

Nietzsche's Will to Power: Analysis and Critique

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Abstract: In this essay I will endeavor to look at interpretations of Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' as found in his writings. I believe that Nietzsche's ideas lead one to a reductionist approach to persons if one follows certain writings attacking notions such as 'free will' and responsibility.' However, I believe Nietzsche can be 'saved' from this view if one incorporates a greater scope of his writings and show how he attempts to expand our notions of 'freedom.'

## I. Introduction

Wilhelm Friedrich Nietzsche was born in 1844 in Saxony, a province of then Prussia. After studying in the universities of Bonn and Leipzig, he was appointed a professor in 1869 in the University of Basel. Between then and 1889 Nietzsche became a prolific writer and teacher until his untimely nervous collapse and death in 1900. In 1872 he published his first work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, and up to 1888 published dozens of works with topics ranging from interpretations of the arts of the ancient Greeks to the scourge of 'herd mentality' that pervaded European society of his time.

For this essay, I wish to investigate one of Nietzsche's most well known ideas: The Will to Power (WTP). The WTP has been a source of debate for numerous philosophers, continental and analytical, and the ramifications of Nietzsche's idea cover a majority of his other thinking and even inspired such great persons as Sigmund Freud. Unfortunately, I believe that there pervades a misunderstanding of the WTP that leads one to paint Nietzsche in an unfavorable, and unfair, light. This stems from the idea that Nietzsche's idea of the WTP has with it the admonishment of 'freedom' and 'responsibility' that make up our everyday concepts of what it means to be a person: a free agent. This Reductionist fear, which is not unfounded based on certain readings of Nietzsche, shall be the dilemma I wish to deal with. I hope that by the end of this essay I can show that Nietzsche is not a Reductionist in the context of the WTP but is actually a champion of expanding our ideas of 'freedom' and 'responsibility.'

## II. What is the Will to Power?

## A. Scholarly Interpretations of the Will to Power

In order to get clear as to what Nietzsche means by “the will to power” (WTP) let us begin with a discussion of what some of the leading Nietzsche scholars have said about it. These scholars are Martin Heidegger, Angelo Belliotti, Arthur Danto, Walter Kaufman, and Maudemarie Clark. Each presents a range of ideas that variously picture the WTP as metaphysical, psychological, physiological, and so forth. It is my hope that in these interpretations we may grasp a better picture of our current subject.

Heidegger approaches WTP as a means to reevaluate reality. “Will to power is the ‘principle of a new valuation,’ and vice versa: the principle of the new valuation to be grounded is will to power.”<sup>1</sup> He already sees what questions this raises and endeavors to answer what “valuation” and “value” mean in the context of how Nietzsche was using these words. Through these questions, Heidegger attempts to explain what WTP is and its importance in Nietzsche’s philosophy of life.

Heidegger suggests that “value” is related to the concept of a condition of life, of things being “alive.” Heidegger claims that throughout Nietzsche’s writings, that which has value, or is a condition of life, are those things which “support, further, and awaken the enhancement of life.”<sup>2</sup> Only those things which make life better are things to be valued; Heidegger goes on to remark that it is these things of value, these conditions of life which enhance it, constitute the essence of life. Hence, the essence of life is to enhance it and Heidegger sees this as a belief espoused in Nietzsche’s writings. As to “valuation,” Heidegger states that this means “determining and ascertaining those [‘perspective’] conditions that make life what it is, that is, assure its essential

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, Pg. 15

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, Pg. 16

enhancement.”<sup>3</sup> Our present modern culture however is based on valuations that support Platonic-Christian views, which to Nietzsche represented “the devaluation of beings at hand here and now... they represent a falling away from what truly is.” Indeed these values are against the essence of life: enhancement. With this valuation in the way, Nietzsche needed a “new valuation” in order to reject and reverse the devaluation which the Platonic/Christian ideals promoted. Nietzsche thought that the old Platonic/Christian values that modernity embraces are life-hindering and as such are not values but “unvalues.”<sup>4</sup> In place of these values Nietzsche proposed values that are life enhancing. This is what he envisioned in the transvaluation of all values.

Let us now look back at what was said earlier. If WTP is the new valuation (and vice versa), then WTP is that principle in which the enhancement of life is to be found; “life is will to power.”<sup>5</sup> Yet one still is not clear what WTP is itself. Heidegger suggests we look unto life to answer this question since, if life is the WTP, then by observing life we will see what WTP is. Though the essence of life is, according to Heidegger’s interpretations, enhancement; the WTP, by being the essence of life, is a principle of the enhancement of life. Looking at our endeavors of science, art, etc. we see a striving for the bettering of life and enhancement if you will. Heidegger asks the following questions, “What is knowledge? What is science?” He answers them with this: ‘It is will to power.’ Therefore, WTP is the answer to the age old metaphysical questions: “What is essence of life.” According to Heidegger, Nietzsche’s answer is “the enhancement of life.” WTP is thus used to bring about new valuations to undermine and circumvent prevailing valuations which go against the values of life or those which enhance it.

Belliotti has a simpler approach to the WTP. For him the WTP is quite simply the answer to what drives life: “the fundamental drive of all living things... [is] the impulse to

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<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, Pg. 16

<sup>4</sup> Heidegger, Pg. 17

<sup>5</sup> BGE: 13

dominate one's environment and extend one's influence." <sup>6</sup> When externalized in our everyday life, it will manifest itself in different forms such as brute force or other forms which are the product of a person's boldness, cleverness, etc; it is based on how people are able to satisfy their impulses of domination and influence. In fact, since WTP is the fundamental drive of all life, then all things are the product of that drive: "love, friendship, respect... and so on – are all manifestations of the will to power." <sup>7</sup> As a drive, the WTP does not require the presence of a free will or other wills. Rather it is at the core of all living beings and is not reducible to other faculties of a person. WTP was coined by Nietzsche to describe the continuous struggle between a person and objective reality. This shows itself in the matter that in order for the impulse of domination to be satisfied, it must overcome something; what greater satisfaction comes from the instance in which persons overcome numerous trials to achieve their goals than simply willing and gaining what they want. However, satisfaction comes about differently in respect to the persons in relation to themselves and their environment. In the former, satisfaction comes in "sublimation, self-perfection, and self-overcoming" and in the latter "influence, domination, and command over others." <sup>8</sup> From these ideas, life takes on the form of a massive arena in which persons are constantly in a contest to satisfy their most basic instinct: to dominate. No endeavor of humankind is exempt from this. With morality people can raise themselves to a moral "high ground" and condemn others and the pursuit of knowledge can allow one to grasp the hidden truths of nature in order to manipulate it.

