

The Elimination of ‘Mind - Body’ Dualism in Nietzsche’s Anthropology: From ‘Mind’ to ‘Will’

Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is one of the thinkers who is often discounted by professional philosophers as too literary and fictional. At the same time the scholars of literature label him as an abstract thinker. Yet, Nietzsche had a prominent place in shaping the thinking pattern of the 20th century. He was one of the most brilliant and profound forerunners of contemporary schools of thought as well as a most radical critic of Western society and culture. His ideas inspired many of twentieth century intellectuals, including those who branded him as a pro-fascist.

Nietzsche’s anthropology is based on creating a ‘new man’ who would come out of all the barriers of morality, religion and other value systems; He would be the ideal human being who would show the way for new life to other human beings. This new man is called by other thinkers as ‘*Nietzschean Man*’ who has a total contrast of the characteristics of the ‘Christian Man’. This paper is not comparing and contrasting these two notions, that is, ‘*Nietzschean Man*’ and ‘Christian Man’; rather the primary characteristics of ‘*Nietzschean Man*’ is dealt with to show that Nietzsche’s anthropology is overwhelmed with ‘will’ in contraposition to the traditional Christian anthropology which had been substantially ‘mind’ centered.

Nietzsche has a lot to contribute to the contemporary society to get out of the crisis situation created by post-modernism. His ideas pose serious invitation for humanity to re-think the belief systems and to revalue the value systems once more. His anthropology based on the ‘will-to-power’ which is dealt with specifically in this paper would help to consider seriously the integral nature of human reality amidst all the crisis situations of the contemporary world.

1. Nietzsche’s Influence in the Thought Patterns of Twentieth Century

Nietzsche’s thought extended a deep influence during the 20th century, especially in the Continental Europe. By the wake of 20th century, his thinking style was particularly attractive to the artists and poets. His tendency to seek explanations for commonly accepted values and outlooks attracted many philosophers. His philosophical assumptions of the ‘will-to-power’ and the ‘superman’ concept were easily taken in by the Nazis and Italian Fascists who were focusing on power, and war as an inevitable means to achieve it. It was possible for the Nazi

interpreters to assemble, quite selectively, various passages from Nietzsche's writings to justify war, aggression and domination for the sake of nationalistic and racial self-glorification. (E. Behler, 1995: 283)

Nietzsche became influential in the French existential philosophical circles during the mid of the twentieth century through his obituary for God's death. The removal of God from the human society by his declaration 'God is dead' was again an emphasis upon power as the real motivator and explanation for people's actions. This showed new ways to challenge the established authority and launch effective social critique. (E. Behler, 1995: 295)

That Nietzsche was able to write so prolifically and profoundly for years, while remaining in a condition of ill health and often with intense physical pain, is a testament to his spectacular mental capacities and will-power. He had the power to influence an entire century with his 'dynamite' type of thinking. (F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, §.1)

2. The Place of 'Mind and Body' in Nietzsche's Anthropology

A good way to begin a description of Nietzsche's anthropology is to ask how Nietzsche defined the self. Most of the philosophers in the Western tradition thought that reason is at the centre of the human constitution. Nietzsche was one of the first prominent philosophers who disparaged that notion. He argued that reason is but a minor part of the human personality and that people are actually driven by the 'will' rather than 'reason'.

The predominant view in Western philosophy starting from Greek Platonic philosophical tradition which ran through the medieval philosophy was the dualism of mind and matter which in the Christian anthropology reflected as the dualism of mind and body. Accordingly the human beings have a twofold nature - a nature composed of mind and body; there is something like a struggle between the two components, a struggle that ideally results in the dominance of the mind over the body.

