The Nietzschean Legacy in Cultural Theory: A Study

SIMI MALHOTRA

The usual view about the position of philosophy within contemporary thought is that, like so many other presences and discourses of truth that dotted the modern and pre-modern Western horizon, it is dead, and, therefore, of no relevance. No wonder, Derrida gives a whole inventory of what all has 'ended' under the postmodern, and he lists philosophy within it:

> [...] the end of history, the end of class struggle, *the end of philosophy*, the end of God, the end of religion, the end of Christianity and morals [...], the end of the subject, the end of man, the end of the West, the end of Oedipus, the end of the earth, *Apocalypse Now*, I tell you, in the cataclysm, the fire, the flood, the fundamental earthquake, the napalm descending from the sky by helicopter, [...] and also the end of literature, the end of painting, art as a thing of the past, the end of psychoanalysis, the end of the university, the end of phallocentrism and phallogocentrism, and I don't know what else.[1]

However, one would notice that not only has philosophy not vanished from the postmodern horizon of thought, but it, in fact, informs, constructs and reinforces many postulations that are thought to be exclusively postmodern. This is so much so that Derrida, his previous quote notwithstanding, says that philosophy is not at all dead and a deconstruction of philosophy requires one to philosophise further. Claiming that he is 'true to philosophy', Derrida says,

> I never said a word against philosophy. I insisted on the contrary that philosophy was not dead and that the closure of philosophy was not the death of philosophy. [...] And even if you deconstruct philosophy or if you want to think of the limits of philosophy, of the special kind of limits of philosophy, you have not only to philosophise in a general and a historical way but to be trained in the history of philosophy and to go on learning and teaching philosophy. That's why I am true to philosophy.[2]

Derrida explains this paradox by resorting to metaphoricity in his

usual style. Giving the example of a heliotrope flower, he shows that the death of philosophy can be of two types—that of the likes of Plato and Hegel on the one hand, and that of the likes of Nietzsche and Bataille on the other—with the second kind of death actually being relevant to the current times, much like a dead heliotrope flower put inside a book, to be relived any time:

> Metaphor, then, always carries its death within itself. And this death, surely, is also the death *of* philosophy. But the genitive is double. It is sometimes the death of philosophy, death of a genre belonging to philosophy which is thought and summarized within it, recognizing and fulfilling itself within philosophy; and sometimes the death of a philosophy which does not see itself die, and is no longer to be refound within philosophy. [...] [T]hese two deaths repeat and simulate one another in the heliotrope. The heliotrope of Plato or of Hegel on the one hand, the heliotrope of Nietzsche and Bataille on the other, to use metonymic abbreviations here. Such a flower always bears its double within itself, whether it be seed or type, the chance of its program or the necessity of its diagram. The heliotrope can always be *relevé*. And it can always become a dried flower in a book. There is always, absent from every garden, a dried flower in a book; and by virtue of the repetition in which it endlessly puts itself into *abyme*, no language can reduce into itself the structure of an anthology.[3]

This already includes Nietzsche into the postmodern scene, and he becomes our contemporary, because for postmodern thought in general, as it is for Nietzsche regarding the death of God, the death of philosophy is not an end of philosophy, but a further appropriation of the legacy of the dead philosophy, to construct itself in all its inherited embellishments.

Thus, instead of conceiving of postmodernism as a doing away with philosophy, it may be worthwhile to see how it appropriates the institution of philosophy, and herein, to warn one beforehand, one may get led to Nietzsche again. Deleuze argues that most of philosophy begins from a natural Image of thought based on common sense, which is supposed to have bearing on truth, and philosophy is thus based on a dogmatic Image of normative truth. For Deleuze, however, as opposed to the 'orthodox' philosophy, there is another kind of philosophy, which begins with a critique of this pre-philosophical natural Image of thought and presumes that philosophy could really start off only when it is freed from the dogma of the Image. This alternate mode of thought, which Deleuze equates with postmodern philosophy, happens when, as opposed to dogmatic

thought, based on the recognition of similarities, a rather differentiating 'encounter', not with some benign unifying force, but with the demonic forces of 'difference' takes place. He says,

> It is not the gods which we encounter: even hidden, the gods are only the forms of recognition. What we encounter are the demons, the sign-bearers: powers of the leap, the interval, the intensive and the instant; powers which only cover difference with more difference. [...] *Opposition, resemblance, identity and even analogy are only effects produced by these presentations of difference*, rather than being conditions which subordinate difference and make it something represented. [...] Even the point of departure—namely, sensibility in the encounter with that which forces sensation—presupposes neither affinity nor predestination. On the contrary, it is the fortuitousness or the contingency of the encounter which guarantees the necessity of that which it forces to be thought.[4]

