

The Creative Will: Kant and Nietzsche on Moral World-Making

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Abstract. This paper is a study in comparative philosophy that attempts to reveal the continuity in thinking about the will from Kant to Nietzsche by presenting an original interpretation of each regarding the agential role of the will in world making. In Kant, it is argued, the practical laws that the will legislates to itself as *Willkür* becomes themselves laws of synthesis that creates the phenomenal world, so that the moral agency of *Willkür* when acting autonomously creates the world as world for us in the sense that our rational ethical aspirations of the Kingdom of Ends are realized. While disagreeing most sharply with Kant, Nietzsche conceives of the will to power as world making, and again, along the same lines as a world for us but, as against Kant, in creating us into beings of “*eines Mehr an Leben*” as we knowingly think, feel and see ourselves to become. We are not meant to be born into the irrational or incomprehensible as selves of “limbs and fragments” merely that can do nothing, become nothing, and by the knowing agency of will to power “*ein Zuviel des Lebens*” will come to us. This is what he states as being the World of Truth because in it is unmasked the mendacity of the ill-will of the Spiritualization of Revenge that wills its own preservation as nihilism in lying, Nietzsche’s word, about the truth of will to power agency in the evolution of life in our species.

Keywords: Kant, Wille/Willkür, Nietzsche, will to power, epigenetics, neo-liberalism, revaluation of all values, spiritualization of revenge, *Übermenschlichkeit*.

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Творческая воля: Кант и Ницше о моральном мирозидании

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Аннотация. Данная работа представляет собой исследование в области сравнительной философии, в котором предпринята попытка выявить преемственность в мышлении о воле от Канта до Ницше, представив оригинальную интерпретацию позиций каждого из них относительно агентивной роли воли в создании мира. У Канта, как утверждается, практические законы, которые воля устанавливает для себя как *Willkür*, сами становятся законами синтеза, создающего феноменальный мир, так что моральное агентство *Willkür*, действуя автономно, создает мир как мир-для-нас в том смысле, что реализуются наши рациональные этические устремления к царству целей. Резко расходясь с Кантом, Ницше представляет себе волю к власти как мирозидание, и опять-таки по той же схеме — как мир-для-нас, но, в отличие от Канта, в создании нас как существ «*eines Mehr an Leben*», какими мы сознательно думаем, чувствуем и видим себя. Автор анализирует тезис Ницше о том, что мы не должны рождаться в иррациональном или непостижимом мире как «конечности и фрагменты», которые ничего не могут сделать, ничем не могут стать, и по воле к власти к нам придет «*ein Zuviel des Lebens*». Это то, что он называет «миром истины», потому что в нем разоблачается лживость недоброй воли одухотворения мести, которая желает своего

сохранения как нигилизма, лучшего, по выражению Ницше, об истинности агентности воли к власти в эволюции жизни нашего вида.

Ключевые слова: Кант, Wille/Willkür, Ницше, воля к власти, эпигенетика, неолиберализм, переоценка всех ценностей, одухотворение мести, сверхчеловечество.

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Introduction

In 1967 Slovakian author Svätopluk Štúr wrote a book titled *The German Will to Power* in which he set the ills of the modern world as the feet of the idea of will to power as a blind and instinctual force. But, in fact, the overall trajectory of the philosophy of will in German philosophy is not that, and we see as much in the arc from Kant to Nietzsche. Although Schopenhauer represents an exception to that intellectual history, Nietzsche's conception of the will to power developed from Schopenhauer's idea of the "will to live" although it is an evolutionary thought in Nietzsche, and that is the significant change of context. Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859, five years before Schopenhauer's death when Nietzsche was only 15. But *pace* Štúr, the development of the philosophy of will from Kant to Nietzsche has quite strong lines, and for both, the will becomes world-making in an ordering, or reordering, from what is merely determinative in the shaping of who we are. For both, it is a creative force that reshapes the world into a transcendent reality, and not an irrational force in the least.

Kant famously attempted to solve the problem of freedom and determinism presented in the Third Antinomy of *The Critique of Pure Reason*. In this paper I am more interested in what Kant thought the world would be like had he succeeded in solving it and not so much whether the solution succeeded technically. Kant distinguished two aspects of the will, conceived it in two employments, the will as *Wille* and the will as *Willkür*, will-choice. *Willkür* is the faculty of initiating a series of events in the sensible world, whereas *Wille* is the will conceived to be the faculty which legislates the moral law to itself as *Willkür*. The will as *Willkür* is free to choose the ground of its own determination, either to be determined by the practical laws legislated by the *Wille*, or to be determined by heteronomous principles, that is, natural laws.

On Kant's analysis, an event, to be an event, is determined by a rule of causality provided by the category of natural causation, but I argue that it is his view that an event's location in the temporal order could be set by a rule provided by the practical law as well, that is, that the rules which determine the temporal position of the effects of an intelligible causality are practical laws themselves, that practical laws are rules of synthesis (Steinbuch, 1975)¹. What Kant was searching for philosophically was an account of the will as agential in moral world-making when the ground of its determination is the moral law. Moral agency for him was not just about making choices, but about participating in the creation of a moral world order. The world is transformed then, into being world for us not just as known scientifically but also as the

world of our highest aspirations, which for Kant are ethical. For Kant, to the extent that it can become a creation of *Willkür*, the world can reach moral perfection. But broadly similar, in Nietzsche too, we read that the will to power creates a World of Truth, a world of reality and as against the world of nihilism. Nietzsche's World of Truth is world for us to the extent that it exposes the Spiritualization of Revenge that fabricates a metaphysical order in which we become denaturalized and, ultimately, dehumanized. The World of Truth is the opposite of the moral order of Kant as based on duty and obedience, but it is still based in the agential will.

Nietzsche's revaluation project is an attempt at unmasking moral history from Plato on as being based in revenge. The Spiritualization of Revenge in morality is a civilizational and cultural construction from an original vengefulness, that may even be ancestral in origin, against will to power as a developmental force to strengthen aliveness. The revaluation is an evolutionary project, although not on the Darwinian model, as Nietzsche was an acute critic of Darwin. Today, we recognize that evolution takes place along several different lines, and what Nietzsche was saying in his time would seem to have anticipated aspects of what today would belong to the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis. The designation of the decadent's "decadence" refers to his always already weakened state of life in rejecting will to power evolution in himself, which then creates the culture of the Spiritualization of Revenge which then further intensifies that inner weakness in a reinforcement loop. This thinking is in line with current ideas about epigenetic evolution and culture.

Understood through the lens of modern epigenetic theory of culture, we can understand how what Nietzsche is saying about "decadence" is not universal in all cultures and all times as environmental variables can be so dramatically different, one place and time to another. So, while Nietzsche was a sharp critic of Christianity in the West in his book *The Antichrist*, he has quite favorable things to say there about Buddhism and about Islam, (Nietzsche, 2001b: § 20–23, 42, § 59–60). But his critique does mean that the "*wertvollen Individuen*" who will lead in his Great Politics are "*wertvollenheit*", so to speak, because the values of the revaluation are already realized in them, and those are specific to overcoming Western nihilism. But then by a second application, they may become universal. Kant and Nietzsche, differences aside, share a fundamental idea of the will as creative in bringing forth a rational world order: in Kant as *per* practical laws synthesizing of the temporal order to include the novel appearance of intelligible agency *per* the *Willkür*; and in Nietzsche in the agency of the creative will to power to bring about the revaluation of all values that is the basis of the World of Truth as the rationality of evolution.

The kleine Menschen

Nietzsche's mature thinking about the will first appears in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; one of the most relevant chapters is from Part II, "On Redemption". The discussion there is complicated as it presents the will to

power both as it is affirmatively and creatively but also as it has turned against itself to become the ill-will of renunciation. The antagonism between these contains the seeds of Nietzsche's illiberal turn in political philosophy.

