

INDIVIDUUM II



11. In the *Lenzerheide* notebook on European nihilism of June Nietzsche conceives of a crisis-point in which different forces will come together and collide, and in which there will be assigned “common tasks to people of opposing mentalities”, leading to the initiation of an order of rank among forces “from the point of view of health, and, he stresses, also at ‘one remove from all existing social orders”. He asks who in this struggle will prove to be the strongest, and states that it is not a matter of numbers or of brute strength.

The strongest will be the most moderate ones who do not need extreme articles of faith (dogmas). These spiritually mature human beings can concede a good deal of contingency and nonsense and even love this and they can think of the human being with a significant reduction in its value without becoming small and weak. These are the ones who are richest in health, equal to the misfortunes of life and therefore less afraid of them, and “who are sure of their power.” These confident human beings can be said to “represent with conscious pride the *achievement* of human strength.”

Nietzsche is insistent, then, that humanity needs a new aim (WP 866) and this new aim will eventually conquer the pathological feeling of nihilism.

12. It is even possible to speak of a “destining” of the West on this issue, and this is the issue of secularization and its task:

The history of the dissolution of metaphysics, and in general of the reduction of the sacred to human dimensions, has its own logic, to which we belong and which supplies us, in the absence of eternal truths, with the only guide we gave for arguing rationally and orienting ourselves in the matter of ethical choice. Our belonging to the history of the West as secularization is not something we can be convinced of by proofs...Let us call it a destiny – not in the sense of fate, but in the sense of the destination towards which are (already) headed by the very fact that we exist.

As is well-known, of a secular philosophy of weak thought and a “weakened universality”, by which I take him to mean that as humanity we are now united by a sense of our radical contingency. This is to speak of what he calls a postmodern pluralism in which all cultures, western and non-western, now participate. To be “mature” in this new pluralism is to make the transition from *veritas* to *caritas*:

In all fields, including science, truth itself is becoming an affair of consensus, listening, participation in a shared enterprise, rather than one-to-one correspondence with the pure hard objectivity of things...I would even say that this movement could be encapsulated by referring in Christian terms to a passage from *veritas* to *caritas*.

13. Holds that to live with an affirmation of this postmodern Babel of cultures, irreducible to a common core, requires something of a superhuman effort, indeed, the very figure of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*:

If we do not want – as indeed we cannot, except at the risk of terrible wars of extinction – to give way to the temptation of resurgent fundamentalisms grounded in race, religion, or even the defence of individual national cultures against invasion by ‘foreigners’, we will have to imagine a humanity with at least some of the characteristics of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*.

14. I have been claiming that Nietzsche’s fundamental problem is one of nihilism arising from what for him is the greatest recent event on earth, namely the death of God (GS 125). However, as Deleuze and Guattari point out in *What is Philosophy?*: “It is amazing that so many philosophers still take the death of God as tragic. Atheism is not a drama but the philosopher’s serenity and philosophy’s achievement”.

In book five of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche notes that, as a matter of integrity, unconditional and honest atheism is “a triumph achieved finally and with great difficulty by the European conscience”. It is “the most fateful act of two thousand years of discipline for truth that in the end forbids itself the *lie* in faith in God” (GS 357).

But then, he quickly goes on to note something awkward or difficult:

As we thus reject the Christian interpretation and condemn its 'meaning' like counterfeit, *Schopenhauer's* question immediately comes to us in a terrifying way: *Has existence any meaning at all?* It will require a few centuries before this question can be heard completely and in its full depth. What Schopenhauer himself said in answer to this question was – forgive me – hasty, youthful, only a compromise, a way of remaining – remaining stuck – in precisely those Christian-ascetic moral perspectives in which one had *renounced faith* along with the faith in God. But he *posed* the question – as a good European, as I have said, and *not* as a German (*ibid.*).

For me the *Übermensch* is the goal Nietzsche posits in the wake of the event of the death of God and in an effort to bestow upon the earth and human a new *Sinn*. I believe the emphasis is on human and social experimentation so as to produce plural "peoples". A key question to consider, then, is precisely how we are to conceive of this commitment to experimentalism on Nietzsche's part.

15. In the future, Nietzsche writes in *Dawn*, the inventive and fructifying person shall no longer be sacrificed and numerous novel experiments shall be made in *ways of life* and *modes of society*. When this takes place we will find that an enormous load of guilty conscience has been purged from the world. Humanity has suffered for too long from teachers of morality who wanted too much all at once and sought to lay down precepts for everyone (D 194). In the future, care will need to be given to the most personal questions and create time for them (D 196). Small individual questions and experiments are no longer to be viewed with contempt and impatience .

In place of what he sees as the ruling ethic of sympathy, which he thinks can assume the form of a 'tyrannical

encroachment', Nietzsche invites individuals to engage in self-fashioning, cultivating a self that others can look at with pleasure. Unknown to ourselves we live within the effect of general opinions about "the human being", which is a "bloodless abstraction" and "fiction" .

Even the modern glorification of work and talk of its blessings can be interpreted as a fear of everything individual. The subjection to hard industriousness from early until late serves as "the best policeman" since it keeps everyone in bounds and hinders the development of reason, desire, and the craving for independence. It uses vast amounts of nervous energy which could be given over to reflection, brooding, dreaming, loving and hating and working through our experiences: "...a society in which there is continuous hard work will have more security: and security is currently worshipped as the supreme divinity.

Nietzsche's commitment to experimentalism, it would seem, centres on a set of ethico-ontological concerns to do with human pluralization and combating attempts to place a "closure" on the human. As Spinoza asked: do we know what a body can do?