

Aesthetic Moralism as a Form of Overcoming Nihilism

Ethical-Pedagogical Ideas of F. Nietzsche

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Abstract—The following article considers the connection between one of the most topical, moral issues facing modern mankind – nihilism – and the aesthetic moralism as a form of its overcoming. Special attention is paid to the pedagogical implements of overcoming nihilism in aesthetic moralism.

Keywords—aesthetic moralism; nihilism; pedagogy and education; ethics; the superman; the will to power; the Dionysian; the Apollonian

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the middle of the nineteenth century in Western culture, philosophy of culture comes to an awareness of the phenomena of nihilism, which includes the spectrum of such states of spirit, as the decline of the will to live, rejection of life in its pursuit of higher goals, and the devaluation of higher ideals and values. They affect the sphere of arts as well as the philosophy of a man. The latter attempts to identify the nature of a new reality of consciousness, its causes and reasons and possible ways to overcome the negative consequences. Philosophy also raises still relevant tasks of understanding the concept of spiritual crisis, modification of values and their revaluation (reassessment). These questions involve a wide range of others: its embeddedness of nihilism in the logic of internal development of the European reason, the connection of nihilism with Socratic conceptual thinking and abstract-theoretical understanding of the world. The researchers of post-romantic philosophy note that the largest "clinicians" of culture A. Schopenhauer and F. Nietzsche "show that the ailing European culture ... has a specific illusion of logical prejudices, moral hypocrisy and the twilight of the idols. ... For the first time in the history of the tragedy of culture appears not as an insoluble contradiction in the collision of

the hero with the world, his ideals and ideas, but as a loss of sense, i.e. as a mental drama"¹.

II. OVERCOMING NIHILISM AS THE PRINCIPAL TASK FOR NIETZSCHE AND HIS METHODS

The philosophical ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche were much influenced by the European humanity situation of coming "the uncanniest of all guests"²— nihilistic frame of mind. Nihilism is defined by Nietzsche as the devaluation of all values.

The fight against this state of affairs in the spiritual culture is the keynote of all philosophical concepts of Nietzsche – and they constitute – whether reassessment of all values, the theory of eternal return or the concept of the will to power – a response to the challenge of the nihilistic devastations of life. The critic of morality and the researcher of its fate, Nietzsche creates a new paradigm of understanding of "proper" and "improper", "good" and "bad".

Speaking about the era of the global nihilism, Nietzsche describes it as a long-term "process of distancing Christianized humanity from the immanent values of the experience of life"³. Nietzsche talks about the decay and degeneration of a culture which "nullified" the value for life vitality, life elements in her physiology, spontaneity and randomness. The categories of Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of life and its elements are the basis and the instruments for discussions of the theme.

¹ Pigulevski V. O. Irony and fiction: from romanticism to postmodernism: Rostov-on-don: Publishing house "Folio", 2002. <http://www.urgi.info/urgiinfofiles/sites/pigulevsky-ironiya/>

² Nietzsche F. Will to Power. New York, Vintage Books, 1968. P. 9.

³ Podoroga V. A. Nietzsche // New philosophic encyclopedia in 4 vols. URL: <http://iph.ras.ru/elib/2096.html>

The methodology of discernment of the Apollonian and the Dionysian elements in the cultural phenomena is accompanied by different aspects of Nietzsche's thought and developed in "The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music". Named after the ancient gods Dionysus and Apollo, these elements are responsible for the same cultural functions (even if in the case of Dionysus, in a sense, countercultural) as the corresponding personalities of ancient Greek mythology.

The Dionysian is understood as the principle of natural vitality, wild, primitive and an unformed powerful life forces. Apollo symbolizes light, measure, limitation, intellectual and cultural design⁴. The Apollonian element embodies such cultural phenomenon as Socratic logical dialectical consciousness, which influenced the formation of European culture in its isolation from the values of the Dionysian.

The most important key to getting rid of nihilism is, according Nietzsche, the phenomenon of the will to power, the function of which is determined primarily through its Dionysian nature.

The Dionysian and the Apollonian in their opposition define the problem field of the thought of Nietzsche, in which the concept of the will to power is intended to refute and demythologize the Apollo-Socratic type of rationality developed in European culture. It is the type of rationality which is seen by Nietzsche as responsible for nihilistic neglect of life's element. The will to power as a value, the basis and truth of all existing, is the argument against the absolutizing of the Apollonian at its core, logical consciousness. Will to power is seen by many researchers as a metaphor for returning to the natural, the deep unconscious, which was forgotten in the alienated Socratic consciousness⁵.

