

# Nietzsche's Nose

Hannes Nykänen

## *The Crime*

For a reason that might be connected to the theme of my paper, Nietzsche's philosophy has rarely been criticised in a way that would address his basic, moral ideas. Of course, some would probably protest at the suggestion that Nietzsche had any basic moral ideas in the typical sense. In the present paper, I will show that Nietzsche had a quite ordinary, basically Kantian, view of ethics. His central, philosophical task: to re-value all higher values, indicates this. As I see it, ordinary – which means: collective – ethics *is* an ethics of value and normativity. Values found norms, and normativity establishes normality. Re-valuing values is thus to stay within ordinary ethics.

The core of Nietzsche's critique against the values that have determined philosophy and morality is that they, since Socrates, have constituted a "no" to life. Such a no to life is characteristic of what he calls slave-morality, which culminates in Christianity. I will show that Nietzsche, after all, shares the basic features of this morality. My critique of Nietzsche's moral ideas will thus at the same time be a criticism of some very general, common views of morality.<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche's ethics does not differ in any substantial way from common views. They just reach a higher pitch in his thought. I will also show that what Nietzsche takes to be his special, philosophical gift, is part of the negativity that he takes himself to be criticising.

Christianity, particularly Protestantism, is in Nietzsche's view a terrible and insidious denial of life: "Christianity, that *denial of the will to life* become religion!" (EH 91). And as he also puts it: "the cross as the distinguishing mark of the most subterranean conspiracy ever heard of – against health, beauty, well-being, intellect, *kindness of soul* – *against life itself* (AC 91)."

This is a familiar Nietzschean theme of course. The character of this theme is, perhaps a bit surprisingly, quite closely related to the *way* in

<sup>1</sup> But, someone might ask, why would "general, common views" be reducible to Kantianism? Short answer: Kantianism expresses the morality of general views of morality, utilitarianism the political use of it, and virtue ethics its behavioural patterns.

which Nietzsche, according to himself, managed to unmask this truth about Christianity. Since he did not arrive at this truth either by way of rational argument or moral reasoning, it is worthwhile to reflect at the way he thought he had come to see this "crime against life", for it was this alleged ability that made him able to start unmasking Christianity – an event which seemed to him to be a catastrophe without equal. The task is obviously not an easy one:

Not to have opened its eyes here sooner counts to me as the greatest piece of uncleanness which humanity has on its conscience, as self-deception become instinct, as a fundamental will *not* to observe every event, every cause, every reality, as false-coinage *in psychologicis* to the point of crime (EH 101).

Here we begin to see the magnitude of the problem, the denial, at hand: it is self-deception become instinct at a, well, global level. We also get an indication of the kind of problem we are dealing with, for Nietzsche characterises it as uncleanness. But what is one to make of the reference to conscience? How does "not to have realised the uncleanness of something" become a matter of conscience – and, if this needs specification, a matter of highest urgency? And what does it mean to speak about the conscience of humanity? Or does Nietzsche mean the consciences of all human beings taken separately? Further, if "Remorse of conscience is indecent" (TI 33) as he says in another place, why is there any problem with having something on one's conscience? It is a well known fact that Nietzsche thought that having a conscience at all is indecent – it is a sickness to be cured from.

Whatever the case, what we are dealing with according to Nietzsche is the "*ghetto-world* of the soul" that "Christian agitators" like St. Augustine, "filthy fellows", introduced into the world (AC 87). It is this kind of rottenness; rottenness of soul-issues (Is he thinking of rotten souls? Or is "soul" that which is rotten?), that Nietzsche thought he was the first one to detect. How does one detect such rottenness? One needs to have what Nietzsche thought he had, an extraordinary decency:

It is my fate to have to be the first *decent* human being, to know myself in opposition to the mendaciousness of millennia...I was the first to *discover* the truth, in that I was the first to sense – *smell* – the lie as lie...My genius is in my nostrils...I contradict as has never been contradicted and am none the less the opposite of a negative spirit. I am a *bringer of good tidings* [...] (EH 96)

This passage, which presumably is not in favour among postmodernists, gives us some indication of the "ghetto-world of the soul" that Nietzsche has in mind. But what rottenness, what lie, what self-deception become an instinct, is he thinking of? Generally speaking, he is talking about the rottenness of "Christian instincts". But what exactly are these and what is the smell that Nietzsche was the first one to sense? What are the truths that his nose reveals? Truths that other philosophers have completely missed because they supposedly have lacked the nose requisite for discovering them. In fact, Nietzsche does not speak about truths in the plural but about truth, The Truth. It is the nose that leads Nietzsche to The Truth. Does it also lead us to the "good tidings" that he claims to deliver?

What kind of Truth is it that is revealed by the nose? Is it a truth that only the nose can perceive? If this is the case, the above passage does not tell us why truth is supposed to be like this, for there Nietzsche says only that it is the lie as lie that is exposed by his nostrils. But surely lies can be detected in other ways too. For instance, one can hear the falseness of a false reasoning or see through deceptive thinking. So how should we understand The Truth that Nietzsche has discovered? There are several indications in Nietzsche's work. Let us look at one of them. It communicates distinctly the intensity of Nietzsche's perception. What Nietzsche states here comes just after he has lamented on the way the blond beast has been tamed into a "household pet":

– At this juncture I cannot suppress a sigh and one last hope. What do I find absolutely intolerable? Something which I just cannot cope alone with and which suffocates me and makes me feel faint? Bad air! Bad air! That something failed comes near me, that I have to smell the bowels of a

failed soul! . . . Apart from that, what cannot be borne in the way of need, deprivation, bad weather, disease, toil, solitude? Basically we can cope with everything else, born as we are to an underground and battling existence [...] (GM 25)

Nietzsche cannot stand failed souls. Let us for the moment set aside the category of “failed souls”. I feel a certain unease in my soul at the thought of this categorization, but let me come back to this later on. My unease is not about anything that, in any sense of the word, smells; that is detectable by the nose. Nor is it about anything that shows itself. Not even anything, that whispers in my ear. Just a certain unease. Let me however leave this issue for the moment and instead focus on Nietzsche’s reaction.

Nietzsche claims in many places – just as he does in the previous quotation – that he is good at enduring suffering. And without doubt he was in some sense "dynamite". Still, he cannot deal with the smell of a failed soul – it makes him choke. He cannot stand it *on his own* (*womit ich allein nicht fertig werde*). Nietzsche occasionally confesses suffering from certain weaknesses but is this one of these occasions? Is he not rather explaining how he has been able to detect the truth with capital T? We are making contact with what Nietzsche himself characterizes as his genius. I want to attach attention to the fact that when Nietzsche thinks that he is accessing Truth, in this "event without equal" (EH 103), he says that he cannot stand what emerges, "the bowels of a failed soul", alone. Whom does he long for at this moment? He certainly does not long for being part of some herd. May be he longs for free spirits? “Free spirits” probably would not want to see themselves as constituting any herd – quite the contrary. But do they not nevertheless constitute a “we”, a collectivity of a certain kind? A collectivity that is characterised by "a rebellious, despotic, volcanically jolting desire to roam abroad, to become alienated, cool, sober, icy: a hatred of love [...]" (HH, 6).

Moreover, how can Nietzsche, who celebrates loneliness and scorns need of other people, say that he faces something that he cannot cope with alone? We are obviously dealing with a very special case. In this connection, it is also important to see the crucial role of decency – and I see no reason to add, "What Nietzsche calls decency".

It would be a typical move to draw the conclusion that what we have here is Nietzsche's tendency to fall into contradictions. Another line of thought would, by contrast, be to praise Nietzsche's depth and make claims about the inadequacy of the philosophical notions of truth and coherence. I will try to avoid both of these urges; urges that define philosophy and that are in my view two aspects of the same confusion. Or rather: different distortions caused by the same repression. Moreover, there are hardly more contradictions and paradoxes in Nietzsche's thought than there is in, say, Kant's.

