

Chapter II

The Overman Wills

Man is engaged in a continuous struggle for self actualization in the course of his life, driven by the urge to express himself through the agglomeration of power attained through exercise of his will. Self actualization takes place when the will to power which, working from within the self, incorporates and subdues more and more of that which is outside, extending its domain of influence. The will to power is not centred on the application of the laws of 'adaptation' as articulated in biological, economic or social theories of evolution, production and signification. Nietzsche's will to power is fundamentally shaped by the eternal movement of 'overcoming' which puts the being on becoming. The overcoming is the result of an act of overturning that guarantees the continuity of life-forming processes through amalgamation of all that is outside. The genius, who is a product of will to power, testifies both to the individual's higher potential for continuous self-overcoming through the realization of his singularity and to the human species' potential for self elevation.

Nietzsche believed that writing is not a plain representation of the spoken word as it was for Plato; it is will to power's very mode of expression and its tangible materialization. He proposed that it is will to power, not a self-contained subject, that interprets everything and that all institutions and values are the products of the will to power's interpretative process. This is realized in the overman's reworking of the grammatical, metaphorical and symbolic practices associated with the world. Nietzsche's philosophy of will to power is best understood as ontology of Becoming, and as an attempt to redeem its reality. All occurrences, all movements, all Becoming should be treated as a fixing of relations of degree and power, and as a struggle. The will to power which is the essence of life, can be encapsulated as the merger of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, and form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions. It generates a powerhouse in the individual that triggers a passion in him to actualize his life with a goal specific progress. Will to power is also the play of unequal and colliding power centres, and a continuous establishment of power relationships. The domination through power, which elevates an individual from the herd, is the outcome of relentless self overcoming of oneself. The man with will to power is above the plebeians and voluntarily forfeits the

customary gratification of material life for the pleasure of pain which acts as a catalyst in the ascend to higher planes of domination and self actualization. Nietzsche explicates will to power in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Will can of course operate only on 'will' - and not on 'matter' (not on 'nerves' for example): enough, one must venture the hypothesis that wherever 'effects' are recognized, will is operating upon will - and that all mechanical occurrences , in so far as a force is active in them, are forces of will, effects of will. - Granted finally that one succeeded in explaining our entire instinctual life as the development and ramification of one basic form of will - as will to power, as is my theory - ; granted that one could trace all organic functions back to this will to power and could also find in it the solution to the problem of procreation and nourishment - they are one problem - one would have acquired the right to define all efficient force unequivocally as: *will to power*. The world seen from within, the world described and defined according to its

'intelligible character' - it would be 'will to power' and nothing else. (67)

Nietzsche believed that cultures and societies once lose their creative drive, become decadent. Morality is, for Nietzsche, an order of decadence, retarding man's attempts to achieve power and dominance. Nietzsche differentiates morality as master morality and slave morality. People who pursue master morality are aware of their role as creators of values. Slave morality on the other hand thwarts man from creating new ideas or values or from taking up positive actions which lead to power and fresh vistas in life. Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

The noble type of man feels himself to be the determiner of values, he does not need to be approved of, he judges 'what harms me is harmful in itself ', he knows to be that which in general first accords honour to things, he *creates values*. Everything he knows to be part of himself, he honours: such a morality self glorification. (195)

The will to power is inextricably linked with the concept of truth. Jesus at the time of his trial before Pilate said, 'I am the truth'. Zarathustra, the teacher liberator in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, asserts that

no truth is discoverable except the truth which is the creation of an individual vis-a vis his personal perception and there is no truth in the world except what one provides. Truth as a concept is the product of the human mind and his/her will and without it truth ceases to exist. Philosophers from Plato onwards laboured to give a meaning to life which was construed to be the truth itself. Cultures and religions constructed their own versions of the enigmatic events which astounded mankind to bring out select interpretations which were extolled as canonical truths. But the primary truth is that there is no infallible truth. For Nietzsche truth as a metaphysical idea is a deliberate concoction of ingenious minds to order and control the weak and the sundry. The concept truth lacks a universal homogeneity as it takes on varied forms across cultural paradigms. It is created by every individual who ventures out to generate constructs conducive to the proliferation of power. Hence the answer to Pilate's question is that truth is will to power and power is mastered when we realize that power is will to truth.

Nietzsche was vehemently critical of positivism which prefers that we can access the facts about the world through sensory experience and empirical observation. Nietzsche overturned it saying that the

development of knowledge has to be understood as the result of a will to power by which the human being increases its control and mastery over the world. Nietzsche says in *The Will to Power*: “The measure of the desire for knowledge depends upon the measure to which the will to power grows in a species: a species grasps a certain amount of reality in order to become master of it” (480).

Truth is not something to be found or discovered but something which must be created. A judgement about the world can be false, but it can be life promoting and species preserving. He argues that it is because the judgments which are interpretations of the world in true or false binary, cultivate the will to power in the direction of control and strength. The analyses of moral judgment should be based on the question whether they reflect rich, strong and abundant forms of life, or weak, exhausted and degenerating ones. This is possible through a radical perspectivism beyond good and evil and it recognizes the conditionality of human forms of knowledge and is not concerned with absolutes, moral or otherwise.

Man has to overcome the nihilistic devaluation of life through the exercise of will to power and also attempt has to overcome the strictures

of established metaphysical truths. Human qualities can be understood as sublimated forms of the primordial drive which mankind had in common with animals. The motive behind this Nietzschean formulation was a philosophical urge to account for what is distinctively human without recourse to the metaphysical or the supernatural. From a large number of variables, Nietzsche narrowed on two primitive drives as dominant, the drive for power and the emotion of fear. Assessing that fear was the feeling of absence of power, he was left with a singular motivating principle for all human actions: will to power. Nietzsche describes the will to power as human, all too human. Nietzsche goes on to introduce the concept of self overcoming as synonym for self sublimation through which man moves from being a nihilist to be positive and joyful.