Deleuze elaborates this differentiating encounter of the alternate mode of thought further when he says elsewhere that the task of postmodern philosophy is 'to reverse Platonism'. This takes one straight to Nietzsche, because it is in him that Deleuze locates the call for this reversal when he says, 'What does it mean "to reverse Platonism"? This is how Nietzsche defined the task of his philosophy or, more generally, the task of the philosophy of the future.'[5] 'Platonism' here stands for the dialectic of differentiation in Plato, whose purpose is to distinguish the true from the false, the original from its simulations. For Deleuze, this distinction between copies and simulacra, on the basis of resemblance to reality, becomes the basis of most of later Western philosophy, which dominantly represses the simulacrum because it represents chaos, and disrupts philosophy's search for the Same. A reversal of this, as represented by postmodern philosophy, would conversely involve a foregrounding of the simulacrum, and thus, for Deleuze, there can be two approaches in Western philosophy regarding similitude and difference: one, which is a Platonic legacy, locates similitude in disparity and relies on the 'copy'; the other, which is postmodern, locates disparity in similitude and relies on the 'simulacrum'. Deleuze says,

> Let us consider the two formulas: "only that which resembles differs" and "only differences can resemble each other". These are two distinct readings of the world: one invites us to think difference from the standpoint of a previous similitude or identity; whereas the other invites us to think similitude and even identity as the product of a deeper disparity. The first reading precisely defines the world of copies or representations; it posits the world

as icon. The second, contrary to the first, defines the world of simulacra; it posits the world itself as phantasm.[6]

This second formula, constitutive of postmodern thought, is precisely what, according to Deleuze, Nietzsche was doing in his reversal of Platonism. Deleuze says,

> So "to reverse Platonism" means to make the simulacra rise and to affirm their rights among icons and copies. The problem no longer has to do with the distinction Essence-Appearance or Model-Copy. This distinction operates completely within the world of representation. Rather, it has to do with undertaking the subversion of this world—the "twilight of the idols". The simulacrum is not a degraded copy. It harbors a positive power which denies *the original and the copy, the model and the reproduction.* [...] Simulation is the phantasm itself, that is, the effect of the functioning of the simulacrum as machinery—a Dionysian machine. It involves the false as power, *Pseudos*, in the sense in which Nietzsche speaks of the highest power of the false. By rising to the surface, the simulacrum makes the Same and the Similar, the model and the copy, fall under the power of the false (phantasm). It renders the order of participation, the fixity of distribution, the determination of the hierarchy impossible. It establishes the world of nomadic distributions and crowned anarchies.[7]

Thus, the point to be noted here is that Nietzsche plays a crucial role in the shaping of postmodern thought from the embers of erstwhile Western philosophy, strengthening further the current paper's attempt to probe into his legacy. What is to be noted furthermore is that while postmodern thought is different from what Deleuze has been quoted earlier to have called dogmatic philosophy, it is also a *philosophy*, and it can only be understood in the immanent terms of it having appropriated concepts from earlier Western philosophy towards its construction.

Gianni Vattimo explains this dual relationship between postmodernism and philosophy—that the former announces the death of the latter and yet constructs itself in relation to and under influence from it—by using the Heideggerian category of *Verwindung*, or an immanent overcoming, which is different from *Šberwindung*, or transcendental overcoming. He says,

> In order to examine the question of the post-modern in philosophy in a way that avoids making a rhapsodic comparison between contemporary philosophy and the apparent traits of post-modernity in other fields, such as architecture, literature, and criticism, we must turn to a term which Heidegger first introduces into philosophy: *Verwindung*. [Ö] *Verwindung* indicates

something analogous to *śberwindung*, or overcoming, but is distinctly different from the latter both because it has none of the characteristics of a dialectical *Aufhebung* and because it contains no sense of a 'leaving-behind' of a past that no longer has anything to say to us. Precisely this difference between *Verwindung* and *śberwindung* can help us to define in philosophical terms the 'post-' in 'post-modernism'.[8]

However, Vattimo goes un to say further that it is Nietzsche who first speaks of *Verwindung*, and thus postmodernity can be conceived to have born with Nietzsche's work. Vattimo says,