### ***The Truth***

No matter how one interprets Nietzsche's concept of truth, certain confusing questions arise, confusions that do not go away even if one would not fall in with Nietzsche's gender stereotypes. For if, as Nietzsche says, truth is a woman (BGE ix), then he does not seem to approach it in a very manly way. Or was Nietzsche a transsexual? We need to leave this kind of tinkering with collective stereotypes, for they just deepen the confusion.

What smells is the lie; a lie that is said to deny life and find its deepest hypocrisy in Christianity. The odours of this lie is what Nietzsche cannot stand – alone. Given his perspectival and local, essentially postmodern, notion of truth, and that he praises lying, one can wonder why he becomes sick when facing a lie. One has to assume that the lie he has in mind is an unusual one.

At this point, placed before an idea of a philosophical Truth of the grandest dimensions, I feel like asking: What became of Anti-Christ? And of the pre-post-modernist? Why did Nietzsche, precisely at this point, make use of a concept of big truth? It is also here, in connection to this truth, that he states what it is that he cannot stand - alone. In making his statement, he lets out a sigh, a sigh that also expresses "one last hope" and "confidence".

Whence the sigh? Whence the impulse to suppress it? What is the hope about? And what is it that disposes him *not* to suppress the sigh but instead let it out? Is the impulse to let out a sigh so overwhelming that he cannot resist it? Or is there a third factor – perhaps the hope? –

which allows Nietzsche to re-interpret the sigh so that it becomes bearable? In that case, there would seem to be two moments in the sigh: The initial stage that, whatever else it signified, provoked an impulse to suppress it, and the second stage that, after re-interpretation was, figuratively, allowed to become audible. What could these two sighs signify?

I hope you forgive me my perhaps peculiar questions, but I cannot help ("Cannot help" – how peculiar that it makes sense at all to speak like this!) being curious about the kind of sigh that a philosopher, who makes himself known as a truth-basher, hesitantly lets out at a moment when he announces the arrival of a truth with capital T.

We must obviously try to study both Nietzsche's anxiety and hope and their possible intersections and even dependences. The kind of anxiety at stake clearly must have a striking weight. The anxiety presumably has a connection both to the truth that Nietzsche is about to reveal and to the incapacity he is giving voice to, the incapacity to endure alone the Truth that his nose reveals to him. In fact, it appears as if the grand truth would – strangely? - be a fruit of the incapacity. Perhaps the company he longs for is also essential to the arrival of this truth? This would be exceptional in many ways, not least because of Nietzsche's oft-stated need for solitude (for instance in EH 18). - Anyway, we must now scrutinize the smell at stake for the *Truth is in the smell*, or in the detection of it.

### ***The Smell***

Without yet saying anything about Nietzsche's incapacity – if that is the word to use – to deal with the smell, we can take note of the fact that he speaks about a smell that arises in a certain closeness to others; when others come close to him (*in meine Nähe kommt*):

May I venture to indicate one last trait of my nature which creates for me no little difficulty in my relations with others? I possess a perfectly uncanny sensitivity of the instinct for cleanliness, so that I perceive physiologically – *smell* – the proximity or – what am I saying? - the innermost parts, the 'entrails', of every soul...I have in this sensitivity

psychological antennae with which I touch and take hold of every secret: all the *concealed* dirt at the bottom of many a nature [...] (EH 18).

Here it becomes clear that what is at stake is not merely about detecting the rottenness of Christianity, nor even merely about detecting "failed" souls. Nietzsche smells the proximity of every soul. It is the proximity that smells. If someone comes too close to him, Nietzsche feels - "perceives physiologically" – the entrails of the soul of that person. What smells is, he says, the concealed dirt, "every secret", of that soul. Does this mean that what gives Nietzsche these...qualms?...is *the soul itself*? If so, then Nietzsche prefigures the modern psychologist and neuroscientist.

Anyway, this is the uncanny sensitivity, the genius, of Nietzsche's nostrils. And he makes it clear that he is not talking about being able to distinguish a failed soul from a "healthy" one: "*Disgust* at mankind, at the 'rabble', has always been my greatest danger...(EH 19)." He obviously does not think that the failed souls constitute some kind of unfortunate exceptions that disturb him. It is mankind itself that makes him sick. Just as he says, it is "every soul" – if a human being comes too close. The following passage from *Anti-Christ* – and here we meet the sigh again – makes the scope of Nietzsche's disgust quite clear:

I cannot, at this place, avoid a sigh. There are days when I am visited by a feeling blacker than the blackest melancholy – *contempt of man*. Let me leave no doubt as to *what* I despise, *whom* I despise: it is the man of today, the man with whom I am unhappily contemporaneous. The man of today – I am suffocated by his foul breath (AC 54)!

Let us postpone the suspicion – or is it wishful thinking? - that these passages show that discussing Nietzsche does not tell us much about human beings in general, because he is so obviously lacking in humanity.

In discussing his difficulty, Nietzsche points out that "extreme cleanliness" is a presupposition for his existence: "I perish under unclean conditions" (EH 18). Nietzsche tries to evoke literal, physiological, aspects of his cleanliness and he probably did connect his claims about his spiritual cleanliness to his bodily cleanliness and his liking for bathing and swimming. He also speaks about his liking for hiking high in the mountains in snow and ice, as if to emphasise his cleanliness and "*purity*". In this connection he makes a quotation from *Zarathustra*. The quotation is supposed to capture his "*redemption* from disgust". Zarathustra dwells in the "extreme heights" of the mountains where the coldness repels all "unclean men": "Their bodies and their spirits would call our happiness a cave of ice!" (EH 19). Also, "[t]he ice is near, the solitude is terrible" for those who are not made for it (EH 4).

"*Our* happiness"? - Yes, here we probably meet those "free spirits" in whose company alone Nietzsche can endure the smell we are discussing. However, he is a bit confused here, for in the company of these free spirits there supposedly is – almost – no closeness and no smell. What he means is probably that when someone gets too close to him, the *thought* of (with an eye to what will emerge it may be illuminating to say even *concept* of) these *cool* friends helps him endure the situation. I will come back to this cooling effect of the friend, but let us for the moment stay with the smell itself – though these two themes will merge.

We have seen that the smell seems to arise when people in general, not some particularly failed souls, come "too close" to Nietzsche. This means that, for Nietzsche, it is the *closeness itself* that is rotten; that smells. Now, since we today live in a *Zeitgeist*, by which I mean "collective illusion", of intimacy and closeness, it might seem that what Nietzsche says is very far from our current understanding of human relationships. This would be confused.

Nietzsche just expresses in his own way what people usually take to be the "problem" of love: to find a friend that has the same sense of distance and nearness as one has oneself. Kant discusses this same theme in terms of a balance between love, which he calls attraction, and respect, which he calls repulsion (Kant 2000, 215). In my view,



Kant here unwittingly describes a central aspect of a universal dialectics of repression. Kant notes that if one becomes "too close" with one's friend it could become the end of the friendship. His concern is highly relevant to understanding Nietzsche. The dynamics between attraction and repulsion that Kant discusses is the same dynamics that we find also in Nietzsche's predicament. Once this is seen, Nietzsche's worries appear to be quite ordinary and do not give us any reason for taking them as signs of an unprecedented capacity of revealing the Truth. On the other hand, Nietzsche's worries reveal the implausibility of Kant's account – and indeed also all ordinary, everyday accounts. An understanding of love where this dynamics is irrelevant would be one where a conception of human closeness and engagement is in no repressive way related to any conception that includes a function of secretly distancing people from each other. In other words: the love-respect dynamics would be irrelevant in a culture where the openness of love is not a problem. - Now, let us look at what Kant says.