Danto can lend another agreement to the conclusions found in Heidegger and Belliotti since he too agrees that WTP is "a metaphysical or, better, an ontological

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<sup>6</sup> Belliotti, Pg. 82

<sup>7</sup> Belliotti, Pg. 83

<sup>8</sup> Belliotti, Pg. 83

concept” since it answers “What is there?”<sup>9</sup> First, Danto agrees that it is a fundamental drive whose impulse drives a person to dominate and subjugate; the example of sexual urges is used since sex can be used to “bend others to our will” (think of the numerous case studies done by feminist philosophers on the power struggle between male and female coworkers where the male is in a higher position in the workplace). Second, WTP is not only a fundamental drive, it is the essence of who we are; you the reader and I the writer are WTP. This is an interesting point which I believe Danto is culling from remarks such as those in *Genealogy of Morals* in which Nietzsche rebukes the idea of the separation between persons and their actions. In these remarks, Nietzsche takes the doer and the deed to be one in the same. If all doings are reducible to WTP then we the doers are nothing but WTP.<sup>10</sup>

Kaufman’s take on the WTP is different than the above in that he does not rely on metaphysical views to analyze the WTP; all the others make the claim that the WTP is an essential part of reality, the ‘thing-in-of-itself,’ and thereby make the WTP into a metaphysical doctrine. Kaufman writes that Nietzsche made claims that “the world is *not* knowable” and that his philosophy was “experimental” in that it was not concerned with finding the essential truths of reality.<sup>11</sup> Thus, for Nietzsche to make any metaphysical claims – the essence of reality, etc. – he would be contradicting himself. The WTP, according to Kaufman, follows this idea of Nietzsche’s philosophy in that it is arrived at through empirical investigation and relies on inductive notions. Since Nietzsche believed that we cannot get to reality as it is, all we have access to are interpretations and beliefs of reality.<sup>12</sup> Thus, he “interpreted” what he was observing around him as manifestations

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<sup>9</sup> Danto, Pg. 215

<sup>10</sup> GM: I, XIII

<sup>11</sup> Kaufman, Pg. 204

<sup>12</sup> BGE: 19

of the WTP; “Wherever I found the living, there I found the will to power.”<sup>13</sup> It may be asked whether stating that all life has the WTP is a metaphysical claim since it appears that he states in his writing that a life is driven by the WTP or even is the WTP; again, Kaufman would comment that this is an interpretation of the nature of reality or a hypothesis based on observation. He goes further to claim that this is the best interpretation possible for Nietzsche.<sup>14</sup>

It must be asked what the WTP is in order to better understand why Nietzsche makes it such an important theory in his thinking in relation to the activities of life. Here I wish to commend Kaufman in his attempts to define the WTP. In the section of his book entitled “The Discovery of the Will to Power” we see his commitment to a faithful interpretation of Nietzsche’s writings. Without going into too much detail of Kaufman’s arguments and reasons, it can be said that he defines the WTP as the drive that pushes a person to overcome the self and overcome life. These two modes of overcoming are quite similar. In relation to life, humans are always engaged in becoming more effective at controlling their environment; Kaufman notes Nietzsche’s ideas on the Greeks bear this out. According to Nietzsche the art, health, science, and philosophy of the Greeks shows how they were concerned with expanding their influence over their environment. These Greek efforts at control continue in the Christian era where great effort is expended in making the rational mind dominate the erotic desires of the body; Nietzsche believed that members of the Church deny their desires and thereby gain a sense of satisfaction of ‘overcoming’ themselves.<sup>15</sup> It might behoove us to clarify that what is meant by overcoming the self and reality is that the WTP is the drive which is characterized by the drive to exert one’s influence; though Nietzsche goes further and

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<sup>13</sup> Z: II, “On Self-Overcoming”

<sup>14</sup> Kaufman, Pg. 206

<sup>15</sup> Kaufman, Pg. 192

states that this is his interpretation of the fundamental drive of all living things and their actions.

Clark agrees with Kaufmann that the WTP is not a metaphysical doctrine, though she doesn't agree that it is empirical lest the doctrine become deprived "of all plausibility."<sup>16</sup> If we agree with Kaufmann, then everything a person wills is the result of the WTP, no other drives can be accepted as possible. For this reason it cannot be an empirical doctrine since it is not falsifiable by counter empirical evidence; it is impossible to find a case of something that was not driven by the WTP. The claim that the world is just WTP seems to be analytic at best but certainly not empirical. The empiricist, for Clark, can only maintain some plausibility in the WTP (which she feels is a must as Nietzsche was astute in psychological matters as seen in his writings), if they allow there to be two tiers of desires: first and second order desires. The first order desires are those which we are most conscious of, such as the desire for food, comfort, or sex; the second order desire is the WTP.<sup>17</sup> She characterizes the WTP as the desire to "do or get what one wants" which is satisfied when one gains a sense of "effectiveness in the world" which is achieved by satisfying our first order desires. If this is integrated into the empiricist views of Kaufman, she believes this will better them. However, instead of siding with this view, she takes the stance that the WTP is a mythological doctrine, not a metaphysical or empirical one.

For reasons expressed in Kaufman's works and her criticism of the experimental view of the WTP, Clark feels she is right in claiming that the WTP is a "self-conscious myth."<sup>18</sup> Let us hark back to the quotes of Nietzsche used and referenced to in the Kaufman paragraphs above. First, we know that Nietzsche believed that all one has upon inspection of the world are interpretations and that we cannot grasp the 'truth' or

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<sup>16</sup> Clark, Pg. 211

<sup>17</sup> Clark, Pg. 211

<sup>18</sup> *Nietzsche*, Pg. 139

'essence' of reality; all we have are our observations and interpretations of those observations. Second, in answering whether philosophy is an art, Nietzsche responds that philosophy, in its purpose and conclusions, is "the continuation of the mythical drive. Thus, it is essentially pictorial."<sup>19</sup> Acknowledging himself as a philosopher and admitting to such uses of philosophy, we know that Nietzsche saw his ideas of reality as "conceptual representation." Therefore, when he explains that the world is WTP and discusses the importance of the WTP in relation to human beings, what he is giving his reader is another interpretation and explanation of what he sees when he looks onto life; though he would certainly say his interpretation is the best as evidenced by his dismissal of other's views and his reverent support of the WTP. Whereas Kaufman sees the WTP as a means to gain more knowledge of the world (which could be said of many conclusions made of experiments), Clark sees it as an important part in "the interpretation of experience and the furtherance of life."<sup>20</sup> In short, Clark sees the WTP as an explanatory myth, a useful way of interpreting the world. I find this idea of WTP as such an interpretive myth the most plausible of the views I have discussed.

## B. Nietzsche Speaks for Himself

We have now arrived at the point where we must let Nietzsche speak for himself. My aim here is to compare some of the above ideas of the WTP with Nietzsche's writings to see which interpretation can lead us to the best interpretation of Nietzsche's idea. While one may find that much of what is said above does not agree with Nietzsche's writings, at least it will be beneficial to know what the WTP is not to tighten our understanding of what it is.

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<sup>19</sup> *Nietzsche*, Pg. 142

<sup>20</sup> *Nietzsche*, Pg. 143

I believe Heidegger was on the right path in discussing Nietzsche's attack on life-devaluing values and support of life-enhancing ones in society, but to claim that the WTP is that new valuation finds little to no support in Nietzsche. Nietzsche spends numerous pages in his books attacking the valuations against life, which he locates in the Christian/Jewish traditions and general ascetic ideals. What I believe is his best argumentative book, *The Genealogy of Morals*, captures this in his harsh critique of the ascetic ideal which appeared to infiltrate all spheres of life from religion to scholastics. "It signifies... a will to nothingness, a revulsion from life, a rebellion against the principle conditions of living," says Nietzsche at the end of his book.<sup>21</sup> Exactly what makes the ascetic ideal a "rebellion against" life is found in what it means to be aesthetic: the denial of the pleasures or satisfaction of life. Whenever one uses the word "ascetic" there is always a sense of 'denial' of some part of life, whether it be luxuries, language (as in vows of silence), sex, etc. Such a denial of life, which can have many reasons (such as to escape the sufferings of life) is not to be lauded since in this life one attempts to live life by not living it. Think of the monk who sits in contemplation of life or the scholar who reads on the very same subject in his study, each recede to learn about life on their own terms, but nether is living a life; "I have no patience with mummies who try to mimic life, with worn-out, used up people."<sup>22</sup>

In response to these life-devaluing valuations, Nietzsche took hold of the banner of life affirmation, even going so far as to call himself a disciple of Dionysus, who was a Greek god of merriment.<sup>23</sup> However, I will choose here to hold off on going further into Nietzsche life-affirming ideals till later in the essay. The point I wish to make is that there was a valuation which Nietzsche did see as poisonous to life and in need of being

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<sup>21</sup> GM: III, XXVIII

<sup>22</sup> GM: III, XXVI

<sup>23</sup> BGE: 295

removed from society. Yet that this new valuation is the WTP is not to be found expressed literally or alluded to in his writings.

