

RETHINKING
THE NIETZSCHEAN
CONCEPT
OF 'UNTIMELY'

EDITED BY ANNALISA CAPUTO

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We shall refer to Nietzsche's original text by citing the appropriate volume (and aphorism or page) of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe* [KSA], compiled under the general editorship of Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari and based on the complete edition of the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGW), W. de Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1967 ff. References to the print editions of letters published by de Gruyter are cited as *KSB* (*Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe*) or *KGB* (*Briefe: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*), in this case we will indicate: date, number and recipient of the letter. References to Nietzsche's juvenilia appear in *Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Hans Joachim Mette and Karl Schlechta, 9 vols. (C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Munich, 1934–40). We used also the precious *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe* – Digital version of the German critical edition of the complete works of Nietzsche edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari: Nietzsche Source.



MARCO CASUCCI

THE UNTIMELY AS AN ASCESIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: BETWEEN SCHOPENHAUER AND NIETZSCHE

The aim of this contribution is to highlight the possibility to investigate the relationship between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in the light of the concept of the «Ascesis of Consciousness». Beyond the differences and the quarrels which animated the relationship between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer — a great passion which ended in very strong criticism — it is in fact possible to underline how the idea of an ascetical philosophy is very strong for both of them, even if determined by different declinations. In particular, in this contribution, the idea of an «ascesis of consciousness» will be related to the concept of the «untimely», which represents, in the horizon of Nietzschean philosophy, the first impulse to an elevation of mind in the direction of an overcoming of temporal finitude. As will be made clear, both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were strongly orientated towards an elevation of thought in its experiential dimension, as it was able to grasp the essence of that eternity which lies beyond the finitude of the empirical and, thus, temporal experience.

In this sense, the expression «ascesis of thought» — coined by the Italian philosopher Moretti-Costanzi — is what makes it possible to find the *fil rouge* which links Schopenhauer to Nietzsche in an over-historical way. In particular, the idea of an «ascesis», which borrows from the Greek term the significance of «exercise» and «experience», and from Latin the significance of an elevation (*ascensus*), is recalled by both thinkers here considered as the deep need they had to indicate a difference between ordinary experience, as determined by the finitude of temporality, and the eternity as that summit in which the consciousness regains itself in its original dimension.

The experience of the ascesis of consciousness, therefore, will bring us to take into account the possibility to re-read the relationship between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche as animated by the same horizon of sense, by virtue of which the elevation of the experience of thought will lead to the definition of two different states of mind, or «levels». These levels of consciousness are defined by the movement of the ascesis itself in its bringing the consciousness from time into eternity. As a result these levels of consciousness can be thus determined: one as the level of temporality and finitude, and the other as the level of eternity,



where everything is transfigured in the concrete experience of the genius. The figure of the genius, therefore, will be the critical point of this contribution, as the major heritage of Schopenhauerism that can be found in the determination of the Nietzschean untimely, and which will also remain in the other summits reached by Nietzsche in his meditation, such as in that other fundamental figure of the Nietzschean thought: the *Übermensch*.

From this perspective, the present contribution aims to highlight the following elements: after a delineation of the figure of the Genius in Schopenhauer's masterpiece *The World as Will and Representation* as the level of the «authenticity» of consciousness, the Nietzschean reception of the doctrine of the genius in the *Untimely Meditations* will be analysed, in order to examine, in the final section, the doctrine of the «levels of consciousness» in both thinkers, as described in Schopenhauer's *Early Manuscripts*, and recalled in the further directions of Nietzschean thought.

1. *The Schopenhauerian Doctrine of the Genius in 'The World as Will and Representation'*

As is well known, the doctrine of the genius is presented by Schopenhauer in the third book of *The World*. Here, after having illustrated, in the first two books, the dimension of the representation along the principle of sufficient reason, and that of the will as the «thing in itself» as it emerges on the limits of the knowledge, the hermit of Frankfurt proceeds to investigate the dimension of «pure» knowledge, as long as it is freed from the forms of the principle of sufficient reason and from the dominion of the will. For Schopenhauer, the object of this pure knowledge is the «Platonic idea», the true correlate of the vision of the «pure subject of knowledge», as freed from the dominion of time and will. If the world of representation, founded on the principle of sufficient reason, is oriented to the kaleidoscopic multiplicity of the objects in its fragmentation, by contrast, the will, conceived by Schopenhauer as the Kantian «*an sich*» which is disclosed beyond the «veil of Maya», can be considered as its correlative negation. The knowledge of the idea is characterized by a double detachment, accomplished by the «pure» subject of knowledge regarding the representation as much as the will as its negative condition and background, on which the objective world is projected in the multiplicity of its forms.

The idea can be grasped as a «pure object» only if it is offered outside the conditioning elements which transform the «thing in itself» into something which is «for us». Thus, the «object» should be freed from all those forms which enclose the object in the horizon of a limited representation. «Representing»,

for Schopenhauer, means no more than annihilating the «pure» object by reducing it to a mere scheme of relationships of subjective illusions. Time, in particular, is the form through which the consciousness reduces the object into the sum of the changes of its states, by exchanging its duration for the abstractness of the concept. The subject of the representation is completely dominated by the temporality at its roots, and neither can it completely free itself when, practicing its higher intellectual operations, the subject itself is deceived to detach from the «fundamental bass» of the temporality. Undoubtedly, the entire analysis developed by Schopenhauer in the first two books of *The World* is no more than a reduction of the gnosiological dimension of consciousness to basilar temporality as the playground of all its representations. The result of this reduction is an implosion of knowledge, by virtue of which the world is mined at its roots, and it manifests itself as «a dream without a dreamer». As Schopenhauer himself states:

Wie in ihr jeder Augenblick nur ist, sofern er den vorhergehenden, seinem Vater, vertilgt hat, um selbst wieder eben so schnell vertilgt zu werden; wie Vergangenheit und Zukunft [...] so nichtig als irgend ein Traum sind, [...] eben so werden wir die selber Nichtigkeit auch in alle andere Gestalten des Satzes vom Grunde wiedererkennen.¹

This is thus the condition of the transcendental subject submerged in its temporality, for which the whole world is a kaleidoscopic confusion of determinations in which permanence in the flux of time can only be gained by the abstractness of the concept. That determination of time as a basilar element of the gnoseological consciousness can be considered as the starting point from which arises the Schopenhauerian doctrine about the inconsistency of the world, which finally results in the negativity expressed by the «will», which is the negative «noumenon», disclosed beyond the forms of representation. In this sense, the first two books of *The World* are finalized to open the space, so that the real target of the work can be achieved. A target which, paradoxically, is not given by the mere opposition between «representation» and «will», as the title of the book itself would indicate, but rather by the necessity to introduce a soteriological doctrine which is destined to end in the *Noluntas*, the negation of the «will» as a thing in itself.²

1 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Bd. 1, hrsg. von Arthur Hbscher, (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus 1972), §3, p. 8.

2 The interpretation of the Schopenhauerian philosophy has a huge bibliography. Here I want to recall some title of Italian interpreters who oriented my inquiry:

Therefore, while time takes a step back and is deconstructed in its relativizing power, it is given the space for the manifestation of a different level of sense, in which there is a possibility to re-build the fragmented mosaic of the representation:

Die Zeit ist bloß die vertheilte und zerstückelte Ansicht, welche ein individuelles Wesen von den Ideen hat, die außer der Zeit, mithin ewig sind: daher sagt Plato, die Zeit sei das bewegte Bild der Ewigkeit: αἰῶνος εἰκὼν κινητὴ ὁ χρόνος.³

The Platonic quote leaves Schopenhauer's inspiration in no doubt. The contemplation of reality beyond the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and thus beyond the «will to live», frees the space for the manifestation of the idea as the true «thing in itself». Rather than the multiple variety of objects which find only a partial unity in the abstract concept, the idea brings in itself the presence of a concrete unity that can be found in an integral experience that allows the dispersive rays of knowledge to gather into a single focus. The idea is the vision of the things from a non-temporal point of view. The sense of this contemplation, rather than being scattered into pale abstract forms, is capable to manifest the real essence of the world. As Schopenhauer will state in the *Parerga*, recalling the experience in the visual arts:

Die Auffassung einer solchen [Ideen] aber erfordert, daß ich, bei Betrachtung eines Objekts, wirklich von seiner Stelle, in Zeit und Raum, und dadurch von seiner Individualität, abstrahire. Denn diese, allemal durch das Gesetz der Kausalität bestimmte *Stelle* ist es, die jenes Objekt zu mir, als Individuo, in irgend ein Verhältnis setzt: daher wird nur unter Beseitigung jener Stelle das Objekt zur *Idee* und eben damit ich zum reinen Subjekt des Erkennens. Deshalb giebt jedes Gemälde, schon dadurch, dass es den flüchtigen Augenblick für immer fixirt und so aus der Zeit herausreißt, nicht das Individuelle, sondern die *Idee*, das Dauernde in allem Wechsel.⁴

The task of art, and of the genius as its pro-ducer, is to allow the idea to be shown as the thing in itself, outside the relativizing relationships acted

Piero Martinetti, *Schopenhauer*, ed. by Mirko Fontemaggi, (Genova: Il melangolo, 2005); Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi, *Schopenhauer*, in Id., *Opere*, ed. by Edoardo Mirri and Marco Moschini (Milan: Bompiani, 2009); Giuseppe Faggin, *Schopenhauer, il mistico senza Dio* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1951); Leonardo Casini, *Schopenhauer. Il silenzio del sacro* (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 2004).

3 *Die Welt* 1, §32, p. 207.

4 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena*, Bd. 2, hrsg. von Arthur Hübscher (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1974) §206, p. 444.

by the representation. This is why, in the Schopenhauerian definitions of «pure» subject and «pure» object, which are used in the third book of *The World*, the accent should be stressed on the adjective «pure», rather than on the expressions of «subject» and «object» which have already been compromised by the speculative language of modernity. The adjective «pure» in this context refers to a different level of consciousness in which the relationship between the two terms is transfigured into something completely different from the usual gnosiological use. Art, in this sense, is capable of reawakening a radically different experience, in which things can shine in a different way, and are not clouded by the shadows of becoming. Art and genius can elevate the world and consciousness into a level of truth in which the true essence of things can be manifested in its eternity, in a qualitative vision whose intemporality is the sign of its purity.

A genius, for Schopenhauer, is one who can accomplish this elevation of consciousness by achieving an ulterior dimension, where everything shines in a different light. That is why the genius cannot share the point of view of the common man, of that «wholesale merchandise of nature» that fills the market square satisfied with its crass philistinism: «Zu diesem Allen kommt noch, dass das Genie wesentlich einsam lebt. Es ist zu selten, als daß es leicht auf seines Gleichen treffen könnte, und zu verschieden von den Uebrigen, um ihr Geselle zu sehn. Bei ihnen ist das Wollen, bei ihm ist das Erkennen Vorwaltenden».⁵ The third book of *The World* is completely permeated by the exaltation of the difference typical of the genius, as can be highlighted by the quotation given by Schopenhauer from The Gospel of St. John, which clearly presents the untimely dimension of genius itself: «Ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐμὸς οὐπὼ πάρεστιν, ὁ δὲ καιρὸς ὁ ὑμέτερος πάντοτε ἐστὶν ἔτοιμος».⁶

Eternity, for the genius, is untimely, and cannot be commensurate with the day-to-day becoming of time that always flows identically for the man born to die. As will be made clear, this is precisely the position taken by Nietzsche in the second *Meditation*. For Schopenhauer, the experience of the untimely dimension of the idea is rooted in the eternity of a vision, conceived as a liberation that elevates the mind into an original openness of reality. This is the fundamental sense of art, as revealed by Schopenhauer in his masterpiece:

Wenn man, durch die Kraft des Geistes gehoben, die gewöhnliche Betrachtungsart der Dinge fahren läßt, aufhört, nur ihren Relationen zu

5 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Bd. 2, hrsg. von A. Übscher (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1972), p. 446.

