

Interpretation

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Nietzsche's Politics

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"No matter how far a man may extend himself with his knowledge, no matter how objectively he may come to view himself, in the end it can yield him nothing but his own biography" (HH 182).

"The free man is a state and a society of individuals" (M11-230).

Nietzsche was by admission antipolitical. He shunned and disparaged political engagement. His political convictions, when voiced, were voiced negatively, as barbs and broadsides. He intended his political statements to provoke. This is not to say that one should discount his harsher judgements as insincere hyperbole. Nietzsche carved out a political niche, even if it remained obscure and undefended, and he may be held accountable for it. But the political theorist must approach Nietzsche warily. The quarry is not easily captured by definitions, and he is never tamed by reasoned argument. Nietzsche refused to provide unequivocal answers to the most fundamental political questions. To say anything about Nietzsche's politics is to risk contradiction by the text.

One might attempt to root out of Nietzsche's writings the mostly vague or implicit references to concerns that are explicitly addressed within the tradition of political thought. However, I believe such an effort would inevitably fall flat, resulting in little else but well-guarded statements about the ambiguity of Nietzsche's politics, and assertions that if he does not have at least one foot in the fascist camp, then he is culpable for having allowed himself to be so interpreted. These assertions may be well-founded, but they hardly shed light into the depths of Nietzsche's project. From this standpoint, Nietzsche hardly rises above the status of an unfocused polemicist. For the political theorist, Nietzsche's importance is to be found in his use of political discourse to describe what is typically thought to be beyond politics: the workings of the soul. Nietzsche's writings constitute an ongoing experiment in thought and experience wherein a political vocabulary was chosen to explore and describe the soul

This article is based on work which is more extensively developed in my book *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* to be published by Princeton University Press by whose permission it is printed here.

All references to Nietzsche's writings will be given parenthetically within the text by abbreviated title and page number. References to the *Musarionausgabe* are given by abbreviated title, volume and page number; those to the *Nietzsche Briefwechsel* are given by abbreviated title and date. A key to their abbreviations is in the list of references.

of man, and in particular Nietzsche's own soul. He attempted to sublimate politics, to internalize political struggle within a pluralistic self. His works read as the political biography of his soul, and they challenge the reader to engage in a similar politics. Nietzsche believed the role of the individual in politics should be subservient to the role of politics within the individual. That is Nietzsche's philosophic-political position. Its explanation requires us to investigate the nature of a radical individualism that aimed to establish a higher politics beyond the social realm.

The road to radical individualism, which has its greatest ramifications in the realms of politics and morality, finds its origin in epistemology. The starting point is the limitations of man's mind. Nietzsche's individualism is above all the extension of his skepticism.

Epistemology for Nietzsche is the unsuccessful attempt to separate the organ of perception, the mind, from that which is perceived, the supposed thing-in-itself. Despite the most strenuous efforts one is never assured of attaining a true representation of some fundamental reality. One knows only one's own perceptions. Likewise, however deeply the mind is explored its substratum is never reached. One becomes conscious only of its workings, its effects. "When we try to examine the mirror in itself we discover in the end nothing but things upon it. If we want to grasp the things we finally get hold of nothing but the mirror. This, in the most general terms, is the history of knowledge" (D 141). Nietzsche's point is not that the mind is a blank slate, as Locke would have it. (He explicitly repudiated Locke's theory [M16-250]). Nor is the mind considered to be an unblemished mirror which accurately reflects a reality somewhere out there. The passage has a skeptical thrust. The mirror metaphors often used to represent the mind mislead us into positing a separate reality which is reflected by or in us. Nietzsche pictured man standing with his back toward a supposed reality and the mirror of his mind before him. An uninhibited view into the world is blocked by the perceiver himself: "Why does man not see things? He himself is in the way: he conceals things" (D 187).

The world is always and only the mind conscious of its own activity. Nietzsche refused to bestow the world with a higher status, maintaining its dependence upon the structure of the mind. At the same time, man is not congratulated for his limitations. The Protagorean pronouncement that man is the measure of all things must not be accepted without qualification. Man can only know the world as he measures it, as he perceives and interprets it. But Nietzsche does not presume man to occupy a unique position in the universe. Man's inability to measure the world without using his own scales does not mean that other scales do not exist. One must reserve judgment.

How far the perspective character of existence extends or indeed whether existence has any other character than this; whether existence without interpretation, without "sense," does not become "nonsense"; whether, on the other hand, all existence is

not essentially actively engaged in *interpretation*—that cannot be decided even by the most industrious and most scrupulously conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives and *only* in these. We cannot look around our own corner: it is a hopeless curiosity that wants to know what other kinds of intellect and perspectives there *might* be; for example, whether some beings might be able to experience time backward, or alternatively forward and backward (which would involve another direction of life and another concept of cause and effect). But I should think that today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner (GS 336).