As said, I find *The Genealogy of Moral* to be Nietzsche's best argumentative book on the subject of the ascetic. The book characterizes the ascetic valuation as a cancer in need of diagnosis and treatment. One need only read the third essay to sense the great tone of objection to the ascetic ideal, but one must ask oneself what the point of all this trouble is. Apparently, if we listen to Heidegger, we should find a new valuation called the WTP which we are to use in place of the old valuations as to triumph life affirmation over life denying. Yet, one will not find that even in this work. In fact, the main point of Nietzsche's writings on the ascetic ideals is not only to admonish it, but to show it as it is; at the beginning of the third essay he asks the reader "What do the ascetic ideals betoken?"<sup>24</sup>

For Nietzsche, the act of life denying has taken different forms on the context of people's situation as to be better taken into their weave of life. The philosopher, such as Nietzsche's old inspirer Schopenhauer, become taken by the ascetic lifestyle as they become more "objective" and start to go "against sensuality;" in a sense, they deny the world around them and go towards another, such as Plato's move to the Forms.<sup>25</sup> In the religious, the ascetic is greatly vilified by Nietzsche, shown best when he claims that priest themselves are embodiments and spreaders of the ascetic ideal; "And even when he alleviates the pain of his patients he pours poison into their wounds [and makes them, too, ascetic persons]."<sup>26</sup> However we must now ask why Nietzsche was doing this. And the answer seems to be that he was trying to show that the ascetic lifestyle was a "contradiction in terms;" that is full of "rancor without parallel" towards life. He states that he had great respect for the ascetic ideal (in that it was a needed thing in

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<sup>24</sup> GM: III, I

<sup>25</sup> GM: III, VII

<sup>26</sup> GM: III, XV

certain contexts of a person's life), but admonishes it when it hides behinds masks of religion and scholastics which attempt to affirm life in one hand and deny it in another.<sup>27</sup> The negative tone he uses against the ascetic ideal and his positive approach to turning away from it, and instead take up a life affirming lifestyle, makes one see a call for a new valuation. Yet, this new valuation is not the WTP nor does he ever use the concept of WTP as the new valuation, but only a part of it at most. While this will be discussed further later in the essay, the WTP appears just as its name would imply: a will; the WTP arises in the context of Nietzsche's claims that the WTP is a part of life or reality as a whole. An example would be the phrase below:

[The priest] must be sick himself, he must be deeply akin to all the shipwrecked a disease, if he is to understand them and be understood by them; yet he must also be strong, master over himself even more than others with a will to power.<sup>28</sup>

Even in this book where Nietzsche discusses valuations, the WTP is always treated as a will in psychological or physiological contexts. Nietzsche does teach that a new valuation is needed that affirms life and calls for one to enhance it, but is never given a name or said to be the WTP. Instead, one will find the above ideas I have given to the concepts of WTP to follow more closely with Nietzsche's writings than Heidegger's interpretations.

I believe that since I have successfully shown that one can question the idea that WTP is a new valuation, I wish now to return to the issue of trying to see which of the differing ideas of the WTP is closest to Nietzsche's own writings. Given above, we have

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<sup>27</sup> GM: III, XXVI

<sup>28</sup> GM: III, XV

three ways to approach the WTP, either as a metaphysical doctrine in that it gives an account of what this world is in-of-itself, an empirical doctrine borne of an observation of living things, or a mythological explanation meant to give an explanation of why life is as we see it. Instead of approaching each individually as I did above, I wish to address them together since I feel that if the WTP is one of these, then we can conclude the others are not proper interpretations of the WTP.

I wish to use two passages in which Nietzsche expresses 'seeing' the WTP in life around him. The first comes from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

I pursued the living; I walked the widest and the narrowest paths that I might know its nature... Where I found the living, there I found will to power; and even in the will of those who serve I found the will to be master.<sup>29</sup>

The second comes from *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Physiologists should think before putting down the instinct of self preservation as the cardinal instinct of an organic being. A living being seeks above all to *discharge* its strength – life is *will to power*; self preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results*.<sup>30</sup>

In the first quote, the WTP appears as a drive of life since he states that "in the will" of the servants there was a "will to power" or become "master." This observation comes to Nietzsche's character, or his voice-piece, Zarathustra as he seeks the nature of life.

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<sup>29</sup> Z: II, "On Self-Overcoming"

<sup>30</sup> BGE: 13

Thus Nietzsche appears to commit himself to a metaphysical view in that he is answering “What is life’s nature/essence?” with “It is a will, a will to power.” However, the WTP is still being treated as a will and not a metaphysical thing such as Plato’s Forms but as something one can see and observe. Hence the use of the phrases “pursued the living” and “where I found the living.” In the second quote, the WTP takes on a much stronger metaphysical appearance in that Nietzsche uses it to reject the idea that the sole object of living beings is to continue their being; he claims that this is not so and instead “life is will to power” or that the main purpose of life is to project its ‘power’ onto its surroundings. Once again it appears as if Nietzsche is answering the question above with the same answer, but this time warning one of other ‘false’ ideas. There is a lack of an empirical tone in this quote in that instead of implying that he came to this conclusion through looking or analyzing life he merely asserted that this is so. Thus far, we have reason to believe that the WTP is a metaphysical thing or perhaps derived of empirical understanding of life, but I believe that Clark was in the right in calling the WTP a mythological theory.

First, while Nietzsche does remark an admiration of disciplines such as psychology and even writes against the aptness of philosophers to distance themselves from the tangible world for another world, his writings on the WTP are never written as to allude to empirical studies as the source of his thinking on it. True, he does write as one who looks at life and attempts to understand it, but not in any strict sense that one would call empirical. Second, I feel that Clark has given us good reason to reject the WTP as an empirical claim in that it invalidates Nietzsche’s keen insight of humanity. If one were to say empirically that the essential drive of life is WTP, then all other drives are made moot; rape is not instigated by a ‘sex drive’ nor eating be a ‘hunger drive’ but by the WTP. We may call certain actions as results of or driven by such-and-such a drive, but this is just a luxury of language to express the manifestations of the WTP. This makes

the WTP appear limited and childish which is far from the intellectual investment Nietzsche gives to developing his own ideas. Third, I believe the writings of Nietzsche themselves express the WTP as a mythological theory meant to be an interpretative story of the world.

Suppose nothing else were “given” as real except our world of desires and passions, and we could not get down, or up, to any other “reality” besides the reality of our drives – for thinking is merely a relation of these drives to each other: is it not permitted to make the experiment and to ask the question whether this “given” would not be *sufficient* for also understanding on the basis of this kind of thing the so-called mechanistic (or “material”) world? <sup>31</sup>

This quote starts the reader down the road of epistemological questioning. He asks that we suppose that the only things that a person can access are their subjective qualities, such as thoughts and wills; this harkens to the philosophical idea that while we lack the ability to break out of our subjective limitations and gain access to the objective world, we still have a grasp of understanding our subjective realm (ex. “I don’t know if he is in pain, but I certainly feel that I am in pain.”). Instead of becoming worried of this assertion, Nietzsche further delves into the subject by claiming that perhaps we should use this accessible subject to understand the material world. If the reader is willing to give Nietzsche this argument, he then asks us to “suppose” another point.