The objective in the argument of my paper is to establish that in Nietzsche's philosophy of will to power, the will is autonomous, individualistic, and agential. In these ways it is like Kant's conception of the will. But in Nietzsche, will to power is also vitalistic and it is the ground of hierarchy, and these aspects are not to be found in Kant. There is continuity, but not repetition, and the explanation of the difference is the influence of Darwin on Nietzsche, even as he was a critic of Darwin. The will to power is world-creating, creating a world that is "thinkable, feelable and seeable" by us, and as thus so, we are not born into the "incomprehensible or the irrational". It makes the first disclosure of reality and opposes the artifacts of nihilism. The artifices of nihilism are compulsively pursued, and are so as a perverse development taking us away from the reality of will to power agency. The will is creative — it creates the World of Truth / World of Reality for us. The will to power does not emerge passively from more basic instinctual and processes, and there could be no Overhuman otherwise. While emergentism offers valuable insights into how complex ideas can arise from simpler foundations, it should not overshadow or simplify the existential themes present in Nietzsche's work, as I think has been done recently in Edgar Landgraf's book (Landgraf, 2023).

The volitional and intentional agency of the will is the centering idea of the discussions in the chapters in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* on will to power, highlighting the capacity of individuals to make conscious choices and exert control over their actions and environments. The subject matter of Nietzsche's philosophy is the revaluation of values, and the will to power is volitional and intentional in creating human values and directing human actions accordingly, or when not, when the ill-will is turned against itself, dooming us to the continuing history of nihilism. In these two respects, of volitionalism and intentionality, Nietzsche's philosophy of will bears comparison to Kant's conception of the autonomy of the will. *Willkür* as "will choice" is volitional and intentional in choosing to follow the moral law as it legislates it to itself as *Wille*. The will legislates the moral to itself and the *Willkür* chooses to follow it or not, instead being motivated by heteronomous principles of interest opposite to autonomous action. While their specific conceptions of the will and its role differ, both Kant and Nietzsche present views that about the will prioritize volitional agency and intentionality over an emergent explanations of human behavior and cognition and that there is for both an autonomous will but also a will that falls short of being such.

Following the narrative of "On Redemption", we learn that willing involves suffering because will to power cannot will into the past. "It was" is "the stone" that the will to power cannot move, the past's pastness locks in what has happened and all "it was" is beyond its reach. He is suffering by not being able to do so, this suffering is the will's "secret melancholy and gnashing of teeth". Because it is suffering it has turned in ill-will against itself and become revengeful on "all who can suffer" and its revengefulness is how it is redeeming is suffering, which is described as foolish, (*Närrisch*) but in the

context of the chapter, we would today say “pathological”. This is the focus of the section, and it must be emphasized: it ill-willed decadent “redeems” his suffering by being revengeful on “all who can suffer.” Obviously, the extension “on all who can suffer” is not to individuals per who they are as persons but on something about them; as we shall see, it is their will to power agency that the ill-will is striking at. It is because the ill-will has formed into a psychopathology in how it relates to the will to power become agential in the *wohlgeratner Mensch / höherer Mensch* that Nietzsche called for a politics of isolation against him (Steinbuch, 2022).

Only the *kleiner Mensch*, the decadent, forms the ill-will; his opposite, the *wohlgeratner Mensch*, “who believes neither in misfortune nor in guilt”, as Nietzsche says as true of this type and true of himself in particular, does not develop an ill-will (Nietzsche, 2001a: “Wise” § 2). The revenge of the *kleine Menschen* on “all who can suffer” is against will to power in the *wohlgeratner Mensch*. Unlike the *kleiner Mensch* who cannot engage with the stimulus suffering that initially marks the growth of will to power, the *wohlgeratner Mensch* can, and the *kleiner Mensch* zeroes in on the appearance of that suffering, as it is the sign of evolution as self-overcoming, and attempts to thwart it. We learn in *Ecce Homo* that the decadent cannot endure the stimulus suffering of will to power initialized in (Nietzsche, 2001a: “Wise” § 4). That is how the will to power in ill-will has turned against itself in revenge; namely, it avenges itself on the *wohlgeratner Mensch* as will to power is agential in him. The decadent would like to think he is justly morally aggrieved by the action of the *wohlgeratner Mensch / höhere Mensch* but that is not so, and moral aggrievement against him is revenge. His strengthening of life is essentially interior and the agency of will to power is in terms of the interior self, not the exterior self. But the ill-willed decadent tries to make out that the will to power is exteriorized as force of domination of it. This is not without its point because the exercise of will to power is amoral and it does lead to violating the moral law, but it is only in the mind of the decadent that is the primary intention. The primary intention is to exercise and strengthen life in himself by will to power coming into increasing mastery of its intimate weakness.

That is his absolute premise. The decadent wants to cause the *wohlgeratner Mensch / höhere Mensch* to see himself from his, the decadent’s perspective, as an unjust exercise of power over the vulnerable and marginalized, and that is his revenge against will to power if it gets him to stand down from will to power agency. That is the “slave revolt in morality” described in the first essay of the *Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche, 2014b). But the situation is far more complicated than the decadent acknowledges by this reductivity of centering on himself. This fundamental antagonism between the *kleiner Mensch* and the *wohlgeratner Mensch / höhere Mensch* is the basis of Nietzsche’s Great Politics. The revengefulness of the *kleiner Mensch* is a “biopolitics” against the *wohlgeratner Mensch* and against evolution in our species, and Nietzsche’s great war / great politics against the *kleiner Mensch* is a politics in reply.

In the decadent, an ill-will has formed and he has turned himself against the will to power itself as a failed agent and against life itself as a worthless

endeavor. The suffering will calls its suffering a “punishment,” and that is the basis of the psychology of revenge directed against will to power. To redeem its suffering affirmatively and constructively, the ill-will must become the creative will, and to all that is fragment, riddle and dreadful accident in the past of its “it was,” it must will its recurrence. There is a lesser option available, but Zarathustra rejects it. The ill-will of the decadent has the choices of reconciliation with time, *Versöhnung mit der Zeit* and the other is referred to something “higher than *Versöhnung*” and that is a veiled reference to willing the recurrence of the past. So, one possibility is that the will can become reconciled to the fact that it cannot will into the past and that would end its suffering and would mean the deconstruction of the Spirit of Revenge, but that is not the best practice. Zarathustra enjoins us not merely to be reconciled to the will to power’s suffering because it still leaves what is “fragment, riddle and dreadful accident” as it is. This is evolutionary thinking: willing the recurrence of the past will strengthen aliveness in us to become beings of *eins Mehr an Lebens*. Renunciation of the will, as Schopenhauer taught, is curtly dismissed as a “fable of madness”. The suffering ill-will must will the eternal recurrence, and that is to be the “rainbow after the long storms of the will’s revengefulness and the bridge to the highest hope”, as we read in the chapter “On the Tarantulas”.

Willing the eternal recurrence will mean deliverance from the Spirit of Revenge, and that is the bridge to this highest hope, which is the Overhuman. Willing the eternal recurrence is the bridge to the highest hope and a rainbow after long storms and it is addressed to the decadent and to solve the problem of the Spiritualization of Revenge. It is “the knot of destiny for humanity is bound” says Nietzsche (Nietzsche, 2001a: 601). The idea is to solve the problem of willing into the past. The idea behind willing the eternal recurrence is to re-enable the will to power to strengthen aliveness by going into the past and scoping a resistance of suffering to fit its level of will-force and then will that suffering as something still ahead and before us now recurring before us but now with the chance to strengthen ourselves against it. What is needed is to re-live the suffering of the past in the present, only this time as a creative suffering knowing its meaning as such and suffering then redeemed by the creation of life and even *ein Mehr* of life, and not foolishly redeemed by avenging itself on “all who can suffer”.