Skepticism is another word for such modesty in the epistemological realm. Man's limited capacity for knowledge does not determine the boundaries of reality, but the boundaries of man—a particular species on a particular planet in a particular universe. “We are figures in the dream of God who are guessing how he dreams,” Nietzsche suggested (M3-319). Man may speculate about his dreamy existence, but he must acknowledge that it may not be the only dream being dreamt. The discovery of universal laws that rule his world does not preclude other laws or other worlds.

Nietzsche's individualism is the logical extension of his skeptical evaluations. The individual, like the species, cannot see beyond its own corner. Each is locked into a world of its own.

The habits of our senses have woven us into lies and deceptions of sensations: these again are the basis of all our judgments and ‘knowledge’—there is absolutely no escape, no backway or bypath into the *real world*! We sit within our net, we spiders, and whatever we may catch in it, we can catch nothing at all except that which allows itself to be caught in precisely *our* net (D 73).

All knowledge is experience, and all experience is individual. We may compare our experiences, but not exchange them or equate them. The point is not that we subjectivize experiences which would otherwise have some objective status. An ‘objective experience,’ to use a favorite phrase of Nietzsche's, is a *contradictio in adjecto* [contradiction in the adjective]. It is an abstraction that cannot be even clearly thought out. The individual remains the ultimate interpreter of his cultural and social inheritance, including the meanings of words (WP 403). That people agree to call similar experiences by the same name and, by and large, succeed in communicating according to such schemes does not retrieve the individual from its isolation. It simply demonstrates the ingenuity of the species. Perspectivism is the name Nietzsche gave to this radically individualistic epistemology.

Already in his unpublished essay *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Nietzsche had outlined his understanding of radical individualism. “Now philosophical systems are wholly true for their founders only,” he wrote in the preface: “Taken as ultimate ends, in any event, they represent an error,

hence are to be repudiated" (PTG 23). Nonetheless, they provide a semiological study of the individuals who founded them, revealing a "slice of *personality*." One celebrates philosophic studies because they constitute intriguing and inspiring outlooks on the "human scene." However much subsequent research and events may refute elements of any philosophic system, it remains a tribute to "what we *must ever love and honor* and what no subsequent enlightenment can take away: great individual human beings" (PTG 24).

Philosophy for Nietzsche was not about truth, but about living without truth. What remains of import in philosophic works are the portraits of individuals who have struggled with the contradictions of existence. Their writings never provide resolutions to these contradictions, but they may serve as testimonies to battles well fought. Thus Nietzsche remarked of his philosophic mentors: "The errors of great men are worthy of veneration, because they are more fruitful than the truths of small ones" (M1-393). However one might polemicize great men for their errors, their stature remains undisputed. Only after a protracted schooling in their ways may one stand up as a peer and a worthy opponent. Indeed, their greatness elicits confrontation just as it once demanded discipleship. Thus we are to understand Nietzsche's admission of the kinship he bore to his fiercest enemy: "Socrates, just to acknowledge it, stands so close to me that I am almost always fighting with him" (M6-101). Such battles do not produce truth, Nietzsche maintained, but they allow more fruitful errors. Their fruitfulness lies not in the facile discovery of the ubiquity of error, but in the arduous development of the passion for truth, a passion which must remain, nonetheless, incredulous. What is called truth, Nietzsche charged, is only that which is discovered in the retreat from this insatiable passion. The story of philosophy, in short, is the history of the errors and lies found necessary or useful by the titans of thinking.

Nietzsche may generalize as to the erroneousness of all philosophic systems because any attempt to speak of truth in a nonindividualistic manner must founder. Philosophy cannot exempt itself from perspectivism.

The task of painting *the* picture of life, however often poets and philosophers may pose it, is nonetheless senseless: even under the hands of the greatest painter-thinkers all that has ever eventuated is pictures and miniatures *out of one* life, namely their own—and nothing else is even possible (HH 218).

Of course this applies to Nietzsche's painted thoughts as well, and he admitted as much. His oft-quoted declaration, "*This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!*" frequently interpreted as a doctrinaire assertion of a metaphysical truth is something quite different. It is an implicit declaration of the impossibility of such truths. The will to power, as Nietzsche clearly stipulated in the passage, is only the "name" he has given to the world. And this world is shown to the reader the only way possible for Nietzsche, namely in his "own mirror" (WP 549,550). The world as will to power, and more specifically as a

heightened sense of will to power, is a miniature portrait of Nietzsche's life. It is described the only way he could describe it, namely as reflected in him.