Suppose, finally, we succeeded in explaining our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will – namely,

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<sup>31</sup> BGE: 36

of the will to power, as *my* proposition has it... [T]hen one would have gained the right to determine *all* efficient force univocally as – *will to* power. The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its “intelligible character” – it would be “will to power” and nothing else.<sup>32</sup>

It is here that Nietzsche ends his argument. In a more formal form, his argument would be as follows: If the only things one can call as “real” and accessible are our thoughts, sensations, etc. and if we use those “real” and accessible items to understand the material world and if we find that all these “real” and accessible items can be explained as coming from one will, the will to power, then we can claim that it is through this “will to power” that one can attempt to understand the material world. One may just as easily dismiss one of the premises or conclusions, but there is a great importance one must pay heed to in the lines above: Nietzsche’s language. He does not say that we must accept the above claims nor even hint that the above claims are true, he only asks that we “suppose” these claims in an attempt to understand how one may explain reality as WTP. The reader is not being asked “What is the nature of reality?” but is being asked “How can one approach reality?” if one can be said to have only access to their subjective qualities. This comes up most readily in the last sentence of the second passage where Nietzsche uses the phrase “world viewed from inside.” Hence, this is where Nietzsche comes off as presenting the WTP as a mythological story in that it is meant to help one explain, not give knowledge or understanding. Just like the story of Persephone and Hades is used to explain the changes of seasons based on what seems apparent – winter fading into spring, etc. – the WTP is meant to explain reality based on what seems apparent – sensations, etc. In this way, Nietzsche prevents

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<sup>32</sup> BGE: 36

himself from making the WTP into a metaphysical concept in that he does not say that the world is WTP but that to understand the world one might find it useful to look at it through the understanding of the WTP. However, the skeptic of this claim might point to the places where Nietzsche states that the world *is* WTP, thus making the WTP a cosmological and metaphysical concept.

I must point out that this is how I once saw the WTP, but I feel that one need not accept the cosmological use of WTP and Nietzsche does not give the reader reason to do so also. An example of this is in Nietzsche's work in which he points out the way in which philosophers project their philosophies onto reality, just as one would wear colored glasses to make the world appear as one wants it to.

But this is an ancient, eternal story: what formerly happened with the Stoics still happens today, too, as soon as any philosophy begins to believe in itself. It always creates the world in its own image; it cannot do otherwise. Philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, to the "creation of the world," to the *causa prima*.<sup>33</sup>

It is interesting to note that Nietzsche, who often talks negatively of the Stoics, he never states that he is any different or does otherwise. His attack on people such as the Stoics may be in part that they do not admit that the world appears to be 'stoic' because they approach it as Stoics (see the above passage in which Nietzsche attacks the ascetics in that they do not admit they are acting as ascetics). However, in that Nietzsche does not state he acts differently and even calls himself a philosopher/scholar throughout his works (more so as a philosopher of tomorrow, but that is still a philosopher), I believe Nietzsche gives us reason to say he does the same. Nietzsche

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<sup>33</sup> BGE: 9

has faith in his theory of explaining the world as WTP and thus begins to see all of reality as WTP. Hence, while the WTP may be something that is only to be found in willing beings, Nietzsche need only expand his mythological story from just those beings to all of the world to create a cosmological doctrine. Though, we do not need to accept it since Nietzsche is acting like the Stoics: he is reading his philosophy unto the world.

### C. The Will

Thus far, I believe I have given reasons to reject certain claims and interpretations of Nietzsche's WTP and accept Clark's position that the WTP is a mythological story. Now I want to turn to the issue of what the will is in WTP. Nietzsche gives the reader some basic aspects of willing to allow the reader some view of Nietzschean psychological beliefs of willing. He starts by suggesting that "in all willing there is, first, a plurality of sensations."<sup>34</sup> These sensations include states of moving towards or away from something and the muscular sensation that begins between movement of the body and a will. Then, accompanying sensations as "ingredients" of a will, there is also a domineering 'thought.' While Nietzsche does not elaborate too much on this topic, since he states that the thought and the will it accompanies cannot be separated, this thought can be interpreted as the conscious or sub-conscious sentence-form of the strongest, or most dominating will (an example would be the strong will of hunger accompanied by the forceful thought "I want food").

Along with being a conglomerate of sensations and thought, a will also arises with a command within the willing person, a 'push,' if one will, to comply with the will; "A man who *wills* commands something within himself that renders obedience, or that he

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<sup>34</sup> BGE: 19

believes renders obedience.”<sup>35</sup> Being both the commanding party (in that one’s will is commanding) and the obeying party (in that one’s will commands ourselves), as the obeying party Nietzsche sees the person as able to know the sensations that come with achieving a set task. In obeying, one gains the sensations of pressure, constraint, motion, etc. which begin after the action made according to a will. One need only think of the author of this essay as I am bombarded by the sensations above in connection to the willing of writing this senior’s thesis project. However, upon satisfying a will, one takes a complex feeling of delight. As an obeying and commanding party, they take delight in overcoming those obstacles which stood between the will and its satisfaction (seeing themselves as executioners) and in seeing their will as the thing that overcame the obstacles (seeing themselves as commanders), just as “the governing class identifies itself with the successes of the commonwealth.”<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche gives more insight into the will in *The Gay Science* in propositions meant to attack Schopenhauer’s ideas of the will. Here, he writes that the will can only come into being if a being has a sense of pleasure and displeasure. Whether a strong stimulus is seen as pleasurable or not is based on the interpretations of the intellect of the being. Therefore, the only things which can ‘will’ as Nietzsche sees it are intellectual beings in which pleasure, displeasure, and will can be found; this limits the number of beings that have a ‘will’ to, perhaps, only humans and limited numbers of animals since many organic beings have superficial capacities of pleasure and displeasure in the form of pain and lack of pain and not in a heightened sense that Nietzsche treats the subject matters.<sup>37</sup>

This does seem to go against the cosmological use of the will in the WTP such as when he calls life or the world *the* WTP, but I wish I divert the reader from this inquest for some simple reasons. First, as said above one need not accept this view except in an

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<sup>35</sup> BGE: 19

<sup>36</sup> BGE: 19

<sup>37</sup> GS: 127

attempt to see the world through the mythological story of the WTP. Second, while this essay is written in concern to the WTP, I will be treating it as a will first and foremost; its use in cosmological contexts will be noted, but only on the side.

Summing this all up, one gains insight into Nietzsche's view of a will. A will is a collection of sensations and thoughts which 'drives' a person to some end, and by satisfying that will gains a sense of pleasure. Of course, only in those things which have the capacity for pleasure and displeasure does the will arise. While many of this may seem simple or lacking psychological insight, I must remind the reader that Nietzsche was a philosopher, and thus his investigations will be affected as such.

Before moving on, I feel that there are presumptions of the will that Nietzsche would dismiss as not being part of his views. First, the concept of the 'I' in context to how one uses it in everyday contexts ("I am," "I will," etc.) is to be thrown out as erroneous. Many times the 'I' is viewed on a metaphysical level that sets it up as a 'pure' thing, the *causa prima*, of a person's being, such as a soul. The 'I' comes into being and everything else of a person is merely an object created by or a capacity of the 'I.' However, such thinking runs one into danger of misusing Nietzsche's 'will.' It makes the will into something that is a capacity of the 'I' as if 'doer' and 'deed' can be separated.<sup>38</sup> Because of the assumed errors in language, Nietzsche sees that our concept of 'I' and the will have become abused concepts. In the "snare of language" people have begun to "divorce the lightning from its brilliance, viewing the latter as an activity whose subject is the lighting" just as they "divorce [will] from its manifestation, as though it were behind the [will] a neutral agent."<sup>39</sup> Thus, no person exists as a being who wills, but instead is the will itself, just as lightning and its flash are one in the same; the doer was added,

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<sup>38</sup> TI: "Reason," 5

<sup>39</sup> GM: I, XIII

Nietzsche tells us, by imagination and superstition for numerous reasons, one which was in an attempt to bring judgment onto others.