6 *Jo.*, 7:6; *Die Welt* 2, p. 447.

einander, deren letztes Ziel immer die Relation zum eigenen Willen ist, am Leitfaden der Gestaltungen des Satzes vom Grunde, nachzugehn, also nicht mehr das Wo, das Wann, das Warum und das Wozu an den Dingen Betrachtet; sondern einzig und allein das Was; auch nicht das abstrakte Denken, die Begriffe der Vernunft, das Bewußtseyn einnehmen läßt; sondern, statt allen diesen, die ganze Macht seines Geistes der Anschauung hingiebt, sich ganz in diese versenkt und das ganze Bewußtseyn ausfüllen läßt durch die ruhige Kontemplation des gerade gegenwärtigen natürlichen Gegenstandes, sei es eine Landschaft, ein Baum, ein Fels, ein Gebäude oder was auch immer [...], wenn also solchermaßen das Objekt aus aller Relation zu etwas außer ihm, das Subjekt aus aller Relation zum Willen getreten ist: dann ist, was also erkannt wird, nicht mehr das einzelne Ding als solches, sondern es ist die Idee, die ewige Form [...]: und eben dadurch ist zugleich der in dieser Anschauung Begriffene nicht mehr Individuum: denn das Individuum hat sich eben in solche Anschauung verloren: sondern ist *reines*, willenloses, schmerzloses, zeitloses *Subjekt der Erkenntniß*.⁷

The genius, as a «pure subject of knowledge», is at the same time beyond time and will. He manifests the peculiar mood of abandon typical of the consciousness devoted to the contemplation of the eternal truth. The consciousness leaves behind the frivolous curiosity typical of the gnosiological attitude, in order to open itself to the idea, where the thirst for knowledge is suppressed by the manifestation of the truth itself. The genius is thus someone that can contemplate everything «*sub specie aeternitatis*»⁸ by freeing himself and the world in a single transfiguring glimpse. In this liberation inside the essential bond of eternity, the genius contemplates the world, elevating himself to a level of consciousness in which all things change their significance by acquiring their own deepest truth. Also nature, which for Schopenhauer is normally identified as something negative, can be assumed in the vision of art as something beautiful; up to the point, that in the *Supplements to The World*, Schopenhauer cannot contain his enthusiasm, exclaiming: «Wie ästhetisch ist doch die Natur!».⁹ This expression sounds strange in the pessimistic context of the Schopenhauerian masterpiece, but finds its deepest meaning in the unassailable possibility of the vision of the genius that transfigures, in a work of art, nature itself in its beauty.

This is a struggle, that would animate the entire oeuvre of the hermit of Frankfurt: a conflict between the discovery of the negativity of the world,

7 *Die Welt 1*, §34, p. 210.

8 Here Schopenhauer quotes directly the Spinoza's *Ethics*: «*mens aeterna est, quatenus res sub aeternitatis specie concipit*» (B. Spinoza, *Ethica more geometrico demonstrata*, V, prop. 31, schol.; *Die Welt 1*, §34, p. 211).

9 *Die Welt 2*, p. 462.

as attested by the unconcealment of the will as the thing in itself beyond the illusions of the representation, and the raising of the beauty of the world in the contemplation of the genius and in the work of art. If, on the one hand, the world remains limited by its finitude and mortality, as is strongly expressed by the reduction of the world to the negativity of the will, on the other, the centrality of art and aesthetics in Schopenhauerian thought cannot be denied.

This struggle is what leads the reader of *The World* to its aporetic conclusion, which states the need for a complete negation of the world in the *noluntas*, as an announcement of an «epiphilosophy» which is destined to remain unconcluded. In the final chapter of the *Supplements of The World*, Schopenhauer criticizes the Spinozistic doctrine of a divinized world, or better, of a world which results as an expression of the glory of God, as if the last theoretical act of Schopenhauer was addressed to avoid the temptation of collusion between the transcendent perfection of what lies beyond the world and the world itself. The outcome of this struggle is consumed in the flesh of the genius himself, as the beauty which is manifested by his contemplation is submitted to an irreconcilable polarity. The genius is put in a tragic situation, inasmuch as the conflict between the pain and the beauty of the world, between the will and «pure» intellection, is acted out within him:

Im Ganzen und Allgemeine jedoch beruht die dem Genie beigegebene Melancholie darauf, daß der Wille zum Leben, von je hellerem Intellect er sich beleuchtet findet, desto deutlicher das Elend seines Zustandes wahrnimmt. — Die so häufig bemerkte trübe Stimmung hochbegabter Geister hat ihr Sinnbild am Montblanc, dessen Gipfel meistens bewölkt ist: aber wann bisweilen, zumal früh Morgens, der Wolkenschleier reißt und nun der Berg vom Sonnenlichte roth, aus seiner Himmelshöhe über den Wolken, auf Chamouni herabsieht; dann ist es ein Anblick, bei welchen Jeden das Herz im tiefsten Grunde aufgeht. So zeigt auch das meistens melancholische Genie zwischendurch die schon oben geschilderte, nur ihm mögliche, aus der vollkommensten Objektivität des Geistes entspringende, eigenthümliche Heiterkeit, die wie ein Lichtglanz auf seiner hohen Stirne schwebt: *in tristitia hilaris, in hilaritate tristis*.¹⁰