To the extent one's experiences parallel those of others, an understanding may be approached. Still, the most that can be said about close relatives in the realm of thought is that they bring one into one's own company. They are spurs to the soul, awakening forgotten experiences or prompting new assessments of their significance. More is impossible: "Ultimately, nobody can get more out of things, including books, than he already knows. For what one lacks access to from experience one will have no ear" (EH 261). Moreover, the higher one's spiritual rank, the more individualistic one's experiences become. What is common always belongs to "the herd."

The thoroughly self-referential world of the individual was a prominent theme throughout Nietzsche's writings. In 1874, at the start of his career, Nietzsche admitted that he had no right to claim to have penetrated into the world of even his most influential mentor, Arthur Schopenhauer: "I am far from believing that I have truly understood Schopenhauer, rather it is only that through Schopenhauer I have learned to understand myself a little better; which is why I owe him the greatest debt of thanks" (M7-140). Nietzsche's later works show the concept of radical individuality unchanged. In his last year of productivity, he wrote: "It is plain what I misunderstood in, equally plain what I read into, Wagner and Schopenhauer—myself" (NCW 669). Nietzsche would challenge his readers to reread his early essay "Wagner in Bayreuth" and substitute his or Zarathustra's name for Wagner's, claiming: "in all psychologically decisive places I alone am discussed" (EH 274). Of course, the sword cuts both ways. Nietzsche warned his own readers not to assume to have comprehended him: "Whoever thought he had understood something of me, had made up something out of me after his own image—not uncommonly an antithesis to me" (EH 261). In short, everyone pays and receives in his own coin.

The individual is in a permanent state of isolation. Experiences are never truly shared, only their simulacra. This is not simply because the written or spoken word is a poor reflection of thought. Thought itself is a lame transmitter of experience. Consciousness is deemed an antiindividualistic development, the effect of a herd existence. It is the ultimately futile attempt to turn the individual's monopoly of experience into common, communicable knowledge.

My idea is, as you see, that consciousness does not really belong to man's individual existence but rather to his social or herd nature; that, as follows from this, it has developed subtly only insofar as this is required by social or herd utility. . . . Fundamentally, all our actions are altogether incomparably personal, unique, and infinitely individual; there is no doubt of that. But as soon as we translate them into consciousness *they no longer seem to be*.

This is the essence of phenomenalism and perspectivism as I understand them: owing to the nature of *animal consciousness*, the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface-and-sign-world, a world that is made common and

meaner; whatever becomes conscious *becomes* by the same token shallower, low, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd signal; all becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalization (GS 299,300).

Communication, or the making common of what is individually experienced, involves a necessary falsification. We do communicate our experiences, but at the cost of robbing them of their essential uniqueness. For communication marks a three-fold corruption. Words never adequately or unequivocally portray thought, and thought never fully corresponds to experience. In turn, the recipient can only interpret the communication according to his own pool of (unique) experiences.

The self-enclosure of the individual is complete. What applies to the transmission of knowledge also applies to the realm of feelings: "Ultimately one loves one's desires and not that which is desired" (BGE 88). The objects of desire or aversion, no less than the objects of thought or perception, are as images in a mirror. The attempt to grasp them yields only the reflecting surface. "In the final analysis," says Zarathustra, "one experiences only oneself" (Z 173). 'Mankind' and 'humanity' are misleading abstractions. Apart from the herd, all that exists are individuals, each enclosed in its own world, each soul a world to itself.

Nietzsche went a step further. The individual was also deemed an abstraction. The assumption that there was something called the individual that had a certain fixity, continuity, and duration remained unacceptable. Nietzsche stepped beyond subjectivism to attack the idea of an enduring, unified subject. The soul was conceived as a multiplicity. If we may speak of the uniqueness of the individual, it is because of its unique composition of drives, its particular, yet pluralistic, internal regime.

The revocation of the individual's membership in the community of mankind is accompanied by the constitution of the individual as a community in itself. Perspectivism, then, provides a remedy for its own philosophic ills. The impossibility of an objective, neutral vantage point owing to the self-enclosed world of the individual is counteracted by the multiple perspectives each individual is capable of maintaining. "Man appears as a plurality of beings, a union of many spheres, from which one may look back on the other," Nietzsche wrote (M7-395). It is misleading, therefore, to accuse Nietzsche of subjectivism, for the subject is given no stable identity. Nietzsche's perspectivism first isolates and then dissolves the individual. Objectivity is understood to be nothing more than a multiplication of the personal. The more perspectives one may maintain, the more subjectivity acquires a so-called objectivity: "There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our

'objectivity', be" (GM 119). The suppression of the affects or the attempt to neutralize perception was held to be wholly undesirable. Knowledge, Nietzsche insisted, was not a product of depersonalized observation and thought, but of the stimulation of the senses and passions, of their multiplication and agglomeration. Even if one were capable of suspending passion, the result would not be more objectivity, but, to use Nietzsche's words, a castrated intellect. Objectivity, Nietzsche had always maintained, was nothing but an extension of subjectivity (M1-280). We cannot escape our own web, but we may establish numerous viewpoints upon it.