In order to punish people for their acts, morality tells us that the person must have chosen to do an act to be responsible for it, hence the need of an 'agent' to perform and 'act' or 'will.' As language began more and more to make the 'I' into such a being like a soul, the will became divorced from it. Yet, "the [will] is everything" and is integral to who one is, or as one may say "One is what one wills."<sup>40</sup> One may raise a question of freedom and the implications of such states in denying that concept to persons, but this will be addressed later. I therefore believe that a better interpretation of the 'I' in light of Nietzsche's writings is that of the U.S. Senate. Each senator represents the sensations and thoughts that accompany the numerous wills made up of them and eventually the strongest will becomes 'passed' by them and becomes the domineering will that makes the person 'command and obey.' The 'I' then becomes like the will, something more complex, which follows suit with Nietzsche's thinking, especially in concern to his consistent attacks on such concepts as the Kantian "thing-in-itself." Second, Nietzsche warns of the idea that the will is something which 'causes' or suffices for actions. The reason is that while the willing commanded and thereafter one obeyed, it came to the point that actions "[were] to be *expected*, the *appearance* has translated itself into the feeling, as if there were *a necessity of effect*."<sup>41</sup> It must be noted that willing does not cause action, but 'pushes' one to action. This is elaborated further in other works such as in Section VI of "Twilight of Idols." While this concept may not be as important as that of the 'I,' it is still important in keeping one assuming things of Nietzsche that shouldn't be.

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<sup>40</sup> GM: I, XIII

<sup>41</sup> BGE: 19

#### D. The Will to Power

Having now described what a ‘will’ is according to Nietzsche, we can now return to the issue of the WTP. It might help to first look at some of the passages above and we will find one line to be of great use. I am referring to the line in which Nietzsche claims that “A living being seeks above all to *discharge* its strength – life is *will to power*.” One could easily interpret this as saying that WTP is the will to exercise one’s strength and that this will is at the core of life, or *the* strongest will within beings capable of having a will. This, unfortunately, is only partially right. In Nietzsche’s writings, the WTP is consistently associated with being the essence of a willing being’s nature. One need only look back to see this in Nietzsche’s writings, but in other writings he makes the WTP as the fundamental drive to explain life’s doings, but I will wait to show this further near the end of this discussion.

For Nietzsche, “power” or “discharging strength” has a much more complex meaning than what one sees at ‘face value.’ First, the WTP is painted as “the unexhausted procreative will of life.”<sup>42</sup> In the passages where this line comes from, the WTP is treated as the drive of a being to ‘overcome’ itself, or in laymen’s terms, to become more than what it is at present. Think of the athlete who, while being strong and fast, continuously strives to become stronger and faster, or the philosopher who strives to understand and gain more insight than what they have presently.

Of course, to better oneself, one must be able to overcome both the limitations of oneself and external things; “That I must be struggle and a becoming.”<sup>43</sup> In overcoming these, one can guess what a being feels: satisfaction and pleasure. In striving to better oneself, one certainly has wills that cause them to face the limitations, etc. discussed as

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<sup>42</sup> Z: II, “On Self-Overcoming”

<sup>43</sup> Z: II, “On Self-Overcoming”

arising with a will, in facing and triumphing over those things one gains pleasure. Of course, if one does not succeed then they certainly will feel dissatisfied, but does not one also notice the strengthening of a will thereafter, perhaps to even say a will becoming more 'determined' and the cycle continues.

Second, the WTP is also envisioned as a drive to exert one's power over themselves and reality. Nietzsche described priests as ascetics who, while being "sick" due to their ascetic lifestyle, are "also strong, master over himself even more than over others, with a will to power."<sup>44</sup> The priest is "master over himself" in that by being an ascetic, he denies himself action on his wills which, to him, are sinful but may lead him to a more fulfilling life. Examples include denying the will to feast on delicacies and choose to dine on bread and water, or perhaps deny the will to sleep in a warm home and choose to sleep in a dank monastery. One may conjecture that this appears as a denial of the will to exert one's power, but Nietzsche shines in his elucidation of the priests. True, they deny themselves certain things in accordance to the ascetic lifestyle, but by denying themselves, they gain a sense of power over themselves (though they might not admit to this); "For the most part, they had to depend on new covert satisfaction. All instincts that are not allowed free play turn inward."<sup>45</sup> While the later quote was not writing in specific context to the priest, this idea of internalization shows how one can gain a sense of pleasure from having power to turn on themselves and exert strength that we today call 'will power,' or in the context of Nietzsche's writings 'power over oneself.'

Continuing with the discussion of the priest, he is able to exert his power, according to Nietzsche, in his ability to claim what is 'good' and 'evil' in a morally-loaded sense of those words. They "assumed the right of calling [others] to account for being [unlike the ascetic priests]" and therefore began assigning to all actions the qualities of

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<sup>44</sup> GM: III, XV

<sup>45</sup> GM: II, XVI

being either good or evil (note that the priests here separated the 'doer' and 'deed' in order to bring judgment unto others). Doing so, they could divert people from doing such-and-such since one would want to be good for goodness sake and wouldn't do such-and-such for fear of being branded sinful and evil. Here the priest, by controlling the actions of others, gains a sense of power over others. It should also be added that on writing of the priests, Nietzsche also states that they had "an insatiable power-drive which would dominate, not a single aspect of life, but life itself."<sup>46</sup>

Third, WTP can be seen as the drive to satisfy one's feeling of personal volition, or the ability to satisfy one's desires. This comes from a utilization of the above notions of the WTP and some "reading between the lines." Let us say I have a will to sit down, and do so and hence become satisfied. It must be asked what it is that causes me to be satisfied. One can say it was the act of sitting down, or one could conjecture that the sense of volition, or being able to satisfy my will, is what gives one satisfaction. Perhaps a better example can be found in the idea of overcoming an obstacle. In my youth I remember practicing a very difficult piece of music for the violin and playing for hours to play it perfectly. Eventually, I was able to achieve this goal, but what satisfied me most was the idea that I could overcome the difficulties, that I could play the piece perfectly. Hence, by gaining a sense of volition, one also gains a sense of power and strength in that they can say "My will be done." This is seen best in Nietzsche's writings when he states the phrase "Freedom of the will" expresses "the complex state of delight of the person exercising volition."<sup>47</sup>

As said above, the WTP is closely associated with the fundamental drive of willing beings, and I wish to delve into this further. To do so, I wish to look at how Nietzsche characterizes several aspects of human doings as actions that can be viewed