Human All Too Human is a pivotal work that enumerates the initial stages of several of the concepts which are crucial to Nietzsche's later popularity. His notion of will to power, in embryonic form, is present in the treatise as is his philosophical transcendence of conventional Christian morality and the concept of free spirit, the precursor of Zarathustra. The subtitle of *Human All Too Human* is 'A

Book for the Free Spirit'. It outlines the functioning of the free spirit within culture. It is his duty to challenge the old and the conventional to strike the society when and where it is vulnerable and to take upon himself the censor of the society in order to promote its development. The free spirit is essentially the philosopher, as Nietzsche sees him, hovering above the human fray testing the culture for its truths and errors. While there is no truth in metaphysical, moral, religious or aesthetic terms, there are individual truths and it is these which the free spirit will seek out. Nietzsche says in *Human All Too Human*:

Free spirited people living for knowledge alone will soon find they have achieved their external goal in life their ultimate position vis a vis society and gladly be satisfied, for example, with a minor position or a fortune that just meets their needs; for they will set themselves up to live in such a way that a great change in economic conditions even a revolution in political structures, will not overturn their life with it. They expend as little energy as possible on all these things, so that they can plunge with all their assembled energy, as if taking a deep breath, into the

element of knowledge. They can then hope to dive deep, and also get a look at the bottom. (173)

The will to power works in men to transform them into free spirits who will break from the chain of conventional, social and cultural bondage and set themselves free. The will lights up their own path though it is torturous to reach a new heights of power and to leave the imprints of their own values and truths. They differentiate themselves from the rabble who, though dominant in numbers and are the rulers of the land, will be forced to follow the free spirits as they are the creators of a new world order. The destruction of the habitual is the primary requirement to auger the arrival of a man with will to power. *Human All Too Human* points out:

Everything habitual draws as ever tighter net of spider webs around us; then we notice that the fibres have become traps , and that we ourselves are sitting in the middle , like a spider that got caught there and must feed on its own blood. That is why the free spirit hates all habits and rules, everything enduring and definitive; that is why again and again, he painfully tears apart the net

around him, even though he will suffer as a consequence from countless large and small wounds – for he must tear those fibres away from himself, from his body, his soul. He must learn to love where he used to hate and vice versa. Indeed, nothing may be impossible for him, not even to sow dragon’s teeth on the same field where he previously emptied the cornucopia of all his kindness.

(427)

The will to power is an insatiable desire to manifest power and it is an instinctively creative drive. It is essentially a will to violate and to defend oneself against violation and not one of self preservation. Each individual strives to become master and to extend his force and will to power. In *The Will to Power* Nietzsche says:

All “purposes,” “aims,” “meaning” are only modes of expressions and metamorphoses of one will that is inherent in all events: the will to power. To have purpose, aims, intentions, willing in general, are the same thing as willing to be a stronger, willing to grow – and, in addition, willing the means to this.

The most universal and basic instinct in all doing and willing has for precisely this reason remained the least known and most hidden, because in *praxi* we always follow its commandments, because we *are* this commandment –

All valuations are only consequences and narrow perspectives in the service of this one will: valuation itself is only this will to power. (356)

The will to power, the force which drives all human activity is identified with life itself. The will to life works against all ascetic ideals of self abnegation and self castigation because they are opposed to life itself. The self inflicted cruelty of the ascetic ideal is an extension of the self-destructive phenomenon. The ultimate purpose of the ascetic is to find means to justify the suffering of the weak and get them reconciled with life. The weak express their will to power through their acceptance of all ascetic ideals which glorify a life after death. The man with will to power, with indestructible will, realizes the emptiness of ascetic life and he respects those who are like him, the strong and reliable. Ascetic life negates the body and projects the immortality of soul by depriving man

of his chance to empower himself with authority to rule like an emperor. He feels empowered to give his word as something which can be relied on and acts strong enough, even against fate. Nietzsche says in *The Anti-Christ*: “I consider life itself an instinct for growth, for continuance, for accumulation of forces, for power: where the will to power is lacking there is decline” (129).

Wherever will to power declines, there is a concomitant psychological regression and a decadence. The decadence which occurs by the deprivation of all the manliest drives and necessary virtues becomes the good of the psychologically retrograde and the weak. But they are unwilling to consider themselves as the weak, instead they believe that they are the good of the society. The man driven by will to power can perish prematurely as he is following a path of violence and danger. The role of ‘atavism’ in the development of will to power cannot be refuted. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche says:

A kind of atavism – I prefer to understand the rare human beings of ages suddenly emerging late ghosts of past cultures and their powers – as atavisms of a people and its mores: that way one really can understand a little about

them. Now they seem strange, rare, extraordinary and whoever feels these powers in himself must nurse, defend, honour and cultivate them against another world that resist them, until he becomes either a great human being or a mad and eccentric one—or perishes early. (10)

The will to power makes a man renounce the material pleasures and the perquisites of the conventional society. He becomes a spirit of renunciation and selflessness which is different from the selflessness praised by his neighbour, a representative of the weak. The man of renunciation is detailed in *The Gay Science*:

The man of renunciation –What does a man of renunciation do? He strives for higher world, he wants to fly further and higher than all men of affirmation – he throws away much that would encumber his flight including not a little that he esteems and likes; he sacrifices it to his desire for the heights. This sacrificing, this throwing way, however, is precisely what alone becomes visible and leads people to call him the man of renunciation. (27)

At times our strength hurls us forward so much so that we can no longer endure our weakness and perish for them. We become dead against everything in us that desires sympathy and consideration, to reach a point where our greatness can be termed as lack of compassion. The actions which will initially be counted as inhuman must go for a volte-face in as much as it should be extolled as great and later to be pursued as parable of heroism for ages to come. The great destroy many who are weak just as the weak is incapable of transvaluating the table of values. The great bring in high culture where the superstitious and surreptitious customs and practices are demolished, wiping out the weak and their morality to create an epoch of cataclysmic change. The impact of the shift is that, what is best in them is accepted and assimilated by those bereft of selfishness and rebellion as they understand that, what the great follow will benefit them in the long run.