The first philosopher to speak in terms of the possibility of *Verwindung*—even if, of course, he does not use the word itself—is not Heidegger but Nietzsche. It could legitimately be argued that philosophical post-modernity is born with Nietzsche's work, in the space that separates the second of the *Untimely Meditations* ('On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' (1874)) from the group of works published a few years later, ranging from *Human All Too Human* (1878) to *Daybreak* (1881) and *The Gay Science* (1882).[9]

It can be noted that in his 1874 essay mentioned above, Nietzsche shows that 'overcoming', or *śberwindung*, is a typically modern category, rather than one showing a way out of modernity. In *Human All Too Human*, Nietzsche shows that modernity can be dissolved only through a radicalisation of its own innate tendencies, that is through an immanent politics, thereby hinting at *Verwindung*. In carrying the immanent subversive logic, which has already been shown as constitutive of contemporary postmodern thought, in *The Joyful Wisdom* (*The Gay Science*), Nietzsche first mentions the 'death of God', and through a reversal of its nihilistic implications in what Nietzsche would later call 'the will to power', mark his movement away from modern transcendental overcoming. For Nietzsche, since a game of 'will to power' tries to establish 'truth' where there are actually only lies, the answer to this rejection of the real fragmentary reality for mythical unities, is in rejecting this 'nihilism' itself and proclaiming in its place an affirmative 'joyful wisdom'. This is an immanent overcoming or *Verwindung*, which in itself is also metonymic of the very characteristic that marks postmodern thought's use of erstwhile philosophy. Vattimo shows further that this *Verwindung*, combined with the Heideggerian concept of *An-denken* or 're-collection', gives rise to 'post-metaphysical thought', which is a recollection and a re-thinking of past thought, rather than a relief from it. It is easy to associate this philosophy of *Verwindung-*

Andenken, with postmodern thought, because not only does postmodernism, like *Verwindung*, deal with a subversive and immanent means to unmask normativity, it also, like *Andenken*, use nostalgia or recollection as its mode to do so. Vattimo makes this connection between Nietzsche and post-metaphysical or postmodern thought clear, when he says,

> Both the notions of *Verwindung* and *Andenken*, and the similar notion of 'the philosophy of morning' in Nietzsche, seem to point out that post-metaphysical thought can only be a sort of 'revised' (*verwunden*), distorted form of historicism. This is very clear in Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God. [...] But why should we take seriously and conform to the development of Western thought in which, ultimately, God is dead? Precisely because this development has dissolved any other point of reference, any other basis of certainty except the cultural heritage. When the origin has revealed its insignificance, as Nietzsche says, then we become open to the meaning and richness of proximity; or, in other words, we become capable of playing those language games which constitute our existence upon the sole basis of our belonging to a particular historical tradition, which we have to respect in the same way in which we feel respect for monuments, tombs, traces of past life, or even family memories.[10]

Habermas, who would really be the theoriser *par excellence* of 'postmetaphysical thinking' and the conscience-keeper of our postmodern times, also recognises this legacy of Nietzsche, and shows that postmetaphysical thought began with a critique of Hegelian idealism, which, through Feuerbach, Marx and Kierkegaard, led to Nietzsche. He says,

> Initially, postmetaphysical thinking was thoroughly characterized by its critique of Hegel's brand of idealism. The first generation of Hegel's disciples criticized in the work of their teacher the secret preponderance of what is universal, supratemporal, and necessary over what is particular, variable, and accidental, and thus the idealistic casting given to the concept of reason. Feuerbach emphasized the priority of what is objective: subjectivity is both embedded in an inner nature and confronted by an outer nature. Marx saw spirit rooted in material production and embodied in the ensemble of social relations. Finally, Kierkegaard counterposed the facticity of one's own existence and the inwardness of the radical will to be oneself within a chimerical reason within history. All of these arguments seek to recover the finite character of mind from the self-referential, totalizing thinking of the dialectic—Marx spoke of the "process of decay" of absolute spirit. [...] They thus opened the gates to Nietzsche's more radical critique of reason [...][11]

This 'more radical critique of reason' introduces that side of Nietzsche, which deals more ostensibly with power, another important component in contemporary ways of dealing with cultural criticism, thus contributing further to the 'Nietzschean legacy' question.