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<sup>46</sup> GM: III, XI

<sup>47</sup> BGE: 19

as obeying the WTP as characterized above. First, there is the pursuit of knowledge or the “will to truth” as Nietzsche calls it. In *Human, All Too Human*, He gives three effects of seeking knowledge that are tied to a gain in sense of power. One effect is that by gaining knowledge, one gains an awareness of one’s power, analogous to “gymnastic exercises [are] pleasurable even without spectators.”<sup>48</sup> This perhaps is tied to the idea of gaining pleasure from a sense of volition and better myself in that by gaining knowledge I realize that I can raise my understanding of things above what it already is. The second affect is that by bettering our knowledge, we also gain the ability to ‘defeat’ and become ‘victors’ over older ideas (or at least we believe so), thus a sense of power over other’s ideas. A professor need only remember the hint of power and victory seen in his or her students when, after reading something new, are able to defeat arguments that they read earlier; being a student myself I can vouch that I too gain a sense of triumph in being able to ‘face-down’ problems of ancient philosopher’s with modern works. Lastly, in finding new ‘truths’ one can become affected with a sense of superiority and uniqueness since one feels they understand something better than others which can feed a sense of power over others. I need only point to several peers of mine who become a hint more arrogant come their senior year when around underclassmen since, and I remember this line quite well, “Of course we’re better, we know more.” Nietzsche admits that there can be many other “secondary reasons’ for the pursuit of knowledge, but he lists the above as the most “important” – pleasure, power, and knowledge are intertwined. Perhaps one could also look at the passage in which Nietzsche claims “Their ‘knowing’ is *creating*, their creating is a legislation, their will to truth is – *will to power*.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> HH: 252

<sup>49</sup> BGE: 211

Second, Nietzsche saw the WTP as that which drove the priests to moralize the world and recreate the concepts of 'good' and 'evil.' This is seen best in the work *The Genealogy of Morals* in which Nietzsche discusses his idea of an interplay between the 'noble' class Romans and the 'slave' class Jews. Whereas the Romans were painted as strong, rich, and powerful, the Jews were weak, poor, and lacking in power. However, this dichotomy of power caused deep seated hatred to brew within the Jewish class, lead by the priests; "It is their impotence which makes their hate so violent and sinister, so cerebral and poisonous."<sup>50</sup> Thankfully for the Jews, whereas the Romans were powerful in a superficial manner (relying on money and weapons), the priests were the "most intelligent haters." Driven by hatred and keen intellects, the Jews came to overpower the Roman not with weapons and money, but morality. Whatever was Roman was deemed 'evil' or sinful, thus anything that was Jewish was made 'good' (where previously what was 'good' was what was Roman and what was 'bad' was anything that was non-Roman – 'evil' had yet to arise since it was the Roman coining the 'good/bad' and they were not fueled with the anger of the Jews). The masses, or the "herd" as Nietzsche refers to them, fell in sway with this morality and thus the Jews came to dominate the Romans for to be Jewish was to be good, and to be otherwise made one into "the 'evil enemy,' the Evil One."<sup>51</sup> This will to dominate, spurred by hatred, and lead by priests strong with a WTP (as noted above in a line from Nietzsche), allowed the Jews to triumph over Rome.

Finally, one need only look for the 'gems' of Nietzsche in which he raises the WTP as *the* drive of the willing being. "The great and small struggle always revolves around superiority, around growth and expansion, around power – in accordance with

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<sup>50</sup> GM: I, VII

<sup>51</sup> GM: I, X

the will to power which is the will to life.”<sup>52</sup> Whereas other scholars assumed the fundamental drive of living beings was self preservation, Nietzsche saw that what best fit what he saw in life was struggle, overcoming, and growth – a complex plethora of drives that constitute the WTP – and not just merely self preservation or other interpretations made upon life. Hence the passage above in which Nietzsche claims “life is *will to power*.”

To sum up, let us attempt to congeal the above to state what WTP is according to the writings of Nietzsche’s writings. WTP is a mythological story that explains that the fundamental will of living beings is that beings strive for growth, overcoming of subjective and objective obstacles, and the satisfaction of gaining a sense of volition. While Nietzsche does not dismiss drives such as for love or food, and the wills we would correspond to those can be said to be the ‘will to love/food,’ what gives us satisfaction in acting on these drives is not the love or food itself, but the feelings above that come with satisfying a drive – one gains a little sense of power (in that power is taken in the complex form to encompass the many different sensations above). However, it is important to note that in Nietzsche’s mythology, there is no other will besides the WTP, though the WTP manifests itself in many different drives (hence the multiplicity of drives one experiences and not just a single drive). Though, keep in mind that satisfaction of those drives does not satisfy the drive itself, but one’s WTP.

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<sup>52</sup> GS: 349

### III. Reductionism in The Will to Power

#### A. The Will to Power as a Reductionist Theory

At last I can stop teasing the reader and delve into the thesis I proposed above. As stated in the introduction, I believe that one can interpret Nietzsche's idea of the WTP as a reductionist theory based on a certain view of his writings. I must admit that this idea has been most prevalent in my discussions of Nietzsche, including instances in which I taught several classes on *The Genealogy of Morals*. This view relies on the numerous instances in which Nietzsche refers to concepts such as "free will," "freedom of will," and "freedom from will" as misinterpretations, illusions, or mere farces. However, if he so passionately attacks what is generally accepted of freedom – that persons are free – then the WTP no longer becomes a 'will' but a driven or force, and the human is reduced to something analogous to an automaton drive by a set command called the WTP.

Nietzsche's writings are rife with attacks on freedom, so I shall list a few passages and elaborate on those which show his attacks at their best.

We no longer have any sympathy nowadays for the concept ‘free will’: we know only too well what it is – the most disreputable piece of trickery the theologians have produced, aimed at making humanity ‘responsible’ in their sense, i.e. at *making it dependent on them*... People were thought of as ‘free’ so that they could be judged and punished – so that they could become *guilty*.<sup>53</sup>

[The person who wishes to judge] requires the belief in a “free subject” able to choose indifferently, out of instinct of self-preservation which notoriously justifies every kind of life... [It is] the sublime sleight of hand which gives weakness the appearance of free choice and one’s natural disposition the distinction of merit.<sup>54</sup>

One has much to work with in just these two passages. It is clear that Nietzsche is attacking “freedom” in the context of moral culpability. In order to judge a person as having done something right or wrong, it must first be established that they choose to act such-and-such a way and then acted out that way; this is simple moral philosophy. Thus, in any situation, there is an agent X and an act A, and if X does A ‘freely’ or without extraneous pressure from an external source, they can be held responsible for their actions. Yet, as discussed above, Nietzsche believed that the ‘doer’ and the ‘deed’ cannot be separated as he has harshly stated “But no such agent exists... the ‘doer’ has simply been added to the deed by imagination – the doing is everything.”<sup>55</sup> Agent X and act A are, then, really intertwined with each other in that there is only A, or that X is A. This may seem a bit of a stretch in that it appears that Nietzsche is claiming that there

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<sup>53</sup> TI: “Errors,” 7

<sup>54</sup> GM: I, XIII

<sup>55</sup> GM: I, XIII

are only acts, and not agents, but this is a simplified view. Let us take up the Bird of Prey as written in *The Genealogy of Morals*. When the prey of the birds looks towards the Birds (and if they had the capacity of reason and language), they would perhaps say that the Birds are evil for eating them. Though, ask the Bird of this and they may look at you “quizzically” and state that they are only acting on their nature – they are Birds of Prey, and thus feast on prey; “To expect that strength will not manifest itself as strength... [is absurd].”<sup>56</sup> The Birds, along with agents, are defined by what they do, what they are driven to do by their wills; to expect otherwise would be to expect the Birds of Prey to be not Birds of Prey. Thus, X is a scholar in that they are willed to be a scholar or is a glutton in that they will as such and so forth.

