

# THE HUMAN SYNTHESIS: AN EXPLORATION OF ANXIETY, LOVE, AND SELFHOOD UNDER THE DOMAIN OF THE WILL TO POWER

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*“This, my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my “beyond good and evil,” without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself— do you want a name for this world? A solution for all of its riddles? A light for you, too, you best-concealed, strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly men?— This world is the will to power—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!”<sup>1</sup>*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*

## §1: INTRODUCTION

The will to power leaves us with a fascinating question regarding the nature and purpose of the individual. If life is this will of “eternally self-creating, eternally self-destroying” force, and “[we ourselves] are also this will to power”, are we not destined to annihilate ourselves for the sake of creating beyond ourselves? Correlatively, and perhaps more importantly, why is there an individual at all? In

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1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 432.

other words, if life is defined as this impetus to self-destruction and re-creation, what is the purpose of sentient life that is *individuated*, i.e., a myriad of different egos and individuals coexisting as opposed to a single, undifferentiated, God-like intelligence?<sup>2</sup> There must be a reason as to why such a singularity<sup>3</sup> cannot exhibit the will to power itself. In reading Nietzsche, and other philosophers whom I will discuss in the paper, it is never able to be expressly understood as to why this ever-striving will to power manifests itself in the ego, in the *human being*. In this paper, I will attempt to examine the ego through the Nietzschean lens. First, I will expound the concept of the will to power more painstakingly. Next, I will outline why a being exhibiting the will to power must be self-conscious and, under a Sartrean analysis of consciousness, examine why a singularity alone cannot do this. After that, I will examine the human condition in our affections of anxiety and love to investigate the nature of selfhood and offer a solution to the fundamental question of “why” under the domain of the will to power.

## §2: BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE WILL TO POWER AND OUR ROLE WITHIN IT

Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is centric around the idea of the “Übermensch”. Translated into English as “overman” and symbolized by the main character Zarathustra, it represents what humans will one day evolve into: “Man is something that shall be overcome... What is the ape to man? A laughing stock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughing stock or a painful embarrassment.”<sup>4</sup> Crucially, becoming an overman is not achievable by anyone in this epoch; it is frequently misinterpreted as an exalted individual who stands out from a crowd in their excellence. Rather, Zarathustra is a symbol for the distant future of intelligent life’s evolution.

Before I analyze man’s role as a “rope tied between beast and overman,”<sup>5</sup> it is worth elucidating in further detail the concept of life

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2 Importantly, this is not a paper questioning the existence of a God; further, my investigation of why there are a multiplicity of egos isn’t denying the existence of a God. Rather, I am exploring why the will to power isn’t *just* a singularity and manifests in the individual as well.

3 Throughout the rest of the paper, what I will refer to as “singularity”, “infinite” being, or any other related term, is, once again, no remark on a “God”. It is simply to offer a point of comparison to an individual.

4 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 124.

5 Id., 126.

as the will to power. This is best explained in Zarathustra's recollecting of a dialogue he had with life: "And life itself confided this secret to me: 'Behold', it said, 'I am that which must always overcome itself... where there is perishing and a falling of leaves, behold, there life sacrifices itself - for power. That I must be struggle and a becoming and an end and an opposition to ends.'"6 We see once again, as in the quotation from *Will to Power*, that life is posited as a self-sacrificing, self-annihilating machine. Fittingly, Nietzsche construes man in a similar vein. One of the central tenets of our role in begetting the overman is the rather dark notion of self-sacrifice. He claims, "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that is an overture and a going under... I love those who do not first seek behind the stars for a reason to go under and be a sacrifice, but who sacrifice themselves for the earth, that the earth may some day become the overman's."7 This idea is expressed virtually everywhere in the book. Speaking of our inner "spirit", he says, "Spirit is the life that itself cuts into life: with its own agony it increases its own knowledge. Did you know that? And the happiness of the spirit is this: to be anointed and through tears be *consecrated as a sacrificial animal*."8 And, speaking to his disciples, Zarathustra says, "I have found you out, my disciples: you strive, as I do, for the gift-giving virtue. What do you have in common with cars and wolves? This is your thirst: to *become sacrifices and gifts yourselves*."9 Only through our suffering and "going under" do we give way to the overman; our sacrifice is a propagation and gift for our future. Humans, in Nietzsche's eyes, are tools for the beautiful machine of life. Manifestations of life's will to power, we act in congruence with it by destroying ourselves for the purpose of self-overcoming. As dark as this may appear, there is a purpose for our self-annihilation: creation.

