

**Nietzsche
on Science
& Metaphysics**

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e-Book 2016 International Psychotherapy Institute

From *A Brief Introduction to the Genius of Nietzsche* Richard D. Chessick

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NIETZSCHE ON SCIENCE AND METAPHYSICS

SCENE 1: DESCARTES AND CERTAINTY

The famous mind-body problem, one of the thorniest issues in philosophy, arose out of the Cartesian distinction between "I" and matter, or between the mind which thinks and which is not extended, and inert matter like the body or "things out there," which do not think but which have extended substance. This distinction is embedded in the whole notion of *I think therefore I am*, and rises from it logically, but it is questionable whether ancient philosophers thought in those terms at all. At any rate, the mind-body separation greatly influenced all philosophy from the time of Descartes to the time of Nietzsche—and formed a philosophy which fit beautifully with the development of classical science. It was Nietzsche who first called attention to the bankruptcy of classical science, and who predicted that eventually the basic concepts of science, like "atoms"—hard little balls floating around in a void—would turn out to be nothing but constructs. Much of the development of modern science has been consistent with Nietzsche's prescient criticism of Cartesian philosophy and the mind-body dichotomy.

Nietzsche explained that philosophy goes along with the science of the day; philosophers tend to be envious of the particular scientific method prevailing and try to imitate it. They produce philosophies which fit very neatly with the science of the day, and then claim that their philosophies have discovered Truths as veridical as those of science. How accurate a description this is of the pseudo-scientific nature of some academic philosophy as it is practiced today!

In section 530 and 532 of *The Will to Power* he attacked the whole structure of Western logic, the whole possibility of true and false propositions. He argued that any proposition believed to be true cannot be thought of as anything but what he called "a regulative article of belief"; a true proposition is not a form of knowledge at all. Consistent with this in section 551 he proceeded to demolish the concept of cause. Here he argued (as previously explained) that the concept of cause is simply introduced by us because we don't like the unfamiliar, so therefore, we tend to interpret everything in terms of what we are familiar with.

The first section of Book III of *The Will to Power* is a systematic destruction of all the basic beliefs on

which Western science is based. In section 555 he fulminated about what he called the scientific prejudice, "the fable of knowledge"—the idea that the scientific observer studies things that are happening outside of him and learns the truth about them.

He made a statement which has formed the basis of all existential psychotherapy, although to my knowledge no existential psychotherapist ever gave Nietzsche credit for it. He said that coming to know means to place one's self "in a conditional relationship to something; to feel oneself conditioned by something and by oneself to condition it" (p. 301). Knowing is therefore, under all circumstances, "establishing, denoting, and making—conscious of conditions," *not* pursuing "entities, things, what is 'in itself'" (p. 301). In other words, the essence of existential psychotherapy is the emphasis on the mutual interaction and on mutual changes induced in I each; it gets away from the authoritarian gap between the doctor and patient.

In section 578-579 he introduced a topic which might be called the psychology of metaphysics. Nietzsche argued that metaphysics itself has been produced by suffering. The two world theory, the idea of an eternal and unchangeable Real world up in heaven or somewhere, is the production of an exhausted depressed unhappy man. This is a unique approach to metaphysics. It is an attempt to explain the whole notion of Reality on the basis of psychological motivations, and of course it turns around and negates that Eternal World as nothing but a hope or consolation. This is one of the areas in which Nietzsche anticipated Freud. Nietzsche applied this not only to religion but to metaphysics. He also spoke of the *ressentiment* of metaphysicians against actuality; here it is the metaphysicians who are living in relative poverty and Suffering on poor teachers' salaries and not getting their books published who invent these eternal truths and systems to console themselves.

Nietzsche used "value for preservation of species" as the criterion to determine what any given culture decides is true, good, and valuable. Section 584 of *The Will to Power* might be thought of as a summary of Nietzsche's entire epistemology, and in section 594 he wrote more specifically about science. Nietzsche was one of the first philosophers to call attention to the roots of science—these basic premises of science which had been accepted up to his time as absolutely true. He argued that science is nothing but an attempt to make temporary sense out of chaos. It imposes a schema on the chaos of our everyday appearance; in section 597 he labeled the prejudicial presuppositions of scientific work to be the belief

in the unity and perpetuity of scientific work. Here he had in mind the scientific worker who spends his whole lifetime on studying one little area of science, secure in his belief that he is trying to discover something more about the Truth. Nietzsche described this as building a house on quicksand.