It should be noted that Foucault clarifies how it is Nietzsche, and not Marx, who first focused on power relation as the basis of social and ideological structuration saying, 'It was Nietzsche who specified the power relation as the general focus, shall we say of philosophical discourse—whereas for Marx it was the production relation. Nietzsche is the philosopher of power.'[12] Elsewhere, Foucault puts this primacy of Nietzsche in perspective. For Foucault, the fundamental task of contemporary cultural theory, that of questioning normative hierarchies and *a priories*, could only be possible with the introduction of the notion of 'nonpositive affirmation' into the schema of things. This becomes first possible with the distinction by Kant between the *nihil negativum* and the *nihil privatium*, which later the Frankfurt School was to identify as the bifurcation of Reason into instrumental reason and moral reason, and which Blanchot defined through his principle of 'contestation'. For Foucault, the real use of this negative positivity begins, however, with Nietzsche and his genealogical questioning of origins, and it is thus Nietzsche who should be credited with the beginnings of contemporary 'transgressive' thought. Foucault says,

[P]hilosophy has been well aware since Nietzsche (or it should undoubtedly know by now) that it questions an origin without positivity and an opening indifferent to the patience of the negative [...] In our day, would not the instantaneous play of the limit and of transgression be the essential test for a thought which centers on the "origin", for that form of thought to which Nietzsche dedicated us from the beginning of his works and one which would be, absolutely and in the same motion, a Critique and an Ontology, an understanding that comprehends both finitude and being?[13]

Needless to say, Foucault invokes Nietzsche's genealogical method in much of his later analyses, and this method being crucial to a lot of contemporary cultural criticism, an elaboration of the same may help in assessing Nietzsche's position as 'our contemporary'.

I thus proceed to examine the basic postulates of Nietzsche's method of 'genealogy' as laid down and used in his *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) and see how they become the bases of the method much of contemporary cultural criticism would adopt. Before moving into how Nietzsche visualises the study of 'origins' and the version

of 'history' thus arrived at, I would first try to follow Foucault to tabulate a few general features of the method. The first, almost obvious, feature is that genealogy is a method to historically study the constitution of discursive formations in relation to power structures. The second feature is that of plurality of the subject, or that one need not assume a unified singular subject but instead look into the fissures and struggles that comprise the plurality that subjectivity is. Nietzsche says in his *The Will to Power* (1901),

> The assumption of *single subject* is perhaps not necessary. It may be equally permissible to assume a plurality of subjects, whose interaction and struggle lie at the bottom of our thought and our consciousness in general [...] *My hypothesis*: The subject as a plurality.[14]

The third feature of genealogy is that it does not, in its denunciation of subjectivism, resort to mere empiricism or positivism, or that it does not take recourse to some kind of scientism to dethrone the subject. On the contrary, genealogy tries to constitute what Nietzsche calls 'anti-sciences' or, as opposed to the austere academic enterprise, a 'gay science',[15] where local, discontinuous, disqualified and illegitimate knowledges are unearthed to expose the hierarchies which exclude them to form a unitary and totalitarian body of theory in the name of 'true knowledge' and the scientific. The fourth feature is that in the process of its historical quest, genealogy does not rely on the Idealist notion of causality and Nietzsche says in *The Will to Power*, '*There is no such thing as a cause or an effect* [...] *the interpretation of causality is an illusion* [...] There is no such thing as a *sense of causality*, as Kant would have us believe.'[16] The final feature, related to the last, is that the Nietzschean method has a definite purpose in what he describes in the same text as '*To combat determinism and teleology.*'[17] It is with an understanding of these five basic features of the method that I move on to an examination of how Nietzsche proposes to genealogically study 'origins' and 'history' in his *The Genealogy of Morals*.

'Genealogy' etymologically means a study of origins, and therefore, Nietzsche's insistence on doing away with causality and teleology may appear quite paradoxical. This is why Nietzsche uses two different sets of terms for 'origin' and the anti-teleological method of genealogy opposes itself to one of them. Nietzsche makes two uses of the word '*Ursprung*' (the common German word for 'origin'): one is unstressed, which is alternately used with other terms such as '*Entstehung*', '*Herkunft*', '*Abkunft*', or '*Geburt*'; while the other is

stressed. This second use of the word refers to the origin of something as an essential *a priori*, and as perceived by an individual transcendental subject. Genealogy refuses to be a search for this sort of an 'origin', and instead concentrates on the first use of the word, where origin can be studied not as *Ursprung*,[18] but as *Herkunft* (descent) or *Entstehung* (emergence). Nietzsche says in the preface to his *Genealogy of Morals* that genealogy is an examination of the *Herkunft* and not *Ursprung*, thus forwarding the theory of *Herkunfthypothesen*, which he began using as early as his *Human All-Too-Human* (1878).[19] Genealogy as a method, thus, never roots itself in the search for this 'inviolable' origin, and instead goes far beyond it into the depths of material events and accidents, it being a study of the material 'descent' (*Herkunft*) and 'emergence' (*Entstehung*) of phenomena, and I would see now what these two alternate terms for 'origin' entail.