When a life force – will to power – declares itself, it finds expression for this important concept of Nietzsche's philosophy as "eternal return". This idea encompasses, on one side, the myth of a kind of circulation – the return of the same in history, and, on the other hand, the thought experiment to live as if everything in life continuously reincarnates. These two sides of one whole serve the development of the ability to say «Yes» to life – regardless of any tragedies. The eternal in this context is interpreted as "forever becoming", i.e. "the being of becoming"⁶. This is the significance of eternal return to the concept of the will to power: the essence of being – the being of becoming, eternally renewed – the same thing – the effort to be, to become, i.e. endeavor, striving, aspiration about their power, and the will to power.

Thus, the will to power is a construct that specifies the prospect of a new look at existence, which emphasizes the value of unconscious elements of life, elements of spontaneous vitality asserting itself, expanding and powerfully existing.

⁴ Nietzsche F. The Birth of Tragedy // The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings. Cambridge University Press 1999.

⁵ Schutte O. Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche without Masks. Chicago, 1984. P. 97.

⁶ Podoroga V. A. Nietzsche // New philosophic encyclopedia in 4 vols. URL: <http://iph.ras.ru/elib/2096.html>

The will to power as the developed force characterizes a semantic reality of Nietzsche's Superman. The Superman is the embodiment of a powerful affirmation of life. Will to power shows the fullness of its meaning – to be constant and, importantly, increasing self-assertion. The developmental phenomenon of the will to power is denoted by Nietzsche in the term "self-overcoming". The words of Zarathustra expressed the essence of life "that must always overcome itself"⁷. This principle finds expression in the Superman, defined primarily as the one who will rise above "human, all too human", and overcome it.

Another important task and function assigned to Superman, distinguishing him from a decadent (declining) will to power, is the implementation of the revaluation of all values. Revaluation is understood as the reconstruction of the system of values in the direction of emphasis the value of will to power, the Dionysian element generally, which aims if not to turn, then to harmonize the relationship of two elements of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, according to the unity with the elements of life.

The revaluation of values undoubtedly leads to a new ethical perspective, a new understanding of morality. A key distinction in the ethics of Nietzsche is the distinction between the slave-morality and the master-morality. The new understanding of morality is the theory of the morality of the masters, which is the product of the values on the basis of a superabundance of vital energy and strength. The notions of morality of lords expressed in the image above the man who as fully developed the will to power sets of values and produces the estimate. According to Nietzsche, the original meaning of morality is in its growth from the fullness of life and in the sake of completeness. Moral consciousness in its rootedness in life's instinct (will to power) has the criterion of morality in the degree of increasing life and power. Slavish, herd morality has distorted the essence of this by building the morality of resentment (Ressentiment) and proceeding in a moral assessment of the weakness and fear of the totality of life.

Thus, the moral ideal is the concept of considering human values by the Superman. For Nietzsche, there is no specific image of a Superman. It is considered as the principle of maximum development of the will to power. It follows that the principle of morality will be consistent with the principle of will to power (and life itself) – through the idea of self-overcoming. The above-set of characteristics lead to the individualistic and aesthetic (esthetized) nature of Nietzsche's ethics. Individualism in this case is connected not with disunity with others or selfishness, but with a particular focus on considering morality in the future tasks for the individual.

III. AESTHETIC MORALISM AS A FORM OF OVERCOMING NIHILISM

The aestheticism of Nietzsche's ethics is a kind of realization of ideas of the beautiful and valuable in itself, the embodiment of which presupposes that the most important

⁷ Schutte O. Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche without Masks. Chicago, 1984. P. 32.

factors are not theonomy laws (criticism of religion), not the legality of actions (criticism of formalism in morality), but "the emotion, passion and feeling."⁸ To understand the moral aestheticism of Nietzsche and the identification of will to power with the affective side of life, we should remember the understanding of art in his philosophy.

