

# A book for thinking

## NIETZSCHE AND HIS "PSYCHOLOGY": A FORM OF THINKING THAT TRANSCENDS THE RULES OF KNOWLEDGE

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE: *The Will to Power*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. Edited and with a Commentary by Walter Kaufmann. 576pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £3 5s.

ENGLISH READERS of Nietzsche's writings owe surely more to Professor Kaufmann than to any other scholar in the field. While his book, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, sought to rescue the "Nazi" Nietzsche from political misrepresentations and present him in a more positive, rational light than ever before (critics complained that it was overrational, indeed, a rationalization). Professor Kaufmann's translations of all the major writings have also provided a much "better" English reading of Nietzsche in an immediate stylistic sense. It was to be hoped that he would offer us a translation also of *The Will to Power* which could supersede the old version by A. M. Ludovici, edited by Dr. O. Levy and published in 1914, 1924, and 1964, and in this expectation we are not disappointed. Professor Kaufmann has used, and briefly reviews, all the present German editions, and in his introduction he gives a good account of how this final work of Nietzsche's came into being.

Nietzsche himself did not prepare any such book for the press. He planned a *magnum opus* of some kind and for a while thought of giving it the title *The Will to Power*; his notebooks contain various sketches for the title-page and arrangements of contents. The proposed subtitle: "Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values" came to assume greater importance in his mind towards the end of his active life, and he may have envisaged his final work under that heading, with the published version of *The Antichrist* constituting the first of four related volumes. What Professor Kaufmann has translated, then, is a collection of material from Nietzsche's *Nachlass*, which was first selected by Peter Gast and Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche for three progressively larger editions of *The Will to Power* (1901, 1904, 1906). Their selection and arrangement was reproduced, with scholarly notes on the manuscripts by Dr. O. Weiss, in the revised Grossoktav edition of Nietzsche's works (1911) and again in the Musarion edition (1920-29), this time without notes. Both these editions contain also what has generally been assumed to be the remainder of Nietzsche's *Nachlass*, which had not struck the early editors or Nietzsche's sister as being suitable for inclusion in *The Will to Power*. Since what had been assembled under that title represented a somewhat arbitrary choice, Dr. Karl Schlechta tried to abolish the notion that any such work as *The Will to Power* really exists by reproducing, in his three-volume edition of Nietzsche's works (1954-56), the *Nachlass* in a different arrangement, which he claimed was truer to the chronological order of the manuscripts themselves.

Dr. Schlechta's claim was attacked at the time by Professor Kaufmann, who repeats his criticisms here. Nietzsche is known to have written in his notebooks in a far from "chronological" manner, so that the dating of the entries can only be approximate. The early editors merely provided a convenient grouping of the material by subject matter. If their arrangement is abolished in favour of an unproven actual order

of composition, what is achieved except difficulty in reading and comparing what Nietzsche wrote at different times on comparable topics? The question is likely to remain open, at least until the final critical edition has been completed by Signori Colli and Montinari, who are still at work on it in Weimar. They are publishing the "nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente" in their appropriate chronological place amongst the other volumes of Nietzsche's finished works. There is no great difficulty about doing this as regards the earlier periods of Nietzsche's writing. For the critical period 1882-88, when the bulk of the material for a putative *magnum opus* was noted down, the Italian editors are not attempting to produce companion volumes of notes alongside the printed works from *Zarathustra* to *Nietzsche contra Wagner*. They seem to acknowledge that this material occupies some kind of special position in Nietzsche's oeuvre as a whole when they grant it a division of its own—indeed, two divisions, for some reason not yet made clear—of equal importance with the other major divisions of his writings. They do not, however, propose any title for these volumes, other than "Nachgelassene Fragmente", thus strengthening Dr. Schlechta's contention that there is no such work as *The Will to Power*; and they intend also to reproduce the notes in chronological order, whether with any more significant success than that achieved by Dr. Schlechta (who was accused, in fact, of not having consulted the original manuscripts with any care, if at all) remains to be seen.