The second section of Book III of *The Will to Power* presented Nietzsche's psychology. It opens up with an argument asking physicists what they mean by force. The notion of force was taken for granted in physics; in fact it was so important in physics that Leibniz used it in his metaphysics. Leibniz's monadology described the whole world as made up not of things but as of points of force, but Nietzsche insisted that nobody has ever been able to define what they really mean by force. He tried to give what he considered the first operational definition of force, namely it is the will to power.

So he tried to base his metaphysics on a scientific construct and fused metaphysics with classical science. He went through all this trouble to demonstrate that classical science is just a useful interpretation of the world, and that all metaphysics is just consoling interpretations of the world; now he turned around and gave another metaphysics—Nietzsche's perspective. Furthermore, it is deliberately offered in such an ambiguous way that each reader or student has to impose their perspective on interpreting Nietzsche's perspective!

He attacked the notion of the "ego" in section 635. We need unities, and one of the unities we use is the ego. I believe that Freud borrowed his concept of the ego from Nietzsche, but Freud apparently did not study Nietzsche because Nietzsche introduced this concept only to attack it, whereas Freud used it exactly in the way Nietzsche says you *should not* use it, as an "entity" inside the mind. Nietzsche attacked the *I*; there is no real reason to believe in such entities—they are fictions, he says, and there is nothing but events.

Whitehead introduced the famous fallacy of misplaced concreteness; in that fallacy momentary instances in space and time are concretized as "things" in classical science. Whitehead pointed out such a procedure is no longer justifiable in our era of Einsteinian and quantum science. This was Nietzsche's view, for Nietzsche insisted there are no "things," there are only points of force, and these points of force are will-to-power points. If for example, I say, "I see a chair," what I am really illustrating is my will to power, my need to impose an organization on the world at this particular moment at that particular spot.

It does not mean that there "really" is a "thing out there" called a chair, nor does it mean there is something called an *I*. Here is a total demolition of all of philosophy from Descartes to Nietzsche's time, and a total destruction of all the basic constructs that were assumed as self-evident in philosophy from the time of Descartes.

In section 676 he did the same thing with the concept of purpose. Nietzsche's approach to the free will and determinism argument as we have seen was to answer "a plague on both your houses." Both the person who argues that there is free will and purpose possible in the world, and the person who argues there is nothing but mechanistic determinism in the world, are giving perspectives which are neither true nor false, they are just perspectives which help an individual survive and adapt and attain power. They are simply perspectives which are adapted by this or that culture or individual for the purpose of power and control.

Notice in that section the word unconscious is mentioned; Nietzsche referred to the unconscious in a few places in *The Will to Power*. This may be a translation problem. I think it forms an interminable scholastic argument as to whether Nietzsche was really thinking about the unconscious even in the adjectival sense that Freud used it. Section 676, with the idea that there is an unconscious language of signs which expresses itself in the behavior of the conscious ego is the starting point of modern French psychoanalysis, a very powerful movement in continental Europe today originated by the late Jacques Lacan (Chessick 1980).

Nietzsche believed that man as a species is not progressing. He believed in certain higher types being attained from time to time but the level of the species itself is not being raised. His eventual hope as we have seen was that the production of these higher types would then be inherited. He offered considerable argument against Darwin for example in section 685, which contains a misunderstanding of Darwin. Nietzsche was really arguing against Herbert Spencer, a very popular late nineteenth century philosopher who took over from Darwin the idea of evolution and added the Victorian belief in progress. For Spencer, man is evolving progressively and the strong man is entitled to riches and power because he is an evolutionary advance over the weaker man. Spencer's philosophy was in essence a justification of capitalism by an argument that the successful capitalist is a superior kind of evolutionary man. This attempt to justify the existence of capitalists in power is not a very generally accepted philosophy today

but at the time of Nietzsche it was very much discussed and, of course, it was constantly quoted as justification for the capitalistic system and the inequality of wealth.

In section 699 he introduced a concept, which, if Freud (Chessick 1980) would have read it, would have saved him twenty years of going down the wrong path on the subject. Nietzsche pointed out that pain is *not* the opposite of pleasure. Most of Freud's early theories are based on the pleasure-pain principle, namely that man attempts to attain pleasure and avoid pain and in so doing achieve a state of peace, a state where there is neither pleasure or pain, and no tension. Freud realized in about 1920 that there are states of pain which can be intensely pleasurable, for example, the state of sexual tension just before sexual discharge. This is an example that Nietzsche also used in the section of how pain, if it is not too intense, can be actually pleasurable and enhance the pleasure that arises from it. Nietzsche argued that the notion of pain as something that should all be removed is again the argument of the exhausted man, of the tired out, worn out man.