The chapter “On the Tarantulas” is devoted to a critique of the liberal politics of equality, that equality just is revenge of the *kleiner Mensch* against the *wholgeratene Menschen / höchste Menschen* against will to power in them for their own failure to be able to engage with the exactions of will to power in themselves. The *kleine Menschen* are so by their *own* making, not as an arrogance of Nietzsche’s fabricated from thin air. The psychopathological foundation of the ill-will’s revengefulness in turning against will to power in itself must not be lost sight of in the understanding of Nietzsche’s Great Politics against them.

The chapter “On Redemption” opens with a satirical parable addressed to the cripples who insist to Zarathustra that they will believe in him only if cures them and makes them whole. There are parodic elements in “On

Redemption” but they are parodic of the *kleiner Mensch* as ridicule of him, of being “the last man” as “the beginning of the end” because it is deserved. Ridicule of the *kleine Menschen* is in the work for a reason, it is not gratuitous, and when we see the actual psychopathology at work in him as revealed by Nietzsche unmasking psychology of the Spirit of Revenge, he is at once comical but also utterly terrifying. And the *kleine Menschen* should send shivers of horror down our collective spine. Parody here should be understood in terms of Nietzsche thought of the “involuntary parody” (*unfreiwillige parodie*) of the great health (Nietzsche, 2023: § 382), and through the meaning of the involuntary in Nietzsche in general.

Zarathustra’s answer to the cripples makes it clear that he does not apprehend their condition as cripples as a static state but as belonging to a dynamic which is lost by merely curing the cripples, and he does not (not that he could have cured them, but the presumption of the cripples is by hypothesis that he could and that is the context of his refusal). Although it is not made clear that by leaving them as cripples they will become better for it, it is clear that they will become worse if he cures them. Removing the hunchback’s hump just destroys his spirit, restoring the sight of the blind one will just make him see only evil, or making the lame one walk, will just make him more able in his pursuit of his vices. This, says Zarathustra, is what, in any case, the people say who are taking thereby a cynical view of their fellow human beings, and Zarathustra accepts their cynical take that the cripples would only be made worse as human beings were he to cure them. *Kleiner Menschen* they are and *kleiner Menschen* they will remain. Besides, says Zarathustra, being in limbs and pieces means nothing to him as that to him seems to be the basic condition of all humanity. He states that the whole human race is crippled, that all humanity is in “limbs and fragments”, as if strewn on a battle field or cut up on a butcher’s table”.

The scene sets us up for the thought about the way a crippling can be an “energizing stimulus to life even to *“Mehr-Leben”* to use Nietzsche’s language about his own crippling in *Ecce Homo* (Nietzsche, 2001a: “Wise” § 2). We are thus so, and Zarathustra identifies his mission as being to compose into *ein Dichtes* what “fragment riddle and dreadful accident” (Nietzsche, 1976: 251). But crippling goes the other way too, and sometimes we find cripples who have too much of one thing and nothing else, and these he calls inverse cripples, only the *kleine Menschen* call them geniuses. But that admiration is misplaced as the genius for them is in reality merely an “inverse cripple” meaning, someone who has too much of one thing and not enough of anything else, in this case, a big ear. The *kleine Menschen* think the answer to their lot of fragmentation can come from someone with an overwhelming fragment, the inverse cripple, who is the genius to whom alone he has listened until now. The parodic opening of “On Redemption” inspired Derrida’s book *The Ear of the Other*², but the chapter takes a serious turn that I do not find reflected in Derrida’s book.

Zarathustra too is a cripple at the bridge to the future highest hope. The ill-will of the decadent must say “thus I will it” to all his “it was”. What the *kleine Menschen* want from Zarathustra is for him to change the past, to

relieve them of their crippling. It is not of course, by reason of their crippling that they are being ridiculed but because of their misunderstanding of the meaning of their crippling, and because of what they want from the will to power, which is also a misunderstanding of it. They are in a prison of their own making and suffering by their own persistence, and it is funny to watch them. But what they want is not what the will to power is meant to do. Will to power is a force of evolution, and we are to evolve life and evolve to *eines Mehr an Leben*, and it is not just a force of change to the past³. We learn that the will has become revengeful in the *kleine Menschen* because it cannot “will backwards,” it cannot just change its past. The ill-will is “imprisoned” and redeems its suffering “foolishly” (*Närrisch*) meaning not just impudently but crazily, and in a way that generates the psychopathological culture of the Spiritualization of Revenge. Instead it should redeem its suffering creatively, embracing its suffering in its true meaning of the suffering that can, and should, become a stimulus to life to become stronger. We are in “limbs and fragments” but will to power, growing in power, exercises itself over such in ourselves and life becomes stronger in us. So we are not stranded with being what we are. Will to power is a force of evolution, propelling us towards *eines Mehr an Leben*, rather than a magical means to alter the past in its entirety, as the *kleiner Mensch* mistakenly believe. But the consequentiality decadent wants no part of this and lies about his suffering calling it a punishment, and that a deed in the past, eternally past and beyond punishment — thus to make punishment eternal too is the guilt for which we are punished, a reference to the Christian idea of original sin⁴.

It is a *Lügenwort* that suffering is a punishment, and it is a revenge-laden thought. Nietzsche would thus seem to think that we are a divided species: there are, on the one hand, the *wohlgeratene Menschen*, and Nietzsche is one as he states in *Ecce Homo* (Nietzsche, 2001a: “Wise” § 2) and, as mentioned above there are the *kleine Menschen*, and the latter seek revenge on the will to power by suppressing it in the former.

Humanity is in limbs and fragments, as if scattered on a battle-field or cut up on a butcher’s table. Surely Nietzsche wrote about his past of his inheritance from his father in *Ecce Homo* to tell us about how he himself is a case in point, so we would understand what he is talking about from his own autobiographical introduction to his philosophy. Thus, he says that *das Glück* of his existence, and such even to the point of it being a uniquely good fortune, is to be “already dead” while still living and growing old, and that this is a riddle — it is a riddle how this fragmentation can be “*ein Glück*” — and unlike any other and that sets him apart in this respect. It is a reference to something terrible he inherited from his father, and what is indicated by texts is what today we would understand as a transgenerational epigenetic inheritance. But, it is for him *ein Glück*: “The highest prize life can get, he says, is to have the highest opposition set before it” (Nietzsche 1980: 614, my translation), because that means that will to power, if it is successful, can build that highest opposition to the highest rung of life.

What Nietzsche was referencing about himself by saying that as his father he is “already dead” is developed throughout the first five sections this first

chapter, especially in the superseded text of (Nietzsche 2001a, “Wise” § 3): that as his father, he is a *Doppelgänger*, that neither life, and surely not his “great yes” to life, came to him from his father, as quite beyond him. How can that be *ein Glück*, which is the riddle? It is so because the “devilry” of will to power is at work to set before itself the highest opposition to itself to cut into life so that it can grow in power to the highest degree. The riddle of his happiness is that his “death in life” served the ends of will to power to grow in power, and he was able to make it so. For Nietzsche then there is only the reality of *ein Glück*, but the decadent, his opposite, sees only the hand of misfortune. Nietzsche’s own weakness on the lowest rung of the ladder of life is the exemplar model of “fragment, riddle and dreadful accident” in human life. He came into the world on this lowest rung, and as something that he inherited from his father. It was his “it was”. Nietzsche reversed the psychology of vengefulness and vindictiveness in himself, which clearly points to the discovery of how to intentionally reprogram that epigenetic profile.