For Kant, the other does not seem to be as repelling as it is to Nietzsche. Kant warns us of that "sweetness" of love that "approaches fusion into one person" and the background to this warning is telling. He asks namely, how a human being can

be sure that if the *love* of one is stronger, he may not, just because of this, forfeit something of the other's *respect*, so that it will be difficult for both to bring love and respect subjectively into that equal balance required for friendship (Kant 2000, 215)?

Without going to the oddities in Kant's thought here<sup>2</sup>, we must ask what the relation is between Nietzsche's disgust and Kant's dangerous sweetness.

It is important to pay attention to the fact that Nietzsche is not simply indifferent to people, for other human beings have the most profound "effect" on him. And in fact Nietzsche admits some of this quite

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<sup>2</sup>The problems in Kant's thought are no smaller than those in Nietzsche: for instance, earlier in the same work (p. 163) Kant quite efficiently rejected Aristotle's idea of virtue as a mean between two vices. Love and respect are presumably not vices according to Kant, but why would Aristotle's idea work any better with two virtues? And why is it even *needed* with virtues?

explicitly: "[M]y humanity consists, *not* in feeling for and with man, but in *enduring* that I do feel for and with him...(EH 18)"

This is in fact a striking statement. When one considers it, one sees that the difference between Nietzsche's disgust and Kant's sweetness becomes unimportant. The sweetness will according to Kant tempt us to become "too close" with the other and this will lead to loss of respect for the other. Kant does not explicitly say that if one loses one's respect for the other one will feel disgust for her, but it is clear that this is what he means. He says for instance that if one deprives oneself of one's duties to oneself one makes oneself into an "object of contempt", to a "*loathsome* object" (Kant 2000, 175, 179). So behind, or is it before?, sweetness, disgust lies in wait.

What Nietzsche says indicates that he *cannot help* feeling for others. According to Kant it would seem, that it is Nietzsche's loathsome lustfulness, the supposed "sweetness" of which tempts him to becoming too close with people, and then feel disgust for them. I think that this account is outright incredible as an account of love. Rather, it seems to be an account of an emotion that has its origin in a repression of love. I am thinking of a repression that occurs in connection to sexual behaviour, when one person feels disgust at having involved herself in a sexual relationship with another person whose closeness she cannot endure.

Nietzsche's disgust reveals unwittingly the implausibility of Kant's account, for Nietzsche says that simply being in the company of, one must presume "ordinary", people will make him feel disgust for them. Expressed in Kantian terms, it is as if he would constantly feel "too much" of the sweetness of attraction and be unable to create the repulsion that comes with respect. Consequently he feels disgust for others. In the extreme case we would have a situation where a person who has a "really strong" feeling of attraction, "love" that is, could not be among other people at all because she would immediately lose her respect for them and feel disgust for them. I will here take it for granted that what such a reaction – by some psychologists referred to with the term "highly sensitive person" – reveals is a case of *repressing love*, not of "loving too much" – which is a senseless notion. You cannot repress your love only with regard to one specific

person. Repression is, so to speak, global: love as such is repressed. This is what Nietzsche's disgust at mankind is all about.

Nietzsche's reaction reveals something that Kant's seemingly sober analysis sweeps under the carpet: one cannot regulate one's love by aid of social practices. We can "only" repress love (and this is of course unconscious – though "subconscious" captures it better – in a sense) but we are strongly *tempted* to think that one can regulate it along Kantian lines. The both historically, socially and geographically ubiquitous quest for respect (mafiosi and philosophy professors agree here) reveals the scope of that temptation. Nietzsche's heavy emphasis on decency is closely related to "respect" and so he shares with Kant, and with contemporary ethical views, one of the most widespread, severe and deep-seated confusions, namely that love presupposes respect. In contemporary versions respect has often come to be seen even as part of the meaning of "love". In fact, Nietzsche's longing for his friends, the free spirits, who also feel comfortable in the cold solitude of the heights, is a quite easily recognisable longing for respect.<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche's dream of a future superman is a dream of a collectivity that *would* be able to redeem him from his disgust; a dream of a notion of respect that *would* work, for the superman is possible only in a "severe" and "militant" collectivity. It is here that we touch upon the aspects of Nietzsche's thought that are, despite their apparent radicalness, quite common and highly appealing.

We see how Nietzsche's claim that it is in the cold heights of solitude that he discovered the things "excommunicated by morality" (EH 4), becomes doubtful to the same degree as his difficulties with closeness turn out to be a quite familiar case of ordinary moral problems – though cases like these are frequently not recognised as being moral.

Nietzsche is to some extent sensitive to what he is saying, when he characterises his "sensitivity", for in the middle of his characterisation, just when he has come to the closeness and the innermost parts of the other, he as if exclaims – between dashes – "what am I saying?". It is as if he would have been struck by a sense of unreality and as if he would exclaim in disbelief: "am I really saying this thing out loud?!"

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<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche is aware of his fantasy. In fact he says: "There are no such 'free spirits', were none - but, as I said, I needed their company [...]" Further, he hopes that "there *could* someday be such free spirits." (HH, 5)

To speak about smell is without doubt one of the most embarrassing things there are, and to speak about it in the "spiritual" sense that Nietzsche does, and in the way he does it, is even more embarrassing. One might think, if one thinks along the lines of collective morality, that Nietzsche's claim about being so decent becomes questionable, when one considers the embarrassment that he indulges in. However, given a certain repression, does not embarrassment go together with love? Embarrassment can be "absent" only if love would be absent – if that is thinkable. Or then, to mention a quite different but still related possibility: embarrassment is absent only to the extent love is not repressed.

Nietzsche does have an ambivalent attitude to love. On the one hand, he says about Zarathustra that, due to his "superabundance of light and power, through his nature as a *sun*, he is condemned not to love" (EH 78). Still Zarathustra says that his soul too "is the song of a lover" and that a "craving for love is in me that itself speaks the language of love" (EH 78, 80). Why this craving if, as Zarathustra says in the chapter on neighbourly love, love for the neighbour should be abandoned in favour of friendship? And why does Nietzsche allow Zarathustra to speak about his "soul" here? Because using this word is connected to "love"?

Perhaps Kant's take on love is lukewarm because he speaks about love in connection to friendship? Is it something like Kant's, at least apparently, more sober attitude that Nietzsche envisions? Kant seems to think that the "rabble" do not understand the importance of more balanced and distanced relationships – of friendship – and therefore get into an "excessive familiarity" tempted by the "sweetness" of "fusing into one person". They "fight and make up" without being able either to be together or split (Kant 2000, 216).

For Nietzsche, the relationship to the "rabble" seems more complicated. He has to struggle in order to free himself from his "greatest danger": disgust at the rabble (EH 18-19, 101). Wondering whether he has been understood, he says that his whole Zarathustra "is a dithyramb on solitude or, if I have been understood, on *cleanliness...*" (EH 18). You can "wash away" the foul soul only by

fleeing into the isolation of subjectivity – that true friend of philosophers.

Why do the issues we have touched upon seem to be so tightly tied together and yet so confusingly contradictory? We have love and its condemnation, ridiculing truth and the big Truth, celebration of solitude and longing for friendship – and even for the rabble, disgust at and attraction to the *same* "source", dirt of a kind where one must fight for attaining cleanliness in an epochal fight, "soul" as a location of dirt and as the core of love. Why is it so hard to specify the harmfulness of Christianity and to criticise its notion of love, a notion that Nietzsche, in order to make it seem dirtier, characterises as "*lust for one's neighbour*"? And why is he as if choking up again with this "what am I saying!" when he dismisses the Christian idea of love as the highest value (EH 102)?