In the spring of 1868, before the appearance of any of his philosophic works, Nietzsche wrote: "The concept of the whole does not lie in things, but in us. These unities that we name organisms are but again multiplicities. There are in reality no individuals, moreover individuals and organisms are nothing but abstractions" (M1-414). This thesis was maintained throughout his life. The human being, the body, the soul, the subject, the individual was proposed as a multiplicity. A note written in 1885 reads:

The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness in general? . . . *My hypothesis*: The subject as multiplicity (WP 270).

Far from being an ignorable oddity reflecting Nietzsche's penchant for psychology, this *hypothesis* constitutes a cornerstone of Nietzsche's philosophic-political edifice.

The multiple soul, of course, was not Nietzsche's invention. It is at least as old as political philosophy. Plato's "city in speech" of the *Republic* is the macrocosmic description of what Socrates discerns in the souls of his interlocutors. Indeed the manifestly political aspect of the *Republic*, that is, the theorization of the city, is ostensibly proposed as the attempt better to discover the justice of a man's soul. Political theory is the means for the discussant "to see and found a city within himself" (592b). One looked to the order and strife of the socio-political realm to explore and represent the tensioned plurality within the individual. Nietzsche's theorizing is of the same genre. He attempted creatively to revitalize a mode of theorizing that had died with the Christian doctrine of "soul atomism" wherein the soul became identified as "eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an *atomon*." One should not get rid of 'the soul,' Nietzsche insisted, for it is "one of the oldest and most venerable of hypotheses." "But the road to new forms and refinements of the soul-hypothesis stands open" and invites "such conceptions as 'mortal soul' and 'soul as multiplicity of the subject' and 'soul as social structure of the drives and emotions'" (BGE 25). Here Nietzsche revealed the speculative core of his philosophic enterprise. Like Plato, he would clothe his philosophy in political attire. For the language that best facilitates the description and analysis of the soul is political. The world of

politics serves as a conceptual and terminological resource for the “reader of souls.” Nietzsche observed that organization, cooperation, and patterns of domination, in short, politics, allow pluralities to bear the appearance of unities (WP 303). This is true for the human community no less than the community of the self. The politics of statecraft and soulcraft are analogous. The city is the soul writ large.

The parallel drawn between Nietzsche’s and Plato’s understanding of soulcraft, however, diverges with statecraft. Nietzsche showed little interest in describing the patron city of philosophers. Nor did he choose to portray the philosophic benefactor of the city. Apart from his early unpublished essay on “The Greek State” (cf. M3-283-285) wherein the genius is portrayed as he who utilizes the state for his own (mainly cultural) ends, Nietzsche relished the divorce of philosophy and politics. His estrangement from Wagner marked a conviction that the attempt to place the state in the service of genius inevitably leads to genius paying service to the state.

To the extent politics is equated with statecraft there can be no doubt as to Nietzsche’s position: the state is a threat to the individual and the individual to the state. In general, political engagement in the social realm is considered beneath the higher man: “Political and economic affairs are not worthy of being the enforced concern of society’s most gifted spirits: such a wasteful use of the spirit is at bottom worse than having none at all” (D 107). Included among Nietzsche’s Ten Commandments for Free Spirits is the proscription, “You shall not practice politics” (M9-365). Nietzsche himself followed this dictum, averring his “anti-political” nature (EH 225). Still, one must not be misled by Nietzsche’s antipolitical pronouncements. The politics Nietzsche disparaged or ignored in a social context is celebrated in the self. Politics is not so much abandoned as internalized. The pluralism of the soul creates the space for a spiritual political practice. The rule of the self, the struggle of competing perspectives and their coalitions, form its foundation.