The term *Herkunft*, as descent from a stock, talks about a notion's affiliation to a group through bonds of blood, tradition or social class. Genealogy, however, does not study this as an acquisition of solidified heritage, but as an unstable assemblage of faults and fissures that continuously threatens the inheritor. Genealogy, as a study of descent, thus does not aim to construct an unbroken continuity and show that the past always exists in the present, but rather studies events in their dispersion and physical actuality, searching for accidents, deviations, reversals and errors, which give birth to things. On the other hand, *Entstehung* as emergence, or the moment of arising of an event, avoids taking any emergence as the final stage in historical development. For genealogy, emergence of an event happens through the play of several forces, and the analysis of this *Entstehung* has to study the interaction and struggle between these, often contrary, forces. For Nietzsche, these opposing forces do not belong to a common space, and genealogy studies how these different forces however get united in an endlessly repeated play of dominations in a 'non-place'. Genealogy, as a study of *Entstehung*, is thus a study of how these conflicts and power-plays determine the nature of discursive formations as they emerge for the appropriation of the dominant group.

Having established how genealogy, as a study of origins, does not take up the essential inviolable Origin, but sees how events and discursive formations *descend* through dispersions and embodiment, and how they *emerge* through a series of violent combats as the tool for domination. I now move on to how genealogy relates to

historiography. Genealogy is distinct from traditional historiography because the object of genealogy is the Nietzschean notion of *'wirkliche Historie'*, which is different from the traditional history full of metaphysical notions of totality, identity, beginning, development and end. The term *'wirkliche'* literally means 'effective' and has the import of meaning 'real' or 'true', with *'Wirk'* etymologically deriving itself from the same root as 'work'. Genealogy avoids the notions of constancy, stability and immortality of traditional historiography by resting itself on this 'effective' history. There are three salient features of this 'effective history'. The first is that while traditional history dissolves the eruption of a singular event into a teleological movement of an ideal continuity, the Nietzschean notion of *wirkliche Historie* deals with events as unique and as having been generated through haphazard conflicts. Secondly, while traditional history, in its dependence on metaphysics, is most concerned with distances and heights, in what Nietzsche calls 'Egyptianism', analysing the farthest periods and highest forms, effective history studies periods nearest to it and periods normally considered decadent. Finally, while traditional historians make every effort to appear neutral and objective, trying to erase from their works marks of their context or individual stances, *wirkliche Historie* takes knowledge as perspective, and always takes a stance in this 'system of injustice' that knowledge is.

It is clear from the above discussion that genealogy opposes itself to the three Platonic categories of reality, identity and truth that governed Western historiography and sets up instead an alternate historical method whose purpose is to debunk the very assumptions of unity, continuity, subjectivity, causality, teleology and truth. One can appreciate how this is roughly what much of contemporary cultural criticism also intends to do and one can note how Foucault shows that the purpose of contemporary theory, very much like Nietzsche's genealogy, is of setting up, against the traditional historian's play of stable memories, history as a 'counter-memory'.[20] The systematic dissociation in both genealogy and theory of notions of identity that traditional history derives from the past, and their doing away with the metaphysical promise of return to the original moment of emergence, make the subject of knowledge emerge as one committed not to a quest for transcendental truth but to a fissured 'will to power'. This can lead one to an even further instance of the Nietzschean legacy in contemporary theory and cultural criticism.

The Nietzschean category of 'will to power' is in direct relation to

the Schopenhauerian category of the 'will'. For Schopenhauer the primary Rationalist-Idealist precept that the world is nothing but subjective idea is 'one-sided' as such a view takes no account of the objective reality that is also a part of this world, and so for him it is only when the world is seen as a manifestation of 'will' too—will being that subjective category through which the subject comes in relation with the object—that one can have a fuller picture of reality. Nietzsche, however, critiques, in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), the Schopenhauerian concept of the apodictic subjective will, stating that such a simplistic unified notion of the Will as completely knowable is definitely inadequate and he shows how the Will is much more complicated. Nietzsche says,

> Philosophers are accustomed to speak of the will as though it were the best-known thing in the world; indeed, Schopenhauer has given us to understand that the will alone is really known to us, absolutely and completely known, without deduction or addition. But it again and again seems to me that in this case Schopenhauer also only did what philosophers are in the habit of doing—he seems to have adopted a *popular prejudice* and exaggerated it. Willing—seems to me to be above all something *complicated*, something that is a unity only in name—and it is precisely in a name that popular prejudice links, which has got the mastery over the inadequate precautions of philosophers in all ages.[21]