In willing the eternal recurrence, the suffering ill-will is transformed to being the creative will. It is creative of *eines Mehr an Leben*. But the thought of the eternal recurrence is not introduced in the chapter because Zarathustra has a realization about its implications that horrifies him. We do not learn what that realization is in the chapter but only later that he is horrified by the thought of the recurrence of the *kleiner Mensch*, and this is the abyssal thought that afflicts Zarathustra in the chapter “The Convalescent.” In his chapter on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche identifies this as the abyssal thought of Zarathustra — the recurrence of the *kleine Menschen* (Nietzsche, 2001a, “Books” *Zarathustra* 5, variant CWFN 9: 602).

Knowledge as a Path and Footprint of the Will

Nietzsche was an evolutionary thinker and not solely as a scientific thinker but as a critic of human culture. Evolutionary stasis has become the rule in our species, and for Nietzsche that is something we should change. Stasis and revenge are connected ideas in his study: stasis arises out of the Spirit of Revenge, and Nietzsche’s *Kulturkritik* is meant to lead us forward on the path of evolution by overcoming it. He is the first to be able to lead us to new paths of culture, he says, meaning the path through the Spirit of Revenge (Nietzsche, 2001a: 296). What is the sense of these terms and how are they different? For the *wohlgeratner Mensch* suffering can be a stimulus to will to power, but for the decadent, his antagonistic opposite, as we learn in Wise § 4 it is not so, and he lacks the ability to engage with such stimulus suffering of the will to power.

That is why the decadent remains a *kleiner Mensch*, because he is not on an evolutionary track. It is the role of will to power to strengthen life in us against its intimate weaknesses, against what “is fragment, riddle and dreadful accident” and not become revengeful against it as its “it was.” Will to power exercises itself in us to bring us to higher in life in an evolutionary meaning, and that is the call to become overhumanly. But the decadent

stands opposed to the exercise of will to power to strengthen aliveness, and is the foe of the *wohlgeratner Mensch* and has produced a psychopathology of the Spiritualization of Revenge and wrecks his revenge against him, by trying to get him stand down from his will to power agency, abusively threatening him if he does not. This is clearly an antagonistic relationship, but how is the antagonism being expressed, how has it come to a head in a battle line?⁵ The struggle between them is over truth versus mendacity: the ill-willed decadent says that his suffering is a punishment in order to lie about it to himself. He is revengeful but in a “good conscience” — a horrifying psychopathology. The *wohlgeratner Mensch*, on the other hand, works to create the World of Truth, he knows of the agential nature of will to power that the decadent is lying about.

For the *wohlgeratner Mensch*, the stimulus suffering of will to power leads to the strengthening of life, and it can do so because will to power generates knowledge of how to strengthen against the intimate weaknesses in life in us. When it applies that knowledge and exercises itself, it causes a distinctive suffering, and this is the suffering that the ill-willed *kleiner Mensch* zeros in on the *wohlgeratner Mensch* to strike back at will to power in the him; he in on him in his moment of creative suffering. That works because, after all, the *wohlgeratner Mensch* is not that far away from the decadent, only a hair's breadth, otherwise evolution would already be *fait accompli*⁶. So, it is fakery that the decadent moralizes the will to power because it is unjust and that thereby the decadent is rightly morally aggrieved. The real issue for the decadent is the successful development of life; it is will to power in strengthening aliveness about which the decadent raises his “hue and cry”.

In Wise § 4 and Wise § 5 Nietzsche tells us about things he *actively* does to knowingly create more aliveness in himself against his compulsive vengefulness and vindictiveness⁷. In Wise § 4, he says he “tames every bear, makes buffoons mind their manners and makes even the laziest students industrious” and these narrate an inner transformation and not the result of the self exteriorized into the social environment — just the opposite in fact — and in Wise § 5 he renounces his equal entitlement not to be wronged so as not to feel aggrievement towards the wrongdoer. For him, mastery over aggrievement against the wrongdoer is over-humanly. These details are the substance of his philosophy, not superfluous casual narratives. They are a narrative of second-order psychological exercises that meliorate a first-order psychology of compulsive thoughts and feelings of vengefulness and vindictiveness⁸. He knew how to deal with himself and he applied what amounted to an algorithm to do so! We may call these in terminology from epigenetic science today as “cognitive exercises” and they are self-transformational, knowingly and consciously applied, obviously⁹. Note that in acting so as to achieve mastery over his aggrievement against the wrongdoer — he mentions giving him something or even asking him for something, which, he says can be even more obligating that giving something — he is treating him as a means and not as an end, which makes this text good case in point of an example of the the revaluation. This now brings us to the central theme of my paper,

which is the role of knowledge of self-overcoming that makes a science of the evolution of our species.

Three texts in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* present the will to power as a creative force that produces the world for us and as a world that we can know; in this regard, the will in Nietzsche is quite the opposite of the idea of will in Schopenhauer as a blind and irrational force. These are in Part II: "Upon The Blessed Isles", "On the Tarantulas", "On Famous Wise Men" and "On Self-Overcoming".

In "Upon the Blessed Isles" (Nietzsche, 1976: 197–200) Nietzsche presents the will to power as a creative force that produces a world we can know. We learn that as "lovers of knowledge" (*Erkennenden*), we are not born into a world that is "incomprehensible" (*unbegreifliche*) or "irrational" (*unvernünftige*). To that end, we are enjoined to create a world "and what you have called world, that shall be created only by you" with our "creative will" (*schaffender Wille*). By means of the creative will to power, everything is to become "humanly thinkable, humanly visible and humanly feelable" (*Menschen-Denkbares, Menschen-Sichtbares, Menschen-Fühlbare*), and that is a will to truth. And again "in knowledge too, I feel only my will's joy in begetting and becoming". All this is by way of becoming forebears of the Overhuman and the turn after the death of God. Our conjectures should not reach beyond our creative will, says Zarathustra, almost echoing Kant's point in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant, 1929).

In "On Self-Overcoming" Nietzsche begins by telling us that the love of knowledge is not something in itself but merely a drive that follows the service of the will to power, and that is why we love it. He tells them that the will to truth is really a will to power that seeks the thinkability of all beings (*Denkbarkeit alles Seienden*), and that the world we are meant to create by will to power is driven on by "the inexhaustible, generative will of life" (*der unerschöpft zeugende Lebens-Wille*). He writes: "and you too, lover of knowledge, are only a path and a footprint of my will", and that the "will to power walks also on the heels of [the] will to truth" (Nietzsche, 1976: 227) and, in "On Old and New Tablets", he says: "to gain knowledge is a joy for the lion willed, (*Löwen-willigen*)" (Nietzsche, 1976: 318). Nietzsche's idea is that we are not born into a world in which we remain incomprehensible to ourselves as being beings of "fragment riddle and dreadful accident," cripples merely and vengeful that we cannot change "it was" in our lives and suddenly become whole beings. We can understand what is happening. Zarathustra's striving is to compose into *ein Dichtes* what is "fragment, riddle and dreadful accident" in our species, and we are merely forbears of it, but that only becomes a possible objective because of knowledge how to do it. Only the lion-will can face himself, but because knowledge of his own self-overcoming alone makes that possible, it is his first joy leading to his "dancing over and away" from himself. In fact, from the viewpoint of epigenetic evolution, it could well be that our self-overcomings are reprogrammings of the human epigenome through cognitive exercises, and that these severally could come together in a forward inheritance channel. That seems to be Nietzsche's intuition, which is proto-scientific although but within theoretical parameters known today.

The will to power is an evolutionary force in life that enables us to become knowers of ourselves and masters of ourselves, enabling us to grow in power in mastery of our intimate weaknesses and grow in life, and even reach *eines Mehr an Leben*.