Knowledge of misery is another vital force which drives an individual towards the self overcoming provoked by will to power. History of the world is characterized by the ineradicable features of human life – suffering, pain, cruelty and horror. Nietzsche highlights the

role of tragedy in shaping the will to power and Keith Ansell-Pearson clarifies in *Nietzsche as Political Thinker*:

Nietzsche's response is to encourage modern human beings to cultivate the only attitude he believes can redeem the world in the absence of a centre –point or a god , and restore innocence to the flux of life: a 'tragic pessimism of strength'. What is tragic is the fact that life has to be seen as devoid of final purposes or moral goals. However, for Nietzsche, this should not load us to despair or to taking revenge on life because of our resentment; rather, we should strive towards a joyous affirmation of reality as it is, and attain an attitude towards life that is beyond good and evil of absolute and unconditioned moral judgment. Our attitude towards the world is to be born out of weakness or resentment, but out of benevolence and gratitude, of superabundant health, energy, wisdom, and courage.(45)

Nietzsche urges to fight for the rebirth of the tragic culture since it is able to create the space for the actualization of human beings with

will to power. A tragic vision of life is the most important medium to activate the real human being who can attain a stand point beyond his narrow personal existence and achieve the all encompassing Dionysian insight. Misery of the soul and the body separates men more intensively in an age of dread and consternation in which individuals have to fend for themselves, in spite of their weaknesses and infirmities. Pain is anathema and the mere thought of it frightens people from exercising their will to power to extend their domination. People's reproach to pain inculcates an atmosphere conducive for pessimism. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche remarks: "What makes one heroic? – Going out to meet at the same time one's highest suffering and one's highest hope" (268).

Life is governed by a merciless energy which can only be endured if life is seen in terms of an aesthetic spectacle. The highest human being or the hero is the one who affirms his own life as a sacrifice and yields to life's totality and perceives life as a piece of fate. Human being becomes 'God' when he is able to identify with this logic of life and is absorbed into its totality; he is now a spring out of which the world flows and is recreated. Nietzsche clarifies in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "Around the hero everything become a tragedy; around

the demi-god a satyr play; and around the God everything becomes – what? Perhaps a ‘world’” (150).

Nietzsche comments on what makes greatness in *The Gay Science*:

What belongs to greatness – Who will attain anything great if he does not find in himself the strength and will to inflict great suffering? Being able to suffer is the least thing; weak women and even slaves often achieve virtuosity in that. But not to perish of internal distress and uncertainty when one inflicts great suffering and hears the cry of this suffering – that is great, that belongs to greatness. (255)

The will to power is fusion of feeling and thought overridden by an affect, the affect of command. What is called freedom of will is essentially the affect of superiority over him who must obey. The consciousness that ‘I am free, he must obey’ becomes the overruling principle of the will. A man who wills, commands those who obey him or who he believes obeys. He, who wills, believes wholeheartedly that willing suffices for action because in great majority of cases willing

takes place only where the effect of command, that is to say obedience or action, is to be expected. He who wills, believes with a tolerable degree of certainty that will and action are one and the same. He attributes the success, the execution of willing, to the will itself and thereby enjoys an increase of that sensation of power which all successes bring. Freedom of will is expression for the complex condition of pleasure of the person who wills, who commands, and at same time identifies himself with the execution of the command. He enjoys the triumph over resistance involved but thinks it is his will itself which overcomes the resistance.

Nietzsche's autobiographical book *Ecce Homo* provides a great insight into the author himself and his notions of values, morality and truth. Nietzsche says in his preface to the book:

I am absolutely not some evil spirit or monster of morality – if anything , I am the opposite of the type of person who has been traditionally admired as virtuous....You rob reality of its meaning, value, and truthfulness to the extent that you make up an ideal world The 'true world' and the 'world of appearance' – in plain language, the made up

world and reality So far, the lie of the ideal has been the curse on reality, it has made humanity false and hypocritical down to its deepest instincts – to the point of worshipping values that are the reverse of those that might begin to guarantee it prosperity , a future, a high right to a future. (71)

Nietzsche conceived the overman as the philosophical actualization of will to power who is capable of shaking the world and creating new values. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* formulates the narrative representation of the overman in the divinely mad prophet protagonist Zarathustra. Zarathustra takes recourse to the unbeaten track to stay away for the rabble yet perceives the life within the historic context. The world appears to him to be a chimera of fallacies and errors which need immediate rectification so as to create a new world which is free of superstitious elements manifested in religion. He describes the overman in *Ecce Homo*:

The word ‘overman’, as a designation for a type that has the highest constitutional excellence, in contrast to ‘modern’ people, to Christians and other nihilists – a word

that really makes you think when it comes from the mouth of Zarathustra, a destroyer of morals; this word 'overman' is understood almost everywhere with complete innocence to mean values that are the opposite from one appearing in the figure of Zarathustra, which is to say the idealistic type of the higher sort of humanity, half 'saint', half 'genius'.... (101)

The overman is the antithesis of the last man who also appears in the prologue of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. The last man is the goal that Western civilization has set for itself as a sign of achievement. The last man, unlike overman, feels complacent with his comfortable style of life and does not strive for creative or transformative action. In his vision distinction between the ruler and the ruled, the strong and the weak, or the supreme and the mediocre is absent and social conflicts and challenges are minimized. The last man wants a society where every individual lives of equity and harmony. Individuality and creativity are suppressed with the intention of side stepping generative changes especially the painful ones. His society would go against assertion of will to power. Nietzsche says that the world of the last man, with neither

passion nor commitment will be too barren and decadent to support the growth of great individuals. They are unable to dream and merely earn their living and are happy to keep themselves in winter.

The overman and will to power are set for further clinical test in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Zarathustra encapsulates the 'will' in will to power. Will, which is synonymous with creation, liberation and transformation, despises the power of evil and good. Zarathustra states:

Creation – that is the great redemption from suffering, and life's easement. But that the creator may exist, that itself requires suffering and much transformation.

Yes, there must be much bitter dying in your life, you creators! Thus you are advocates and justifiers of all transitoriness.

For the creators himself to be the child new-born he must also be willing to be the mother and endure the mother's pain.

Truly, I have gone my way through a hundred souls and through a hundred cradles and birth-pangs. I have

taken many departures, I know the heart breaking last hours.

But my creative will, my destiny, wants it so. Or, to speak more honestly: my will wants precisely such a destiny.