Nietzsche deduces from this that the Idealist notion of absolute freedom of the will is not something that is unconditional and universal but something that is bound to a play of power, or that the very notion of 'free will' engenders a social game of commanding and obeying:

> That which is termed "freedom of the will" is essentially the emotion of supremacy in respect to him who must obey: "I am free, 'he' must obey"— this consciousness is inherent in every will [...] A man who *wills* commands something within himself which renders obedience, or which he believes renders obedience [...] In all willing it is absolutely a question of commanding and obeying, on the basis, as already said, of a social structure composed of many "souls"; on which account a philosopher should claim the right to include willing-as-such within the sphere of morals—regarded as the doctrine of the relations of supremacy under which the phenomenon of "life" manifests itself.[22]

Thus, for Nietzsche, the act of willing cannot be understood as an *a priori*, and one cannot conceive of an absolute freedom for the will.

For Nietzsche, the will is essentially bound to power and as he says, 'in real life it is only a question of *strong* and *weak* wills.'[23]

To establish the act of willing as basically an act in the exercise of power, Nietzsche first compares the 'will to power' to the more traditionally conceived 'will to truth'. Traditional philosophy points out that the human being is possessed by an insatiable will to know the truth and this is how knowledge proceeds. For Nietzsche, however, this is an unsatisfactory explanation, because it fails to account for why people would crave for the truth and not the 'untruth'. What Nietzsche suggests in *Beyond Good and Evil* is that this is so because systems of knowledge, which are linked to power, privilege the one over the other. He says in an oft-quoted passage,

> The Will to Truth, which is to tempt us to a many a hazardous enterprise, the famous Truthfulness of which all philosophers have hitherto spoken with respect, what questions has this Will to Truth not laid before us! [...] *Who* is it really that puts questions to us here? *What* really is this "Will to Truth" in us? In fact we made a long halt at the question as to the origin of this Will—until at last, we came to an absolute standstill before a yet more fundamental question. We inquired about the *value* of this Will. Granted that we want the truth: *why not rather* untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?[24]

Nietzsche comes to the conclusion that instead of an impersonal and subjective 'impulse to knowledge', which might work only for the exact sciences, what produces more and more knowledge in philosophy is a 'confession', either under duress or in the act to exercise power:

> It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy up till now has consisted of—namely the confession of its originator [...] Accordingly, I do not believe that an "impulse to knowledge" is the father of philosophy; but that another impulse, here as elsewhere, has only made use of knowledge (and mistaken knowledge!) as an instrument. [...] To be sure [...] in the case of really scientific men [..] there may really be such a thing as an "impulse to knowledge" [..] In the philosopher, on the contrary, there is absolutely nothing impersonal [...][25]

For Nietzsche, therefore, what is at the bottom of the production of knowledge, social formations and representations is not the neutral and benign 'will to truth', but a violent 'will to power'. He says, rather poetically, in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-85),

> "Will to Truth" do ye call it [...] that which impelleth you and maketh you ardent?

Will for the thinkableness of all being: thus do I call your will! [...] That is your entire will, ye wisest ones, as a Will to Power [...]

Your will and your valuations have ye put on the river of becoming; it betrayeth unto me an old Will to Power, what is believed by the people as good and evil [...]

It is not the river that is your danger and the end of your good and evil, ye wisest ones: but that Will itself, the Will to Power—the unexhausted, procreating life-will.[26]

Connecting the will to power to the reception of knowledge, i.e. 'interpretation', too, Nietzsche says, 'In sooth, all interpretation is but a means in itself to become a master of something',[27] thus connecting both production as well as reception of knowledge to the exercise of power.

The connection between Nietzsche's 'will to power' and contemporary cultural theory and criticism is obvious. Not only does Nietzsche say that power structures generate knowledge, the multiplicity of power and its being locatable in a constant engagement of forces further suggests that power cannot sustain itself through a mere unilateral repressive means. To perpetrate itself in all its multiplicity, power needs to produce and circulate discourse, the regional conception of power thus automatically leading to the non-repressive hypothesis, where power does not only repress discourse but generates it. The generative hypothesis of power is probably one of the mainstays of contemporary theory, with Gramsci's 'civil society', Althusser's 'Ideological State Apparatuses', Foucault's notion of the 'generative hypothesis of power', Habermas's 'public sphere' and the like all pointing to the same.