### ***The Unavoidable***

There are four things about love that I feel I must point out in order to avoid certain confusions related to the issues at stake. First, there is a confusion that hampers most discourses on love, namely the identification of love with romantic falling in love. However, the latter with its idealisation, along the lines of collective values, of the beloved one, is in fact a repression of love – a repression where the repressed is acutely, even if subconsciously, present. Piling up all wonderful virtues that the beloved one is supposed to possess is in fact a typical repression in that it involves essentialising away the openness of love. The urgency of falling in love does have points of contact with the urgency of Nietzsche's predicament, the beloved one taking on features homologous to the features of Nietzsche's superman.

Secondly, love is not something we chose to have or not to have. What we can chose – if that is the word – is how far we dare to live out love, which means: how far we dare to live. Said in another way: we can repress love in various ways and to various degrees, but not erase it. Love "is there" just as life is. It is *this* "unavoidability" that is touched upon in Nietzsche's statement when he says that his problem is *enduring that* he feels for and with others.

Thirdly, love occurs between "You" and "I" – not between "us". "You" and "I" does not denote an exclusive relationship between two persons. It denotes the *realm of understanding* or, to put it less clearly but perhaps more accessibly, the grammar of fundamental address. This is what Nietzsche, like we all, have troubles with. "Meaning" is not a question of logic. - Buber's account of I-you understanding has, despite the importance of its emphasising the difference between I-you and I-it relationships, more problems than I can deal with here. Most importantly, since I think that religion is perhaps the most insidious repression of I-you understanding, Buber's supernaturalising claim that god guarantees the meaning of I-you understanding amounts to castrating this understanding. One of the many consequences of this castration is Buber's claim that guilt is some kind fundamental, existential predicament (clearly akin to "sin"), probably inspiring Heidegger to adopt a similar view. As to "love", I do not see how Buber could account for Nietzsche's "unavoidable" love for people, nor for the terrible disgust that he felt because of that love. In general, Buber ignores repression and mystifies I-you understanding and thus goes against the very grain of that understanding: its openness.

Fourthly, love involves openness as "engagement". To start with negative descriptions, openness is not about exposing yourself to another, nor in general about being limitless. It is, rather, about being (in the sense of abiding) in love, in a way where "I" "dare" to get in touch with myself *in that* I dare to get in touch with "you". This is possible only in what can perhaps be captured by the Swedish (I am not sure about the German) word *lust*. *Lust* is not desire, for *lust* is neither a lack nor something that can be satisfied. It is not an inclination, enjoyment, or drive but expresses something like a joy-with-you.

Desire is subjective and imaginary (and so is its correlate "pleasure") but to be in *lust* with the other is, precisely, not. In desire you do not care about the other's openness, and so you can imagine that she desires you even when she does not. Desire-pleasure is a repression of *lust*.<sup>4</sup> When you do not dare/want to be in the openness of *lust* with

<sup>4</sup> An important issue arises here, and I cannot help (well...) commenting shortly on it. In this repression two central, collective concepts arise: that of being man and that of being woman. Thus, *to the extent* that they act as "man" and "woman", human beings cannot be open with each other either sexually, or in any other way. But then we never are simply and only man and woman. In the openness of *lust* – and to the extent we dare to be in it – we "live out" our "being", but this being is not predetermined by collective ideas about gender, regardless whether the ideas in question are progressive or conservative. Another important thing to reflect at

the other you may still have desire for her. You can force yourself on the other out of desire but not out of *lust*. *Lust* can, but need not, be sexual. Like life, it encompasses "more" than sexuality.

The traditional meanings of the words joy and *lust* do not say it, but I understand this joy also as a joy of life. *Lust* is not reciprocal. It is not "exchanged" but it can be repressed. In repression one to a certain extent and sense withdraws from *being* in the openness of *lust* and in the perspective formed in this repression, the "residues" of *lust* emerge: desire, enjoyment, and drive. The first is what is exchanged in the relationless relation, the second what is savoured in the solitude of subjectivity and the third is the meaningless urge to repeat eternally this exchange.

In the openness of *lust*; in joy of life, you and me become living – as much as we dare. As long as you have life you have some *lust*, that is: some openness, that is: some love. This is life. It becomes relevant to say that this is *unavoidably so* only when we face a problem like Nietzsche's. Newborns literally die if left without contact to any "you". - The repression of *lust* that occurs in desire-pleasure is revealed with particular clarity in psychosis which without doubt is an indulgement in desire-pleasure and hence *precisely not* about being in *lust* with the other.

These four points will, I hope, avert some of the most obvious misunderstandings of what I mean. They also indicate why so many discourses on love, and sexuality, are confused. This also concerns psychoanalysis which, in the words of Mladen Dolar, is prepared to think of love as an "artificially produced", "highly pathological state" or "mechanism" that exhibits its "purest form" in the analytic situation (Dolar p. 84). Moreover, when Lacan says "love is, essentially, to wish to be loved" (Lacan 1998, 253), he goes totally astray. This can be seen already from the fact that if he would be right, no one would care a bit about love. An analogy might be clarifying here: someone who lacks sexual desire, as far as that is conceivable, does not care a bit about being *sexually* desired. Nor does she even know *what it is to be* sexually desired. There is no such thing as a *mere* wish to be loved.

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is how we should understand our problems with the "unavoidable". One of our deepest temptations is to place the unavoidability outside ourselves on external circumstances, for instance on our "destiny" of being born as men and women. In this repression we alienate ourselves from openness without wanting to see that what we cannot erase – Nietzsche's problem – is our "joy-of-life" with the other.

The wish to *be* loved becomes intensified: intensely repressed, to the same extent that one does not endure one's own preparedness to love.  
- Love as a joy-of-life, with the sexuality that goes with it, is something that no psychoanalyst will, *qua* psychoanalyst, ever encounter.

Allow me also to comment shortly on two important accounts on love, those of Kierkegaard and Scheler, for they share the same problem. Kierkegaard's account of love has the problem that, like other forms of repression, it "rescues" us from the "hardships" of love by introducing the function of a third person (more on that below). Only, it is a god who fulfils this function in Kierkegaard. (See Kierkegaard 2009, 314-15.) Scheler's account is hampered by the same problem – apart from the general problem with his value-theory. (See Scheler 2017, 230.)

### ***The Greatest Danger***

Let me begin discussing Nietzsche's problems with love by stating that I do not think that Christianity has much anything to do with love. It simply uses the term in a demagogic way just as capitalist demagogues use "free market" and communist demagogues use "democracy". Christianity does not have any – and could not endure any – developed idea of love. It only needs to repeat endlessly the word love in order to make shame and guilt surface. Christianity's conception of love is about as developed, as the one you can find in an airport-novel: a simple combination of an ordinary notion of moderation and a dialectic between altruism and egoism.<sup>5</sup> Love is taken to be "that" which "endures all things" as St. Paul says.

Why does shame and guilt surface when love is spoken about? Why is it embarrassing to use the word love – and perhaps particularly in a philosophical context? Why is it as if all intellectual *rigour* would go down the drain as soon as love is discussed – except if it is discussed in a cynical way? This impression of the "stupidity" of love is, contrary to what Lacan thinks (and here most philosophers would support him, see Lacan 1999, pp. 11 ff.), not on the side of love but on

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<sup>5</sup> This is so even in the more elaborate forms of it. Kierkegaard (2009, 339): "True love is self-renunciation's love."



the side of philosophy's inability to deal with it. In question is in fact philosophy's essential, sophisticated stupidity.

Why is it that people in general, just as the most educated specialists in psychology and philosophy, have equally huge confusions concerning love – for instance that love is blind? Or that it is an emotion, drive, instinct, spirituality, infatuation, reciprocal desire, deceptive narcissism, innate disposition...?