Friedrich Nietzsche

Professor Kaufmann's translation includes many useful notes and several facsimiles of the original manuscript, which illuminate the kinds of problem involved in editing this material. Not the least of these is Nietzsche's handwriting: he could

write a beautiful hand, but, not surprisingly, jottings which he doubtless expected no one but himself would read are in places scarcely legible. His friend and editor, Peter Gast, was evidently good at deciphering such notes, but they must surely daunt any scholar whose native tongue is not German—especially in view of the script of that time. Yet one should not exaggerate the amount of Nietzsche's text which is in doubt. Professor Kaufmann obtained from the Weimar archives facsimiles of those pages where it was known, from the notes of the early editors, that something had been omitted. To judge from his translation of this "suppressed" material, Professor Kaufmann's contention seems amply proved that our understanding of Nietzsche cannot be affected in any way by reading a few more of his vituperative remarks, for instance, against Wagner. It undoubtedly comes as a shock to see evidence of the way the first editors divided up and arranged Nietzsche's notebooks, but here again Professor Kaufmann's defence of "the semisystematic arrangement that allows us to read, one after another, a lot of notes that deal with related topics, jotted down over a period of time", makes good sense. His personal position regarding Nietzsche's notebooks is clearly stated: "I still believe as firmly as ever that the books he finished are his legacy, and that his notebooks are of secondary interest." And he concludes:

So far from finding any final system, we look into a vast studio, full of sketches, drafts, abandoned attempts,

and unfinished dreams. And in the end we should be less tempted than ever to mistake a random quotation for an ultimate position.

The only criticism we might offer of Professor Kaufmann's presentation concerns the title-page, cover, and appearance of the present volume. "*The Will to Power*/Friedrich Nietzsche", we see, on a jacket of storm clouds. Whereas, his attitude and approach to this material, which he also does not consider one of Nietzsche's "works", would surely have been better represented by a title such as: "*Nietzsche's Notebooks* in the arrangement known as 'The Will to Power'".

Professor Kaufmann has included in this volume, at the end of his introduction and by way of additional preface, a passage from the *Nachlass* which refers to "The Will to Power". It is interesting that the first editors did not include it, perhaps because it implies disgust for the aspirations of the German *Reich* (though elsewhere they stomach similar remarks), or perhaps because it implies something about the character of Nietzsche's thought which they did not wish to stress. The passage begins: "*The Will to Power*. A book for thinking, nothing else; it belongs to those for whom thinking is a *delight*, nothing else—". No sentence could have been more aptly chosen to introduce this "book", as Nietzsche at this stage (1885) obviously expected it to become, though in what way he could not foresee, for it reminds us of a question which poses itself most urgently with regard to his whole manner of writing. What are his books good for? What kind of thinking do they represent? In what sense are they true—or false? Nietzsche clearly wanted us to ask such questions, which he himself directed in one form or another against every writer of his day and of the past about whom he thought at all. Unfortunately, the full implications of these questions have not been much explored as yet, least of all in the English-speaking world, where one might have expected that serious attention would be paid to Nietzsche's conceptual, logical, and inferential techniques. Instead of which, Nietzsche has been largely ignored by the philosophers in our universities, despite the fact that his works are widely (and often eagerly) read there, and taught (often badly) by amateurs who borrow what help they can from their knowledge of literature or psychology in an effort to come to terms with this disturbing and dangerous type of "thinking".

One way of approaching the basic question about the character of Nietzsche's philosophy is to recognize that he forces us to ask it, and to see that it is an extra-philosophical question, or at least one at the borderline of possible topics for philosophical discussion, a question that can only be formulated with the help of metaphors and which invites answers in terms of still more imaginative speculation. It is in this dubious territory that Nietzsche thinks and that concepts like the will to power have effective existence. Thinking is an expression, for Nietzsche, of that will to power which alone gives to particular thoughts, and to the principal parts of thought, the words, concepts, syntax, and so on, their value. There are examples again in these notebooks where the same thought has a positive or a negative value accord-

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ing to the degree of power expressed in it. For instance:

Nihilism. It is ambiguous:

A. Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as *active nihilism*.

B. Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as *passive nihilism*.

The distinction which Nietzsche makes here in schematic form permeates all his work and leads to often confusingly contradictory observations of the same phenomena. These contradictions are a standing challenge to commentators, who keep discovering new ways of reconciling them, in order to state what Nietzsche really meant. Professor Kaufmann himself, in his book on Nietzsche, has argued persuasively that "reason is the highest manifestation of the will to power", the culmination of a process by which the human animal has achieved "power over himself". Doubtless Nietzsche's goal for man was some quite individual and inward act of self-understanding and control which was never intended to be realized on a political basis; doubtless all this talk reprinted again as Book Four of *The Will to Power*—about warrior virtues, blood aristocrats, racial breeding, masters of the earth, and the like—should be read in a higher sense, as metaphors for a state of the soul. But, precisely here, a question is raised about the kind of function Nietzsche expected language to fulfil. We may perhaps assume that the end at which Nietzsche's thought aims is good and noble, but it does not follow that his intellectual means are beyond question. Whether a man is likely to achieve power over himself by learning to think with such concepts as the will to power and "active nihilism" is essentially a quite different question from the one which now needs to be asked regarding the rules that govern the objective use, and presumably also possible misuse, of these terms.