He claimed that pleasure comes from the sense of power, so here he tried to use *psychology* as a basis of argument for his philosophy of the Will to Power. First he used physics, in which he argued that the concept of force in physics is an illustration of the Will to Power. Then he used psychology, in which he tried to point out that pleasure is essentially the feeling of power, and the opposite of power is not pain but weakness and helplessness. Man rather than seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, seeks power and avoids helplessness. Nietzsche's twist in psychology was to point out this extremely famous prejudice as he called it, that goes all the way back to classical philosophy in proclaiming man seeks pleasure and avoids pain; yet we realize that there are mild forms of pain that man seeks out, which contradict this point of view. Again Nietzsche was trying to show that there is no such thing as truth, and that there are moral values embedded in every single basic scientific and philosophical concept.

SCENE 2: NIETZSCHE AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Nietzsche viewed art as an antidote to the decadence of philosophy, but his views on art changed. In *The Birth of Tragedy* he saw art as the salvation of man. By the time he wrote "The Will to Power as Art" (Nietzsche 1968), the title of section 4 of Book III of *The Will to Power*, he saw it as a countermove to the decadence of philosophy, morality, and religion but he no longer conceived of it as the salvation of man.

He did make the crucial distinction between those who enjoy works of art and his ideal, the creative artist-philosopher. On pages 419, 421, and 451 this phrase comes up, and his hero, the Socrates who makes music, the artist-philosopher, is one example of the overman which he retained fairly consistently throughout his work. What he was emphasizing is the artist who affirms the senses and extolls life in this world. In contrast to that might be Wagner's *Parsifal*, which is a work of art that focuses on life in the next world and which Nietzsche hated.

Nietzsche's argument in section 1041 of *The Will to Power* is that philosophy is permeated by cowardice and lack of integrity. He called this the hidden history of philosophy. If we really want to get further in philosophy we are going to need a lot of severity, what he called cleanliness toward ourselves. The definition of cleanliness toward oneself is on page 541 in a comment about washing one's soul clean from the marketplace dust and the noise of this age. Compare this to the famous passage in Plato where Socrates talks about the philosopher not fitting into the marketplace and seeming remote from noise of this age. Somehow Nietzsche has come around back to Plato in a full circle.

Compare Nietzsche's passages in section 1067, with Plato's *Timaeus*. This section might be termed Nietzsche's *Timaeus*. What Nietzsche did is to introduce a pre-Socratic cosmology, an immanent metaphysics rather than a transcendent metaphysics. Being for Nietzsche is immanent in the apparent world for there is no transcendent world. For Nietzsche, Being is a continual clashing and overcoming, a shaping and breaking, and creating and destroying, flux and change. This is all there is, all a manifestation of the Will to Power—*everything* is a manifestation of this.

Being for Nietzsche is identified with becoming. There is no solid matter in motion, an amazing prescience into modern physics. There are no categories of the understanding. There is no "substance"; all of these concepts are embedded in the structure of our language. In our grammar there is a subject and a predicate in a sentence. From this fact we hypostatize that there are "subjects" in the world who operate on or "cause" or move "things" in the world. This is an unacceptable hypostatization, a "prejudice" according to Nietzsche, based on our use of grammar. In this sense he anticipated modern analytic philosophy. In other words, nothing is really distinct from its relations. These distinctions are all arbitrarily imposed by us, they are perspectives.

All physical forces are the Will to Power and this is the only force there is. This is the only force we experience, he argued, so therefore why must we extrapolate any others? It lessens the gap between organic life and inorganic life. All force, whether it is manifest in organic or in inorganic life is Will to Power as far as Nietzsche was concerned.

The relative unities that appear in nature form themselves due to resistance between aggressive powers. What he meant by that can be best understood through politics. Groups of nations aggregate together in any given era as "allies" and they fight against other groups of nations who are their enemy. In another historical era entirely different groups, some of which were formerly allies and some of which were enemies, may now form and fight each other. These are relative aggregates, temporary aggregates, which come together to form a larger group and then clash with each other in any temporary period.