From the passages above one sees clearly why Nietzsche believes the will was made ‘free.’ As said above it was to allow judgments to be made on the actions of others and to subvert people to a system of rules that made one out to be ‘good’ or ‘evil.’ Our language began to follow suit and became entranced by these concepts such that one began to use ideas such as ‘freedom’ and ‘responsibility’ in a way that was in accordance with the above. Though, if people such as Nietzsche were preaching the illusions of ‘freedom,’ it can be asked why people kept these concepts. He states

It is certainly not the least charm of a theory that it is refutable; it is precisely thereby that it attracts subtler minds. It seems that the hundred-times-refuted theory of a “free will” owes its persistence to this charm alone; again and again someone comes along who feels he is strong enough to refute it.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> GM: I, XIII

<sup>57</sup> BGE: 18

The charm came twofold for Nietzsche. First, he saw people as unwilling to give up a sense of responsibility for one own and other's actions which allowed them to their merit statuses of being 'good' or 'evil.' One could admit that to be called good or to understand oneself as good does bring with it a sense of pride or, for a lack of better words, goodness. It also allows one to see themselves as part of the 'better' groups in society, not akin to the 'evildoers.' Second, by saying one is free and can be 'affected' by outside forces then one could shift responsibility onto those forces. This could be borne of numerous reasons, such as "an inward self-contempt," but by saying one is free, one can point at the 'evil' forces in society as reasons for their actions. If I can show within reason that my poor childhood upbringing caused my life of crime, I can shift responsibility off myself since, as a free being, I was 'affected' to be such a person.<sup>58</sup>

If one was keen enough, he/she will point to an above quote in which Nietzsche uses the phrase "freedom of will" in a positive light. However, it must be noted that "freedom of will" takes two forms in Nietzsche's writings. The first has been discussed so far and is the concept of freedom which Nietzsche harshly criticizes. The second is in conjunction with the sense of one's ability to satisfy one's desires, or their sense of volition. This is seen when he writes that

"Freedom of the will" – that is the expression for the complex state of delight of the person exercising volition, who commands and at the same time identifies himself with the executor of the order – who, as such, enjoys also the triumph over obstacles, but thinks within himself that it was really his will itself that overcame them.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> BGE: 21

<sup>59</sup> BGE: 19

Thus, this concept of “freedom of will” is merely a phrase that describes the delight one takes in acting on their desires. This fits together with Nietzsche’s overall idea of the WTP and how one gains pleasure from action.

Before summarizing this section, I wish to discuss what I feel is Nietzsche’s final ‘nail’ in the concept of ‘freedom’ which in turn will lead one to the dilemma of reductionism.

*No one* is responsible for simply being there, for being made such and such a way, for existing under such conditions, in such surroundings. The fatality of one’s being cannot be derived from the fatality of all that was and will be.... One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, one *is whole*...<sup>60</sup>

This sets before the reader many views. First, one is, let us say, Z (in that Z is a composite of qualities, personalities, and so forth that allow us to define a person and who they are) only because they are born as such. We commonly look at one’s upbringing, surroundings, and so forth to give us reason to believe one came to be Z because of outside factors, along with some internal factors which is the concern of psychiatrist. However, for Nietzsche, one is Z only because he/she is born that way and not because he/she was “brought up on the streets” or was “born with a silver spoon in their mouth.” Second, what one ‘is’ is a necessary thing. Just as a claim that God is a necessary being means that God cannot, in any world, be not God, claiming that one being Z is necessary carries with it the implication that one cannot have been otherwise. If, by following my desires, I come to be a scholar, then under Nietzsche’s views I would claim that it would always be that I was a scholar, and while I may not have manifested

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<sup>60</sup> TI: “Errors,” 8

the qualities as readily in my toddler years, I was fated to be a scholar when I grew up. The ramifications of all the above passages and the one directly above lead one to what I see as a bleak view of the person as a non-person.

Look at what we mean by the word “person” in everyday context. When asked to define a person, we tend to say that they are free in that they are responsible for their actions or that they are always changing in that yesterday I was such-and-such a way (i.e. a mad valet) and today I am something new (i.e. a happy scholar). It seems that ‘freedom’ in the sense that we use it and that Nietzsche attacks is integral with being a person. Yet, what if I were to circumvent this idea of freedom from the person? I claim that when one is born, he/she is fated to be such-and-such a way and that this is a necessary thing that cannot be altered by any force. Think of the “Star Wars” movies in which characters continuously are told that they are doomed to be a certain type of person because “It is [their] destiny.” I then tell you that these concepts of ‘freedom’ that we use are mere products of persons who wish to moralize us, to control us under the banners of ‘good’ and ‘evil.’ What one is left with is that a person would no longer suffice to be a person to us. Instead, they are reduced to an automaton in that they are analogous to a machine made with a specific purpose, and while the machine may not be used for that purpose at first, it is fated to assume its ‘proper’ role. This is much against a Sartrean idea of a person in which one defines oneself in the choices they freely make; hence one’s existence precedes their essence – one must exist and then act in order to define themselves. Instead, the person’s existence and essence exist simultaneously – they are Z and act in accordance to being Z just as the wind acts as wind and is defined as wind at the same time. Yet, let us not forget what it is that defines us according to Nietzsche, or what drives us to be who we are. Our fundamental drive is the WTP and nothing else. This is what Nietzsche states in his writings as discussed above. Therefore, the person, in these readings of Nietzsche is reduced, and therefore

Nietzsche appears to us as a Reductionist in his view of the WTP. We are what our WTP is. It is here that we arrive at the dilemma of Nietzsche and where I wish to begin my next section in which, in the face of the above, I wish to ‘rescue’ Nietzsche and show that while Nietzsche can be read as a Reductionist, in fact one can make the case that he is not in this context of the WTP.

## B. Rescuing the Will to Power from Reductionism

In order to ‘rescue’ Nietzsche from Reductionism, I believe we must look at his works in context of why they were written. Let us look at his attacks on the moralization of the will, or the use of ‘freedom’ to make people responsible for their actions. I feel confident in saying that one effect of constructing a moral theory and subjecting a society to the rules that follow from them acts to ‘tame’ the members of society. Nietzsche writes that justice was practiced and maintained as an effort to “regulate the senseless raging of rancor among [persons],” or better put it attempt to regulate a person to keep them from acting in unharmonious ways that would destabilize the social order.<sup>61</sup> Think of a society in which there were no laws and one may have trouble maintaining the idea that the society is just that and not an assortment of people living together and acting with little fear of “the man.” It could be said that this ‘taming’ was for the better and one can point to the goods which justice has bestowed upon societies practicing it, but Nietzsche saw otherwise.

To call the taming of an animal its ‘improvement’ is to our ears almost a joke. Anyone who knows what goes on in menageries will doubt that a beast is ‘improved’ there. It is weakened, it is made less harmful, it is

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<sup>61</sup> GM: II, XI

turned into a diseased beast ... It is no different with the tamed human being whom the priest has 'improved.'<sup>62</sup>

He saw morality, at least that which was practiced and promoted by the priests, as a means of "breeding" a specific type of humankind, one who is submissive to their doctrines. Since Nietzsche saw the priestly morality as a pervasive theory that had soaked into society since the Jews subverted the Romans to Jewish morality, he saw this as an epidemic. The reason being was that the priests were ascetics, and as written above, the ascetic life was contrary to life itself to Nietzsche. For him, life was to be rejoiced in a Dionysus-like atmosphere, in which humans live to affirm life, to accept their desires and partake of them to lead a life of pleasure. In a sense, Nietzsche calls one to live life. He writes that many things, such as "hardness," "danger in the ally and the heart," "the art of experiment and devilry of every kind," so forth and even their opposites can serve "the enhancement of the species 'man.'"<sup>63</sup> In being 'intoxicated' by life's plentitude of desires, we can see life as something grander and more swollen of goodness; with humankind sensing a life "charged with energy" they begin to transform, in their minds, life into something more perfect.<sup>64</sup> Against this, the ascetic ideals drive one to go against life. As Nietzsche writes, "The kind of inner split we have found in the ascetic, who pits 'life against life,' is nonsense."<sup>65</sup> While the ideal may have arisen in need of man to find meaning in his life, as Nietzsche sees it, its end result or continuous use has led persons to a "will to nothingness, a revulsion from life, a rebellion against the principle conditions for living."<sup>66</sup> The ascetic tells us to deny certain things in life, but Nietzsche instead tells us to affirm those things, to embrace life instead of turning from it.