Nietzsche is in the grips of a problematic, the character of which he did not seem to fathom. Is love then not unfathomable? Here I want to pose a counter-question: who is it, and with an eye to what philosophical elaboration, that feels herself capable of making this judgment? How is one obvious problem to be avoided: that it is only the speaker who cannot deal with love and who, *smelling* this intolerable fact, projects it onto love itself? Such a projection becomes even more pernicious when it acquires "intellectual authority" from a community of researchers or therapists who take themselves to have detected one or two "essential features" of love and who thus think they have escaped "naïve" ideas about love. In fact, taking love to be something unfathomable, is a quite comforting idea – equally comforting as taking it to be narcissism. The question here arises whether not one's smelling that one finds it hard to deal with, to *endure*, love is the most intolerable "fact" that there is? Philosophy is replete with accounts where the openness of love is essentialised away. Philosophy is that essentialisation – love is openness (but not "by contrast"). This is why love lies "at the very heart of philosophical discourse", to transplant a phrase of Lacan's (1999, 39).

Why is the disgust at the rabble the "*greatest* danger" to Nietzsche? This does not become quite clear from the passages we have discussed so far, so let us look at another passage where this greatest danger is also touched upon. The passage is from the same chapter where Nietzsche expresses his disgust at "failed souls" but here he has moved on to lament on the "levelling of European man":

Right here is where the destiny of Europe lies – in losing our fear of man we have also lost our love for him, our

respect for him, our hope in him and even our will to be man (GM 25).

It would now seem that disgust at the rabble is a danger in that it arises because Nietzsche gets himself too close to the rabble. How does this happen? When European man has been levelled, mediocre and indifferent, Nietzsche says that he loses his love for man. When Nietzsche says he loses his love for the rabble, it comes *closer, too close*, to him and Nietzsche does not – may Kant help him! - find enough respect to push away the rabble. Disgust is the result. But is it not paradoxical to say that when the rabble comes too close, one loses one's love for man? Well, yes and no.

What Kant did not see is that if respect is lost, also the "love" he is talking about is lost. It is not that there is more, not to say "too much", of it. If one thinks of love as something mutual this is not surprising at all. But if one thinks that it sounds curious to say that when respect is lost one also ceases to love, it is because one has a hunch that love is not reciprocity.

One could say that it is the universal problem of man, that man longs for a love where the distance to the other is appropriate according to her own tastes. If the other comes "too close", this will destroy love – *from the perspective of the person who feels like this*. But in this perspective it is of course never conceived of as being about the other coming too close, but about the other lacking in respect. From the second person's perspective – and, to be a bit obscure: from the second person perspective – however, the first mentioned person's love is felt to be distant and lukewarm. It is only the first mentioned perspective that is subjective, not the second. (Openness is neither a subjective nor an objective point of view: it is not a "point of view".) Kant, perhaps blinded by an upper-class narcissism, thought that there existed a consensus concerning the proper distance. Or perhaps it was just wishful thinking? May be it is wishful thinking that Nietzsche is up to, too? What is the wish about?

Nietzsche cannot stand the closeness of a "failed soul" alone. He needs the free spirits, or at least the thought of them: spirits that like to dwell up in the heights amongst snow and ice. Apart from these

heights, love for the European man would be possible only if there would still be *something to fear* in the European man. Why would fear have this effect? Well, if one fears a person one very obviously stands at a certain distance from that person. Fear too, is a principle of repulsion, to gesture towards Kant's dynamics here.

Nietzsche repeatedly spoke for cruelty and violence. The notion of a heroic warrior was important to him. To be a warrior in the classical sense means that neither blood, faces, urine, saliva nor any other bodily exudations disturb you. A warrior will not only be close to the entrails of other men; he cannot avoid to be splattered by all kinds of bodily fluids. However, this side of the warrior's life never seems to worry Nietzsche. Nor does it worry the warrior. Metaphorical dirt and smell are more unendurable than their concrete counterparts.

At this moment, it might be important to observe that even the so-called metaphorical smell will decrease in an hostile atmosphere (so much for "metaphor"! ). When you are raging at someone, you can throw out all sorts of truly intimate and personal issues. Cruelty and irony create a distance where you can without – almost without – any qualms harshly criticize a person by referring to intimate issues. And you have no troubles placing your growling face just one inch from the other's face – something you perhaps would never have done otherwise with this person. In Swedish we have the expression '*läsa lusen av*' (to read the lice off someone) for such criticism.

The louse is a symbol for dirtiness and smell. In rage, you can without visible problems (safe for the rage of course), attend to the other person's metaphorical entrails. And is not Nietzsche's philosophy in many ways a discourse of such a rage? When you take enough distance in one regard, you can allow yourself to attend to intimate details in another.

Another depiction of the disgust we are talking about can be found in Sartre's *Nausea*. Here we encounter a discussion on love for mankind and this makes the situation difficult. This discussion makes the main-character, Antoine Roquentin, react in the following way to the words of the Self-Taught man:

I can't speak any more, I bow my head. The Self-Taught Man's face is close to mine. He smiles foolishly, all the while close to my face, like a nightmare. With difficulty I chew a piece of bread which I can't make up my mind to swallow. People. You must love people. Men are admirable. I want to vomit - and suddenly, there it is: the Nausea (Sartre, 62).

Distance dilutes the disgust. But metaphorical smell is something you can feel only when there is a closeness that is alarming. Nietzsche's problem is the disgust: the lack of distance, his inability to keep distance. Has Nietzsche been led to his obscenely explicit judgments on "failed souls" by being *unable to resist* that he *does* "feel for and with" these souls? What a strange problem – or is it? He needs aggression in order to, try to, keep these "failed" souls at bay, and he envisions a superman who would not care a bit for others, who would have overcome this "feeling for" - a feeling which Nietzsche despises – in himself too.

As to the sigh I have been discussing: Nietzsche seems to transform this sigh, before it even becomes one, from being a recognition of his difficulty with perceiving a fellow human being into becoming a hope for a kind of human being that, being *frightening*, would permanently "cure" Nietzsche from his "fate": his *unavoidable caring for the other*. He seems to be longing for a human being who, in being frightening, would not come close and whom it therefore would be easier not to care for in a "disturbing" way. He longs for "love" in its normal, collective sense, sung about by pop singers.

Is it this curiously incurable caring that Nietzsche has in mind when he calls himself a decadent? He does not see that he has repressed openness and distorted it into a disturbing limitlessness, and so he perhaps thinks that he is too human, that he is not yet the man of the future, the superman: because he cares. "It is only among *decadents* that *pity* is called a virtue. [...] I count the overcoming of pity amongst the *noble* virtues" (EH 13). (It should be obvious how much wishful thinking is loaded into the word noble.)

Nietzsche thinks that "giving in" for love and pity is a sign of weakness against stimuli and a lack of strength and will power. He

says that a "life that lies in love free from all [...] keeping of distances" is a consequence of a "morbid sensibility of the tactile nerves" (AC 46-47). This way of thinking is old in philosophy and it is repeated in another key by Freud and psychoanalysis. Love is taken to be a soft emotionality or an urge of narcissism, of nature, of *das Es*, etc., and only hedonists and weaklings (psychotics and perverts) give in to it and only neurotics let themselves be troubled by it. The "normally unhappy" person – that is: the "healthily" lukewarm person, in short: the Kantian – will not, normally, take that much trouble with these "urges", which both Kant and psychoanalysts regard as "pathological". Psychoanalysts celebrate the Kantian moral law which rests on *achtung*, because it provides a possibility to play out love against the law in a basically similar way as Kant himself does.