The relative endurance of these entities cause us to reify them. For example, in the Second World War we had the "Axis" and the "Allies"; today we have the "Free World" versus the "Soviet Empire." Our tendency is to think of these as "things" whereas they are actually just relative aggregates at a temporary time. Similarly, each individual man is nothing but a temporary aggregate, what Nietzsche called a piece of fate, a temporary power point clashing with other power points. The rough uniformities which are described by science again are local and temporary. These are just transient bits of order, and Nietzsche's main point was that such uniformities do not imply that there is an intelligent purpose working in nature. The fact that there are transient laws, transient bits of order, cannot be used to prove any Grand Design. The play of chance in the clash of wills to power is enough to explain various aggregates in motion in any temporary era.

For Nietzsche, time is endless but space is not. Thus there is a ceaseless flux in endless time in finite space. From this he argued you can only have a certain number of possible combinations of aggregates . and therefore, these will recur. The energy remains constant; there is no running down of the universe in this metaphysics, there is simply endless time, limited space, and aggregates which form and then dissipate. Since space is limited and time is endless these aggregates will form again. That is eternal recurrence. He claimed this is the one strictly universal and eternal law. Energy is total and is constant and therefore, there is eternal recurrence.

This statement contradicts everything he said everywhere else, where he constantly claimed there is no such thing as a strictly universal and eternal law. How do we explain this? Nietzsche would say that anyone who reads the chaos of Nietzsche must impose his "will to system" on it in order to understand it. Interpreters clash with each other and with Nietzsche. This illustrates philosophy itself as "will versus will" and thus the history of philosophy, like everything else, is a manifestation of the Will to Power! It is nothing but clashing wills which manifest themselves through clashing interpretations. There is nothing but the Will to Power and the Will to Power is all there is.

One of the interesting corollaries of this view is that there is no clear dividing line between very general scientific hypotheses and metaphysical theories. We have a spectrum running from poetry and mythology, then through speculative metaphysics, then through inductive metaphysics, and finally through science. In Nietzsche's view these are all perspectives which begin with art, poetry, and mythology and "harden" as they approach science—when they become science they are hardened into prejudices. When myths or speculations have passed through speculative metaphysics and become scientific hypotheses, we mistakenly say this is an approach to the Truth.

SCENE 3: NIETZSCHE, JASPERS, AND HEIDEGGER¹

Jaspers (1966) measured Nietzsche's significance neither in terms of biography nor on the basis of doxography (a compilation of extracts from the philosopher's work). Neither the life nor the doctrines alone constitute the event which for subsequent thinkers Nietzsche is. Nietzsche was a kind of happening in the history of philosophy. Nietzsche's dedication to thought throughout the whole of his existence, plus, his passion to communicate and his skill in devising masks for his passions, and ultimately the courage he displayed in posing the question of meaning—why or to what end—constitute this "happening." By asking about the whole, Nietzsche executed a radical break with past morality, past philosophy, and past humanity. No one can surpass the radicality of that break. Nietzsche, wrote Jaspers (1966), thought philosophy through to its ultimate consequences. It is scarcely possible to take a step farther along that route.

Yet what drove Nietzsche to that protracted and painful rupture with the past is something powerfully affirmative—the yes to life, overman, and eternal recurrence. It is in the formulation of the

positive side of Nietzsche's philosophy that Jaspers foresaw a successful career for subsequent philosophy. Thus he lauded Nietzsche's morality as that which cleared the path for his own philosophy of *Existenz* (Jaspers 1954). Although Nietzsche denied transcendence with every fiber of his being, Jaspers concluded that the fury of his denial testified to his embrace of the *Encompassing I*. Obviously Jaspers read him as one who by the very fury of his protest actually was seeking transcendence, so that Jaspers actually conceived of him as a quasi-religious philosopher.

That is a very idiosyncratic and questionable reading of Nietzsche, almost a psychological interpretation, for Nietzsche at least ostensibly is *the* philosopher of anti-transcendence. He was constantly reversing the trend of Western philosophy and he repeatedly argued that Plato's two-world theory is a symptom of a feeling of weariness with life and of decline; the whole concept of an eternal Real world is constantly attacked as a symptom of decadence, exhaustion, and the end of man as he is now. Nietzsche attacked all concepts of God, Spirit, Being, the One, the self, the thing-in-itself, Hegel's historical process; he argued against all these because they reduce the world of our experience to something inferior.