It belongs to Nietzsche's style of thinking, and is implicit in his vocabulary of power, that no rules seem applicable to or derivable from it. How rarely does Nietzsche make any statement that could be tested against fact, experience, or logic, and this in spite of his show at summing up and accounting for European history. (One of his most recurrent thoughts takes the general historical form: "All that hitherto has been . . . e.g., 'accomplished' or 'believed', &c.) One way of describing his importance as a thinker would be to say that he discovered, or rediscovered, a dimension of thinking which transcends the rules by which knowledge can be tested. He himself suggested a name for it when he claimed that it was "psychology", which should become "the queen of sciences". For what Nietzsche sketches, when he treats a subject, be it philosophical, or sociological, or cultural, is frequently some kind of *psychological* characterization. Now, the point of darkest

confusion in our understanding of Nietzsche, and perhaps also in his understanding of himself, lies in his association of this psychology with science, with the physical reality of existence, acknowledged in a natural and naturalistic spirit, unclouded by moral prejudice. Whatever Nietzsche meant by science, and by that act of spiritual acknowledgment which seems implied whenever he uses the word *Erkenntnis*, it was evidently much more than a body of established fact and self-consistent theory. We soon find that science too—like nihilism, and all other types of thinking in Nietzsche—may be strong and positive or weak and negative. Science is evidently not a category that embraces psychology: psychology is superior to it.

It may be doubted whether psychology, as Nietzsche practises it, is a form of knowledge at all (let alone a science), though it is certainly a form of thinking. That there may be ways of thinking about the world which are not limited to the rules of knowledge, but are governed by some other principle—which Nietzsche calls "delight, nothing else"—becomes easier to recognize if we call these other modes of thought by their traditional names: aesthetic, ethical, religious. Nietzsche, of course, rejected all three (only occasionally allowing the first) and pretended to think beyond conventional categories. But it is, surely, literature which provides the most obvious model for understanding how the same thought may be either weak or strong. "What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed." And not only does poetry convince us that words may have a kind of truth which stems from something very different from knowledge or logic, something which may perhaps as well be called power as beauty, but drama and the fictive genres relate all experience, including ideas, to the "psychology" of particular men.

Thus, it is on something like literary grounds that Nietzsche attacks the "fictions" of past philosophy. Thinking, he declares, is not done by some abstract, universal "I": the "self", the "soul", the "cognitive intellect" that has been the ideal subject of many of Europe's thoughts has been altogether too pale, too bloodless, too weak a concept. Nietzsche is judging similarly in terms of imaginative creation when he makes many of his more alarming declarations: as, for instance, that evil is an essential ingredient of greatness, that the difference between true and false is unreal, and so on. When he writes that "only the particular is loathsome . . . all is redeemed and affirmed in the whole", he is not only summing up one of the constant aesthetic principles of his thought since the time of his early writings on Greek art, he is also echoing a fundamental conviction of late nineteenth-century literature. Nietzsche's work has, in fact, some obvious points of kinship with the aesthe-

ticism prevalent in his day; negative points, like their common rejection of all moral concern, all pity, for the spectacle of life; and positive points, like enjoyment of the spectacle for the enjoyment's sake, for art's sake—or, as Nietzsche puts it, for the delight in thinking, nothing else.

As a result of thinking in a manner analogous to art, however, Nietzsche becomes entangled, and entangles us, in a problem which involves two different types of solution, depending on the context in which it is posed. It is the problem of the relationship of particulars to universals. To insist, as Nietzsche's psychology does, on the particular personal character of cognition leads to a pessimistic conclusion in the sphere of knowledge; in Nietzsche's own figurative language, God, as the symbol of all universal certainty, is dead. On the other hand, the will to power is very much alive; indeed, it is Nietzsche's newly conceived universal principle of life. In this context, which is the context not of certainty but of creativity, the particular personal character of thinking symbolizes the activity of the Dionysian world spirit itself. Thus, Nietzsche's wisdom is entirely two-faced: as a form of knowledge it is destructive and nihilistic; as a form of art, as personal fantasy, and stylistic rhapsody, it is affirmative and even joyful. At the heart of his confusion, indeed, fusion, of two types of thinking into one lies his unnerving belief that destruction itself is joy, and inseparable from creation. It is time, after nearly a century since Nietzsche wrote, to disentangle the central problems of method which arise from his having treated knowledge as though it were a form of art, and art as though it were a form of knowledge.