An early variant to the chapter we have just been studying, “On Self Overcoming” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* contains a passage describing the “World of Truth” (Nietzsche, 1980: 302). The sense of the term “World of Truth” is opposed to the mendacity of the decadent in his spiritualization of revenge. In the World of Truth, the lie that the decadent is the ideal type is turned inside out. In Nietzsche’s philosophy, the World of Truth is the totality of the knowledge that guides the will to power in its becoming master over our intimate weaknesses. That knowledge is always opposed by the decadent’s mendacity. Nietzsche is speaking of knowledge “how” not about propositional knowledge. The knowledge in question is knowing how to advance the growth of power against what resists it: willing the Eternal Recurrence is just such a “knowing how”. The idea of the eternal recurrence is “the knot of destiny for humanity is bound” says Nietzsche (Nietzsche, 2001a: 601). The willing that such knowledge makes possible of how power grows in becoming master of the intimate weaknesses in our lives is a creative willing that creates the world to be “thinkable, feelable and seeable” for us as awareness of extended aliveness as we are awakened in the evolutionary order of development of life. This is a departure from Kant for whom the world is the product of the activity of the mind in synthesizing the manifold of sensible intuitions in the threefold synthesis in imagination as that is not activity of the will, but the will is world building in Kant in the area of practical reason, creating a world for us per our ethical rationality as the Kingdom of Ends, and there is a point of comparative philosophy to Nietzsche’s World of Truth. But to gain such self-knowledge, life must spiritedly “cut into itself”.

In the chapter of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “On Famous Wise Men” Zarathustra instructs the famous wise men in his Dionysian wisdom: “spirit is the life that itself cuts into life; with its own agony it increases its own knowledge” (Nietzsche, 1976: 216). Will to power deliberately sets us back to enable itself to gain knowledge of our intimate weaknesses in order to grow in power over them. The line: “life sacrifices itself for power” (Nietzsche, 1976: 227) is a reference to interiority, as the sacrifice is to lead to knowledge of how to strengthen life against its original crippling of us as beings of limbs and fragments merely. This is the basic knowledge of the will to power that modern humanity has lost, and we are drowning in nihilism of the culture of the Spirit of Revenge as a result.

In an 1884 *Nachlaß* text Nietzsche writes about the Dionysian Wisdom that characterizes the highest type of human being and that the world as he would wish to see it has emblazoned over it the principle of the greatest possible stupidity, the *Übermut* symbol, because that is the world in which will to power is ever turned against success/self-interest in order to make its advance. The idea is that will to power brings a kind of devilry and devilment into our lives to study and understand ourselves as beings of “fragment, riddle and dreadful accident” leading us to knowledge of self-overcoming and

to life and even *einses Mehr an Leben*. He speaks of the suffering that will to power brings on us as delivery, devilment, of the will to power, that in the world as it is in his mirror, as he lived the reality of will to power in himself and reflects that reality back into the world as what it should be, it bears emblazoned over it the “*Übermut*” Symbol. It is the world in which we are first authentically rendered by the principle of selecting according to the rule of The Greatest Possible Stupidity. Similarly. This is also the world as presented in his “mirror” at WP 1967 standard edition; the world as it reflects himself in his self-overcoming and as is opposed to the world of lies of the decadent.

Will to power insists on our taking the path of the greatest possible stupidity in our lives, throwing our secure lives into turmoil, sacrificing life for power. We are vulnerable to the will to power in this way; it will sacrifice life so that its intimate weaknesses may be brought into focus and knowledge acquired of how to strengthen life in ourselves against them and will to power grow. But the decadent has set himself to deny this reality of life and to deny that becoming the forbearer of the Overhuman with such knowledge is what he is supposed to be doing Stasis and flight into nihilism is the result.

Dionysian wisdom of life sacrificing itself for power, in that it is tied to acquiring knowledge of how to strengthen ourselves against of intimate weaknesses, is the source of our authentic happiness, which is Nietzsche’s own authentic happiness as he states is his in the opening sentence of *Ecce Homo* “Why I am So Wise”. It puts the lie to the fake happiness of the *kleine Menschen* and the fake culture of nihilism. We see this contrast in the section “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” Section § 4 which contains Zarathustra’s litany of what in human beings he loves most, among which we read: “I love him who is abashed when the dice fall to make his fortune, and asks, ‘Am I then a crooked gambler?’” (Nietzsche, 1976: 127). The line recalls Kant’s distinction between autonomous and heteronomous willing. Taking the path of the greatest possible stupidity against self-interest to the degree that it provides us with knowledge of our suffering and how to overcome it is the sign of the interior journey on route to the Overhuman which is our authentic selfhood. On the other hand, the next section of the Prologue § 5 we read of the *kleine Menschen* — “the last humans”, “the beginning of the end” — who believe that in their dereliction in self-overcoming they have found happiness: “We have invented happiness” they say, but it is the happiness of the idiot as Zarathustra indicates, as after each such declaration he writes: “*und Sie blinken*”, the mindlessness of idiocy. *Ecce Homo* is all about the new happiness of self-knowledge in action in the exercise of will to power over the intimate weakness of life, in Nietzsche’s case his mastery of pathological reactivity in thoughts and feelings of renunciation and retaliation that came to him though his father, as he relates it to us.

Another statement of *Übermüt* devilry occurs in the published writings in BGE section 36 and 37. In BGE section 36, Nietzsche argues to the imaginary interlocutor that the world is will to power and he is too. But in the next section, 37, the interlocutor objects: “God is refuted but not the Devil?” and Nietzsche’s answer is in the form of a rhetorical question. The interlocutor is

making a popular objection, but Nietzsche asks, “oh, for the devil’s sake, who is forcing you to use popular expressions anyway!” (Nietzsche, 2014a: 40). And the answer is that it is the devilry of will to power that is doing so, and he, the interlocutor, will soon learn as his obtuseness to what is being said about himself as being will to power its itself just will to power leading him to a rude awakening as he stumbles forward on the path of the greatest possible stupidity it has just set him on until he figures it out. There is no sense here or any related text that the devilry of will to power in taking us a step back to take two steps forward as being an emergent property from simpler processes.

Will to power cuts into life to acquire knowledge of how to grow in power over life’s intimate weaknesses, setting us, hopefully, even on the path of the greatest possible stupidity. But from the perspective of self-preservation, which is the perspective of the *kleiner Mensch*, what is “fragment riddle and dreadful accident” is a misfortune only and not potentially part of a dynamic of evolution to stronger life, and will to power is malevolent in intruding in disruptively on our secure lives, provoking the strongest feelings of revenge against itself. The decadent cannot engage the suffering of will to power’s devilish pranks on life as a suffering of life growing — if we are to call them such as they are devastating in their effect. Instead, he wants precisely to undo the past, to change it, he wants a different past. The decadent believes in misfortune and guilt, the self of “fragment, limbs and dreadful accidents” and all of life is a punishment. But he believes that only so that he can have a good conscience about his dereliction in not undertaking what we are called to do, which is to become forebears of the Overhuman. He is lying, pleading his innocence and haplessness as suffering in punishment.

The revenge of the *kleiner Mensch* on will to power in the *wohlgeratner Mensch* is by way of getting him to believe in the same way, thus to confuse him about the meaning of will to power stimulus suffering and stand down from the project of his self-overcoming. In this way, will to power will be thwarted and the decadent avenged. This is why Nietzsche says that, as a *wohlgeratner Mensch*, he does not believe either in misfortune as punishment or guilt. That is the lie and it conceals revengefulness against will to power, pleading its innocence and haplessness.