The opening to a better understanding of Nietzsche is to ask the question, since he rejected the concepts of God, Spirit, Being, the One, the self, and so on, why didn't he also reject the concept of eternity, which is an integral part of most transcendent philosophies? He took the concept of eternity and he changed it to meaning "no end." He flatly stated that the one thing that goes on forever is time, and that is essentially what he meant by "eternity." He disagreed with other philosophers because he did not think any progress is implied by this; the "fact" that there is no end to time did not for Nietzsche imply some kind of forward progression in time. Existence for Nietzsche is just as it is, with no meaning and no purpose; it eternally recurs again and again and there is no end.

This is really quite different than what other philosophers have said about transcendence. It does not coincide with the Buddhist philosophy of a circle of life and death, because the Buddhist hopes to and tries to get out of this circle of life and death, whereas for Nietzsche that is all there eternally is, a very important differentiation.

Heidegger (1979) turned Nietzsche's thought upside-down by placing Nietzsche squarely in the

western metaphysical tradition. He argued that first of all the crucial question of Philosophy is the question of Being, and he asked, does Nietzsche say anything about the nature of Being—about the character of all things—or, to use Heidegger's phrase, the Being of beings? For Nietzsche, the Being of beings is the Will to Power, so the essence, or what the world is— the answer to the question, what is Being?, is for Nietzsche the Will to Power. This, according to Heidegger, is the key question of all philosophies, the question that philosophers have asked since the beginning of philosophy, and he criticized Jaspers for not realizing just how significant this is.

For Nietzsche the essence of the world was the Will to Power. The existence of the world, the how or the that of the world, was the eternal recurrence of the same. All classical metaphysical philosophers have to answer these two questions—what is the essence of the world and what is the existence of the world? According to Heidegger, Nietzsche was squarely in this tradition. He gave a theory of the essence of the world which he said is the Will to Power and of the existence of the world, the way the world works, which for Nietzsche is the eternal recurrence of the same. This eternal recurrence concept is an attempt to interpret everything that happens. It is an enigmatic and unfathomable concept, but it is at the center and at the peak of Nietzsche's philosophizing; it is brought forth at the end of his most famous work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as his greatest finding.

What is Being? is the fundamental question of philosophy. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche was a transition figure between the modern age from 1600 to 1900 and its completion from 1900 to the future. What we mean by the completion of metaphysics for Heidegger would be reaching some kind of understanding of the unbounded nature of Being. According to Heidegger, in *The Will to Power* metaphysical thinking completes itself and this makes Nietzsche the last great metaphysician of the West. Nietzsche's metaphysics is the ground of the twentieth century. His tremendous nihilism, the Will to Power, the eternal recurrence, manifest themselves most predominantly in the horrible recurring struggles--the blood and slaughter that occurred in the unprecedented wars of the twentieth century. What is not known is what will come next. Will there be destruction of the world or will a new man arise as Nietzsche is hoping?

Heidegger's important point was to think of Nietzsche as the completion of a phase which began with the modern age, with Descartes' emergence from medieval philosophy. What happens as you read

Nietzsche more carefully, according to Heidegger, is that you get into the concept of "life" that he keeps bringing up—a very mysterious and poorly defined concept for Nietzsche. For instance in *The Gay Science* he writes, "life should be an experiment of knowers."

On the other hand, Heidegger very much objected to the tendency on the part of Jaspers to call the eternal recurrence a religious notion. He claimed this distorts Nietzsche's philosophy and he tried to distinguish between a religious position and a metaphysical position. A metaphysical position talks about Being, talks about the "is-ness of that which is," talks about existence, but it does not introduce a concept of God except as an abstraction. The concept of a God to whom we could pray or anything like that is outside of the metaphysical system. So religion may start from metaphysics and go past it, may use metaphysics as a springboard, but it has to be differentiated. Heidegger argued, and I agree, that Nietzsche's position is primarily a metaphysical one and not a religious one.

There are more questions to ask on this topic. For instance, what does Nietzsche mean by "will"? Sometimes he talked about it as a passion or a feeling, and sometimes he made it circular because passion and feeling are claimed to be manifestations of will. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Book VII, section 28, he said it is very "complicated." There he was writing against Schopenhauer, who conceived of the Will as an abstract "simple" metaphysical concept. Nietzsche did say that willing is only the will to power—it is an emotional concept not an intellectual concept, and it is a biological concept. In *The Will to Power* (section 702) he defined power as the wish to become stronger, and the original emotion or affect for Nietzsche is the pleasurable feeling that you get when you become stronger.