The task is urgent not merely for the sake of a better understanding of Nietzsche. Most modern thinking about spiritual matters, and the only available approach in places of education to questions of value and belief, is accomplished in that rather ill-defined area of learning called "the humanities", where non-systematic philosophy, literature, psychology, sociology, and a little intellectual and cultural history contribute what they can to answer the doubts of the young about the meaning of their lives. The list reads like an index to Nietzsche's work, and he anticipated the kind of inspiring half-knowledge which would become possible, together of course with the havoc to traditional ideas, once fragmented insights from so many fields were thrown into a common pool of speculative thinking without distinction as to origin, status or method. Out of this pool Nietzsche drew radical generalizations about the sickness of modern culture and anarchical appeals to creative individualism which still satisfy modern taste. The reason for studying his books is that he created the vocabulary for so many myths of the twentieth century: not only the myth of cultural decadence, but the comple-

mentary myths which tell how all systematic knowledge is false, and all moral values a form of tyranny; the myth of a new generation which will not be fooled by the lies of the old, and the myth of fidelity to self and to the earth.

They are all here, those basic spiritual assumptions, about the world, those guiding images and moods of the mind, which are not themselves the products of reason but give to reason and pursuit of knowledge, meaning and direction. How, then, should we react to them? Perhaps in a manner similar to that in which we react to literature: not to learn anything that is literally true, but to observe manners of living (in Nietzsche's case, manners of thinking) which are characteristic of our time, of ourselves. And not in order to imitate them—who imitates a tragedy?—but in order to "overcome" them, to use another of Nietzsche's recurrent concepts, and one which he certainly applied to his own thought. Here already is a lesson in one of the ways in which meaning arises for the modern mind: by dialectical opposition. Nietzsche's last notes on "Dionysus and the Crucified" remind us of how indispensable Christianity is to his conception of the Dionysian alternative to it. "To overcome everything Christian through something supra-Christian, and not merely to put it aside—for the Christian doctrine was the counter doctrine to the Dionysian." Nietzsche never put it aside: a religious and metaphysical structure persists in his thinking to the last, albeit in a negative and oppositional fashion. If the aim of "overcoming" is not to abolish this opposition, but to strengthen it, possibly we should replace this word by a different one which Nietzsche often uses, in the same context, namely, to endure. Another of Nietzsche's psychological lessons in meaning is that the power of a thought, the depth of value, is determined by the degree of contrary experience which it can endure. For this reason he describes as follows the "Type of my disciples":

To those human beings who are of any concern to me I wish suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities—I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished; I have no pity for them, because I wish them the only thing that can prove today whether one is worth anything or not—that one endures.

It may today perhaps be safely assumed that no one is any longer likely to believe that these are Nietzsche's notes for a final systematic work, even when they are published again in this ordered arrangement by other hands. This is not the kind of thinking which can be substantiated or proven or worked out systematically. Nietzsche's paragraphs resemble works of art also in this, that while we can recognize consistency of style, of leitmotiv, of structure, we cannot add these pas-

sages together to learn their total message. Nietzsche seems to be searching in one formulation after another for essentially the same thing: an ever more powerful statement of a vision, a sense of what existence is, that in itself is deeper than any form of knowledge or words. It is to this primary intuition that he returns again and again, and he gives us therefore an unusual opportunity to feel its shape. One way of grasping it is to remind ourselves of Nietzsche's ill-health and of the frequency and intensity of his experience that bodily states are the prior conditions of thought. Or we might recall his intense feeling for music, and not only during the years of his admiration for Wagner: a note dated 1887 still places music nearer to primary intuition, at the expense of mere words (which Nietzsche often sees as responsible for man's false pretensions to truth). "Compared with music all communication by words is shameful; words dilute and brutalize; words depersonalize; words make the uncommon common." But, of course, no reference to Nietzsche's biography can ever explain why he interpreted ill-health and music in this fashion. His conception of what is primary in experience is established not factually but *a priori*; it represents an act of faith.

Nietzsche's "priorities" follow a fairly consistent pattern. He distinguishes between the superficial meaning or appearance of an event and its prior psychological or real character. Already in his first book he defines the primal experience of tragedy as "joy in the destruction of the individual": the intricacies of action and characterization with which more sophisticated tragedians overlaid this original ritual ecstasy, provided no more than a measure of control, a means of interpretation: in a word, a beautiful surface spectacle to cover the abyss. Whoever would believe the surface action to have real moral significance is "no tragedian. (It would be interesting to know why this theory has ever been thought applicable to any drama except the one which actually inspired it, namely, Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*.) Fifteen years later Nietzsche is still thinking in the same way, for instance, on the subject of punishment. The basic experience where punishment is inflicted is a primitive aggressive pleasure for the person inflicting it. After that come a whole range of possible justifications, uses, rationalizations, which prevent us from seeing what is really going on. Or, to take one further example from "The Will to Power" dated 1888, Nietzsche explains in a similar way "the origin of religion":

. . . In the psychological concept of God, a condition, in order to appear as effect, is personified as cause. The psychological logic is this: When a man is suddenly and overwhelmingly suffused with the feeling of power—and this is what happens with all great affects—it raises in him a doubt about his own

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person: he does not dare to think himself the cause of this astonishing feeling—and so he points to a stronger person, a divinity, to account for it.