It can be argued, however, that Nietzsche often presents extremely reactionary positions when it comes to dealing with hierarchies, and so labelling him as a contemporary left-of-the-centre cultural critic may be problematic. It is difficult to forget Nietzsche's prescription in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* as to how a man should treat a woman: 'Thou goest to women? Do not forget thy whip!',[28] or, when in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he talks against education for women: 'When a woman has scholarly inclinations there is generally something wrong with her sexual nature.'[29] He demonstrates similar notions about race too, and says in the same text, 'The Jews—a people "born for slavery"',[30] and opines that the races should be kept distinct, because any intercourse, mental or sexual, between them is bound to lead to weak generations:

The man of an age of dissolution which mixes the races with one another, who has the inheritance of a diversified descent in his body—that is to say contrary, and often not only contrary, instincts and standards of value, which struggle with one another and are seldom at peace—such a man of late culture and broken lights, will, on an average, be a weak man.[31]

Generally, Nietzsche is seen to be opposed to any attempt at egalitarianism, and it can be noticed how he attacks socialism in the very first book of *The Will to Power*, when he says,

Socialism—or the tyranny of the meanest and most brainless,—that is to say, the superficial, the envious, and the mummers, brought to its zenith,— is, as a matter of fact, the logical conclusion of "modern ideas" and their latent anarchy.[32]

While Nietzsche does take extremely reactionary positions, it should be appreciated that it is his iconoclastic notion of power that makes him appropriable to postmodern thought and critical cultural practice, and, much like the *Verwindung* he himself proposed, his own works have also been selectively appropriated towards contemporary radical cultural praxis. Or, at worst, one can say that Nietzsche is probably not our contemporary is certain aspects, which warrants the question mark in my title, but does not take away the basic statement which precedes it.

Finally, one can end this paper with a tabulation of four of the most prominent features of postmodernism, and see how Nietzsche had offered them all a century back. If one of the foremost features of postmodernism is its celebratory aspect, one can see how Nietzsche had already rejected the Kantian and Hegelian austere philosophy and proposed instead the 'Dionysian' alternative based on iconoclastic sensuality. He says,

We shall not allow ourselves to be deceived either in Kant's or Hegel's way— We no longer believe, as they did, in morality, and therefore have no philosophies to found with the view of justifying morality. Criticism and history have no charm for us *in this* respect: what is their charm, then? [...] *My first solution to the problem: Dionysian wisdom. The joy in the destruction of the most noble thing* [...][33]

To take a second feature of postmodernism—that the subject is multiplicitous—it can be seen that Nietzsche also shows the subject to be a plurality rather than a unity, when he says, as has already been quoted above: '*My hypothesis*: The subject as a plurality'.[34] Thirdly, the postmodern view that knowledge and representation

are more of simulations, rather than dealings with real objects, is also reflected in Nietzsche's view that:

> When we try to examine the mirror in itself, we discover in the end nothing but things upon it. If we want to grasp the things, we finally get hold of nothing but the mirror. — This, in the most general terms, is the history of knowledge.[35]

Finally, one of the mainstays of postmodernism, that the notions of truth and absolute freedom of the will are problematic, and that they are rather bound to a contingent play of power, engendering a social game of commanding and obeying, is also what Nietzsche theorizes elaborately in his idea of the 'will to power'. This may seem as a rather arbitrary shopping list, and may appear to have been cast a little pell-mell at the very close of the paper, but this list does show how Nietzsche's reversals and repositionings of most of erstwhile Western philosophy have been formative in the construction of a joyful, fragmentary, simulatory and contingent mode of thought, or what can also be called postmodernism, and have also got appropriated into the business of more involved political criticism, the two together framing much of our 'contemporary' cultural horizon, and placing the legacy of Nietzsche very much in it.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1   Derrida, Jacques ('Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy', *Oxford Literary Review*, 6, no. 2, 1984, pp. 20-21), quoted in Julian Pefanis, *Heterology and the Postmodern: Bataille, Baudrillard, and Lyotard*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991, p. 56. [Emphasis mine]

2   Derrida, Jacques ('On colleges and philosophy', Interview with Jeff Bennington, *ICA Documents*, 4 and 5, pp. 66-71, p. 68), quoted in Stuart Sim, *Beyond Aesthetics: Confrontations with Poststructuralism and Postmodernism*, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992, p. 140.

3   Derrida, Jacques 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy' ('La mythologie blanche', *Poetique*, 5, 1971), in Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (*Marges de la philosophie*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972), trans. Alan Bass, Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982, p. 271.