Heidegger focused on section 797 in *The Will to Power*. Here Nietzsche extolled the artist, not art. He called the person who extolls art a person indulging in what he calls "women's aesthetics." He was not interested in the question of what is beauty or what makes a painting beautiful. What he was interested in is the artist, the way of life. The creation of art for Nietzsche is thought of as a masculine activity. Creativity is masculine in contrast to the degenerate "women's" aesthetic philosophies—like Kant who he was really writing against. The reason he focused so much on creativity is because creativity and the making of art emphasize the sensuous world, the world of appearance, in contrast to the intelligible Platonic world.

So he talked about "art in the grand style," that extolled the artist-philosopher (in section 795 of *The Will to Power*). He had a concept of the artist producing something in the world of appearances that directly affects us, and of that being the artist's main interest—in contrast, for example, to the academic philosopher who is producing a philosophical system of the world of Truth and Reality.

Both Nietzsche and Heidegger agreed on the urgent need of philosophy to advance beyond classical epistemology, beyond "theory of knowledge," to inquire into the goals and purposes of philosophy as such, that is to say, the need to advance in the direction of metaphysics. They saw philosophy as having an important function as a value for life, and they studied the tension between philosophy and the living personality of the philosopher—the drive to philosophize.

Nietzsche extolled the frenzy of the inspired artist and he invidiously compared the inspired artist to the dried up laboratory scientist. For him art stimulates life; he saw it as healing and refreshing and urging to renew creations, and he compared this invidiously with the search for security and the bliss of eternal Truth and so forth.

In summary, the question What is Being? is for Heidegger the key question of all philosophy. For us life, according to Nietzsche, is the most familiar form of Being and the innermost essence of life is the Will to Power. So the innermost essence of Being for Nietzsche is the Will to Power. The life of the artist gives the most clear and present mode of the Will to Power, what Nietzsche called the artist phenomenon, the person who creates from the world of appearances, to master the world of appearances, to create something out of it.

According to Heidegger the meditation on art in *The Will to Power* is the best illumination of what Nietzsche meant by the Being of beings, and his recognition of art as a countermovement to nihilism is what very much distinguished his thought from Plato. Plato banished poets from his Republic for this very reason, that poets tended to fix the mind of people on the world of appearance; Plato wanted to fix their minds on the eternal world. Nietzsche was doing exactly the opposite—he was extolling the artist, because the artist fixes on the world of appearances. It just so happens that these metaphysical systems are in direct opposition to each other but they are both nevertheless metaphysical systems. The reason that Heidegger said Nietzsche is the last great metaphysician of the West is because with a grounding like

Nietzsche's nihilism and the explosion of the Will to Power we come now to a radical turning point in the history of the world. We do not know what will come next but there is no place for metaphysics to go after this according to these philosophers; one cannot get more nihilistic than Nietzsche.

It was characteristic of Nietzsche's work to philosophize negatively, to break with everything that was met by universal acknowledgment whether it be God, morality, or reason. Teaching academic philosophy—the systems of other people—does not require a youthful attitude, but philosophizing requires this attitude, said Nietzsche. Hence the very important difference Nietzsche made many times, distinguishing between what he called philosophical laborers and philosophers proper. The passion of longing to proceed from the inner grandeur of the intuition of Being to its actual realization and fulfillment—that is philosophizing, in contrast to a person who makes his living teaching other people what other people have thought.

Usually these two kinds of philosophers don't get along. Yet, Copleston (1975), famous for his teaching of other philosophers, offered a fine starting point for criticism of Nietzsche. He conceded that we have to come to grips with the thought of Nietzsche and rise above it. Nobody who wants to philosophize in the twentieth century can do so without acknowledging what Nietzsche said and grappling with it in some sense. He saw Nietzsche as a lonely solitary soul who lived in the depths of his own visions; anyone who reads *Ecce Homo* will also get that feeling.

Nietzsche's philosophy can be thought of as an answer to Wagner's *Parsifal*, the opera in which Wagner returned to Christianity and salvation through Christ and religion. Nietzsche's answer is that Wagner sold out to make money, and that man must save himself by the glorification of his own species, not by recourse to Christianity.