Nietzsche’s assertion that he does believe in either misfortune or guilt is to some extent declamatory, but it is essentially not a bravura statement, and the point is to want the untoward past, although this does not mean wanting it as a *nöesis* of some sort of inane total affirmation of existence, but because the untoward past is in a dynamical relationship in evolution. But even for the *wohlgeratner Mensch* there is the danger of decadence in himself in the engaging inclination to reject the *kleiner Mensch* in revengefulness as the *kleiner Mensch*’s intrusion is itself a stimulus, even as he is under an original stimulus from will to power. But it is not so easy to tolerate the added layer of antagonism the *kleiner Mensch* introduces, and that is why it is so difficult to will his recurrence. But what happens if he gives into aggrievement against him? It would turn into a spiral of decadence in himself. This is Zarathustra’s abyssal thought in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, III “The Convalescent”; he is so downcast because the *kleiner Mensch* cannot be

affirmed but Zarathustra cannot afford *not* to affirm him either. This is the paradox that so preoccupies Zarathustra for those seven days, all his labor to carry together and compose into *eines Dichtes* on behalf of humanity opposed by the very humanity it is meant to save! So, in the broadmost scheme of things, even the *kleiner Mensch* must be willed to recur as he is part of the great process of evolution in understanding itself despite his antagonistic intrusiveness on our attempts to will the suffering of evolving itself. That is why even the terrible revengefulness against will to power that he represents must be willed to recur. Paying attention to this context, we may note that it is not truly affirmative of the decadent in the sense of valuing him, but is a matter of having no choice but to affirm him. But this is not an agonistic affirmation of the value of the decadent as the neoliberal reading of the oppositional structures in Nietzsche's thinking would have it. Those readings make no attempt to penetrate into the paradox of the seven days and nights he lay downcast, which his animals could not understand. How could they?

Holy Suffering and the Knowledge Therefrom

Victory over our intimate weaknesses and unconquerability of life through knowledge by the agency of Will to Power are key ideas and bring us to Nietzsche's later political philosophy of the Great Politics in *Ecce Homo*. The Great Politics centers on the fundamental struggle between the decadent and his opposite. The opening sentence of *Ecce Homo* is that he, Nietzsche, seeing ahead that before long he will have to confront humankind with the heaviest demand that has ever been made of it, it seems to him that it may not be set aside to say who he is. Clearly, whatever that self is it must understand itself in some exceptional way to be making the heaviest demand.

Nietzsche announced the revaluation of all values as certain knowledge and that in the new world to come by the Great Politics we are called to be something higher than what we are now. But how did he know that the revaluation would lead to Overhumanity?

In foreword to *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche says that he has a "predestination to the labyrinth" (Nietzsche, 2001b: 134). In *Ecce Homo*, which was written to be read before *The Antichrist* — Nietzsche delayed publication of *The Antichrist* to make that work out (but then *Ecce Homo* was delayed and did not appear until 1908), Nietzsche says he had to find an Ariadne's thread *into* the labyrinth in order to be in a conflictual relationship with the *kleine Menschen*, and that he endured a "holy suffering" from them for the sake of knowledge about them (Nietzsche, 2001a, "Books", Zarathustra, variant to § 5, CWFN 9: 602). He voluntarily entered into a labyrinth in a negative relation to the *kleine Menschen*, making himself vulnerable to them, deliberately mimicking the cutting into life of will to power suffering by making himself thus vulnerable, and the knowledge he acquired was of their terrible vengeance against him in so far as will to power was agential in him. As himself a decadent, on the lowest rung of life even, as he tells us, he is especially vulnerable to being abusively undermined by the *schlechta litiani* of the decadent and standing down from the suffering labor of self overcoming.

He says that in engaging with the *kleine Menschen*, the greatest danger is the danger of “losing oneself”. His struggle in his antagonistic relationship to the abusive demeanment of the *kleine Menschen* inclined against him, only seemed as a personal attack, but it was a deflection away from what is the true focus of their animus, namely, will to power become agential in him. But, will to power was growing in him against them, constantly being declined, and that is why their revengefulness was such certain knowledge for him. That antagonistic engagement, endured and withstood, informs the stated purpose of *Ecce Homo*, which is to say who he is. The statement of identity there supports his ethos appeal for making the “heaviest demand,” of the revaluation (Nietzsche, 2001a: 212). It is precisely this assertion of identity that the *kleiner Mensch* sought to disrupt to make him “lose himself,” and it is precisely because Nietzsche was able to stand up against it that he knows who the *kleine Menschen* are and who he is. It is a double victory for him, he says because, what did not kill him made him stronger, and is not axiomatic since what did not kill him may just have left him no better off than he was before, but a victory over the declination of himself by *kleine Menschen*. He identifies himself as Dionysus reclaiming his realm. The identity of “who” he is — the author of this heaviest demand of the revaluation — comes from his Great War / Great Politics against the *kleine Menschen*. He is a self-growing-in-will-to-power against the abusive demeanment they tyrannically impose on him that he is permitting to cut into life in himself to learn about. It is a terrifying narrative. The agential will to power standing up against the demeanment of the *kleine Menschen* but that, as indirection, concealed his revengefulness against will to power, was the source of that knowledge in his suffering from their cutting into life in him.

Nietzsche announced the World of Truth of the revaluation as the certain path to life and evolution to *ein Mehr* of life, and he revealed the truth of the revaluation against the decadents’ ill-will against will to power. Nietzsche voluntarily entered the labyrinth enduring a holy suffering, just as Jesus voluntarily endured his holy suffering of crucifixion. Nietzsche signs his letters of this period: “The Crucified”. The revelation of the lie of the *kleine Menschen* that they are punished by their suffering to create the good conscience but in fact are derelict in self-overcoming, revengeful against the exactions of will to power, becomes the World of Truth as he engages it in himself as a lie, knowing it to be so. He knows the full compass of the Spiritualization of Revenge because it extended to all loci of the labyrinth against them, so his truth has the completeness of a new world.

Neoliberal readings of Nietzsche persistently ignore his later Great Politics, but the Great Politics is the central theme of *Ecce Homo*. The opening sentence in which Nietzsche presents the question of his identity, “Who am I”, as being the stated purpose of the work is already the self of the Great Politics standing up to liberalism and democratic ideals; it is, as I have suggested, that self that stood up to the *kleine Menschen* in the labyrinth and that was not lost to him by their demeanment¹⁰. The Great Politics is a call for a Party of Life to come forth that will attempt to raise humanity higher. This is to include the “relentless destruction” (*schonungslose Vernichtung*) of everything

degenerating and parasitical and that this will lead to a “*Zuviel des Lebens*” on the earth. A Dionysian state will emerge and humanity will have these wars but without suffering from them, and this line is emphasized in the as making the point (Nietzsche, 2001a: Books Birth of Tragedy § 4). Because of the “*Zuviel des Lebens*” the destruction will be enfolded by a Dionysian joy in the tragic wisdom of Dionysus because these wars will signify only the inexhaustibly of life (Nietzsche, 2001a: Books “Birth of Tragedy” § 3). The same language appears in a *Nachlaß* text titled “The Great Politics” where he speaks of it as being to create force strong enough to cultivate humanity as a whole and higher things, including:

...merciless severity (*schonungsloser Härte*) against the degenerate and parasitic in life — against what corrupts, poisons, slanders, destroys to the ground ...and sees in the destruction of life the mark of a higher kind of soul (Nietzsche, 1980, 13: 25 [1], my translation).

In a late letter to George Brandes Nietzsche speaks of how the days’ current political formations — he mentioned the Triple Alliance — will give way in the Great Politics and that the new power structures will be in the hands of formations of individuals that oppose such. He says at the end of the letter that the wars of the Great Politics will be unlike any we have had, not like the wars of the small politics between race nation and class, which are absurd divisions, (*absurden Grenzen*) and so, by implication, the wars fought in such formations are absurd wars, as there in reality, no such orderings but only order of rank between one human being an another. So these must be the individuals who will come together in the opposed formation as the new power structure (Nietzsche, 1986, 8: 1170).