The image of Mont Blanc which is exposed to the light only in «rare moments» after days of gloomy weather, can lead us to the experience proper of the genius, which Schopenhauer himself would have experienced in his own life. That «rarity» which sometimes emerges over the pain of

10 *Die Welt* 2, pp. 438–439. Schopenhauer, in the third book of the first volume also recalls the verses of Byron, in order to underline the deep participation of the genius to the nature: «I live not in myself, but I become /Portion of that around me; and to me /High mountains are a feeling» (*Die Welt* 1, §51, p. 296).

existence is in fact typical of the genius. The summit of the mountain, lit by the morning sun, testifies to the possibility of a different state of mind, in which everything becomes light, by losing the weight of finitude, and inspiring a renewed feeling of the world.

However this gesture of the genius, the ease in which his art is given as a gift to the world, arises from the same pain that, for Schopenhauer, is present in the world as its unmoving condition, and that can only be eliminated with the whole world itself. It is as if Schopenhauer could not suffer the burden of existence faced by that lightness of the candid and pure summit of the mountain. A grace for the world does not descend from this summit, only the underlining of its constitutive mistake. That is why, in the end, the «play» of art is revealed as a trick, as a diversion for young and enthusiastic minds, that should be left aside, by breaking the bonds with the world with a complete renunciation.

The ascesis of consciousness in *The World* thus ends with a complete negation which should eliminate every tension between time and eternity, finite and infinite — because those tensions are painful, and pain is a mistake that must be eliminated from the world: «*pues el delito mayor per l'hombre es haber nacido*».¹¹

2. The Presence of the Schopenhauerian Genius in Nietzsche's 'Untimely Meditations'

The tension highlighted in the philosophy of Schopenhauer was probably assumed by Nietzsche in his early meditation. The unsolved struggle between being and existence is the fulcrum of Nietzschean reflection, evolving itself into the meditation concerning the overman and the eternal return.

So it is not a coincidence if the early Nietzschean reflection was oriented to the theme of tragedy, not only because of his philological studies, but also because of the Schopenhauerian inspiration received by the reading of *The World*. The theoretical question proposed in *The Birth of Tragedy*, also confirmed by the coeval writings on the same subject, concerns the problem of the relationship between the noumenal and phenomenal dimensions of art, in which the artistic «play» is permeated by a metaphysical sense as needed for the conciliation of being and existence: «Apollo konnte nicht ohne Dionysus leben! Das 'Titanische' und das 'Barbarische' war zuletzt eine eben solche Notwendigkeit wie das

11 P. Calderón de la Barca, *La vida es sueño*, I act, scene I; *Die Welt I*, §51, p. 300.

Apollinische!».¹² This can happen because the Apollonian dimension of the mask, otherwise the tragic hero, is necessary in order to catch a glimpse of the terrible aspect of nature, like luminous spots to heal the eye offended by the horrible night.¹³

The Greek genius which represents itself in the Attic tragedy is nourished by the possibility of that *harmonia praestabilita* between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, so that it becomes possible for Nietzsche to say that «nur als *aesthetisches* Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig *gerechtfertigt*».¹⁴ This statement is fundamental to understanding the profound sense of the text, as Nietzsche himself recalls in the *Attempt at Self-Criticism*, written as an introduction to a further edition. Here it is possible to find the answer given by Nietzsche to the struggle experienced by Schopenhauer between «art» and «truth». Schopenhauer diverted his attention from art precisely when he needed it the most. So the demand for art remained something fundamentally undisclosed in its full potential. On the contrary, Nietzsche reconsidered the importance of art, starting from the same metaphysical need presented by Schopenhauer: that problematic tension between the horror and the beauty of the world, as it is given in a cognitive sight, or as transfigured by the «illusion» of art. In this sense — as this contribution aims to show — the philosophy of Schopenhauer represented for Nietzsche, rather than a «subject of study», an *exemplum* whose betrayal was no more than a supreme act of fidelity to his «educator». For Nietzsche, Schopenhauer thus represented that figure of «genius» which he himself wanted to become. The hermit of Frankfurt was able to put the radical question concerning the «world» and «life» in all its dramatic dimension, as a fundamental question for the authenticity of the consciousness.

There is no doubt that, in the third of the *Untimely Meditations*, the figure of Schopenhauer is manifested as an example for Nietzsche, not as much as for the doctrine of the will — here almost not considered — but more

12 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 40. For Nietzsche's writings, when not otherwise indicated, the reference is always to the edition: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, herausgegeben von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München und de Gruyter, Berlin 1988² [KSA]. For the letters of Nietzsche and his correspondents, the reference is always to the edition: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Briefwechsel, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, de Gruyter, herausgegeben von G. Colli und M. Montinari, Berlin 1975 ff. [KGB].