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<sup>62</sup> TI: "Improvers," 2

<sup>63</sup> BGE: 44

<sup>64</sup> TI: "Untimely," 8

<sup>65</sup> GM: III, XIII

<sup>66</sup> GM: III, XXVIII

However, such a life affirming view of living is castrated in societies and people's desires are subjugated to morality, where one may come to feel 'guilty' for, perhaps, feasting on great food instead of nibbling on bread and drinking only water. For these reasons, Nietzsche adds in the very same section where he deems persons as "fated" beings

That no one is made responsible any more, that a kind of Being cannot be traced back to a *causa prima*, that the world is no unity, either as sensorium or as 'mind', *this alone is the great liberation* – this alone re-establishes the *innocence* of becoming.<sup>67</sup>

Perhaps the great importance of this is that the "fated" passage comes into a different context than it appears in the section above. Nietzsche saw life as something that is always becoming through growth, exercise of volition – through the WTP. Also note that when Nietzsche saw everyone was necessary and fated, he never said what we are necessarily nor what we are fated to be. Since he was responding to the claim that one is responsible for being who they are, what I believe Nietzsche is telling us here is that we are fated to be ourselves, that we are necessarily who we are; who I am is something unique and not driven by haphazard forces such as my surroundings, etc. While tautologous, Nietzsche is perhaps simply saying that "I am who I am." We are constantly becoming, and yet who we become is being attacked by moralities, and to gain a sense of "great liberation" one must champion the calls Nietzsche makes above.

Nietzsche is also attacking with 'freedom' the concept of responsibility. In his discussion of the priestly morals, it appears the he is discussing a moralized sense of "freedom" as opposed to a qualification of action. We know that one is

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<sup>67</sup> TI: "Errors," 8

punished based on the acts they are said to 'freely' do, as mentioned in passages from *The Genealogy of Morals*. However, what this instantiates is an ideology in which person are only responsible for their actions. This, for Nietzsche, is a narrow use of responsibility; we are responsible for more than we merely intend and voluntarily do. The Bird of Prey is not responsible for just acting as a Bird of Prey, but is responsible for being a Bird of Prey, or having the essence of one. To shift to persons, I wish to use myself. I consider myself a homosexual male because of my sexual attraction to other men and a lack of attraction to women. Based on the priestly system, I am condemned and coerced to feel guilty for acting as a homosexual since it goes against their 'sexual purity' views. The problem is that I should not just feel responsible for acting, but for being. Within myself I find drives that lead me to look at members of the same sex in a different light than the opposite; I find within myself the 'will to homosexuality.' To throw out our inner world, to focus responsibility just on actions, negates this important factor of the person, and Nietzsche's critiques illuminate us to this fact. One is responsible for their will and drives, though instead of being covered in the blanket of 'guilt' or 'bad consciousness,' Nietzsche's writings have a joy in them that tells the reader "Don't moralize, accept!"

One can envision a battlefield from the above passages, in which on one side are the priests moralizing and subjecting society, on the other Nietzsche in full armor and mace. The hatred with which Nietzsche saw moralizing of the will, of human beings, according to the priests is not to be doubted in his writings. Therefore, I believe that an explanation for the attacks made on freedom come from this deep seated despise of Nietzsche's and his wanting to champion a philosophy of life affirmation. The problem he faced, though, was that the priestly morality had been absorbed by the European

cultures and practically laid fasten in the crevices of his society's culture. In order to 'shake up' this institution, Nietzsche needed to attack as a doctor who attempts to remove a cancerous tumor – with precision and strength. The concept of 'freedom' was being used to deem society's members as 'good' or 'evil' according to a system which Nietzsche saw as being against life; society was being pressured to feel guilty in affirming life and to follow ascetic ideals. In a sense, it was being abused. Nietzsche instead saw freedom in a light that was beyond the moralizing priest's perception. Instead of 'freedom' being used to condemn, it was in turn used to celebrate one's volition, their ability to live life according to their desires. It is here that I believe Nietzsche's idea of 'freedom' takes on the meaning that we associate most with it – to live according to one's will. He says most elegantly, in fact

Independence is for the very few; it is a privilege of the strong. And whoever attempts it even with the best right but without inner constraint proved that he is not only strong, but also daring... <sup>68</sup>

Here he speaks of independence from inner constraint, which can be interpreted as the pangs of guilt and bad consciousness that arise when one begins to moralize their desires.

Remember that the WTP has with it, being a will in Nietzsche's writings, an element of 'command' and 'obedience.' Within the person, their desires demand to be satisfied, and the person obeys these desires. However, if the fundamental drive of the willing being is growth, overcoming, and exercise of power, there are numerous ways in which one can achieve this drive; for one command, say "overcome," there are numerous ways in which to obey. For Nietzsche, he called for us to celebrate this, not to

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<sup>68</sup> BGE: 29

become bogged down in concepts of 'good' and 'evil' divined by life-denying priests. In fact, if the priests, or ascetics, actually began to admit that they are actually affirming their WTP or life, he perhaps would embrace them. He states the "I have great respect for the ascetic ideal so long as it really believes in itself and is not merely a masquerade."<sup>69</sup> The ascetic embraces power, but instead of externalizing it, they internalize it and attain a sense of "power over oneself." I feel hungry, but instead of dining on a plethora of food I simply eat a small portion, denying myself greater satisfaction though my hunger desire may be strong – I exert strength over myself. Yet, to Nietzsche, the ascetic, instead of admitting to such a lifestyle, they attempt to claim what they do as pious, as acts done for the good; though he envisions such claims as "fake idealism, fake heroism, and fake eloquence."<sup>70</sup>

It is here I believe I have 'rescued' Nietzsche and have shown that in light of other writings and thoughts, he is not a Reductionist and nor does the WTP suffer from such a theory. True, in Nietzsche's mythological story of explaining willing beings, he states that they are all driven by the WTP. Yet, in his writings Nietzsche sets forth to not admonish 'freedom' or 'responsibility,' but to expand them. Nietzsche does have a sense of liberation and freedom, but instead of being 'chained down' by morality and justice, Nietzsche attempts to move such concepts "beyond good and evil."

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<sup>69</sup> GM: III, XXVI

<sup>70</sup> GM: III, XXVI

#### IV. Conclusion

It is here that I wish to end my essay for I believe my task is done. I hope I have been able to show the following ideas: First, that the WTP is a mythological story of Nietzsche's created in order to explain the world around him. It is not metaphysical nor empirical, but mythological in its power to give one a set of lenses to look at the world in order to give one a sense of meaning out of the chaos. Second, that based on certain readings of Nietzsche one can construct an argument that Nietzsche is a Reductionist who reduces the person to an automaton driven by the WTP. His swift and brutal attacks on 'freedom' and 'responsibility' leave one very little room to say otherwise. However, finally, I greatly trust that I have been able to 'rescue' Nietzsche from this Reductionist view. I attempted to show that he in fact only attacks the concepts above because of the problems of 'moralizing' the one's drives and actions, and that one should expand these notions in order to gain a better appreciation for what it means to be free and responsible. Before ending, I wish to leave the reader with a passage from Nietzsche, or to allow him to have the last word

Rather has the world become “infinite” for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretation...* Alas, too many *ungodly* possibilities of interpretation are included in the unknown, too much devilry, stupidity, and foolishness of interpretation – even our own human, all too human folly, which we know.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> GS: 374

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