All feeling suffers in me and is in prison: but my willing always comes to me as my liberator and bringer of joy.

Willing liberates: that is the true doctrine of will and freedom – thus Zarathustra teaches you.

No more to will and no more to evaluate and no more to create! ah, that this great lassitude may ever stay far from me! (111)

Kazantzakis had an in depth study of Nietzsche's philosophy and came out with an endorsement of its positive aspects. Kazantzakis says that the contemporary table of values associated with humanity, family, the state, religion and morality, is the personal handiwork of the slaves and the vanquished. Man will be able to erect new table of values

consistent with a unique mindset that can contribute to the enrichment of life by formulating an inclusive law that brings together living organisms - plants, animals and humans. He has the capacity to found a new Decalogue which, not only accepts and promotes life, but also makes use of pessimism and nihilism as instrumental to meaningful living. For Kazantzakis, will to power is not tantamount to the struggle to exist that governs beings, but is rather the persistence to prevail. He describes will to power in *Friedrich Nietzsche on the Philosophy of Right and the State*: “So it is not the struggle to exist that governs beings but the struggle to prevail.” Life is not simple and ascetic as to rest content in vegetative subsistence, preservation and reproduction ensuring for itself a narrow measure of welfare. Life should be an intense longing for externalization of the will to power and in the process transcend itself. Every healthy living organism posits itself as capable of conquering and dominating its environment and never to rest content on victory but to rush insatiate towards ever new conquests.

The will to power owes its origin to the concept of will of Schopenhauer who inspired Nietzsche to step into the challenging field of metaphysical enigma and to give new direction to the philosophical

investigation into worldly phenomena. Schopenhauer considered the world as will. He believed that humans were motivated by their own basic desires, or 'wille zum leben' (will to live), which directed all mankind. The will acted as the individual motivation. Schopenhauer explains will:

Will is the thing- in-itself, the inner content, the essence of the world. Life, the visible world, the phenomenon, is only the mirror of the will. Therefore life accompanies the will as inseparable as the shadow accompanies the body; and if will exists, so will life, the world, exist. Life is, therefore, assured to the will to live; and so long as we are filled with the will to live we need have no fear for our existence, even in the presence of death. (217)

Schopenhauer was influenced by Hegel who popularized the concept of *Zeitgeist*, the idea that society consisted of a collective consciousness which moved in a distinct direction dictating the actions of its members. Spirit is a term identified with freedom and self-consciousness. Hegel's concept of freedom is linked with the will which is the practical and active part of the spirit or mind. The will is free

when its ends are its own and when it has self determining right. The will becomes self determining when two conditions the subjective and the objective, are adequately accomplished. Subjective condition demands that the will reflects on its own ends and endorses them on the basis of its given desires and goals. The objective condition requires the will to pursue the ends and goals which are rational. The will is free and self determining when it pursues the ends that are its own; in the subjective sense when they are grounded in its reflectively endorsed desires and evaluations and in the objective sense when they are grounded in its true goals and purposes as a rational being. Schopenhauer, a reader of both Kant and Hegel, criticized their logical optimism and the belief that individual morality could be determined by society and reason. It is the will that controls and creates values and morality because will is the life force and the thing-in-itself. Will is the inner reality of the material body as the body appears in space and time. Martha E. Nussbaum elucidates:

Our bodies are for us objects of sense perception and thought. But there is another relation we have to them: for we move and act. There is striving, desiring, straining

something about us that does not coolly contemplate and represent, but surges and pushes. This kinetic and desiderative aspect of the person Schopenhauer calls will. (And indeed, like Nietzsche much later, he argues that will is present not only in human beings, but in all of nature.) Will is inseparable from body: Every true, genuine, immediate act of the will is also at once and directly a manifest act of the body. (347)

Will works as a life force which is seemingly illogical and malignant to make one feel one's life's pleasure depends on the fulfilment of desires, but those desires remain insatiable. The insatiability of desire prompts an organism to strive forward in search of further pleasures and it subsequently reaches the point where life appears to be futile and the pessimistic attitude sinks every one into nihilism and tragedy.

Nietzsche's will to power is different from the will of Schopenhauer in the sense that will to power is not a life force which makes the world. Schopenhauer's statement that man can do what he wants, but he cannot will what he wants clearly shows that man is

essentially a slave of desires and he qualifies the process of life as inherently the representation of will itself. But will is always an elusive current and often emerges as illogical and directionless. Man, a puppet in the hands of will is doomed to suffer endless pain and if even there is pleasure it is immediately subsumed by further pain born out insatiable desires. The will to power on the contrary, propels a man to overcome himself tirelessly until he becomes an overman, one who is capable of creation and destruction not just in the divine or metaphysical sense but in the ontological one. Self-mastery and self actualization are the end results of the exercise of will to power. The will to power instigates the individual to conquer new heights of authority and rule instead of remaining slave to pleasures of life or to other human because of fear and infirmity.

The will to power sets the individual on an eternal motion. The moment one reaches the point where one had intended to stop new vistas are opened and one rushes on towards them taking it not as a terminus but as a new beginning. The deepest human urge is for eternal unrest and continuous self expression through the exercise of will to power. The purpose of human being is to surpass himself continually, to tend

beyond and above the given human frame work and to produce a fuller, more robust human subjectivity namely the ‘ubermensch’ or overman. The overman is the one who is able to shake off the present table of values posits the effort to excel himself as the ultimate purpose of his life. The ‘ubermensch’ need not be the harbinger of glad tidings to humanity since he constantly strives to assume higher and superior forms, and is reluctant to rest on his occasional conquests and is for ever ready to risk life and happiness for the sake of his reification.