13 Cfr. KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 65.

14 KSA 1, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 47.

for the deep yearning towards truth, typical of his philosophy.¹⁵ It becomes immediately clear that the significance of *Schopenhauer as Educator* is to highlight the «vital» aspect of the Schopenhauerian philosophy, for a life eminently devoted towards becoming eternal. The Nietzschean sense of debt to his master can be grasped in the same need for eternity, that both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche had as a fundamental element of their respective meditations, in order to rediscover their most authentic essence, beyond the limits of time and death.¹⁶

As Nietzsche says in the third *Untimely*, asking himself about the demand for a rediscovery of the self, beyond the depressing human condition: «Wie finden wir uns selbst wieder? Wie kann sich der Mensch kennen? Er ist eine dunkle und Verhüllte Sache».¹⁷ He concludes:

Dein wahres Wesen liegt nicht tief verbogen in dir, sondern unermesslich hoc über dir oder wenigstens über dem, was du gewöhnlich als dein Ich nimmst. Deine wahren Erzieher und Bildner verrathen dir, was der wahre Ursinn und Grundstoff deines Wesens ist, etwas durchaus Unerziehbares und Unbildbares, aber jedenfalls schwer Zugängliches, Gebundenes, Gelähmtes: deine Erzieher vermögen nichts zu sein als deine Befreier.¹⁸

Thus Schopenhauer as «educator» is for Nietzsche the symbol of all this: he is the liberator, the hammer beat that sketches out the unique form of the self that lies at the height of eternity as its unshakeable kernel beyond every time and will. It was in this sense that there arose the possibility to develop a relationship between the two philosophers that went beyond the explicit «saying», towards a deeper sharing of a common experience, rooted in that eternity which is always far beyond every historical position taken by the two thinkers.¹⁹

15 As a testimony of that it can be recalled the nietzschean works *Ueber das Pathos der Wahrheit* and *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, both in KSA 1, pp. 756–760 and pp. 875–890. Those writings are focused on the relationship between illusion and truth with a clear appreciation of the illusion and its power of disclosure of the truth, specifically in the work of art.

16 We are lead on this path by Nietzsche himself as in *Ecce homo* recalls, for what concerns the *Meditation* on Schopenhauer, that he didn't want to give an historical portrait of his master but the untimely sense of his work. Cfr. KSA 6, *Ecce homo*, pp. 320–321.

17 KSA 1, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, p. 340.

18 KSA 1, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, pp. 340–341.

19 For what concerns that continuity between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche from an esoteric point of view see in particular: Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi, *Sul prologo di Zarathustra (Nietzsche-Schopenhauer)*, in *Opere*, ed. by Edoardo Mirri and Marco

The only reasonable basis on which to establish a comparison between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer is the yearning towards eternity that can be considered as the common root of their thoughts. This yearning is clearly expressed by the tension they both felt towards the summit, considered as the height of an ascesis of consciousness from which every contemplation finds its final significance. This is what they both lived for and philosophized: their philosophies, beyond the differences and the critique that Nietzsche addressed on Schopenhauer, both concern the search for the truth, which is substantiated by a deep intimate experience of the eternity: an eternity that dissolves the fog of human historicity, in which man involves himself in the vain attempt of «evolution» or «progress».

The dialectic between time and eternity is the basilar element which creates a continuity between the two thinkers. In Nietzsche this element is developed for the first time in a clear way in the second *Untimely Meditation*. Here Nietzsche, precisely like Schopenhauer, criticizes the historical education of his times as something dead — thus incapable of creating a real movement of transformation of the ended existence towards the eternity: the only real and significant movement that life can create in itself. As it is clearly stated at the beginning of the second *Untimely*:

Wer sich nicht auf der Schwelle des Augenblicks, alle Vergangenheiten vergessend, niederlassen kann, wer nicht auf einem Punkte wie eine Siegesgöttin ohne Schwindel und Furcht zu stehen vermag, der wird nie wissen, was Glück ist und noch schlimmer: er wird nie etwas thun, was Andere glücklich macht.²⁰

The entire sense of this Nietzschean work is determined by a basilar concept, that beyond the different ways man is used to carrying the burden of the historical memory, what is really important is the capacity of rare human exemplars to reach the different level of the over-historic. This dimension is the only significant perspective in which history is overcome and finds its fundament: «*Das Unhistorische und das Historische ist gleichermaassen für die Gesundheit eines Einzelnen, eines Volkes und*

Moschini, (Milan: Bompiani, 2009), pp. 2705–2716; Id. *Ancora sul prologo di Zarathustra: Nietzsche e Schopenhauer*, in *ivi*, pp. 2717–2744, and Edoardo Mirri, *La metafisica nel Nietzsche* (Bologna: Alfa, 1961); Id. *Considerazioni sulla figura del superuomo*, in Pietro Ciaravolo (ed.), *Nietzsche-Stirner*, (Rome: B. M. Italiana, 1985) pp. 15–34, also in Id., *Pensare il Medesimo*, pp. 319–335; Id., *Storia ed eternità nel Nietzsche*, in L. Rossetti-O. Bellini (ed.), *Tempo e storia*, (Naples: ESI, 1984) also in Id., *Pensare il Medesimo*, pp. 337–366.

20 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 250.

einer Cultur nöthig»,²¹ says Nietzsche, but «das Unhistorisches ist einer umhüllenden Atmosphäre ähnlich, in der sich Leben allein erzeugt, um mit der Vernichtung dieser Atmosphäre wieder zu verschwinden».²²

Therefore, for Nietzsche, it is necessary that the field of historical memory and time, where finitude infinitely repeats itself as a wheel that continuously turns around itself, should be permeated by a «non historical atmosphere», as the only condition which make it possible for the greatest events to happen. In other words, it is impossible for Nietzsche to consider history without thinking of what is not historical, because only what is not historical and is thus «untimely» can be the condition that ensures that history «happens» and becomes effective as an event. There cannot be true historical action if it is only conceived as a mere reproduction of the historical becoming.