The microcosm of the individual becomes a resource better to understand the social macrocosm. Writing of the “*microcosm and macrocosm of culture*” Nietzsche observed: “The finest discoveries concerning culture are made by the individual man within himself when he finds two heterogeneous powers ruling there” (HH 130). The obverse investigative exercise, however, was Nietzsche’s primary concern. The history and status of politics may serve as a guide to inner exploration. That freedom of spirit should not become an excuse for an anarchical soul, for example, the individual might look to eighteenth century French politics, “so as then to *continue* the work of the Enlightenment *in himself*, and to strangle the Revolution at birth, to make it not happen” (HH 367). More importantly, Nietzsche speculated that all moral and spiritual designations, most notably the concepts of good and evil, were the historical developments of political categories and struggles, namely those of the aristocracy or nobility and the plebeians or commoners (GM 24-31ff). Metaphysical concepts,

such as freedom of will, also have their origins in the “social-political domain” (HH 305). Indeed, the soul itself was held to be the product of a political process. Political organization could not tolerate the uncontrolled discharge of instincts. Consequently, instincts were turned inward, internalized. Man pitted his passions against each other rather than loosing them in the public realm: “thus it was that man first developed what was later called his ‘soul’” (GM 84). For Nietzsche, the origin of the soul is political. And its dynamics, he found, are best described in the language of politics. This is not to say, however, that political language and thought cannot and do not also obfuscate the nature of the soul. Our recognition of how political hierarchies have resolved themselves into a hierarchy of souls, Nietzsche noted, has been retarded owing to a political, namely “democratic prejudice in the modern world” (GM 28).

Hence Nietzsche distinguishes his individualism from what might be called democratic individualism. The latter holds the individual to be the bearer of the rights and prerogatives due to all; the particular individual represents all individuals against the totality. Nietzsche holds the individual to be unrepresentable and incapable of representing others, for incommensurability is its defining characteristic (cf. WP 162, 190, 191, 411). Nietzsche’s individualism thus shows itself to be both undemocratic and apolitical. Yet Nietzsche maintained a certain ambivalence toward democracy. For democracy spawns both the freedom that allows for the cultivation of greatness *and* the disorder that characterizes the soul of modern man (BGE 153, 154). Democracy prepares the ground for radical individualism, just as it describes the ebb of that spiritual strength which makes a true individualism possible.

Nietzsche called himself a “nutcracker” of souls who subsequently engaged in their vivisection (GM 113). The object, however, was not to create a scientifically grounded, psychological theory. The substrata of the self are acknowledged to be ambiguous and undefined. The atoms of the community-of-the-self remain essentially unknowable. The molecules they form receive various names, never used with complete consistency. The multiple soul is a conglomerate of passions, desires, affects, forces, feelings, emotions, drives, and instincts. In turn, these variously named molecules of human motivation coalesce to form dispositions or character. Still, Nietzsche did not pretend to have discovered or explained the atomic structure of the human soul. He claimed only to have observed its effects. The hypothesizing was not propounded as the forerunner to a theory; for there was no expectation of subsequent proofs.

Nietzsche’s suppositions were accompanied by a profound skepticism, a skepticism deemed particularly apposite when treating the soul. For the suppositions themselves, *ex hypothesi*, result from an indeterminate interaction of drives. Here observation is already the efflux of that about which one speculates. Thinking represents only the perceivable effect of an imperceivable process. Even the finest thought, Nietzsche wrote, corresponds to a network of drives: “Thoughts are signs of a play and struggle of affects: they always are

connected with their hidden roots” (M16-60). The opaqueness of the human soul precludes anything more than speculative assertions. Thought divorced from its affectual origins remains an abstraction. Consciousness itself is already the organized unity of unseen, and unseeable affects: “Everything that comes into consciousness is the last link of a chain. . . . Each thought, each feeling, each will is a *composite* . . . of our constituent drives” (M16-61). Seeing into the labyrinth of the soul is just as impossible, to retrieve another of Nietzsche’s metaphors, as seeing around one’s own corner. Our perception is restricted, as it were, to the surface of our souls. We are capable of penetrating neither ourselves nor others.

A general pattern, albeit one never strictly maintained, may be observed within the confusing array of terms Nietzsche employed to describe the workings of the soul. Drives, instincts, or affects constitute an irreducible substratum (which is only to say that by definition we are incapable of discerning their probable components). Feelings or emotions form the next level. They are the products, composite and complex, of conscious and unconscious drives. Thought forms the third tier. It is, by and large, a derivative of emotion, the inner conversation that tries to make sense out of a medley of feelings: “Thoughts are the shadows of our feelings—always darker, emptier, and simpler” (GS 203). The simplicity of thought is not to be equated with its immediacy. Thoughts are simpler *because* they are emptier. They are one-dimensional representations of multidimensional emotions. Systems of thought, in turn, do not gain depth owing to their intricacy. This applies especially to philosophic thought. Regardless of how ostensibly rational or conceptually sophisticated one’s philosophy, it remains, nonetheless, merely the schematic representation of affectual relations. Music has long been recognized as “a sign-language of the emotions;” it remains, wrote Nietzsche, for philosophy to be similarly understood (M11-190 and cf. BGE 92).