According to Nietzsche, the artist is the type of person whose natural, irrational, and the vital parts manifest themselves the most. From the interpretation of M. Heidegger, Nietzsche believed that, through the artist, the whole being is filled with light and power. It is the existence of human generative ability and even the ability to produce a product that destroys the bedrock and a chilling sense of the past (if they do not have a fresh and new look). In Heidegger, we find a detailed analysis of five Nietzsche's theses about art, which are undoubtedly important for understanding and moral aestheticism. As part of our topic, the fourth thesis is of particular interest: "Art is a clearly defined confrontation of the nihilism".⁹

K. Jaspers noted about Nietzsche's criticism of morality that it "originates in the morality of the highest order".¹⁰ Speaking of this reality as a higher order of morality, Jaspers focuses on the following requirements to Nietzsche ("the existential ways of implementation")¹¹ which directly refers to reality that is called the aesthetic. These include: morality "for the individual" and the innocence of becoming (the absence of resentment, and the lust to find the guilty), creativity (as the ultimate requirement of true existence), a person who creates himself. Thus, according to Jaspers, the aspiration of Nietzsche "to destroy morality in order to liberate life" must be understood not as the overcoming of any value at all, but as a slave morality, with its resentment division on good and evil. "Jaspers calls such an overcoming a wide and completely positive opinion, including all the controversial opinions, not excluding "bad" ones".¹² Such an approach directly points to the prospect of the aesthetic view of the natural, spontaneous man, which is freely manifested and is constructively creating himself and the world around him in a powerful and beautiful pursuit of a highly developed life.

"In all philosophy hitherto the artist is lacking (In der ganzen Philosophie bis heute fehlt der Künstler)"¹³ – it is the idea that stresses the metatheoretical role of the aesthetical

moralism in Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche's thought changed the philosophical ways of thinking dramatically by working out new ideas that were more appropriate to the Early Romantic thinkers than to the German Enlightenment theories. In this case, Nietzsche scholars put forward the thesis: it is Nietzsche whose works made the character of philosophy to be ethical par excellance.¹⁴ We should add: it is Nietzsche whose works made the ethical character of philosophy to be aesthetical par excellance.

IV. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLEMENTATIONS OF OVERCOMING NIHILISM IN AESTHETIC MORALISM

This aspect of the concept of will to power, understood aesthetically as an element of sensual and creative attitude to the world as a beautiful creation, allows us to define the horizons of the pedagogical implications of Nietzsche's philosophy.

These ethical ideas about the highest good of being are specified directly by reasoning about the education of human beings, which is carried out in "Untimely Meditations" in "Schopenhauer as educator".

First, Nietzsche proposes the idea of pedagogy as a healthy and quick to stand on their feet and integral (non-one-dimensional) life. It clarifies the idea of adding "Dionysian" to the logic of the "Apollonian" consciousness which is nourished by the vital forces of the latter. The increase of the will to power in this case can be interpreted as the overcoming of logical one-sidedness of consciousness.

Second, the idea of negation is understood as the central force containing constructive meaning. In this regard, Nietzsche formulates the task "to become angry" which is specified as the denial of all being which can be denied and which thus deserves to be denied.¹⁵ This statement is clarified through the notion of loyalty to the truth and true being – which cannot be denied and which among the many rules of life will be unconstrained and real. In this regard, denial is an important mechanism of self-overcoming will – the negation of any of its content which can be rejected as low, limited or insignificant.

Third, a special aspect of the attitude to the ways of life which are to be pursued is the denial of their relativity. According to Nietzsche, the one who sees some of the images of life (of a proper life, as it seems), images of certain occupations, family statuses (the person as a moment in the development of generations) and other pre-defined values – he "has not understood the lesson set him by existence".¹⁶ The samples, being inscribed in a sequence of "emerging", i.e. changing elements, become relative and deprecate and make the person choose between the relative values. This aspect shows the distinction of morality of slaves and masters developed in other works. "The task set by existence" involves going outside of the relative goals – to go

⁸ Heidegger M. Nietzsche. Vol. 1. HarperOne, NY, 1991. P. 44.

⁹ Heidegger M. Nietzsche. Vol. 1. HarperOne, NY, 1991. P. 74.

¹⁰ Jaspers K. Nietzsche. Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity. Quoted from: Jaspers K. An introduction to the understanding of his philosophizing. St. Petersburg, Vladimir Dal, 2004. P. 229.

¹¹ Jaspers K. Nietzsche. Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity. Quoted from: Jaspers K. An introduction to the understanding of his philosophizing. St. Petersburg, Vladimir Dal, 2004. P. 231-239.

¹² Kosorukova, A. A., K. Jaspers and M. Heidegger on the concept of nihilism in the philosophy of F. Nietzsche // The Problems of ethics: the philosophical almanac. Issue 1. M.: Modern notebooks, 2008. P. 45.