Nietzsche attacks this dualistic view as childish. The mature view of the human being, according to him, consists in recognizing that mind and body are one, and that what is called the mind is nothing but one aspect of the human being, one of the many parts that the body needs to survive, and which is thus essentially under the overall control of the physical organism as a whole. Thus Nietzsche establishes a correct understanding of the material aspect of the human body as an essential element of the human nature which had been undermined starting from Plato up to the Christian philosophical tradition. In *Thus Spake*

Zarathustra, Nietzsche warns those who despise the body. "They should learn otherwise and teach otherwise; they should bid farewell to their own body, so shall they become dumb. 'Body am I and soul' thus saith the child. And why should one not speak as do children? But he that is awake and knoweth saith: 'Body I am throughout and naught besides; and mind is but a word for a something in body'. The body is a great intelligence, a plurality with one mind, a war and a peace, a flock and a shepherd." (F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, IV, §.18)

The body, for Nietzsche, is not the external tool of a sovereign mind, but an organism within which the mind plays just a subordinate role. According to Nietzsche to think that the mind is in control of the body is one of the most illusions that Western civilization has produced and one of the most damaging as well. It is one of the crucial assumptions which would have to be overcome in the healthy civilization of future. "And therefore rage ye against life and earth. An unconscious envy is in your sidelong look of contempt. I go not your way, ye that despise the body!" (F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, IV, §.22) By affirming that the true self is the body, Nietzsche does not deny that people have feelings, inner experiences and ideas.

He is against a mind operating on its own and which has dominion over the body. "And thy little intelligence, my brother, which thou callest, 'spirit' - it is a tool of thy body, a little tool and a plaything of thy great intelligence. I thou sayest, and art proud of that word. But a greater matter which thou wilt not believe is thy body and its great intelligence. It saith not I, but it doth I." (F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, IV, §.20)

The contemporary medical scientists try to explain that the ultimate source of will-power, determination and other extraordinary achievements are necessarily connected with the human body. The will-power, a keen intelligence, or any other mental phenomenon is not the emanation of some non-physical entity, but the self-expressions of a living and physical organisms. "There is more intelligence in thy body than in thy best wisdom. And who, then, can say to what end thy body hath need of thy best wisdom?" (F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, IV, §.23)

Nietzsche lived in a strong Christian environment. He was brought up within a Christian tradition according to which the body was something evil, filthy, base and the cause of sin. However, Nietzsche revolted against this tradition to affirm the wholeness of the body like some of the exceptional Christian mystics who affirmed the need of the body for salvation and compared the divine - human relationship to the marital relationship.

Nietzsche had his reasons to embrace this type of scientific materialistic outlook. The 19th century was the period of rapid advances in chemistry and biology. Darwin's publications *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) signified effectively the scientific developments that took place during Nietzsche's lifetime. Among the educated elite philosophical materialism became something like a popular movement. Impressed by what modern biologists and physiologists kept finding out about the intricate workings of the body, Nietzsche said that, whoever has even a rough idea of the body, of its many simultaneously working systems, of its many cooperative and conflicting activities, of the delicacy of its balances, etc., will judge that the human mind is, by comparison, something poor and narrow. (F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, VI, §.16) For Nietzsche, the consciousness which is the result of mind often leads to error and confusion. It is only a tool and great things are accomplished without it, therefore one cannot call it the most necessary or the most admirable tool.

The rediscovery of the body that took place during the 19th century scandalized many conservatives and it offended the moral sensibilities of what then was still the cultural mainstream. To conceive of the body and not the mind, as the true self of man is part of a change in perspective that has far-reaching implications later in the 20th century. For Nietzsche the despisers of the body are not in the line of the superman which was for him the goal of humanity. (F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, IV, §.15)

3. The Will-to-Power in the Anthropology of Nietzsche

According to Nietzsche, human life is driven fundamentally by a will-to-power, a drive more powerful and more primal than the pleasure instinct. Will-to-power is what Nietzsche identifies as the most basic driving force of all living beings. (F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §.259) For him this will-to-power is the basic drive which Freud explained as sex drive.