Despite Nietzsche’s repeated acknowledgements of the power of reason, intellect and thought, their status is consistently depreciated in his writings. For they never supply the impetus of human action. With Hume, Nietzsche held reason to be passion’s slave. The intellect merely justifies and defends one’s affectual regime. In the battle between the passions, reason is employed as a tool and weapon. Nietzsche condemned the rationalistic degradation of passion

. . . as if it were only in unseemly cases, and not necessarily and always the motive force. . . . The misunderstanding of passion and reason, as if the latter were an independent entity and not rather a system of relations between various passions and desires; and as if every passion did not possess its quantum of reason (WP 208).

The Platonic opposition between reason and passion is fractured into the opposition between multiple passions, each with its own capacity for reason and will to dominate. Reason does not govern passion, as a charioteer steers his horses.

Self-overcoming is not, therefore, the victory of reason over passion: "The will to overcome an emotion is ultimately only the will of another emotion or of several others" (BGE 79). The perception that reason tames the passions, that intellect may have its way despite one's emotional urges, mistakes the weapons for the actual contestants of battle. What arises to consciousness is only the aftershock of an unnoticed inner turbulence, the post hoc paperwork that spells out the settlement of a dispute.

Since only the last scenes of reconciliation and the final accounting at the end of this long process rise to our consciousness, we suppose that *intelligere* [understanding] must be something conciliatory, just, and good—something that stands essentially opposed to the instincts, while it is actually nothing but a *certain behavior of the instincts toward one another*. For the longest time, conscious thought was considered thought itself. Only now does the truth dawn on us that by far the greatest part of our spirit's activity remains unconscious and unfelt (GS 261,262).

In a typically Nietzschean paradox, the freest thinker is he who realizes that his thoughts are not free, being the efflux of his often imperceptible instincts and affects. The true slave of his passions is he who does not recognize his slavery. The man Zarathustra loves for his honesty is he who knows that "his head is only the bowels of his heart" (Z 45).

Yet Nietzsche deepened the paradox in a striking way by remarking elsewhere: "If one binds one's heart firmly and imprisons it one can allow one's spirit many liberties." And this, Nietzsche claimed, "no one believes if he does not already know it" (BGE 75).

With reason and intellect apparently out of contention as motive forces, the entire spectrum of human action and thought must be accounted for in terms of instincts or drives and their (political) relations. This is made possible by their essentially agonal character. Each has its will to dominate and exploit its competitors. In turn, the ruling drive(s) provides its own agenda and world view. Nietzsche's understanding of perspectivism, often interpreted by his commentators as subjectivist at base, is actually much more radical. The individual is not privy to a single, incommensurable perspective, but is a battleground of competing drives, each with its own perspective. The victory of a particular drive, or coalition of drives, determines the political rule of the community: "It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm" (WP 267). Nietzsche's perspectivism has its experiential roots not only or even primarily in what has come to be known as the relativity of values, that is, the supposed incommensurability of personal or cultural truths, but at the subindividual level of inner conflict, in the vicissitudes of the soul itself. For Nietzsche, the multiple soul with its endless internal strife is the defining characteristic of man. Man is an animal whose

instincts have multiplied and escaped a permanent ordering. The disorder of the soul is both the mark of humanity and the cause of its woes.

. . . a single individual contains within him a vast confusion of contradictory valuations and consequently of contradictory drives. This is the expression of the diseased condition in man, in contrast to the animals in which all existing instincts answer to quite definite tasks (WP 149).

Man, Nietzsche said, is the sick animal. The disease of the human soul and the accompanying torments, however, were celebrated as the means of deeper knowledge, that is, knowledge garnered from multiple perspectives. The most profound thinkers are not those whose thoughts reflect lame passions and simple order, but the multiple, irregular, and chaotic origin of thought in strong, agonistic passions (GS 254). In effect, proper cultivation of the soul allowed one to live multiple lives, thus satiating the passion for knowledge. To have sat in “every nook” of “the modern soul” was Nietzsche’s ambition (WP 532): “Oh my greed! There is no selflessness in my soul but only an all-coveting self that would like to appropriate many individuals as so many additional pairs of eyes and hands . . . Oh that I might be reborn in a hundred beings!” (GS 215). The greed for experience could be satisfied in two ways: to be reborn again and again, or to live one life as many. Nietzsche assumed the latter charge: “Task: *Seeing things as they are!* Means: to be able to see them out of a hundred eyes, out of *many* persons” (M11-138). The individual’s alienation from community is redressed by its manifold internal relations. His isolation bears its own compensation in a spiritual plurality.