As Schopenhauer had already stated, without the contribution of the eternal atmosphere of the over-historic, history would be as in the «Gozzi's dramas», where nothing really changes and the masks always remain the same, for «Pantalone nicht behender oder freigebigter, Tartaglia nicht gewissenhafter, Brighella nicht beherzter und Kolombine nicht sitsamer geworden».²³

That is why Nietzsche, following his master, is allowed to say his «No!» to the historical culture of his time: «Mit dem Nein des überhistorischen Menschen, der nicht im Prozesse das Heil sieht, für den vielmehr die Welt in jedem einzelnen Augenblicke fertig ist und ihr Ende erreicht».²⁴ The over-historical man is the individual who is able to overcome the historical becoming, being fully conscious that there is no salvation inside the «process», inasmuch as it is only a dispersion and an empty repetition of what has always been: «Das Vergangene und das Gegenwärtige ist Eines und dasselbe, nämlich in aller Mannichfaltigkeit typisch gleich und als Allgegenwart unvergänglicher Typen ein stillstehendes Gebilde von unverändertem Werthe und ewig gleicher Bedeutung».²⁵

The substance of history is always the same, and every Caesar and Napoleon only repeats the tragic farce as a performance which is always renewed in the same way. Thus, even if a historical education would be possible, it should never be forgotten, for Nietzsche, that

21 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 252.

22 *Ibidem*.

23 *Die Welt 1*, §35, p. 216.

24 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 255.

25 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 256.

Die Historie, sofern sie im Dienste des Lebens steht, steht im Dienste einer unhistorischen Macht und wird deshalb nie, in dieser Unterordnung, reine Wissenschaft, etwa wie die Mathematik es ist werden können und sollen. [...]. Denn bei einem gewissen Uebermaass derselben zerbröckelt und entartet das Leben und zuletzt auch wieder, durch diese Entartung, selbst die Historie.²⁶

It is therefore no coincidence that Nietzsche, at the end of the second *Untimely*, returns to the over-historical as a conclusion of his meditation. The over-historical is considered as a remedy against the threat of the illness of historical science: «Das Uebermaass von Historie hat die plastische Kraft des Lebens angegriffen, es versteht nicht mehr, sich der Vergangenheit wie einer kräftigen Nahrung zu bedienen».²⁷ For Nietzsche, the remedies to the historical illness are the anti-historical and the over-historical, the only two forces that make it possible to give a new sense to the culture, starting from eternity as the unique point of view from which a real elevation over the finitude of existence and the historical being becomes possible:

Mit dem Worte ‘das Unhistorisches’ bezeichne ich die Kunst und Kraft *vergessen* zu können und sich in einem begrenzten *Horizont* einzuschliessen; ‘überhistorisch’ nenne ich die Mächte, die den Blick von dem Werden ablenken, hin zu dem, was dem Dasein den Charakter des Ewigen und Gleichbedeutungen giebt, zu *Kunst* und *Religion*.²⁸

Art and religion thus become the figures of that elevation of consciousness which make it possible for the genius and the saint to overcome historical finitude and to achieve a different level in which everything is transfigured in its own proper sense. It is therefore possible to say that the impulse to an ascesis of thought is strongly present, not only in Schopenhauer’s masterpiece, but also in Nietzsche’s meditation on the «untimely». This is a nearness that becomes more significant, as it will be shown that the young Schopenhauer elaborated a doctrine of the level of consciousness that fits, in an impressive manner, the deepest theoretical needs of Nietzschean meditation.

26 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 257.

27 Ivi, p. 329.

28 Ivi, p. 330.

3. *On Highest Mountains: Experiencing the Levels of Consciousness between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*

As has been highlighted, Nietzsche was able to read between the lines of the Schopenhauerian text, and to rediscover a thread which had already been developed by the young Schopenhauer. This is the distinction between «better consciousness» and «empirical consciousness»: two levels of consciousness on which the young Schopenhauer elaborated his early writings. In this distinction Schopenhauer established a difference between the level of the appearance, dominated by the time and the other forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and the level of truth and authenticity defined by the vision of the eternal ideas:

Jenes Bewußtseyn unendlicher Vergangenheit; dies Verwundern über das, was allein ich keinen Augenblick aus dem Auge verlieren kann, die Gegenwart; beydes ist Täuschung: aber vielmehr ist es zeitlicher Ausdruck meines überzeitlichen Seyns.²⁹

In this very early note from Schopenhauer there emerges the distinction between the temporal and over-temporal dimension of the consciousness and the dialectic relationship between the negativity of the first and the substantiality of the second. The meditation of the young Schopenhauer is in fact oriented towards the criticism and overcoming of temporality, in search of a clarification of that experience of eternity as the fundament of consciousness itself.

In the early writings of Schopenhauer the concept of will is rarely mentioned, only in connection with the empirical and limited dimension of consciousness. The will here does not assume the characteristics of the «thing in itself», as would happen in *The World*.³⁰ Instead of the distinction between «will» and «representation», the difference between «better» and

29 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß. Frühe Manuskripte (1804–1818)*, hrsg. von Arthur Hübscher, (Frankfurt a. M.: Kramer, 1966), n. 22, p. 15.

30 Cfr. Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, n. 86, pp. 62–63. Nietzsche became critic of the Schopenhauerian concept of «will» after reading Friedrich Albert Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*, (Iserlohn: 1866). In his critique, however, Nietzsche rediscovered in an unconscious way the doctrine of the young Schopenhauer, where the will was only an aspect of the finitude of consciousness. For what concerns Nietzsche, Lange and the critique to Schopenhauer cfr. Jörg Salaquarda, 'Nietzsche und Lange', *Nietzsche Studien*, 7 (1978), and Benedetta Zavatta, *La sfida del carattere. Nietzsche lettore di Emerson*, (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2006) p. 130, note 2.

«empirical» consciousness strongly highlights the distinction between time and eternity. What is in fact at stake in the notes of the young Schopenhauer is the idea of an ascesis that attempts to individuate the authentic dimension of a truth that can be declined in a personal way, beyond the limits of the empirical.