In a *Nachlaß* text he speaks of formations of “singular full-of-value individuals” (*einzelnen werthvollen Individuen*), (Nietzsche, 1980, 12: 7 [9]). The Party of Life is a movement of singular individuals in whom the revaluation is already realized and who come as by a spark ignited by the masses to make them, as we may say, already *wertvollheit*.

In the final version of *Ecce Homo*, “Wise” § 3, Nietzsche may be read to be retelling the myth of King Pentheus, as he would have known it from Euripides *The Bacchae*, and that is a political texts that gives some insight into the Great Politics as well as denying that the noble nature is conserved in succession and that it appears instead as a sudden novelty from an different origin, a second track of descent in the history of evolution itself, a *döppelte Herkunft*. It is Nietzsche’s claim in the opening sentence of *Ecce Homo*, “Wise” § 1, that he is doubly descended, thus identifying the political meaning of the work from its first sentences. In this thinking we can see an anticipation of modern punctuated equilibrium theory first introduced by Gould and Eldredge in 1972 (Steinbuch, 2023).

Also, as noted by Sarah Kofman in her commentary on *Ecce Homo*, “Wise” § 8 in which Nietzsche refers back to the chapter from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “On the Rabble”, thus to give the section a comprehensive scope, Nietzsche believed in a Politics of Isolation, although Kofman herself was critical of any such. In addition to the texts she mentions, the final version of *Ecce Homo*, “Wise” § 3 also suggests a Politics of Isolation in its retelling of

the myth of Dionysus and Ariadne as Ariadne as Shelterer, as I have argued (Steinbuch, 2022).

The form of the Great Politics, achieved in *Ecce Homo*, was that the revaluation of values has to be imposed, by kinetic war, by a Politics of Isolation, perhaps by both. We are at a point of existential crisis over the loss of evolutionary potential, at the point of the nihilism of “the last man”, “the beginning of the end”, and that means that we are in a period of post-consent. In the opening line of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche states that he intends to “confront” (*heranzutreten*) humanity with the greatest demand ever made upon it, not merely recommend it. This demand is related to his concept of the revaluation of all values, though he does not explicitly mention it in this opening line. Our existential crisis means that we are in an era of post-consent, and that we do not have time to entertain the morality of inclusion of every and any identity and that we must impose the new identity of becoming over-humanly, and which precisely cannot come through democratic consensus. Nietzsche’s willingness to expose himself to the sociality of the *kleine Menschen* in order to produce his critique of the revaluation of all values as knowledge is a profound and unsettling aspect of his work (and gives substantive meaning to his account of *Ecce Homo* that it was “time to spread a little terror” about himself!). His most “illiberal” turn of his Great Politics was founded in his total immersion in the nihilism of the human mind in its rejection of will to power agency in the evolution of our species.

Conclusion

Nietzsche’s philosophy cannot be fully understood without recognizing his engagement with Kantian themes. Nietzsche viewed Kant as a pivotal figure in Western philosophy, stating that one must either adopt Kantian principles or think one’s way out of them. While Nietzsche diverged significantly from Kant in many respects — particularly regarding morality, individualism, and the nature of truth — he nonetheless operated within a framework heavily influenced by Kantian thought. His critiques often serve as a means to engage with and ultimately transcend those ideas, although this is less true in some instances than in others. His critique of the Table of Categories in *Beyond Good and Evil* (Nietzsche, 2014a: § 11) does not have a positive engagement. And elsewhere, he is critical of Kant’s ethics as an extension of Christian morality (Nietzsche, 2001b: § 11). But like Kant, Nietzsche was interested in a kind of world-making in which the will is an agential will that makes the world home for us in respect of what is of innermost importance to us. In Kant, practical laws are rules of synthesis; the moral order as legislated by the *Wille* to the *Willkür* is also a world order, and by this Kant combined the role of moral rationality and the order of the world as known as one agency. In both, the will creates a world order, although in different ways, and both are in continuous movement toward their respective versions of moral perfection, the Kingdom of Ends for Kant, and the The World of Truth for Nietzsche. Nietzsche transforms Kant. Kant saw the will as a way to transcend our animal nature, but Nietzsche’s critique is that he never escaped it himself,

and that we cannot and should not try. Kant argues that the moral law is *a priori*, and exists external to rational beings but it is also intrinsically connected to our rational nature. In Kant's theory, the moral law is intrinsic to the will (*Wille*), which represents the rational, legislative aspect of the will. The moral law is a product of practical reason, which is an essential feature of the will of rational beings, and the will as *Wille* gives rise to the moral law. The *Willkür*, on the other hand, is the executive function of the will, responsible for choosing whether to follow the moral law or not. It represents the freedom to choose between following the moral law (dictated by the *Wille*) or acting on other inclinations. But, in Kant, practical laws are rules of synthesis, and the moral order as legislated to the *Willkür* by the *Wille* is also the world-making order, and this would also combine the role of moral rationality and the order of the world as known into one agency (Kant, 1929).

So, in Kant, then, the will transcends our animal nature by holding the moral law intrinsic to it and legislating it to us, whereas in Nietzsche, although similarly, what we need to transcend is our psychopathological nature. We first become rational as comprehensible to ourselves in understanding that what is "fragment, riddle and dreadful accident" in us is so as the stimulus to evolve and that we can know how to do it, how to think, feel and see in and through doing it. The world is rational to the extent that my self-overcoming is present in it before me, not otherwise, and to the extent that we are united in that one goal: "of humanity still lacks a goal — is humanity itself not still lacking too?" asks Zarathustra (Nietzsche, 1976: 172).

The point for comparative philosophy is that both Kant and Nietzsche see the will as foundational of order and not as an emergent property that passively appears from simpler instinctual drives at work in relation to an environment and ultimately exteriorized thereby. Will to power is agential and interior, and the world we create by will to power is rational and comprehensible, as such can only come in this way. This thinking takes us back to Kant, as for him, the will creates the world where what happens is an ordering in which the rational self, as Kant understood it as the ethical self, creates for itself a home. To act morally, *Willkür* must overcome sensuous impulses and align itself with the moral law given by pure practical reason *Wille*. This overcoming of heteronomous influences (interests, desires) is necessary to will autonomously and in accordance with the categorical imperative. So the rational as the ethical for Kant involves a kind of self-overcoming of what we would be where we purely determined by instinctual drives and cannot be emergent from such.

Autonomy, in Kant's view, is the capacity of a rational will to be a law unto itself, but unless the will embraces its rationality we remain in a merely social order of interest and desires and instinct-driven behavior, like an insect colony. Insects primarily act based on instincts and external stimuli, much like humans would if they only acted heteronomously, driven by desires, impulses, and external influences. Insect behavior remains largely unchanged over time, paralleling a human society that doesn't engage in the kind of moral progress that Kant's ethical framework cherishes. Both thinkers then render a goal, perhaps even for both, not just Kant, it is a *telos*, in terms

of the autonomous agency of the will, which is a robust conception of the will and not will as a passive emergence. But while Kant's world renders the moral order as the Kingdom of Ends, Nietzsche's World of Truth is naturalized rationality; it is evolutionary development that is being rendered as the agency of the will in outcomes "thinkable, feelable and seeable". Nietzsche could not have been more critical of Kant's idea of morality based in the virtue of duty/obedience; it is an empty thought for him "the last collapse of life" and dangerous to life (Nietzsche, 2001b, § 11) and precisely not world for us¹¹. But his translation back into nature does not mean a translation back to the instinctual. For him, world for us identifies virtue in terms of self-overcoming, so it is at first individual and not universal, although in the sense that self-overcoming becomes the Overhuman, it is universal in the final analysis and grounds the thought that we are "not born either into the incomprehensible or into the irrational". That is why there can be a "revaluation of all values" and the world is first rational and comprehensible in this universal scope.