Nietzsche displayed an unmistakable pride in having achieved a “cosmopolitanism of the spirit” (HH 262). The ability to see from multiple perspectives and wear many masks is celebrated throughout his writings. In the *Dithyrambs of Dionysus* he poeticized: “My soul,/ its tongue insatiable,/ has licked at every good and evil thing,/ dived down into every depth” (DD 71). The prelude to *The Gay Science* contains a similar self-congratulation: “Sharp and mild, rough and fine,/ Strange and familiar, impure and clean,/ A place where fool and sage convene:/ All this am I and wish to mean,/ Dove as well as snake and swine” (GS 45). Nietzsche announced that he was “happy to harbour in himself, not ‘an immortal soul,’ but *many mortal souls*” (HH 218). The higher man, in other words, wears many masks. More important than an altered appearance, however, are the changes in perspective, in perception and thought, allowed with the donning of these masks. Nietzsche claimed to have regained that which is denied the individual—the capacity to look around its own corner (EH 223). As the dramatist he can, as it were, scrutinize Hecuba, and as Hecuba he may look back upon the dramatist. The perspectives thus gained, however, are ultimately incommensurable. They can be compared only from the position of yet a third perspective, a perspective itself no more ‘objective’ than those it evaluates, its competitors.

To be many people, to have many masks, is the precondition for knowledge and growth, the sign of a profound spirit. The contradictions of Nietzsche's thought which are the bane of his commentators must be understood in light of his glorification of the multiple soul. Consistency is not considered a virtue, especially for a philosopher whose primary concern should be his spiritual development and not the continuity of his intellectual endeavors. In this regard Nietzsche placed himself with Plato, Spinoza, Pascal, Rousseau and Goethe who displayed a "passionate history of a soul," and thus were considered philosophically superior to Kant and Schopenhauer (their intellectual excellence notwithstanding). Kant and Schopenhauer gave biographies "of a *head*" rather than biographies "of a soul" (D 198). Their lack of spiritual experience and development, in short their consistency, was to their demerit.

He who is concerned with growth overcomes himself, becomes different. The vicissitudes of the philosopher's soul, however, are particularly troublesome for those who wish to nail down his identity. That his own protean character would cause much misunderstanding was foreseen by Nietzsche. "We are misidentified," he wrote in *The Gay Science*, "because we ourselves keep growing, keep changing, we shed our old bark, we shed our skins every spring . . . we are no longer free to do only one particular thing, to *be* only one particular thing" (GS 331, 332). The philosopher with a passion for learning finds a change of internal regime a welcome occurrence. The new leadership of drives brings new perspectives and experiences. The ensuing increase in knowledge as the stimulant of further growth, growth which inevitably will leave this knowledge behind.

The irony of Nietzsche's philosophy is that its contradictions demonstrate its consistency. The assertion that the philosopher is actually a puppet of his competing instincts is effectively demonstrated by the contradictions within Nietzsche's own work that represent the temporary hegemony of his various drives. In short, Nietzsche's defense against the charge of incoherence was a reaffirmation of his understanding of the soul as a plurality. "The wisest man would be the one richest in contradictions," Nietzsche claimed, for he would be master of the greatest assortment of perspectives from which he might view life (WP 150). *The Gay Science*, for example, was prefaced with the admission that the book "seems to be written in the language of . . . contradiction." Further on the reader discovers the reason: the work demonstrates the changeability of Nietzsche's philosophy owing to his periodic changes of internal government. Everything from culinary dishes to philosophic doctrines are held to be "brief habits" which are and should be frequently discarded, like "shedding a skin" (GS 32, 237, 246).

It follows that the search for the authentic Nietzsche is misdirected. His 'identity' can only be discovered through an analysis of his various personae and their interaction, of his masks and their recurring features. This is not to abandon the attempt to characterize Nietzsche's thought, but merely to

emphasize that any such characterization must be polyvalent. His writing must be approached as one would a musical composition of many voices in counterpoint. One observes dissonance and its resolution, with much oblique and contrary motion between the melodic parts. Such works do not preclude interpretation, they invite it. But the discovery of a harmonic theme, or themes, is predicated on an appreciation of the desirability of the work having more than a single voice. To remain faithful to Nietzsche's self-understanding one must come to terms with his multiple characters, even at the price of ambivalence and its susceptibility to abuse.

The soul, then, is proposed as an agonistic political community which experiences changes in regime. The analogy to social 'units' also includes the desirability of strong government. Frequent regime changes should not be invitations to anarchy. Struggle begets strength; but anarchy, in the soul and society, signifies powerlessness, a regression to barbarism. In the soul, no less than in art, in ethics, and in politics, *laissez aller* is a mark of decadence and a recipe for dissipation (TI 95,96). A tensioned order is the goal, and to this end leadership is found indispensable.