Copleston (1975) pointed out that Nietzsche lacked the power of sustained scientific and rational argument; so he was neither a great metaphysician nor was he a scientific psychologist. There is no debating with such a view since we do not find passages in Nietzsche of long sustained scientific or philosophic arguments. What Nietzsche did was to state his case and then fulminate against his opponents. There is a definite lack of reasoned careful philosophical or scientific arguments. Copleston also pointed out that Nietzsche made innumerable historical mistakes and inaccuracies, so one must not

take literally every statement that Nietzsche made about the history of philosophy, human history, cultures, and so on, for there are many, many misrepresentations.

The question comes up very commonly about whether Nietzsche's overman or superman is a hard unfeeling egoist such as Napoleon; even Copleston felt that he is not. Of course, the crucial parting of ways we would expect from Fr. Copleston occurs because he felt Nietzsche was very wrong when he said Christianity is inimical to life and no-saying to life.

SCENE 4: CRITICISM

Why did Nietzsche consider Napoleon to be a great man when Napoleon led the world repeatedly to blood, slaughter, and war? Napoleon conceived of Europe as a political unity, so for Nietzsche Napoleon was in a sense a person who was trying to lift man one step higher away from nationalism and into political unity. There are of course a number of authors who worship Napoleon as a warrior, while others claim that the reason Napoleon wanted Europe to be a political unity is because he wanted to put one of his family members on the thrones of each country in Europe. Yet he *did* have political vision, he did codify the laws of France, and he was thinking about trying to form a super-national Europe. Again, we can have a hard interpretation or a soft interpretation.

The overman of Nietzsche gives, but he gives from strength in the sense that the sun shines and gives out warmth out of power and energy. The difference is that the Christian hero gives from compassion and pity, but Nietzsche's concept of the overman was of the person who has so much excess power and energy that he gives it out naturally, like the sun shines. Copleston agreed with Nietzsche's argument that if there exists no God and no religion, then it follows the strong will create their own morality and give to the weak as they choose. There can be no such thing as a natural morality, divine moral laws within, or a moral order in the universe, without a God.

Nietzsche's overman can be thought of as proud and free, joyful and serene, and strong in mind and body. Nietzsche was a philologist—Nietzsche's overman is the man who is *κάλος* translated as good, beautiful, and noble—a Greek ideal like Achilles or Pericles. In contrast to the overman we have "the last man," the mediocre man, the man who is *δειλός* (cowardly, wretched, idle) or *μοχθηρός* (the man in sorry

plight or the villainous man). Greek is a very descriptive, poetic, and beautiful language and these are the Greek terms Copleston believed Nietzsche the philologist had in mind when he was juxtaposing the overman to the last man or the mediocre man.

Copleston claimed (without giving any reasons) that Nietzsche's concept of the will to power is a great improvement over Freud! We do both agree that the crucial error of Nietzsche was in his denial of the fundamental value of humility. The concept that no human being should ever be made a mere means for another human being is not only in Christianity but becomes a form of Kant's categorical imperative. Nietzsche's overman uses the herd, creates his own morality, and apparently does so without any sense of compassion or pity. Nietzsche's words are a challenge to Christians, what Copleston called "a prick to the Christian conscience," especially the Christian conscience that tends to water down Christ's ideals.

Nietzsche and Schopenhauer agreed on their fundamental despair, they agreed that death is the seal of meaninglessness, they denied the transcendental, they were atheistic, they believed that the universe is fundamentally irrational — in contrast to Hegel—and they believed in the subordination of intellect to will. Nietzsche's eternal recurrence is a fatalistic doctrine and, philosophically speaking, contradicts the possibility of change and the possibility of an overman, as Copleston pointed out.

Nietzsche's man can be thought of not as overman but as "only-man," only a man, without God, who is condemned to death and the abyss of meaninglessness. How, asked Copleston, in this situation can only-man be spurred to create values, culture, and civilization? What is the point, if it is all so meaningless? He concluded that the way of Nietzsche is the way of madness. If there is no ground and no meaning, what is the sense to any appeal for overman? Furthermore, the notion of overman already presumes a fixed system of higher and lower values—one could not talk about an overman if one did not have an implicit notion of "over" and "under"; this again is a logical contradiction in Nietzsche's thought.