¹³ Nietzsche, F. (1999). Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden. hrsg.v. G. Colli und M. Montinari. Berlin: de Gruyter. Quotation from: Stefan-Sebastian Maftei. Philosophy as 'artwork': Revisiting Nietzsche's idea of a 'philosophy' from the point of view of the 'artist' / Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 71 (2013). P. 91.

¹⁴ Guseynov A. A. Philosophy as ethics (an approach to the interpretation of Nietzsche) // <http://www.nietzsche.ru/look/xxc/etika/guseynov/>

¹⁵ Nietzsche F. Schopenhauer as Educator // Nietzsche F. Untimely Meditations. Cambridge University Press 1997. P. 153.

¹⁶ Nietzsche F. Schopenhauer as Educator // Nietzsche F. Untimely Meditations. Cambridge University Press 1997. P. 155.

back to the "being" from the ranks of relativity and choose the meanings again.

Fourth, a special understanding of liberation as the task of true education is created through the expression of the concept of negation, through the escape from the relativity of becoming: "Your educators can be only your liberators"¹⁷. The ultimate goal of education is personal manifestation and progress; when the question about "self" arises, this goal seems unattainable for Nietzsche because "self" remains behind any guidance¹⁸. Only the liberation that wakes the movement of will and thought remains possible. The true liberation of the will can be interpreted regarding the above-mentioned work of overcoming and growth. As far as thought is the epiphenomenon of the will, it should also be freed from destructive inertia. In this regard, Nietzsche talks about the movement and activities of the mind as an activity directed at the conceptualization of the reasons and goals of the current life or present situation of life.

So, on the basis of the whole concept of the will to power and its ethical values it seems possible to summarize the main values and meanings of human practice (higher purpose of ethics), defining Nietzsche's idea of education and upbringing (cultivation of self)¹⁹.

- The development of the logical consciousness in education must be supplemented by the development of qualities of will and emotional sphere (the Dionysian).

- The criterion of increasing the will to power, as the criterion of value, points to the idea of growth and progress which should penetrate all raising quality, and in accordance with the "law" of the will to power – to overcome any "quality" and to rise above limitations.

- Self-overcoming and constant overcoming of the ordinary "human, all too human" is the most important quality of the Superman, and as a completely objective – a moral quality.

- A conceptual distinction between the slave morality and master morality is, in some way, landmarks and guidelines in the field of moral consciousness. Feelings of resentment (Ressentiment), characteristic for the slave morality, as well as weakness and fear before life are anti-value for motivation, while life force and freedom of the "master" are value and orienting point.

V. CONCLUSION

Summing up, it is necessary to emphasize the following conclusions.

- Ethical and pedagogical ideas about ultimate good (the higher human being) are considered by Nietzsche through the context of their prime significance and

¹⁷ Nietzsche F. Schopenhauer as Educator // Nietzsche F. Untimely Meditations. Cambridge University Press 1997.

¹⁸ Nietzsche F. Schopenhauer as Educator // Nietzsche F. Untimely Meditations. Cambridge University Press 1997. P. 129.

¹⁹ Kosorukova, A. A., Ethical and pedagogical ideas of F. Nietzsche // Opening re-modernity: Collection of scientific articles of teachers and post-graduate students of the faculty of Humanities and social Sciences PFUR dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the faculty. M.: PFUR, 2011. P. 479.

the call to the reader to see them as essential. It is indispensable for cultivating them in himself.

- The idea of education and upbringing (cultivation of self) finds the expression in the activity of the will in its most important endeavor: to elevate itself constantly. This mechanism is conceptualized through the idea of the Dionysian element, free willing (being creative and adhering to master-morality) and self-overcoming. Both the negation and the sacred "yes" display again and again the renewable life.
- Pedagogical conclusions of the theory of will to power are connected, firstly, with the idea of aesthetic moralism as the way of overcoming nihilism. Nothing else but the sensual impulse that creates the constant affirmation of the principle of life, the comprehension of the growth and development of life as a virtue – this impulse determines self-overcoming as the essence of will to power as an effective way of getting genuine perspective of life. The will to life force is the only possible proper position/perspective – it is useful for the exaltation and prosperity of life. For the latter, the prospect of aesthetic view is required, of the view of the man, which constructively creates himself and the world in a powerful and beautiful pursuit of a highly developed life.

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