Nietzsche, together with the tradition that he takes himself to re-value, shares this deep confusion concerning love; a confusion that is the other side of his suffering, disgust, melancholy and aggression. Nietzsche had difficulties with being normally unhappy, and I doubt that any therapy would have helped him.

### ***The Friend***

At this stage it becomes relevant to bring in Nietzsche's imagined friend, the free spirit, that Nietzsche longs for when he says that he cannot stand the smell of a failed soul *alone*. With a view to what has emerged so far, it seems that this friend is rather important in that she at least in some sense ameliorates Nietzsche's disgust. Apart from closeness to a failed soul, Nietzsche can, as he said in the above quotation from GM, deal perfectly well with solitude, but with the failed soul, he needs a friend. The notion of the superman who has managed to get rid of pity and conscience does not seem to help Nietzsche here.

It is in some sense self-evident that a friend can comfort you in many ways, but perhaps the self-evidence of this self-evidence is not, after all, that self-evident? Anyway, Nietzsche's friends are supposed to be at home amongst snow and ice. Is this a crude, inhuman dream where Nietzsche fantasizes about friends that are actually projections of his own difficulties with human intimacy? I suppose it is tempting to say

"yes". And I say "tempting" because it does not seem to me to be particularly *inhuman* to think like Nietzsche.

Is it perhaps not common among us men that we fantasize about friends and spouses that would be our dream come true; a dream-wife or dream-husband – and even dream-children? Secondly, it might not be all that uncommon if this dream-friend would be imagined to have exactly the same sense of intimacy and openness as we, the dreamers, have. "Of course" it is also important that this partner challenges us but it is, paradoxically, equally natural that the challenge must lie within the limits of what *we* take to be "appropriate" challenge. So, in the end, we tend to dream about a duplication of ourselves, a duplication that, as if by magic, still would not be us. Nietzsche's dream seems all too human.

But, trying to locate the source of our dreams, a friend could cause us no small difficulties. The closer the friend is allowed to approach, the bigger the potential problems – as Kant saw. Though he thought that it is the *loss of respect* that poses the unavoidable problem. Love must be restricted. What a curious logic! As if love would be some kind of excess, like eating too much. (And does not Lacan's view come down to this too?)

What Kant feared was the loss of respect. For "once respect is violated, its presence within is irretrievably lost" (Kant 200, 215). Is this what had happened to Nietzsche? He could neither keep people at bay nor understand them in the light of love. Hence his disgust. He is like the jealous spouse who completely "humiliates" herself because she can neither love the other nor give him up.

When we have hard problems with a friend there arises, as a response to the problems, an idea of still another friend. This other, unknown – and unknowable! - friend appears in our dreams as an escape from the problems with the actual friend. It appears to be the essence of this unknown friend that forms our concept of friendship. The fact that an actual friend can perform the function of this unknown friend does not change anything.

Is friendship a dream? Something imaginary? Like dreams, this idea of a friend can disperse and so, in the depression that follows, it is tempting to say, as the wise man does: "Friends, there are no friends". But as we shall see, the concept of friend is in fact a collective, repressive function.

The dream-friend is distinctly perceptible in Levinas's idea of the other.<sup>6</sup> The other and I are according to Levinas asymmetrical in that I owe the other an "excessive generosity". This absolute demand of the other is a heavy burden but, Levinas says, then justice comes with the *third person*, with *sociality*, "human plurality" (Levinas 1999, 101-102). Levinas thinks that the I-you relationship is an asymmetrically reciprocal relationship. "I" just owe the other an excessive generosity. But when sociality – in the form of the third person – arrives, this excess is "subordinated to a question of justice".<sup>7</sup> What a relief! No wonder that Levinas says "Sociality, for me, is the best of the human. It is the good, and not the second best to an impossible fusion" (Levinas 1999, 103). One sees how "good" in its proclaimed moral sense is impossible to distinguish from subjective enjoyment – and enjoyment can only be subjective. For it is only to the subject; an entity isolated from both you and her "I", that sociality constitutes this "blessing".

It is easy to see that Levinas's notion of excessive generosity is an euphemism for the painful and disgusting unavailability of openness and *lust*. It is equally easy to see how his notion of sociality and justice fills the same function as Nietzsche's free spirits.

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<sup>6</sup> I will discuss Levinas not because he would emphasise collectivity more than others but because he, inadvertently, emphasises those features that I think are central for the repression that occurs in collectivity. In short: I think that Levinas's account is more profound than most others; it reveals the, as it were, fundamental repression. - In this connection I also want to remind the reader of the above references to Kierkegaard and Scheler.

<sup>7</sup> Here I just want to announce that a discussion concerning formality would be in place, for one of the forces that create the distance between "I" and "you" is formalisation: the idea that what is morally right and wrong is not a question about my openness with you but a question of formal correctness; of the formal-conceptual correspondence between action and moral essence, which too, is a formal construction. "Moral essence" is of course a polymorphous brew of various collective values that compete with each other as to what is the most relevant repression of love. Apart from that, the fear that is internal to subjecting oneself to moral law is in fact an aspect of the "repulsive" power of respect. Respect for the moral law, and for the other, also contains the rational agent's respect for formal reasoning, the kind of reasoning that is, in a rational and law-like manner, supposed to settle moral problems. This formal, law-like discourse would seem to allow the moral agent to dwell in her own subjectivity. What Heidegger says about respect is not all wrong: "Respect is the mode of the ego's being-with-itself." (Heidegger 1988, 135) But then there is Nietzsche's case. - All in all one can say that respect is the rational equilibrium of loneliness.

With Levinas we meet again the idea of the fusion into one person. Where does this idea come from? From the beginning of time? I cannot discuss the idea of fusion here, but let me just note that this idea suffers from a serious *confusion* that is usually, perhaps since the beginning of time, completely overlooked: that, to the extent it makes sense at all to speak of such a fusion, this fusion would, to that same extent, make the other quite harmless; to a duplication of yourself, or of your illusions. It makes no sense to speak of an excessive generosity towards – nor of an overwhelming disgust for – an other that vanishes in fusion (though it is another aspect of the issue, that if we would get a friend that would appear to us as a duplication of ourselves, we would soon start to despise her).<sup>8</sup>

But there is the smell. This smell could not possibly originate from an other with whom one would have vanished in sweet fusion. The smell shows without doubt that someone is there; someone who is not I. I have called it a you. The "problem" with "you" is that you bring me to my I; to be a human being who, in daring to be an I, dares to be open to another human being. The you is not I but still it is not a *not-I* either. The you is neither same nor other; neither identical nor different; neither familiar nor alien. This *neither nor*, which is unintelligible to both ordinary and philosophical thinking, shines through in our problems with openness. For it is not possible to determine whether the smell, the smell of fear of openness, originates from "me" or "you". And does not Nietzsche's extensive washing and bathing reveal, that he is not too sure?

Or perhaps the smell originates from both? But if both would smell, and be aware of this fact, there would be no problem – like between two persons who have both eaten garlic. But Nietzsche tries hard to make it appear as if it would be precisely the other who smells. He

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<sup>8</sup> There is such a thing as fusion of persons but it is a collective phenomenon, the grim aspects of which are well captured in the following passage where Jonathan Haidt quotes a veteran – only, Haidt thinks this fusion is the foundation of morality; he does not see either the grimness or the religious-phantasmagoric undertones of it:

Many veterans who are honest with themselves will admit, I believe, that the experience of communal effort in battle [...] has been the high point of their lives [...] Their "I" passes insensibly into a "we," "my" becomes "our," and individual fate loses its central importance [...] I believe that it is nothing less than the assurance of immortality that makes self sacrifice at these moments so relatively easy [...] I may fall, but I do not die, for that which is real in me goes forward and lives on in the comrades for whom I gave up my life (Haidt 2012, 240).



does not seem to take his obsession with cleanliness as an indication that he might have a subconscious fear that it is he himself who smells. Anyway, *the smell arises in the isolation created by repression*. The smell also indicates that the isolation has not been completely successful (and it can never be): the other is still there. Naturally, this smell is now, as far as possible, projected on that "repulsive" other while, at the same time, the fear is that it issues from oneself. The smell is the unlocalisable, unerasable residue of repression; it is a synesthetic sensation of the self-disgust that goes with the alienation that I have created between me and you.