Nietzsche believed that creating is the best way to give rise to the overman and succeed in "cutting into life". He thought that in order to create, old values must first be destroyed in giving rise to new ones: "Change of values - that is a change of creators. Whoever must be a creator always annihilates."10 Novel creation requires annihilation of the old. Just as a demolition unit is required to construct a new building, man must demolish himself in order to recreate himself; he must

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6 Id., 227.

7 Id., 127.

8 Id., 216.

9 Id., 186.

10 Id., 171.

“wish to consume [himself] in [his] own flame: how could you wish to become new unless you had first become ashes... I love him who wants to create over and beyond himself and thus perishes.”<sup>11</sup>

All this to say, and this is a crucial point, that the ego appears to be *set up for annihilation*. This is done for the purpose of and as a manifestation of life’s will to power, which man is a piece of. Throughout the paper, I will investigate how and why this process unfolds through an analysis of anxiety and love. In doing so, this conclusion will not seem as vague and dark as it does at this juncture.

Crucially, this is Nietzsche’s view of the overman, human beings, and their place in life’s will to power. I am not proclaiming the will to power to be true, nor explicitly endorsing this conception of the role of humans; what I will aim to do in this paper is elucidate the fundamental affections of anxiety and love in the context of the will to power.

### §3: JEAN-PAUL SARTRE AND HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

The reason for this begins with an understanding of intentional consciousness and nothingness, outlined by Jean-Paul Sartre in his book *Being and Nothingness*. Following Edmund Husserl, Sartre defines consciousness as being intentional, or *about something*<sup>12</sup>. Further, the object of consciousness must transcend consciousness itself. For example, if I am conscious of the computer that I am typing this paper on, the object of my consciousness transcends my consciousness in that it is posited as something other than it. This is best explained by Sartre himself: “Consciousness is consciousness of something. This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness; that is, that consciousness is born supported by a being which is not itself. This is what we call the ontological proof.”<sup>13</sup> This, as Sartre masterfully examined, raises interesting questions about the notion of being. If a requisite to consciousness is predicated on transcendence, then “nothingness” becomes an integral part of being: “In our introduction we defined consciousness as ‘a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself.’ But now that we have examined the meaning of ‘the question,’ we can

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11 Id., 176-77.

12 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, li, lxi-ii.

13 Id., lxi.

at present also write the formula thus: ‘Consciousness is a being, the nature of which is to be conscious of the nothingness of its being.’”<sup>14</sup>

Sartre has discovered something crucial, and here is where we begin to examine the problem of individuality under the domain of the will to power. If the will to power coined by Nietzsche manifested in a single, all-encompassing, infinite intelligence, it *would not be able to be conscious of the nothingness of its being* and therefore would not be able to *execute* the will to power. How could the idea of a singularity - which is wholly itself - be conscious if consciousness is defined as a being that is conscious of the nothingness of its being? Correlatively, how could this singularity execute the will to power? If will to power is defined as a self-overcoming life force, this singularity would not be able to self-overcome; it would not be able to envisage “a being other than itself” because it is, by definition, all-encompassing. *There is no being that it is not*. It is every being to have existed, is existing, and will exist. Sartre claims that we are able to transcend because time separates us from our future selves: “The being which is what it is must be able to be the being which is not what it is not. But in the first place this negation, like all others, comes to the surface of being *through human reality*, as we have shown, and *not through a dialectic appropriate just to being*.”<sup>15</sup> He is saying my point exactly: to become what it is not, to exhibit the will to power, a being needs to take form in *humans* and nothing else.

To further establish this point, we must distinguish between what Sartre terms a “being-in-itself” and a “being-for-itself”. A being-in-itself “is what it is” in that there is no distance between its consciousness of itself and itself. An example of a being-in-itself is a chair; it is wholly a chair. There is no reflection or consciousness constituted by an object-subject distance, as in intentionality. More perplexing and relevant to the focus of the paper, another example of a being-in-itself would be an infinite singularity since “In the in-itself there is not a particle of being which is not wholly within itself without distance.”<sup>16</sup> Further, a singularity would be characterized as a being-in-itself because “the density of being of the in-itself is infinite. It is a fullness.”<sup>17</sup> If all intelligent life to ever exist across all time were concentrated to a single being, there would not be an iota of that being which is not

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14 Id., 47.

