

Tracy Strong's "Genealogy, Will to Power, and the Problem of a Past"

When I read N, can't help but think of what he's trying to build on.

-- e.g., Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Hegel, Schopenhauer

Start with summary of some of the arguments in the article, then take a different route in second half of presentation

Summary of parts of Strong's argument

"Genealogy is actuality of the past in the present" (94).

-- N concerned with how the past continues to manifest in the present

Quote from N, cited in Strong p. 94: We can implant in ourselves a second nature so the first nature withers away

-- WTP as what allows for this withering away

Will to Power, acc to Strong

- cannot be satisfied
- never static, always moving forward
- overcomes obstacles and barriers
- doesn't seek pleasure or avoid pain
- not a single entity or faculty
- way of interpreting
- a form-giving force
- all life is will to power

Too many things here to make sense of; had to pretty much dismiss this and go on with the argument

Master-slave morality

In the slave morality, the self is attained by differentiation from nature and from others; this form of moral agency requires oppression (98)

-- related to Hegel's master-slave dialectic

Weakness of the will of slave leads to victory over the nobles; source of this victory is in rationality

-- presenter disagrees with this

Presenter's own argument

Going to argue that will to power does not have to do with consciousness, doesn't have cognition, interpretation

-- would N agree with this interpretation of WTP from Strong as WTP having to do with interpretation, form-giving, as if these were conscious?

-- look at his influences

Fredrick Copleston on Schopenhauer

- bodily movements for Schopenhauer are expression of desire, or “will”
- no entity called “will” distinct from the movement; volition is inside of movement and physical movement is outside
- reality is a drive, force or energy that S called “will”; an unconscious striving, striving for existence, life, self-assertion

So Schopenhauer’s will is unconscious striving; want to bring N’s WTP back to this. Want to take consciousness out of will to power

- Essay 1, Sect. 16: talks of “instincts of a resentful populace”
 - Essay 1, Sect. 10: “the governing unconscious instincts”
 - Essay 2, Sect. 18: “the instincts of freedom”
- This is why N uses parable of eagle and lamb: animal instincts

N revered Schopenhauer, Dostoyevsky, Kierkegaard, what do they say about consciousness?

- Schopenhauer: consciousness leads to suffering (*The World as Will and Representation*)
- Kierkegaard: “The present age is one of understanding, reflection, devoid of passion... (*The Present Age*)
- Dostoyevsky: suffering is sole cause of consciousness; the immediate result of consciousness is inertia (*Notes from Underground*)

Nietzsche on consciousness:

- Essay 2, Sect. 16; unhappy creatures are reduced to their consciousness when enclosed in society and peace
- Essay 2, Sect. 17: those who create forms, create societies are unconscious artists

George Simmel, The Metropolis and Mental Life (1903)

- problems of “modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society”
- it is external ideals like calculability, punctuality that exclude our irrational, instinctive impulses that would determine our life from within the individual

Nietzsche’s Sovereign Individual?

- The state/society/culture/religion/morality suppresses a “genuine consciousness” and leads to a “bad conscience” that turns us against our instincts.
- a sovereign individual can overcome this disease by ceasing to “de-self”, to return to humanity

Question

1. How do we come to understand the WTP in regards to instincts, unconscious desires, and consciousness? Does N regard consciousness as a burden to the will to power?

Discussion

Not sure if you can get to later developments unless you first become self-conscious. Don’t see N as saying we should become instinctual beings again.

Have to eventually get to the point where one can act in ways without having to be self-conscious of the rules; internalize rules so that they become fully a part of oneself and one doesn’t have to adhere slavishly to them anymore.

Those who turn inwards with a bad conscience also have to turn outwards to have rules from outside of themselves, whereas the sovereign individual acts from self, from self-created values.

Consciousness is good because it allows the self-awareness that will allow us to question where we're getting our values, whether we've created them, why we follow them, whether we should or not.