The will to power is an integral part of Nietzsche’s critique of culture and morality and had conjured up a variety of related critiques, from sadomasochism to ethnic cleansing and global intolerance. Nietzsche speaks of will to power in relation to values, truth, and morality which span the traditional categories of ethics, epistemology and metaphysics in philosophy. The will to power is the fundamental principle of the world and is not something that we acquire – it is what we are. Our behaviour is underscored by will to power; our very being is will to power and so is the being of everything, animate or inanimate. Nietzsche writes in *The Will to power*:

And do you know what “the world” is to me? Shall I show

it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning without end; a firm, iron magnitude of forces that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole ,of unalterable size, a household without expenses or losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by “nothingness” as by a boundary; not something blurry or wasted , not something endlessly extended, but set in definite space as a definite force , and not a space that might be “empty” here or there but rather as throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces.... This world is the will to power – and nothing besides! And you yourself are also this will to power – and nothing besides! (1067)

For Martin Heidegger the will to power names what constitutes the basic character of all beings. He states:

As the name for the basic character of all beings, the expression “will to power” provides an answer to the question “What is being?” The name “will to power” must therefore come to stand in the title of the chief

philosophical work of a thinker who says that all being ultimately is will to power. (4)

For Nietzsche Being is Becoming which carries with it the elements of action and the exercise of willing. In reality will is will to power. Heidegger asserts will and will to power represented the same force. To Nietzsche too will is will to power where power is the essence of will. Hence, will to power is will to will, which is to say, will is power and power is will. Heidegger comes out with more clarity:

Now in order from the outset to avoid the vacuity of the word "will" Nietzsche says "will to power". Every willing is a willing to be more. Power itself only is inasmuch as, and so long as, it remains a willing to be more power. As soon as such will disappears, power is no longer power, even if it still holds in subjection what it has overmastered. In will, as willing to be more, as will to power, enhancement and heightening are essentially implied. For only by means of perpetual heightening can what is elevated be held aloft. Only a powerful heightening can counter the tendency to sink back, simply holding onto the

position already attained will not do, because the inevitable consequence is ultimate exhaustion. (60)

The will to power is born out of Nietzsche's preoccupation with the question concerning the purpose of life. When he declared that God is dead and what God stands for is also dead, he was declaring to the world that Christian values can no longer provide European civilization with its ethical and cultural foundation. His attempts to enthuse modern human beings to achieve a philosophical attitude which can redeem the world in the absence of a centre point or a God gave rise to the concept of tragic pessimism of strength; tragic in the sense that life has to be viewed as devoid of final purposes or moral goals. It does not breed despair and resentment to take revenge on life, rather we are forced to look forward to master a joyous affirmation of reality as it is, and continue the effort to take life beyond the good and evil of absolute moral judgment. The right attitude toward life is to be born out of benevolence and gratitude and not of weakness and ignorance.

Nietzsche holds that in the exercise of will to power we need not try to dominate others. It is the weak who try to take control over others and employ power and violence against them to gain self esteem and the

feel of power. A strong human being with will to power relates to others in terms of an overflowing and abundant creative energy which inspired and transformed them, and with a sense of the conscious of superiority over good and evil.

Will to Power and Political Thought

Nietzsche redefined the philosophy and questioned the theocratic rule of Christianity and brought about a tectonic shift in epistemology. He dreamt of a better nation, strong people to change the world and human life and wanted to rewrite redundant moral values

To gauge Nietzsche's contribution to political thought, it has to be examined in detail the way he understands the close link between immorality and idea of human betterment. Nietzsche has often been associated with a tragic worldview because he considered man as engaged in an ethical struggle which usually ends in ruin or in profound disappointment. He does not espouse the conventional morality defined by the antimony good/bad, but proposes an ethics that is intended to better the human condition. However he sees this proposal as rife with difficulties. Making life as a trial of suffering and pain need not guarantee an ultimate redemption for man; as failure is more common.

The individual, more often than not, is limited in capacities and the world is chaotic. Nietzsche does not see the path of human achievement as positive except it engages the challenges of the infirmities of life. The uncertainty about the comprehensive unity of human experience and meaning generates the tragic vision of his work.

A radical critique of Christianity makes Nietzsche reject its eschatological view. Politics is, for him a practice that orders the world. It is a vital endeavour which can engender great deeds, yet it need not always be progressive. He espouses the value of order, stability, durability, development, strength, freedom, independence, and beauty and they supplement his own idea of man as a physio-psychological plant. For him, in an age of nihilism, the Platonic – Christian morality has run its course and is no longer cogent. Man must overcome himself by seeing himself as he originally is; a physiological and psychological being who must therefore choose values that will make him stronger in those two realms.

Nietzsche felt that ‘agonism’ – the idea that conflict and struggle are the natural basis of life and that they are reflected in social, political, and cultural life – is indispensable in the execution of noble causes by

the noble types. His obsession with the concept of agonism resulted in the theme suffusing his oeuvre. From his early writings on 'Homer's Contest' to the miscellaneous notes that make up the will to power, the notion of the contest recurs. In the former, Nietzsche argues the values of contests and confrontation, is a form of wrestling that enables the individuals to improve himself through a challenge. It is a challenge that involves the fundamental continuity of the human and the natural. Diego A. von Vacano states:

For Nietzsche what makes a man great in political term, is the ability to go above the constant antagonism of life and to see that a higher purpose can be achieved if one abandons the desire to oppress. That is what Nietzsche refers to as the love of humanity that a great leader comes to possess by acting for the common good of a people or humanity. (82)

Nietzsche was regarded an advocate of political restructuring in the field of feminism, socialism, anarchism, and neo-conservatism. He was misunderstood to be the ideologue of Nazism as it pursued the path of violence, cruelty and oppression to attain its political goal of

domination. His political perspective is clearly reflected in *The Birth of Tragedy* where he shows how the Greek constructed a political identity for themselves.

Nietzsche believed that contemporary politics is characterized by the absence of a strong political leadership. This is not a justification for the emergence of an authoritarian leadership, on the contrary he deemed that the greatest threat in the contemporary world are the leaders who stand aloof from the political world and wilfully manipulate it for their own ends. The idea that the moral and ethical claims cannot themselves provide the grounding for a society and that leaders should break the barriers of slave morality to follow the lead of master morality is a recurrent theme in Nietzsche's opus. He argued that moral systems are based on power relation and derive legitimacy through politics itself.