Nietzsche's statement is in a certain sense right: it is the *closeness* of another soul that smells – and we all know the disturbing meaning of this. But now, what is the relationship between this horrible Nietzschean smell and Levinas's excessive and unsettling generosity? One could say that this Nietzschean smell will remain even if you manage to escape, with the help of justice, from the demand that seems to underlie the Levinasian generosity. Also, there is a curious common "feature" in both notions, something that is perhaps not exactly excessive, not declared to be rotten, not perceived as a danger but something from which one is "saved" – not without residue – with the help of a third person: the you.

It is the third person, correctly identified with sociality by Levinas, who saves one, as far as this is possible, from the you. In Nietzsche's case one would have to add: the society of free spirits – or perhaps a society of fearful warriors. How can society have this extraordinary effect? Well, has it not become obvious? Because it creates distance. Collectivity is our commonly created distance-nearness or love-respect dynamics. It is closeness, the repressed analogue to openness, that smells. Not any closeness of course, but the closeness that takes you *closer* to me than I can *endure*. In fact, "justice" with the sociality that goes with it does have something of the fearfulness Nietzsche longs for, for it is backed up by a power that does create distance – "fresh air" – in society.

Society does not "save" us by specifying the proper distance but by infusing distance into love. This is done by establishing "moral law", a law that is upheld by the value of respect: by the principle of

repulsion that restricts the smelly "attraction" of love. One could call this the cultural castration of love.<sup>9</sup>

"Castration"? Well, I think that the openness of love that is here constrained, is an aspect of life. To say "no" to it is to say no to life. That is what Nietzsche is doing. I think it is misleading to call this destructive urge "death drive", but obviously there is something right about that.

### **The Power**

It is not only justice that comes with the third person. With the third person also arrive other aspects of the third person perspective: norms, values, duties, traditions, practices, rites and (collective) morality in general. As we have seen, these things do not come as it were *from* the outside. They come *as* the outside of the terrified human being who in repression creates for herself an inside that she hopes can be isolated from the frightening you, who is banished as the outside, as "sociality". This illusory inside, subjectivity, needs an outside *recognition*, and that recognition consists in the collective, objective, morality, whose object-like objectivity is equally illusory and can never be established but whose repressive *pressure* is objective in the sense of: *appearing* to come from the outside. Here a critical discussion of Hegel's conception of conscience and recognition would be illuminating,<sup>10</sup> but what Nietzsche says in GS §117 reveals the basic dynamics.

Nietzsche thinks that in remote times conscience was different; that people abhorred free will and personal responsibility. What in those days gave pangs of conscience was if something hurt the herd. Nietzsche overlooks the fact that this tension between the individuality and collectivity is an essential characteristic of the the problem at

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<sup>9</sup> Probably not seeing the excess that disturbs Levinas, Raimond Gaita gives this respect an thoroughly excessive, "absolute", meaning. Here is how he responds to Kant's statement that "everything empirical" is injurious to morality: "That he [Kant] had a point can be seen by reflecting that it seems that no amount of lyrical improvisation on the love of our neighbour or on a sense of human fellowship, on our common mortality or on compassion, etc., will take us to the idea of unconditional respect for all persons, for reasons which are obvious and which Kant pointed out." (Gaita 2004, 41.) So love is something empirical! And is not the other side of "lyrical improvisation" on love precisely the *seriousness*, a word endlessly repeated by Gaita, of unconditional respect? Is it not by adopting this respect that love is, in secret awe, first sentimentalised, then kept at distance and finally ridiculed?

<sup>10</sup> A discussion of Lacan's empathetic account of Freud's horror of love for one's neighbour as well as Lacan's view of the connection between "you" and the "Thing" would also be in place here (See Lacan 1997). For more on this, see Nykänen 2019.

hand; of the "metaphysics of ethics". What Nietzsche says is inadequate in the same way as it would be to say of some older society that it is completely different than ours because they were so occupied with honour while we are occupied with shame.

The repression of I-you understanding creates the "inner", the "outer", and collective morality, and, being a repression of love, a disgust at love, it has a violent character. The essential aspect of this violence is *power*. Power is "repulsion" in that it creates an *effect* that side-steps openness and pressures people to act according to its demand. Power is an anonymous, distancing closedness in that it involves pressuring (forcing, threatening, frightening, seducing, flattering, persuading, buying, etc.) people to something, ignoring what they themselves think. When is one further from the other than when one tries to silence the other's own thought and to replace it with one's own? And how own are one's thoughts here? How far am I not from being an "I" when I try, using whatever ways that I think might work, to make the other succumb to my will; a will driven by subjective interests? How obvious it is that the words I utter are not my words but words who are calculated to have a certain effect.

Creating distance and non-understanding is the very point of collective morality (but all the things that follow suite – such as loneliness - are not equally desired). Why not ignore morality – which is what Nietzsche expects the superman to do? Well, that simply is unthinkable: what would it even mean? No wonder Nietzsche cannot give us any idea about it. He himself felt the drive towards collectivity; to his friends, the free spirits and "hyperboreans".

If collective morality would not be underpinned by power, it would become meaningless. What is a norm if there is no *pressure* to heed it? What is a duty that is never *enforced*? What is a right that one is not *obliged* to acknowledge? What is respect that cannot be *demande*d? Someone might here say that it is superficial to think that one acts morally because one has to, for "genuine" moral acting starts from a necessity that one acknowledges oneself. The felt necessity is self-imposed. This would be a stupid objection firstly, because what I am trying to bring out is how we, in fear of a certain disgust, tend to *desire* to subject ourselves to power and, secondly, because the power-

ridden grammar of morality does not change at all even if it would be the subject herself who subjects herself to power. Masochism is all violence even if it is the subject herself who agrees to it it. A subject is a subjected-subjecting, repressed "I". In fact, the morally relevant aspect of power, in contrast to its actual consequences, *exists only to the extent that it is acknowledged* by those subjected to it.

Both Nietzsche's disgust and his rejection of "slave morality" have their source in his sense of life. Despite his not very successful struggle with the openness of love, Nietzsche does perceive the strangling character of ordinary morality, its, as he says, immorality. He also perceives the suffocating sentimentality and greasiness of ordinary, romantic ideas of love. But then he commits the philosophical blunder *par excellence*: he goes, and quite deliberately<sup>11</sup>, in the direction of the *on the contrary*. He wants to abolish morality and love in order to open for new possibilities. It does not strike him that philosophical oppositions are creations of the (Western, Greek-Christian) thinking that he wants to re-value. Thus, he fails to perceive what his sense of life, his love, could have revealed to him and, instead, interprets it in the terms of the repressing and distorting understanding of "love" and "morality" current in his times – and is sickened. Instead of questioning it, Nietzsche accepted the collective understanding of love and morality and then concluded that love and morality as such are to be overcome (and, given the premises, who can blame him for the conclusion?). To be immersed in collectivity is not an abstract matter but involves understanding-perceiving things according to its concepts: its values and norms.<sup>12</sup> It is in fact difficult not to do so *even* if one would in one's thought be critical of those values and norms. ("Don't worry, it's nothing to be ashamed of!" - "Yes, I know, but I still...")