This passage is interesting because it shows Nietzsche interpreting the psychology of the religious man in the light of his own (just as he interpreted Greek drama in terms of his own reaction to music). He supposes that the religious man must have invented a prior cause to account for the feeling of power within himself. But this "feeling of power" as the psychological event prior to the invention of a religious concept, is of course Nietzsche's own *a priori* judgment of the case.

No area of Nietzsche's thinking needs to be more carefully analysed than this one, where he attempts to develop a new type of causal explanation. In fact, the concept which he chiefly uses in this connexion is not that of cause, but rather (as in the case quoted above) that of origin. Moreover, the relationship of movement from cause to effect he described by the term "becoming", which sounds vague in English but has a considerable philosophical history in German; he lends this term concreteness, if not always much precision, by associating it with a range of metaphors drawn from the field of organic growth. Among the passages in this book which have, philosophically speaking, the greatest interest are those where Nietzsche takes issue with Kant, most often on the question of causality. Nietzsche's attitude to Kant is generally ambivalent, but we glimpse an underlying exasperation in the following note: it is a bare statement of the obvious, but the concluding exclamation marks show that, for Nietzsche, it revealed the inadequacy of Kant's thinking: "Philosophy defined by Kant as 'the science of the limitations of reason'!!" From Nietzsche's point of view, Kant

has correctly perceived that the mind structures its knowledge of the world according to its own laws, but had misinterpreted this capacity as a limitation. Worse still, Kant had imagined that the highest type of truth-structure of which reason can conceive is that of causal explanation; and to Nietzsche's imagination this conjures up a picture of egalitarian subservience in all things before an abstract law, a passive waiting of all things for something which will cause them to move.

As always, it is with the psychological character of the idea that Nietzsche is concerned, and for him Kant's account of the mind's ability to make synthetic judgments *a priori* (i.e., of the kind: "every event must have a cause") fails to do justice to its creative potential. In another note, Nietzsche extends Kant's thoughts in a direction which brings them closer to his own:

If there are to be synthetic *a priori* judgments, then reason must be in a position to make connections: connection is a form. Reason must possess the capacity of giving form.

It is this activity of "giving form, shaping, overcoming, willing" which constitutes for Nietzsche "the essence of philosophy". What he is undertaking, evidently, is to replace explanation in terms of causality by interpretation in terms of origin. We can comprehend the will to power not so much by defining what it *is*, but by defining what it does and what it might, in Nietzsche's fervent hopes, enable the world to become. "The will to power interprets", as he declares. What then does our knowledge of the world amount to?

"Interpretation", the introduction of meaning not explanation. . . . There are no facts, everything is in flux, incomprehensible, elusive; what is relatively most enduring is our opinions.

The condition (or is it the consequence?) of Nietzsche's attempt to liberate man's creative intelligence and give it a world of unlimited power to play with appears to be that *all* interpretations are recognized to be equally untrue. The pattern of his thinking contains ultimately a paradox, which it may be possible to understand only by reference to religious or mystical ways of thought. "What is" remains eternally the same in Nietzsche's vision of the eternal recurrence, which sounds like a restatement in agnostic and occasionally even positivistic language of the belief that "as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be". Yet what this "recurrence of identical cases" may become in human interpretation of them leaves open still a vast realm of possibility. Here lies the dimension of Nietzsche's spiritual health and sickness, his psychology of despair and affirmation, the will to power which alone can save men from the discovery that there is nothing to live for. Is it not possible to detect here the structure of a Christian thought, reinterpreted in terms of Greek art and personal creativity? There is even the echo of an ancient prayer in all Nietzsche's talk of the all-powerful will: Thy will be done. Nietzsche refused any relationship to a "Thou", divine or human, and imagined a solitary superman who would take the burden of ultimate willing upon himself. Zarathustra's affirmation of omnipotent will is in and through himself. When he says: "Thus I will it", this is more than a way of thinking: it is a way of trying to believe again in the godless earth. The will he affirms is still mysterious in its quality of power, and his pronouncement is still something like a prayer.

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