Tracy B. Strong says:

Master morality rests on a non-reflective assertion of self. The master says: "I am good, you are not like me and you are bad". "Character is destiny" in this morality. It was perfectly possible for very different persons, even enemies, to think of themselves and each other good, even

in combat. The weak (not yet psychologically slaves) suffer from their domination by the unreflective masters. (122)

Substantial contribution to the state and society comes from leaders who are imbued with master morality and it is power relations that reiterate one's claim to 'identity'. Right from his first work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had as one of his concerns the exploration of a politics of identity. Strong observes:

Identity is what Nietzsche refers to as the internal connection and necessity of any true civilization or the dominant unity, let us call it the Hellenic will (of the Greeks). In the formal sense, I might say that I have a political identity when I can use the first person plural and first person singular pronouns to refer to the same state, when the question who are we, and the question who I am are answered in the same way. (123)

The will to power is the faculty of an individual to create an identity for himself in society at the expense of the prevailing social order. This process gets augmented when will to power works in tandem

with political structure to result in the reorientation of the state, and there by produce far reaching repercussions in socio, political and ethical spheres. The people who are fed up with the morality of the herd dare to embrace challenges and perils which is the first step in the direction of high culture and noble morality. Such move may be treated as evil and immoral, but it is inevitable that the individual has to express dissent so that age old practices which are harmful, but are regarded as suppliers of energy and strength, get dismantled.

Though Nietzsche does not support any specific political movement, his theory of will to power falls in line with political movements or endeavours spearheaded by leaders who are intelligent, powerful and farsighted. A new world order can be created with the political application of will to power which is made possible by those who move outside the herd and leads it as a shepherd, embodying the quality of a true hero even as the end could be tragic and gruesome.

The will to power stands for that instant of freedom which enables an individual to carve a very personal niche for himself in the society. Power and politics are the result of the interpretations of metaphysical and ontological epistemology by the rulers and power

centres down the history. They form the majority who overrun the masters who are doomed to be the minority in the socio- political development.

Two cardinal points: fear which is negative and the very positive will to power determine our attitude towards individual and the ideologue. Nietzsche tried to expose the universal human traits of fear and laziness that have become additive. They hamper human creativity but once they are overcome and the will to power becomes the dominant trait humans can reaffirm the essential creativity they are born with.

Walter Kaufman notes in *Nietzsche, Psychologist, Anti-Christ*:

Primarily, however, fear is nothing but our attitude toward power – or, in Nietzsche’s own previous words, the negative aspect of our will to power. A privation of power gives rise to both fear and will to power: fear is a negative motive which would make us avoid something; will to power is the positive motive which would make us strive for something. Nietzsche does not conclude yet that, wherever there is fear, there is also a will to power to cope with what is feared. The two are still employed as separate

principles. (190)

The distinction between the powerful and the powerless is clearly a sociological one and not racial or biological. Nietzsche strongly professed that pity was a tool born out of a desire to hurt others. To elicit pity is to make others to suffer with us and in turn impedes the progressive development of will to power into a full-fledged faculty. Nietzsche believed that man wants neither power nor independence as such and that he wants not freedom from something but freedom to act and actualize himself.

Nietzsche studied the development of Greek culture to underscore the fact that will to power prompted them to prefer power to worldly riches and even to good reputation. The importance of agon is paramount in Greek culture. The contest pertained to all fields of activities including the rivalry of the ancient dramatists who competed with each other for the highest prize. Agon was also the basic rubric of the Olympic games and the Greek gymnasium and of Plato's effort to outdo the sophists and the poets by composing more beautiful myths, speeches and dialogues than they had ever conceived and also the vital part of the Socratic dialect which Plato realized as spiritual contest.

Agon was manifestation of the will to power.

The will to power may be considered ruthless and be mistaken as a source of evil. The heroes have no need to prove their might either to themselves or to others by hurting others and if they do so, it happens incidentally in the process of using their power creatively. They hurt others without thinking of it; only the weak man wants to hurt and to see that others suffer out of his slavish resentment. The desire to hurt others is the product of one's sense of powerlessness and the feeling of being oppressed. Repressing one's desire may lead to psychotic behaviour. Kaufman says: "Impotence may thus be a poison and the possession of power may be a medicine" (194).

Nietzsche declared himself to be a perfectionist and evinced keen interest in the future of the human sense of justice and institutional forms of social and political order. He stood committed to a historical approach to the concepts that had played a vital role in social and political life. *Human, All Too Human* showcases Nietzsche's historical speculations on the impact of democratic institutions on modern society and government and vice versa. It provides us with two frameworks to address the possibility of a more just and thoroughgoing democracy on

the basis of his conception of the will to power. He differentiates between the state – understood as a distinct entity of power over and above the power of those governed, and the government – understood as the means by which citizens collectively exercise power over one another. But he acknowledges that the evolution of modern society will inexorably lead to a plurality of religious, philosophical and moral views. It is natural that every person will have his own opinions and objectives but he will have to take into account the plurality of the conceptions of the good. Nietzsche over and over again highlighted the argument that truth is subjective and in so far as a progress in government is concerned, the re-order is inevitable provided it will lead to a better society. Though Nietzsche railed against democracy, liberalism and socialism as bane in the path of creativity, he supported a society where the universal principle of egalitarianism of fundamental rights of all citizens re-emerges to cast away the outworn culture which is collocated with the good. All individuals have the right to their own conception of good and right to live in accordance with their own conception of what makes a life worthwhile. This is often expressed in terms of the idea that individual lives should be lived from the inside.

People should not be taken for granted by the authorities and told how to live. Nietzsche endorses this principle in *Human All Too Human*:

If the purpose of all politics really is to make life endurable for as many as possible, then these as-many-as-possible are entitled to determine what they understand by an endurable life; if they trust to their intellect also to discover the right means of attaining this goal, what good is there in doubting it? They want for once to forge for themselves their own fortunes and misfortunes; and if this feeling of self-determination, pride in the five or six ideas their head contains and brings forth, in fact renders their life so pleasant to them they are happy to bear the calamitous consequences of their narrow-mindedness, there is little to be objected to, always presupposing that this narrow-mindedness does not go so far as to demand that everything should become politics in this sense, that everyone should live and work according to such a standard. (38)

For Nietzsche, purpose of the politics is not to make life endurable for mankind at the expense of individual power and domination. His idea of 'grand politics' points to the higher power and the splendour of the human species which are something entirely different from ordinary conception of politics. However, his opinion that the idea and the pursuit of such grand politics are not for everyone does not make him an enemy of democracy, nor does it preclude his qualified endorsement of the egalitarian principle. The egalitarian principle that all should be allowed to live in accordance with their own conception of what is good need to be reckoned with the requirement that more enlightened spirits ought to be allowed to abstain from those forms of politics aimed only at making life endurable for as many as possible. It is the task of the dominant few with will to power to question the prevailing constructs defined to be good and to ask whether such constructs serve or hinder the progressive evolution of humankind.