This is his new meaning of rationality. Rationality is based on evolutionary development to *eins Mehr an Leben*, while the societal is seen as an expression of our still-developing potential. We are still embryos, he says. For Kant then, the rational as the ethical Kingdom of Ends is our goal, but with Nietzsche's turn to *homo natura* (Nietzsche, 2014a: § 230) and the terrible basic text that *homo natura* is, including the first disclosure of the mind's unconscious forces, rationality for him becomes self-overcoming and evolution. This potential can only be realized through the exercise of individual agency by the will to power, then to be severally "carried together" and to become *eines Dichtes* in a forward evolutionary channel to the Overhuman. That thought is within the theoretical parameters of evolutionary thinking in the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis. The contrast between Kant's ethical rationalism and Nietzsche's naturalistic, evolutionary approach underscores a fundamental shift in philosophical anthropology per the advent of Darwin and his general influence on Nietzsche and Nietzsche's critical engagement with him, but the overall outline of continuity of the autonomy of the will is still visible.

NOTES

¹ My thesis, in Kant's technical vocabulary, is that some of the contents of subjective consciousness are reproduced in imagination according to practical laws, which is to say that practical laws are rules of synthesis. That one event follows upon another according to a rule would seem to have different implications for Kant depending on whether the rule in question is a practical law or a rule provided by the category of causality. Kant's argument can be tracked through two passages from *The Critique of Pure Reason* and another passage from the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, which he published in between the two editions of the first critique. The two passages from the first critique are at A539–B567, and A549–B577 (Kant, 1929); the passage from the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* is paragraph § 59, (Kant, 1950: 93).

² Derrida lectured on this scene from "On Redemption" at Notre Dame in circa 1980 or 1981 and, in my view, mistook the parodic opening scene on the *kleine Menschen* to set the tone for the whole chapter, whence his book's title. I was fortunate to be in the audience, and he presented the scene as tokening great hilarity, although he was quite off-sides in his reading of it, guided too heavily on the chapter's initial parodic elements rather than coming to terms with its deeper philosophical and illiberal political implications.

³ Stúr (1967) and following him, intentionally or otherwise, Edgar Landgraf (2023), have criticized Nietzsche's vitalism, but the argument is a non-sequitur; it does not follow either that

Nietzsche was not a vitalist or that he should not have been, because vitalistic thinking of a naturalized Will to Power can be appropriated to support terrible ideologies, the premise of Štúr's consequentialist ethics. And then too, what is the consequence of the rule of the Spiritualization of Revenge? Nietzsche says it signals the end of our species. This sentence from "On Self-Overcoming" captures Nietzsche's view: "I am that which must always overcome itself. Indeed, you call it will to procreate or a drive to an end, or something higher, farther, more manifold: all this is one and one secret." Cantrell appears to be presenting Štúr's critique and examining its implications within the context of Slovak philosophical thought, (Cantrell, 2023).

⁴ A separate study is needed of the meaning of guilt in this context and in *Ecce Homo* where Nietzsche says that he, as a *wohlgeratner Mensch* does not believe in guilt, that compares it to the study of guilt in *The Genealogy of Morals*, Essay II: "Guilt, 'Bad Conscience,' and Related Matters", but it is beyond the scope of the present essay to attempt it. In "On Redemption," Nietzsche presents the idea that the will's inability to change the past leads to a spirit of revenge and the creation of guilt. This aligns with his view in *The Genealogy of Morals* that guilt emerged from the concept of debt, becoming a complex moral construct.

⁵ The following writers — Herman Siemens, William E. Connolly, David Owen, Keith Ansell-Pearson, Alan Schrift, Lawrence Hatab, and Crista Davis Acampora, among others — have worked with the idea of the agonistic as a foundation for a conception of democracy instead of consensus, interpreting Nietzsche's oppositional structures as agonistic rather than antagonistic. The thinking is that agonism is mutually developmental and so each point of agon must be valued and affirmed as potentially contributing to the overall well-being of society. Owen speaks of "agonistic deliberation" and Hatab of an "adversarial system" and Connolly of "agonistic respect." This unfortunately tendency is insupportable in the texts, as will be clear in the present writing, and is little more than a repurposing of Nietzsche to suit a progressive neoliberal agenda.

⁶ But the decadent's revenge is not against the *wohlgeratner Mensch* as a person; it is not personal revenge at all, why would it be? The actual object of revenge is the will to power become agential in the *wohlgeratner Mensch*. The decadent cannot face the fact of power growing as our evolutionary meaning, it is blind to it in its revengeful hatred of it, it negates and denies it, and so he uses indirection to make power growing a personal fault of him in whom it is so.

⁷ An example of treating another as a means not an end, counter to Kant's ethics, appears in *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am So Wise," § 5. There Nietzsche speaks of how he is grateful to the wrongdoer for wronging him because it provided him with the opportunity to face his inclination to aggrievement at being wronged and to mastering it. If he does so, he expresses his gratitude to the wrongdoer. Clearly, gratitude to the wrongdoer is to use the wrongdoer as a means and not as an end. In such cases, and this would be the point of the revaluation, it is a "moral" amorality because it transpires in the course of the development of life.

⁸ Nietzsche thought through his self-overcoming theory as evolution in detail. He recognized that evolution can occur only if the resistance to will to power is equal to its degree of ability to grow from it, that resistance must be equal. He is quite clear about this point in (Nietzsche, 2001a "Wise" § 7) that the opponent must be equal. But how does one wander through the world looking for an equal opponent? Nietzsche recognized this problem and this answer is that will to power interprets who or what the equal opponent is. So in the case of his being wronged, for example, as I read the application of the theory, the wrongdoer is being scoped to be the equal opponent as a wrongdoer as an interpretation of him, and Nietzsche thanks him and will to power is stronger, but as will to power has grown stronger it now scopes his wrongdoing as the equal opposition, which is harder to do. Maybe after years the whole incident can be sorted and no trace of aggrievement left, but because, and only because, it is overcome by Will to Power and life now stronger against it so it becomes not "equal" but "below" (Štúr, 1967: 656, 688; Nietzsche, 1986: 2 [148] and a little further on at 2 [151]).

⁹ What they decidedly are not are self-idealizations, as has been maintained by some commentators. The statement at the beginning of each of these sections (explicit in § 5, implied there to be the reading of § 4 by the use of the word "also" in the opening § 5) that he is his father again, which is outside the narrative in the sections, (as it must be since it is a purely negative term) shows that the exercises are directed at overcoming the compulsive thoughts and feelings of renunciation and retaliation that come of his inheritance from him of decadence. The phrase "self-idealizing" is reductive, and quite *ultra palum*. To identify the exercise with how he is his father again is to re-weave and make self-fulfilling the narrative that *Ecce Homo* is a *wahnsinnschrift*.

¹⁰ Recall in *Ecce Homo*, "Wise" § 3, final version, he refers to the "slander" (*Lästung*) of his mother and sister in insisting that he is related to them as in succession, as the nonsense theory

that noble natures follow in succession, such as the Pope's belief that he is the the successor to Christ or the newly ascended at that time Wilhelm II believed. See also (Nietzsche, 1986: 25 [5]): "the emperor and the priest agree". They are slandering him, but it is superficial merely, and the actual focus of the negation was the agency of will to power, his "noble nature." What would be the point otherwise?

¹¹ But Nietzsche is no less a critic of Schopenhauer's idea of a morality of compassion. Nietzsche's break with Wagner over *Parsifal* was on this issue. Although *Parsifal* was not directly based on Wagner's planned Buddhist opera "Die Sieger," *Parsifal* incorporates Buddhist themes and ideas that Wagner initially explored in "Die Sieger." Nietzsche's critique of compassion appears in *Ecce Homo*, (Nietzsche, 2001a: "Wise," § 7).

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