In his discussion of Nietzsche, Scharfstein (1980) considered Nietzsche's loss of his father at the age of 5 as decisive for his philosophy and his life. He considered his simultaneous longing for his father and his rejection of him as being very important and therefore the attack on his father's values— his father was a strict Lutheran minister—according to Scharfstein "was an irrational attempt to revenge himself and simultaneously to overcome his suffering and presentiment of death." This is an amateur

psychological effort to explain all of Nietzsche's philosophy on the basis of an attempt to deal with his father problem. Such interpretations, I think, have very little scientific validity and tend to degenerate into simplistic generalizations, especially in such a complicated person as Nietzsche. Others, for example, in the same vein have interpreted *Zarathustra* as an expression of loneliness following his break with Lou Salome. Many authors have interpreted the will to power concept as a projection of Nietzsche's persistent infirmities, as his way of trying to overcome his own weaknesses, physical ailments, loneliness and failure. Others have interpreted *Ecce Homo* and *The Antichrist* as a declaration of Nietzsche's madness, and probably correctly have explained his frequent disparaging remarks about women as being due to his woman-dominated childhood.

Nietzsche anticipated many of Freud's notions; he was a very great intuitive psychologist. However, he never worked out his psychology into anything useful. He just threw out numerous sparks but never developed any kind of a program for using his psychology in understanding people or healing people as Freud did. Freud recognized his greatness and considered him to be the greatest intuitive psychologist who ever lived next only to Shakespeare, but Nietzsche provides very little of practical clinical use—a matter that would be irrelevant to Nietzsche.

There are at least three very great errors that Nietzsche made, in my view. First, it is a tremendous mistake to think that instinct has to be protected from reason and morality. Actually the problem is the other way around. Reason and morality have a very weak suppressing force on instinct. The true problem is that the thin veneer of civilization is what needs protection from instinct! Instinct is tremendously powerful and always threatens to destroy the veneer of civilization. The same is true with democracy, so despised by Nietzsche. Democracy does not have an inimical effect on man's development and instinct; democracy is always in danger of being destroyed and over-run by tyrannies, by right wings and left wings, by explosions of mob violence, and so on. The preservation of democracy has always been an extremely difficult task, especially in troubled times such as today (Chessick 1969).

The second great error I believe Nietzsche made is to see life (or spirit) and morals as opposed to each other. This is a philosophical blunder because it rests on an unclear use of the term "morals." When Nietzsche wrote about morality he was talking about the hypocritical Sunday morning sermon type of morality, and it is no great advance in philosophy to discover that kind of Victorian morality to be trivial.

When this triviality is coupled with his increasingly violent tone as it developed in his writings, it lends itself to a very gross misinterpretation of Nietzsche and makes him sound much like he was advocating violence and destruction, although actually I believe he was not. Probably the most fundamental aspect of this second type of error is in his indifference to ordinary human beings. In my judgment this is unforgivable. His constant disparaging comments about democracy and the herd, regardless of rhetorical intent, indicate a *serious* problem in his own morality. There is something grievously the matter with any person that does not have a sense of compassion for the ordinary human being and for the sufferings of humanity, and no amount of philosophical argument, learning, and sophistry can justify Nietzsche's attitude.

Finally, as I have previously mentioned, there is a fundamental scientific error in Nietzsche, his Lamarckian belief in the inheritance of acquired characteristics. This by itself would destroy his entire solution. Similarly there is no scientific justification—in spite of his claims—for his doctrine of eternal recurrence.

In conclusion, keep in mind a crucial positive assumption behind all of Nietzsche's writings, a metaphysical *a priori* for Nietzsche; it is called "life." Life is the standard of all values for Nietzsche, and enhancement of human life on earth is the crucial issue for Nietzsche—enhanced life as against decadent life. Life is defined vaguely by Nietzsche as the will to power, and power is then defined as vital intellectual energies and abilities, that is to say, not pure physical force but sublimated force—not harshness and cruelty but enhanced and organized power, spiritual independence and adventure. Health for Nietzsche represents an abundance of this plastic force, this vital energy. Hypocritical morality is opposed to this kind of vital energy; it makes a virtue of decline and complacency, and produces guilt, self-hate, weakness, and fear. Nietzsche was fulminating against a culture which produced serious psychopathology in its own time and endless monumental wars in the century that followed.

Notes

¹ At the time of this writing only Vol. I of the 4 volume work on Nietzsche by Heidegger was available in English. A subsequent volume (Heidegger 1982) has appeared, too late for inclusion here.