Initially, this leadership is supplied by one's mentors. Education, for Nietzsche no less than Plato and Aristotle, proved the highest duty. All philosophy, Nietzsche maintained, originated and was carried out in the service of education (M16-38). The order of the soul Socrates sought to instill among his youthful interlocutors has its parallel in the proper hierarchy of instincts Nietzsche attempted to stimulate in his readers. A truly philosophical education always entails the active manipulation of the soul.

The "essential thing" regarding this manipulation is that it produce "a protracted *obedience* in *one* direction: from out of that there always emerges and has always emerged in the long run something for the sake of which it is worthwhile to live on earth, for example virtue, art, music, dance, reason, spirituality" (BGE 93). Education, in effect, is an extended discipline. It has little to do with the accumulation of knowledge and much to do with the learning of self-control. The understanding is that eventually the student will internalize its force, coming to discipline himself. He will, in effect, learn to be the master, or perhaps better said the coordinator, of his instincts. In sum, the educator trains his students in the art of arranging the soul, and training always involves authority and discipline. Thus Nietzsche's radical individualism is just the opposite of unrestrained development. The uniqueness of each student calls for a personalized form of discipline; it is not an excuse for intellectual or spiritual self-management. But the educator's role, as Zarathustra demonstrates, is not that of Procrustes. The successful student eventually discovers in his teacher the paradigm of how to become his own master. The true educator celebrates his victory when his students become worthy of demanding their independence, for "one repays a teacher very badly if one remains only a pupil" (Z103).

The soul is a plurality which seeks unity, a chaos that must become a cosmos: "To become master of the chaos one is; to compel one's chaos to become form: to become logical, simple, unambiguous, mathematics, *law*—that is the grand ambition here" (WP 444). Nietzsche's writings are the self-conscious attempts to demonstrate the achievement of this ambition. His battles with other philosophic giants evidence both his tutelage and his pursuit of independence. Nietzsche was engaged in a lifelong struggle to gain statehood for the society of his soul. His personal motto might well have been *e pluribus unum*. And like the American founding fathers, Nietzsche recognized that the strength of the union was based on the vigor achieved through the ordered competition among its parts.

The creation of unity out of diversity is given the name of style. Style is the coordinated exploitation of powerful instincts. It is impossible for those whose passions are too weak or those who are incapable of harnessing strong passions. Stimulation and sublimation rather than extirpation or anaesthetization of the passions is its precondition. Grand style, as demonstrated by classicism, is the effect achieved through the harnessing of violent and varied passions, and their placement under the rule of a predominant drive.

Only great passion can produce a great work. And for Nietzsche, the greatest of works was the individual. He extolled "that strength which employs genius *not for works* but for *itself as a work*; that is, for its own constraint; for the purification of its imagination, for the imposition of order and choice upon the influx of tasks and impressions" (D 220). Style is that art of living which begets greatness. To stylize something is to give it an identity, to introduce form, coherence, and strength, to lend the appearance of unity to a plurality. Nietzsche's life was one of almost constant physical misery, spiritual suffering, and social alienation. His works are as explosions of strength, energy, and gaiety. They offer episodes of a life of radical individualism. Nietzsche's writings, then, may be seen as a stylized analysis of style. In other words, Nietzsche's writings, as the descriptions of his own struggles to arrange his soul, are submitted as style conscious of itself in the act of creation.

"I am one thing, my writings are another matter" Nietzsche began the section of his autobiography, *Ecce Homo* entitled 'Why I Write Such Good Books.' It is a statement typical of someone who wished to stylize his work and knew the need of masks to achieve his purpose. To use the page as a shambles for one's cognitive or emotional dismemberment is the height of decadence in Nietzsche's eyes. It is the absence of style. Style is the exhibition of a self-overcoming. The point of wearing masks is not so much to deceive, as to grow into them. The imposition of order upon the page limns the struggle for order within the self. In short, style is always a display of will, of the use of power to govern a fractious soul. The mask of Nike is worn, not because Eris is absent, but because order was ultimately achieved through the disciplined rule of the strongest drives:

. . . what happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy commonwealth: the ruling class identifies itself with the successes of the commonwealth. In all willing it is absolutely a question of commanding and obeying, on the basis, as I have said already, of a social structure composed of many 'souls' (BGE 31).

Nietzsche's glorification of the will to power, often interpreted in terms of the pleasure of dominating others, is essentially a tribute to self-overcoming. The greatest struggles are not to be witnessed in the sociopolitical arena, but in the rule of the self. The greatest victory is a well-ordered soul. We must confront Nietzsche as one who rejected a life within politics that he might explore this life of politics within him.

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