Nietzsche repudiated the idea that the highest good should stop at the desire to create a comfortable life for as many as possible. He was firm on his conviction that the attainment of comfortable life would destroy the soil out of which great intellect and the powerful individual

in general grows. The real source of pleasure is the redoubtable conquest of power and the feeling of relentless power. He is therefore opposed to the perfection of the state as a prudential institution as it will lead to complacency and deprivation of contest and competition, still he upheld the liberal ideal of a democratic society of autonomous and self-determining individuals. Nothing in his commitment to grand politics prevents him from recognizing the value of the basic democratic right of the self-determination for all citizens, including those focused on the perfection of the species because man should be involved in the continuous process of self overcoming to reach higher status.

Nietzsche defines democracy as a form of political organization that wants to create and guarantee as much independence as possible: independence of opinion, of mode, of life and of employment. The political superiority should go hand in hand with human superiority without which the real spirit of politics will vanish. Humans are the centre of politics and power and it should be expended on themselves breaking the barriers of the dormant culture and morality. Nietzsche underlines this sentiment in *The Portable Nietzsche*: “Political

superiority without any real human superiority is most harmful. One must seek to make amends for political superiority.” (48)

Political power devoid of humanism will lead to tyranny and dark ages which bar individuation and ontological existence. Independence of opinion and a mode of life promising a free and democratic space facilitates a plurality of conceptions of the good and enhance the ability of individuals not only to choose but also to live in accordance with their chosen mode of life.

Nietzsche rejected moral truth or absolutism because moral truth prevented the maintaining of heterogeneity of human existence and pointed out that the organized political mendacity was as harmful as moral absolutism as far as the pluralist fabric of community and human existence in general were concerned. Nietzsche’s political ontology stands for truth in the form of honesty even as it rejects epistemological and moral dogmatism and absolutism that disallow the expression of uniqueness and creativity vested with every individual. The idea of honesty in politics ensures one’s perceptual right to uplift one’s life while avoiding the imposition of dogmatism.

Creating values in politics is not about making up claims that devalue particular groups of people, nation-states or political opponents in order to justify policies that are either unpopular or that reverse ethical norms. It is an attempt to subject everything that is or has been, especially perspectives that have settled as truths, to an exhaustive critique. Hence, will to power in politics paves the way for a major overhaul in social life by acting against self-deception, jingoism, narrow mindedness and dogmatism. Nietzsche's great method of knowing, which he eventually calls genealogy, consists in embracing the revelation that there are only perspectival evaluations which in combination with the feeling of the many contradictions brings forth epistemological interpretation. This is the means by which the wisest elevate themselves beyond the valuation of good and evil.

A man of politics is bound to bid his time and also knows how to act at the right time. He should be able to discern current and future condition in order to gauge his action and be informed by the past and a sense of the present blended with vision of the future. von Vacano writes: "Knowledge of past, present and future, both from a wider perspective as well as from a momentary one, is essential for a man to

engage his flexibility and transgressive qualities at the appropriate instance” (100).

Nietzsche is a thinker preoccupied with role and fate of politics in the contemporary society. As a young medical orderly in the Franco-Prussian War, Nietzsche had face to face experience of war carnage and his comments on politics are aggressive and subtly nuanced. Nietzsche’s oeuvre dares us with great promise and danger and every reading of Nietzsche is both a deconstruction and a reconstruction, conditioned by anti Semitic xenophobia to history, time, and place. His idea instigated the fascist Germany to unleash the wave of exterminate the Jews and establish a state for the pure Aryans.

Nietzsche pursues that the production of human greatness demands the society to be established in a hierarchical social structure. He states that the creation of higher, more complex and hybrid human type requires distances between human beings created through specific social structures and particular form of politics.

Nietzsche’s political observations and statements would suggest a longing for the forceful rule by the strong which prevailed in ancient Greece, especially in pre-Socratic period. Since the purpose of politics is

only to bring forth a superior being, also called the overman, it requires a society of rank and slavery where there is contest and struggle between the highest and lowest social orders. The difference and disparity between these two classes will produce a desire in an individual to transcend his own limits to conquer and proliferate his dominion and power. The politics which favours such development in the state and society can only be instituted by an overman who, through his superior will to power, transforms and transvaluates all legislations to implement his plans. Nietzsche was of opinion that the healthy should be differentiated and segregated from the weak and guarded from the sight of the sick, or else they will confound themselves with the sick. His teachings are for the free spirits whose superior autonomy does not need the attachment to the herd and its politics of socialism and liberalism. Socialism and liberalism represent the decadent forms of Christian values which prevent the growth and rule of overman who is the breed of self-overcoming and self-determinism.

Nietzsche stands firm in his theory that there is no natural order but only chaos in politics and does not see natural equality as the correlate to chaos. He disagrees with Plato who attacks the democracy

on the ground that it treats all opinion equally creating chaos in the city and the soul. For Plato, chaos destroys order, hierarchy and authority. But Nietzsche distances himself from Plato when he upholds the view that chaos implies a relation of inequality, which remains in a flux and is susceptible to alteration. The inequality of power foregrounds a constant interplay of domination and submission, breeding the resistance to overcome the rule. In unequal relations the strong have the potential to act straight away and they express their awesome power in instant action. The weak are forced to inaction and their will to power will take a different tactics in the subversion of the constructs of power and strength in the long run. But the immediate result is that the strong defeats the weak or the herd and forms its hierarchy over the rest. Nietzsche considers that the self and will to power are formed through unequal relation as Nathan Widder clarifies:

For Nietzsche, however, the self and, more specifically, its will to power are formed through these unequal relations. There are many dimensions to the concept of will to power, and Nietzsche makes it clear that it does not refer solely or even primarily to the human will (the world

itself, he says, is will to power), but here it suffices to define the will to power an expression of power that follows from the position of self within the unequal relations that constitute it. It expresses not only the self's power, but also its judgment of the world and its moral and aesthetic outlook. (497)

Public opinion, religion, morality and the national state obstruct the becoming of individual genius, the flowering of his unique and singular form and hence a political will to power is essential to achieve major overhaul, like freedom from tyranny, in politics.