4   Deleuze, Gilles 'The Image of Thought', in Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (*Différence et repetition*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), trans. Paul Patton, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, pp. 129-67; pp. 144-45.

5   Deleuze, Gilles 'Plato and the Simulacrum' ('Reversing Platonism', *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale*, 1967, 2), in 'The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy', Appendix 1, in Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense (Logique du sens*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969), trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, pp. 253-79; p. 253.

6   *Ibid.*, pp. 261-62.

7   *Ibid.*, pp. 262-63.

8   Vattimo, Gianni 'Nihilism and the Postmodern in Philosophy' ('Nichilismo e postmoderno in filosofia, *Aut*, 202, 1984), in Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture (La fine della modernitë*, Place: Garzanti, 1985), trans. Jon R. Snyder, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988, p. 164.

9   *Ibid.*, pp. 164-65. The references are to Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (1874), trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; *Human All-Too-Human* (1878), trans. Helen Zimmern and Paul V. Cohn, in Oscar Levy ed., *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Vols. 6-7, Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1900; *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (1881), trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982; and *The Joyful Wisdom (La Gaya Scienza*, 1882), trans. Thomas Common, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, op. cit.*, Vol. 10, 1900.

10   *Ibid.*, pp. 176-77.

11   Habermas, Jürgen *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays (Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988), trans. William Mark Hohengarten, Cambridge: Polity Press, and Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, pp. 39-40.

12   Foucault, Miche 'Prison Talk', (interview with J.-J. Brochier, *Magazine LittÈraire*, 101, June 1975, reprinted as 'Les jeux du pouvoir', in D. Grisoni ed., *Politiques de la Philosophie*, 1976), trans. Colin Gordon, in Colin Gordon ed., Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980, p. 53.

13   Foucault, Michel 'A Preface to Transgression' ('Une Préface à la transgression', "Hommage ë Georges Bataille", *Critique*, nos. 195-96, 1963, pp. 751-70), trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, in Donald F. Bouchard ed. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977 (reprint 1986), pp. 37-38.

14   Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Principles of a New Valuation*, Third Book of *The Will to Power: an Attempted Transvaluation of All Values (Die Wille Zur Macht*, published posthumously, 1901), trans. Anthony M. Ludovici, in Oscar Levy ed., *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Vol. 15, Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1910, p. 18.

15   Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Joyful Wisdom (La Gaya Scienza*, 1882), trans.

Thomas Common, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, op. cit.*, Vol. 10, 1900.

16 Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Principles of a New Valuation, op. cit.*, p. 57.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

18 Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Genealogy of Morals (Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1887), trans. H. B. Samuel, in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (an anthology), New York: The Modern Library, 1927; reprint 1954, pp. 617-807; p. 624.

19 Nietzsche, Friedrich *Human All-Too-Human (Menschliches Allzu Menschliches*, 1878), trans. Helen Zimmern and Paul V. Cohn, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, op. cit.*, Vols. 6-7, 1900.

20 Foucault, Michel 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' ('Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire', in Michel Foucault ed., *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, Paris: P.U.F., 1971, pp. 145-72), trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, op. cit.*, p.160.

21 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil (Jenseits Gut und Böse*, 1886), trans. Helen Zimmern, in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche, op. cit.*, p. 399.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 400-01.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 404.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 381.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 386-87.

26 Nietzsche, Friedrich *Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None (Also Sprach Zarathustra: ein Buch fur Alle und keinen*, 1883-85), trans. Thomas Common, in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche, op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

27 Nietzsche, *The Principles of a New Valuation, op. cit.*, p. 125.

28 Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra, op. cit.*, p. 70.

29 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil, op. cit.*, p. 465.

30 *Ibid.*, 485.

31 *Ibid.*, 490.

32 Nietzsche, Friedrich *European Nihilism*, First Book of *The Will to Power: an Attempted Transvaluation of All Values (Die Wille Zur Macht*, published posthumously, 1901), trans. Anthony M. Ludovici, in Oscar Levy ed., *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Vol. 14, T. N. Foulis, Edinburgh: 1910, p. 102.

33 Nietzsche, Friedrich *A Criticism of the Highest Values that have prevailed hitherto*, Second Book of *The Will to Power: an Attempted Transvaluation of All Values* (published posthumously, 1901), trans. Anthony M. Ludovici, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, op. cit.*, Vol. 14, 1910, pp. 332-33.

34 Nietzsche, *The Principles of a New Valuation, op. cit.*, p. 18.

35 Nietzsche, Friedrich *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (1881), trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 243.