The thesis of this contribution specifically concerns the fact that the Nietzschean concept of «untimely» can be theoretically related to the ascetical dimension as shown by Schopenhauer in the distinction between «empirical» and «better» consciousness. Nietzsche glimpsed this element in his interpretation of Schopenhauerism, as he comprehended that Schopenhauer could become an example, an «educator», for future generations.

As a confirmation of the proximity between the two thinkers, their profound experience of the mountain can also be recalled, intended as a cypher of that height their thoughts were addressed to. As has already been suggested by a quote from the *Supplements to The World*, Schopenhauer connects the experience of the genius to the experience of altitude as the mark of its originality and authenticity. For Schopenhauer, the Alpine experience was inspired by his voyage through Europe in his younger years. This was immediately associated as a figure of philosophy:

Die Philosophie ist eine hohe Alpenstraße, zu ihr führt nur rein steiler Pfad über spitze Steine und stechende Dornen: er ist einsam und wird immer öder, je höher man kommt, und wer ihn geht, darf kein Grausen kennen, sondern muß alles hinter sich lassen und sich getrost im kalten Schnee seinen Weg selbst bahnen. Oft steht er plötzlich am Abgrund und sieht unten das grüne Thal: dahin zieht ihn der Schwindel gewaltsam hinab; aber er muß sich halten und sollte er mit dem eigenen Blut die Sohlen an den Felsen kleben. Dafür sieht er bald die Welt unter sich, ihre Sandwüsten und Moräste verschwinden, ihre Unebenheiten gleichen sich aus, ihre Mißtöne dringen nicht hinauf, ihre Rundung offenbart sich. Er selbst steht immer in reiner, kühler Alpenluft und sieht schon die Sonne, wenn unten noch schwarze Nacht liegt.³¹

31 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, n. 20, p. 14. A strong correspondence can be found in a Nietzschean note from 1874: «Denn vor nichts warnt uns die Schopenhauerische Philosophie mehr als vor dem Verkleinern und Vernebeln jener tauben unbarmherzigen, ja bösen Urbeschaffenheit des Daseins: durch nichts erregt sie das schauernde Gefühl des Erhabenen mehr, als dass sie uns in die höchste und reinste Alpen — und Eisluft trägt, um uns in den granitnen Urschriftzügen der Natur lesen zu lassen. Wer es hier aushält und wem die Kniee zittern, der mag nur schnell wieder in die Weichlichkeit seiner Verklärungsbildung hinabflüchten» (KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, aph. 34[21], p. 798).

The *pendant* of this citation is the note n. 277 where Schopenhauer says: «Auf den Höhen muß es freilich einsam seyn».³² Mountains thus become for Schopenhauer the metaphor of an ascesis where genius appears in all its significance: as a painstaking research of the truth that culminates in the apical and vertical experience of altitude. The mountain is thus the place where the pure vision of the «better consciousness» becomes possible in its attitude to overcome what is beyond time and its relativity. The «summit», in its standing out against the valleys, with its atmosphere qualitatively different from the «lower» places populated by every day man, by the philistine, becomes the symbol of the rarity of an emersion that cannot be silenced but rather asks to be explicated without compromise, in its wholeness, even if it cannot be comprehended by the majority.³³

That experience, which is basilar in the elaboration of the doctrine of the levels of consciousness for the young Schopenhauer, can be also considered of great importance for Nietzsche, who was devoted to altitude too, as a central element of his meditation. The theme of high mountains brings us directly to the second *Untimely Meditation*, where they are recalled as the image of the over-historical as it is announced by monumental history:

Dass die grossen Momente im Kampfe der Einzelnen eine Kette bilden, dass in ihnen ein Höhenzug der Menschheit durch Jahrtausende hin sich verbinde, dass für mich das Höchste eines solchen längst vergangenen Momentes noch lebendig, hell und gross sei – das ist der Grundgedanke im Glauben an die Humanität, der sich in der Forderung einer *monumentalischen* Historie ausspricht.³⁴

That aspect is also present in the Nietzschean *Nachlass*. In a fragment from late 1870 or early 1871, Nietzsche, criticizing von Hartmann's

32 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, n. 277, p. 169.

33 Very important is in this sense a note wrote by Schopenhauer on the diary of the refuge on the Schneekoppe, a summit in the Sudetenland: «Who can climb / and remain silent?». Who tasted the highness of a summit cannot remain the same, as signed by a verticality reached by the soul that Schopenhauer experienced as a testimony of a philosophy in its deepest essence. Among the climb of the Schneekoppe Schopenhauer climbed two many peaks during his travels around the Europe: the climb of the Mont Chapeau (Mont Blanc — Chamonix) and the climb of the Pilatus near Luzern. Cfr. Rüdiger Safranski, *Schopenhauer and the Wild Years of Philosophy*, ed. by Ewald Osers, (Cambridge (Ma): Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 49–51; David E. Cartwright, *Schopenhauer: a Biography* (Cambridge (Ma): Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 79–81.

34 KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 259.

idea of historical progress in the process of liberation from the will, writes: «Die Menschheit ist nicht ihretwegen da, in ihren Spitzen, den großen Heiligen und Künstler liegt das Ziel, also weder vor noch hinter uns».³⁵ Genius is here conceived as he who stands in the verticality of an experience that makes him someone unique, as the owner of a rare experience that cannot be confused in the repeatability of time that flows indifferently identical in every instant of its becoming. The fundamental idea that can be deduced from this quote is that there cannot be any salvation in the flux of time, because there is no redemption that can come from progress, but only in something that arising from the flux, that does not pass away.