When comparing with the sex drive in Freud's theory, the will-to-power does not always show itself specifically. For an example, it had a manifestation in the systematic attempts of Napoleon to control people, countries, corporations, markets and resources of any kind. It can also be seen in the struggle of an artist with a master piece, namely, Beethoven's successful attempts to incorporate a mass of heterogeneous musical material into one dominant structure. A monk, mastering his desire to eat or his sexual longings with iron discipline, is yet another illustration of the will-to-power, particularly when such an ascetic's energy is subsequently

used to bring other people under the control of his mind as well. (F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §.281)

By 'power' Nietzsche did not mean primarily, military and financial powers. To see more specifically what Nietzsche means power, one has to look at what he says about happiness. For Nietzsche, happiness is the feeling that power is increasing and resistance is being overcome. (F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §.264) This harmonizes with the ideas common to Buddha and Freud, that the desire which motivates action can in all cases be thought of as to overcome an 'unpleasurable tension' and to experience pleasure or at least a lessening of pain. In overcoming the resistance presented by any desire, one gains power. (J.S. Moore, 2011: 134)

The will-to-power was interpreted by Nietzsche as basic to human life. It is an essential factor in the generation of values, by which one understands the society, the belief system composed by psychology, religion, morality and political ideals. It has to be understood surpassing the monetary, military and social status which the world thinks as powerful. The will-to-power has to be understood both as a term together with its application. As a term it means some sort of positive mental energy and passion for life. In its application Nietzsche distinguishes between uncontrolled will-to-power and sublimated will-to-power. (F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §.36) Nietzsche saw in the Greek games a type of warfare, and speculated that this had given the inspiration and motivation for the Greek heroes to participate in the games. In this instance he saw the uncontrolled will-to-power. Further observations convinced him that the sublimation of this uncontrollable warring instinct produced the noble and sublime Greek culture. Here he was convinced of the value of the sublimated will-to-power. Thus Nietzsche's great insight was not on the uncontrollable and naked force which is all-powerful, but on the sublimated will-to-power which drives the instincts towards noble and sublime destinations. (F. Nietzsche, *Anti Christ*, §.96)

Through his proposal on the will-to-power Nietzsche developed a new philosophy of the human will and gave a new interpretation for voluntarism. (F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §.887) This shows a transition in the traditional - a transition from the emphasis on 'mind' to 'will'. This helped Nietzsche to develop a new anthropology eliminating the dualism of mind and body and to integrate the view of the human being with an emphasis on the will.

Conclusion

It is commonly interpreted that the '*Nietzschean Man*' is a Nazi or a Fascist. That means, the new human being predicted by Nietzsche would be a follower of Nazism or fascism. If it were true then Hitler and Mussolini should be the ideal human beings according to Nietzsche. However, the latter part of the history of Hitler and Mussolini, especially when carried away by the power-politics, they failed to become the real masters, creators, or in the words of Nietzsche 'the ideal' to lead others to this ideal life. They failed to liberate the European society from the darkness of nihilism. Instead Europe became more covered with uncertainty, meaninglessness and darkness after their rule. Therefore Nazism or fascism was not the dream of Nietzsche in his new anthropology.

The concept of the will-to-power, offers a perspective from which a type of understanding is possible. This claims to be a universal perspective on human nature. The motivation is the same as that which led scientists in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to try to uncover the secrets of nature. The study of the will-to-power in this very basic aspect is very instructive for other fields of human affinities. Further, every human being would like, if possible, to be masters of mankind in some way or other. The observations of Nietzsche of the human hunger and thirst for power is very realistic. The '*Nietzschean Man*' is not only like Napoleon who conquered other kings and countries but also a sage or a mystic who knows how to win the self also.

Nietzsche's intellectual contribution has two aspects; one is critical, where he takes the position undo everything and criticize everything as a fierce enemy of humanity; the other is positive, where he tries to promote a new human civilization from the ill fate of the past history with an affirmation on life and creativity. Nietzsche's attacks on the 'Christian Man' has to be understood as his attempt to create a new man based his new anthropology eliminated from the doom dualism of mind and body. Positively he tries to bring out a new human being - the '*Nietzschean Man*' who is an antithesis of the 'Christian Man'. It is up to the readers now, who read Nietzsche after hundred years of his dynamite type proposals, to draw the synthesis from these two antithetical views.

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