15 Id., 77

16 Id., 74.

17 Ibid.

being; it wholly and unequivocally constitutes itself. Since, as I stated, it is every being that exists, has existed, and will exist, it is wholly and fully being. It is, therefore, a being-in-itself. Recall that Sartre defined consciousness as “a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself.”<sup>18</sup> Further, a conscious being “does not coincide with itself in a full equivalence [...] The distinguishing characteristic of consciousness, on the other hand, is that it is a decompression of being.”<sup>19</sup> Nothingness is a requisite for consciousness, which is a requisite for the will to power. This, a singularity does not have.

It is worth summarizing at this juncture what we have posited so far. First, we defined the will to power as an eternally self-creating, eternally self-destroying, eternally self-overcoming force of life. Then, we questioned why life, in exhibiting this will to power, manifests in a plurality of individuals as opposed to a singular, infinite intelligence that overcomes itself. Then, using the Sartrean definition of consciousness, we posited the reason why a singularity would not be able to exhibit the will to power. We found that since consciousness requires an aspect of nothingness, a singularity cannot envisage a being other than itself because there is no being that it is not. There is no being which is not by definition of an infinite singularity and because in order to envisage a being other than itself it requires being a finite being that is affected by time. Now, I will posit that life must be in anxiety to exhibit the will to power, which it is unable to do if it is not individuated into fragments. These fragmented individuals are human beings. I will first elucidate how human beings are unique in that they are able to exhibit the will to power. Then, I will offer some commentary on life’s fall into individuality and a multitude of self-aware egos.

#### §4: ANXIETY EXCLUSIVE TO HUMANS AS A CATALYST FOR THE WILL TO POWER

As Sartre claimed, and as I outlined at the end of [§3], a being who is able to become the being that is not what it is not is unique exclusively to “human reality [...] and not through a dialectic appropriate to just being.”<sup>20</sup> We now know that a being who wishes to be what it is not, i.e., to exhibit the will to power, must be a human. A singularity, as

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18 Id., 47.

19 Id., 74.

20 Id., 77.

Sartre would say, is unable to be conscious of a being it is not. But how do humans go about becoming a being which they are not?

The answer to this is that humans are *in a state of anxiety*. Also called angst, it is an affection felt exclusively by humans and analogously has the power to elucidate our condition.

Sartre claims that in humans, “there is already a relation between my future being and my present being. But a nothingness has slipped into the heart of this relation; I am not the self which I will be. First I am not that self because time separates me from it. Secondly, I am not that self because what I am is not the foundation of what I will be. Finally I am not that self because no actual existent can determine strictly what I am going to be.”<sup>21</sup> This first reason is straightforward; I am, for example, not the self that I was in 2017 because that was seven years ago. Correlatively, I am not the self because my past conduct doesn’t determine my present self, and I can’t control or determine my future self with my current actions.<sup>22</sup> Nothingness is constitutive of being human and analogously allows us to have an ambiguous relationship with ourselves. Our past selves are not us; they are objects for us. Sartre uses the example of a recovering gambler who once again faces the gambling table. His past resolution is not him since “it has become an object for [his] consciousness.”<sup>23</sup> However, despite us not being our past or future selves for the aforementioned reasons, we at the same time *are* our past and future selves: “Yet as I am already what I will be (otherwise I would not be interested in anyone being more than another), I am the self which I will be, in the mode of not being it. It is through my horror that I am carried toward the future, and the horror nihilates itself in that it constitutes the future as possible.”<sup>24</sup> There is a distance within us and between our past, present, and future selves rendering the human experience fragmented and ambiguous. As mentioned, our past is not us but an object for us. My future self is not me because I am not it yet; however, “Decisive conduct will emanate from a self which I am not yet.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore, “I am the self which I will be, in the mode of not being it.”<sup>26</sup> This is precisely Sartre’s conception

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21 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 31-32.

22 Otherwise, we would not be free. If my future self was constituted solely by my current actions, my actions and character in the future would be determined by my present self and congruently unfree.

23 *Id.*, 33.

24 *Id.*, 32.

25 *Id.*, 56.

26 *Ibid.*

of anguish. A singularity does not have this ambiguity for the reasons outlined in §3.