Nietzsche upholds knowledge of necessity as the ultimate source of liberation. Knowledge of necessity opens up the individual's creative potential by undoing the anthropocentric projections of life and nature. Knowledge of necessity liberates the human being from both the scientific as well as the moral and religious conceptions of nature and necessity that have been imposed on the human species throughout the process of civilization. Nietzsche hopes that through this new knowledge of necessity the human being will again adopt a perspective of radical immanence which allows them to love and embrace life and

nature as fullness and affirm it as a source of freedom and creativity. From this new perspective, freedom and necessity are not opposites that exclude each other but become a singular force motivating mankind. From the perspective of the knowledge of necessity, freedom is no longer conceived of as something one has or something which one gathers over time but rather as something that occurs only momentarily, or at the turning points of history. It is in the affirmation of the moment in its relation to the whole of becoming that freedom can be experienced as an event of eternal value and significance.

The strength and power of politics are the products of antagonism, struggle, contestation and disagreement which get formulated through will to power. In politics will to power makes possible genuine pluralism which is essential to question and transform power-relations and also to force the affirmation and celebration of people's rights.

This active conception of power has two characteristics which are essential for an antagonistic ontology of pluralism that is to offer more than the alternatives of annihilation or security. For Nietzsche active power is not bound to just self-preservation and at the same time the

exercise of power need not be limited to the hostile resisting or overpowering of other powers or power centres. It can take an indeterminate number of qualitatively diverse forms including self-destructive forms of activity which will open the space for the qualitative transformation of existing power centres, forms of life or political identities into new forms to achieve self-overcoming as defined by Nietzsche. Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals* is replete with examples of both the qualitative transformation of life-forms and the variegated forms that the exercise of power can take. Nietzsche's generative concept of power allows for reinterpretations of the opposition or resistance offered by an external power. Opposition or resistance need not be considered as a threat or an impediment to one's power; on the contrary, under certain conditions, they can serve as stimulants that empower individuals to scale new heights. Antagonism produced by will to power inspires one to emasculate and devalourise the opponent through creative self-transformation or self-overcoming. It is this reinterpretation of opposing forces from inhibitors into stimulants that lies at the heart of Nietzsche's description of the Greek agon as a dynamic of reciprocal provocation and reciprocal limitation. Nietzsche's concept of power has two features which are of value for a political

ontology of pluralism – the innate capacity for qualitative self-transformation or self-overcoming in life-forms and the emphasis on the possibility to engage conflicting life-forms or values as a stimulant and not as a threat to qualitative self-transformation.

Nietzsche placed paramount importance on liberal individualism built on a self centred preoccupation with purely personal ends and saw it as dangerous if the society is overtaken by philistinism erasing the importance of aristocratic culture. It is equally dangerous to have the society made up of a herd of men and women who are concerned with happiness born out of the satisfaction of material desires. These people never attempt to cultivate themselves and engage in risky endeavours and they fail to conceive of anything nobler or higher beyond themselves or to overcome themselves. Nietzsche advocated a politics which acts as a means to an end aiding the production of noble culture and human greatness. Once politics is misused for material pleasure, it becomes impossible to provide social existence with any spiritual or cultural justification. With the notion of ‘*ubermensch*’ Nietzsche tries to envisage human life which is spiritually higher and nobler and is devoid of narrow egoism and materialism.

What makes Nietzsche different from other thinkers is his deep insight into the modern moral and spiritual sickness. For him the problem is not just a social or political or one which can be solved simply by refining liberal democratic institutions and customs. According to Nietzsche western civilization is caught in the grip of a debilitating nihilism which makes the most fundamental conceptions of the world no longer credible. It influences the metaphysical and moral languages through which the understanding of the world is fabricated. Concepts such as sin, unity, purpose, truth, pity and justice illustrate the depth of the crisis of such outcome and the need of a comprehensive self examination is reiterated. If God is dead and all metaphysical, traditional, moral structures which enabled the humanity to make sense of their existence are lost, a new age can be constructed through the transvaluation of all values. A political will to power emerges as the need of the hour to reconstruct the metaphysical imperatives.

Nietzsche's thinking is driven by the ontogenic vision of will to power's constitutive activity of overpowering, which consists in incorporation and subjugation at the physical and simultaneously, at the political and normative levels of life. The will to power in politics

demands overpowering of the established canons and their revaluation and reinterpretation. The dictum that change is the most unchanging thing in the world becomes a vital tool in the hand of the overman, to whom everything appears dull and despicable not because of his innate pessimism, but because he is fed up with dogmas and deeds glorified by the weak and herd as supreme idealistic incarnation of virtue.

Nietzsche emphasizes the necessity of politics in which an elite philosopher- legislator will guide Europe beyond the petty politics of nationalism and promulgate what it means to be a good European. Though Nietzsche is often accused of anti-Semitism, he consistently opposes politics that encourages racism and attacks German politicians for doing so. Nietzsche's political thought is centred on the self overcoming of man and while his anti humanism may hurt the moral sensibilities of traditional liberals, socialists, and Christians, it never justifies itself along either racist or nationalist stream of thought.

Walter Kaufmann, the celebrated translator and biographer, rescued Nietzsche's writings from misinterpretation and subsequent abuse by the Nazi ideologists and propagandists. Recent years have witnessed the publication of a number of books and studies on

Nietzsche's political thought. His overt political thought continues to confuse many and the political dimensions of Nietzsche's thought still remains the most contentious aspect of his studies. His early reflections on the Greek agon, his attempt to write genealogy of morals and his diagnosis of nihilism to characterize the moral and cultural malaise of modern human beings make Nietzsche a political thinker, first and foremost.