In the same way, the task of philosophy should be to keep the mountain range of greatness intact, as can be read in another note from 1872: «Die Philosophie soll den *geistigen Höhenzug* durch die Jahrhunderte festhalten: damit die ewige Fruchtbarkeit alles Großen».³⁶ Once again it is possible to note that fundamental element of verticality, which is one of the most important figures of the rarity of genius, and of the eternal truth he is able to manifest.

The loneliness and rarity of the genius are recurrent themes in all the preliminary notes written by Nietzsche before the *Untimely Meditations*: in particular the notes preceding the II and the III *Meditation*, which underline the emersion of the ingenious in the eternal dimension typical of the level of consciousness reached in a stronger fashion. The eternity that is linked to genius is associated with the mountain peaks: the first one emerges from the flux of time, exactly as the summit of the mountain is elevated and illuminated over the foggy valleys. That fundamental experience of an emersion is the summit point from which the genius can project his light on the world and «make» history as a place in which the event stands in its exemplarity beyond time and space.

35 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, aph. 7[100], p. 161. This note is recalled in the second *Untimely Meditation* where Nietzsche states, always in quarrel with von Hartmann, that «das Ziel der Menschheit kann nicht am Ende liegen, sondern nur in ihren höchsten Exemplaren» (KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 317). A further indication on this theme can be also found in a note from 1874, after the publication of the 2nd *Untimely Meditation*: «Die großen Genien sind gewöhnlich in Fehde dagegen. Man denke an Goethe und die Gelehrten, Wagner und die Staatstheater. Schopenhauer und die Universitäten: es wird offenbar nicht zugegeben, daß die großen Menschen die Spitze sind, derentwegen alles andre ist» (KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, aph. 34 [15], p. 796).

36 KSA 7, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, aph. 19[33], p. 426.

The genius stands on the threshold of the instant, where everything is transfigured, realizing the possibility to see the world from a different point of view, in a verticality that makes it possible to understand all *sub specie aeternitatis*.³⁷ This is something that is at the higher level of every self, which can be disclosed, or remain a pure possibility.

This element, as we have seen, was also a problem for Schopenhauer in his early writings, as he delineated the figure of the aesthetical genius — a figure to which he was strongly attracted, up to the point of considering his own philosophy as an art, more so than a science.

The problem at stake here is the ontological possibility of a resurrection or transfiguration which is typical of an aesthetical approach to the world: how is it possible that in this world, in which finitude seems to be the last word of everything, in which everything is an illusion that must end in death, there can also be «beauty»? As has already been stated, Schopenhauer's answer to the problem is to renounce the «game» of art, in order to return to «serious things»,³⁸ by moving towards the negation of the will as the result of the ascetical course.

For Nietzsche, on the contrary, the direction to be taken is that of a deeper and more passionate affirmation of the aesthetical dimension: the beauty of the world cannot be put aside, but rather should be considered in all its tragic and contradictory value. As it happens for the beauty of the world, thus also the genius and the singularity of his experience cannot be abandoned to a mere *cupio dissolvi*: what is at stake here is the possibility of an authentication of the singularity that finds in the genius its exemplar figure.

Starting from this point, the theme of the summit of eternity is qualified as an affirmation of the self that overcomes the limits of finitude, becoming something different, like the «better consciousness» highlighted by the young Schopenhauer. This level of consciousness, even if it can be still linked with the idea of a speculative subject, as it is described by German idealism, cannot be understood without the exemplar names of those who revealed it to the world in its vivid concreteness, so that Schopenhauer could not absolve himself from indicating those exemplars with the names

37 As it has already been highlighted, this statement returns in *Die Welt 1* (§34, p. 264) with reference to the genius. Nietzsche himself in the second *Meditation* defines Raphael as a *natura naturans*, comparing him to a divine nature as in Spinoza was the eternal fundament of the world (cfr. KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, p. 410).

38 See *Die Welt 1*, §52, p. 316.

of Shakespeare, Raphael, Goethe, Byron, St. Francis, Marguerite Porete, Thomas More — to name but a few.

That is why, for Nietzsche, as a deep reader of Schopenhauer, what must emerge as the sense of every existence is the «monogram»³⁹ of a singular and concrete experience that is elevated over speculative knowledge, in order to return to experiencing ipseity in his own uniqueness.

39 «Und doch erwachen immer wieder Einige, die sich im Hinblick auf das vergangene Grosse und gestärkt durch seine Betrachtung so beseligt fühlen, als ob das Menschenleben eine herrliche Sache sei, und als ob es gar die schönste Frucht dieses bitteren Gewächses sei, zu wissen, dass früher einmal Einer stolz und stark durch dieses Dasein gegangen ist, ein Anderen mit Tiefsinn, ein Dritter mit Erbarmen und hülfreich – alle aber Eine Lehre hinterlassend, dass der am schönste lebt, der das Dasein nicht achtet. Wenn der gemeine Mensch diese Spanne Zeit so trübsinnig ernst und begehrlig nimmt, wussten jene, auf ihrem Wege zur Unsterblichkeit und zur monumentalen Historie, es zu einem olympischen Lachen oder mindestens zu einem erhabenen Hohne zu bringen; oft stiegen sie mit Ironie in ihr Grab – den was war an ihnen zu begraben! Doch nur das, was sie als Schlacke, Unrath, Eitelkeit, Thierheit immer bedrückt hatte und was jetzt der Vergessenheit anheim fällt, nachdem es längst ihrer Verachtung preisgegeben war. Aber Eines wird leben, das Monogramm ihres eigensten Wesens, ein Werk, eine That, eine seltene Erleuchtung, eine Schöpfung: es wird leben, weil keine Nachwelt es entbehren kann» (KSA 1, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, pp. 259–260).