One could say that Nietzsche, unwittingly using and developing the weapons of collectivity, attacks love and openness with the energy provided by his sense of life. He radicalises the collective distortion of love, openness and conscience. He amplifies the violent power that is immanent in the collective concepts. But he confuses the concept of "herd mentality" – collectivity - with the specific, Christian herd

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<sup>11</sup> "I contradict as has never been contradicted [...]" (EH 96)

<sup>12</sup> Are not collective values and norms highly varying? From my point of view they are just different ways of subjectifying-objectifying I-you understanding, and Nietzsche's predicament reveals some of the very general features of this repression-distortion.

mentality that he criticises. He does not seem to notice that "free spirits" as well as the aristocracy are as much instances of herd mentality as Christianity. The brave young aristocratic man who will without hesitation draw his sword – and it is this kind of gesture that Nietzsche so admires – to defend his honour, will as an obedient school boy marry the woman that daddy and mam have chosen for him – all according to what "one simply does", given the values of one's herd.

Nietzsche's philosophy is a distillate of the general, philosophical confusion concerning individuality and collectivity. He sees that in collectivity people can act in ways so ruthless, that as individuals they could not dream of acting that way. But his explanation of how this is possible addresses only the superficial side of the issue:

How does it happen that the state will do a host of things that the individual would never countenance? - Through division of responsibility, of command, and of execution. Through the interposition of the virtues of obedience, duty, patriotism, and loyalty. Through upholding pride, severity, strength, hatred, revenge - in short, all typical characteristics that contradict the herd type (WP §717).

"Contradict the herd type"! What a misconception! This *is* the very realm of the herd. And as the veteran I cited above notes, when the herd-mentality is thick enough, you do not even need to be courageous because all there is, is the herd. But true, what "the state organises" here is *will to power* and when it is far gone, particular persons and their thoughts do not count at all. What a relief from disgust!

The herd-state is a sum of different euphorias, including sexual ones. The unbelievably maddening effects of collectivity can be clearly seen in the documentary on Charles Manson's "family" ("Manson The Lost Tapes"). Here the woman who killed Sharon Tate said that stabbing someone to death is a sexual release more powerful than an orgasm "because" everything in life is intercourse: is about "in and out". In the "sexiness of power", the strong feeling of *lust* has been repressed-distorted into desire, and desire involves power. One *intensely* (and

*lust* cannot be intense) wants something of the other at the *biggest possible distance* from her. - Why has this kind of *outrageous madness* no diagnose? A madness where persons say that they are completely one, completely fused, with their leader? Is it not here that we see the Kantian-Levinasian "sweetness" of fusion? And are we lacking a diagnose because what we are seeing is a quite "normal" collective behaviour, only: in this particular case it does not have the *usual* kind of collective legitimation?

Nietzsche's thought reflects his ambiguity; his need for and hatred of the herd. Out of this hatred he does see the "immorality of morality" and the way "[m]oral values reveal themselves to be conditions of the existence of society" (WP §§271-72) but in his efforts to escape his disgust, in his need of friends, he goes completely astray, and assumes that the "shepherds" of the herd, the free spirits, lying at the top of his order of rank, could withdraw themselves from herd-thinking (WP §287).

When this repressing-distorting, collective construction of a violence-based morality is taken as morality as such, its violent pressure, collective pressure, is correspondingly, by Nietzsche and most others including Freud and Lacan, taken to be "conscience".<sup>13</sup> What has been repressed is an experience where you feel that you violate your love for the other. Repression cannot do away with this feeling. Thus we distort it, using our conceptual powers. The terrible feeling of violating another human being is interpreted as a guilt-ridden, violent power that forbids and punishes. But it also creates distance. Instead of reflecting at what I am about to do to you, I and my action become *objects* of moral assessment – and in a sense this is precisely what I "wanted". This violent, judging power, which I have called collective pressure, has almost universally been heard, as if psychotically, as the voice of the good, or even "god".<sup>14</sup> And when the herd allows it, violating this morality produces its own euphoria.

<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche does see, that what he takes to be conscience: collective pressure, is "the invention of [...] the man of *ressentiment*" (GM 49) but he does not see that, *in this case too*, there is a "sentiment" to which the resentment is a reaction. If this were not a standard case of repression, one might think it odd that, unlike the case with master and slave morality, Nietzsche here "forgets" the "instance" to which collective pressure is a response to, namely conscience. The "masters" do not have anything that collective pressure could be a response to, for they just have their own collective pressure, based on aristocratic values.

<sup>14</sup> May be I should, just in case, point out that what I say does not imply that I think that collective morality should be abolished – whatever that would mean. I just want to situate a possible meaning of love with respect to the idea of moral law (collective morality). And there may be *some* points of contact between what I say about love's openness and what Lacan says about, what he calls, "limitless" love, though the concept limitless does not capture at all what I mean by openness. (See Lacan 1998, 276.)

Nietzsche, just like Freud, Lacan, Heidegger, Kant and most others, took collective pressure for conscience. Was it his disgust that prevented him from experiencing his conscience? Did conscience, this alarm bell of openness and *lust*, bring him "too close" to the other? Whatever the case, he wanted to get rid of conscience. But what does he mean by that? For what he understands by conscience is without doubt what I have called collective pressure? Nietzsche's predicament seems to be that he tried to get rid of both conscience and collective pressure. This may have led him to affirm "power" as the highest principle of life and to proclaim the superman as its prophet. But power is, precisely, the founding principle of the herd. And trying to get rid of both conscience and collective pressure: of both the fear of what is repressed and of the oppressive side of repression, lies at the root of all herd-values.

Nietzsche did not see in what sense the instance that he thought was the biggest disaster in our culture, the church, was built upon power. His wondering about how the "weak", the slaves of slave morality, could win the "strong" ones, the masters of the master morality, reveals his nearsightedness here. Another thing that shows Nietzsche's nearsightedness is that he did not see how his response to every human soul was a typical case of what he himself termed as *ressentiment* – a herd-reaction. It is from this reaction that herd-morality is formed.

Power is essentially desire: to want something from the other *without* wanting-daring to be in the openness of *lust* with her. Power is to exert influence on the other: it is to want to act as a remote control of the other. The other side of power, equally present in Nietzsche, is the *drive* to *succumb* to such forcing influence, that is: the urge to think that such influence is forcing. Such forcing may need the use of the sword but as we all know, there are many other ways too, such as the kind of threatening, shaming, guilt-mongering and bullying that Christianity has been up to with its "love" preaching. In fact, we like to think of ourselves as automatically subjected to such forces, such as when we explain our questionable behaviour by saying: "Well, if someone..., then one *cannot help* that one..."

If the main task is to get rid of conscience, as Nietzsche thought, then Christianity has made a very good job with its contribution to substituting collective pressure for conscience. But it is possible to get rid of one's conscience "only" to the same extent that it is possible to get rid of one's humanity. One cannot get *rid* of conscience because one cannot get *rid* of love – and a particularly ridiculous and pathetic effort to do so, is the intellectual person's attempt to view love from some kind of superior position.

The *will to power* is a violent will to distance oneself from joy of life: the joy-with-the-other, "I" being in openness with "you", and it "needs" to be violent because one also longs for this joy. One "has to" tear oneself away from *lust* by way of a destructive force. "Will to power" thus constitutes a thorough "no" to life. However, being a repression, what is repressed, joy of life, love, is never simply absent. The more acute and violent the repression, the more obvious the presence of this joy is. This struggle certainly is more perceptible in Nietzsche's thought than it is in the thought of most other thinkers.

The smell can spread itself everywhere and determine how we see people, how we talk about people and how we see ourselves. This smell produces the violent inner voice that numbs and distorts your perception of another human being. This distortion takes place only to the extent that you want it: and this is a wanting where you do not want to recognise that you want it. Such is the phenomenology of smell.

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