Because humans have this distance between ourselves - a concomitant of which is our anxiety - are we able to *exploit the gap* between our past self or future self and *become anew*, thereby exhibiting the will to power? Only in anguish is the ambiguity and nothingness of our existence posited. Further, anguish is tightly intertwined with freedom: "What we should note at present is that freedom, which manifests itself through anguish, is characterized by a constantly renewed obligation to *remake the Self* which designates the free being."<sup>27</sup> I italicized the words "remake the self" in order to stress its importance in relation to the will to power. Once again, the will to power is defined as a "self-overcoming", "self-creating", and "self-destroying" life force. Only when there is a distance existing in the individual between himself and his consciousness of himself can he become something he is not. Nietzsche describes the will to power as *self-overcoming*. For the "*self*" to be a *self* in "self-overcoming", it must become fragmented: "The self therefore represents an ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself, a way of not being his own coincidence, of escaping identity while positing it as unity-in short, of being in a perpetually unstable equilibrium between identity as absolute cohesion without a trace of diversity and unity as a synthesis of a multiplicity."<sup>28</sup>

Individuated human selves are their future selves in the mode of not being them. A singularity is its future self in the mode of being it. Therefore, it can't create beyond itself because *it is already that which it wants to create*; it's like a paradox. To solve it, life must be individuated in the forms of humans<sup>29</sup>. Existential philosophy has struggled for decades with the notion of anxiety and a feeling of ambiguity, of homelessness, within ourselves. I posit the reason for this being that life needs these fragmented multiplicities characterized by anxiety as opposed to a *complete* singularity in order to self-overcome. How,

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27 Id., 34-35.

28 Id., 77.

29 Interesting similarities here can be drawn to a singularity splitting itself up in an act of Sartrean "bad faith". A singularity cannot self overcome, for the reasons posited so far, if it knows it is infinite. Therefore, it must deceive itself into finitude through a sort of entropic and fragmentation into humans, who are ambiguously infinite and finite. This, however, is presupposing there is a "life" that is doing the "splitting up"; hence, this is mere speculation.



though, is anxiety born?

## §5: ANXIETY BEFORE THE FALL

For Soren Kierkegaard, this begins with a perspicuous analysis of anxiety itself in *The Concept of Anxiety*. Anxiety is a clue that is utterly crucial in elucidating the fundamental human question of “why” and “what”. Before diving into the text, a few preliminary remarks must be established, as well as some definitions. The first is that Kierkegaard uses the myth of the Christian bible, specifically the fall of Adam, to elucidate the concept of anxiety. A concomitant of this is that much of the language he uses falls under the domain of Christian mythology; however, he claims that “the myth gives an outward expression of something that is inward.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, the myth of the bible is practical and correlatively used for the purpose of illustrating a fundamental truth about humans that may otherwise be opaque. The myth, therefore, should not be viewed exclusively about Adam but interpreted as a metaphor for *every human being*; specifically, their “fall” into a state of “spirit” from a state of “innocence”.

This leads me to my next preliminary remark: much of the language used by Kierkegaard may feel esoteric to those unfamiliar with his philosophy; therefore, some brief definitions must first be outlined:

“Synthesis”: The concept of human beings as syntheses is arguably the most crucial tenet of Kierkegaard’s anthropology. He defines a synthesis as follows: “The human being was, then, a synthesis of soul and body, but also is a *synthesis of the temporal and eternal*.”<sup>31</sup> Humans are, in Kierkegaard’s description, intermediate beings in that we are not purely “physical” nor purely “psychical”. We are not purely body, like animals, nor purely mind. Analogously, we are a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal. Our predisposition to and conception of the infinite allows us to realize our finitude; likewise, through our awareness of being finite are we able to conceive of something that is not finite, the infinite.

“Spirit”: Kierkegaard refers to spirit as a sort of glue that makes this synthesis possible. Spirit can also be conceived of as our self-awareness and consciousness. He says that “the human being is a synthesis of the psychical and the physical, but a synthesis is unthink-

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30 Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 57.

31 Id., 104.

able if the two are not united in a third. This third is spirit.”<sup>32</sup> Further, in his *The Sickness unto Death*, he claims that “A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation’s relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation’s relating itself to itself.”<sup>33</sup>

“Innocence” and “the qualitative leap”: Innocence can be characterized as a state of immediacy, before the “qualitative leap” into spirit. Though he compares the state of innocence to that of Adam before his fall into sin, it can be compared to every human’s state of being before they are self-aware, before they are characterized by “spirit”. The qualitative leap is the fall into self-awareness itself.

With this framework, we can now undergo a brief synopsis of Kierkegaardian anxiety. There are two main characterizations of anxiety: the anxiety felt before our qualitative leap into self-awareness and that after; for now, the former will receive most of the analysis. Kierkegaard begins by describing the human experience of anxiety *before* we become self-aware:

“Innocence is ignorance. In innocence the human being is not characterized as spirit but is psychically characterized in immediate unity with its natural condition. Spirit is dreaming in the human being... In this state there is peace and repose, but at the same time there is something else, something that is not dissension and strife, for there is nothing against which to strive. What, then, is it? Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety. This is the profound secret of innocence, that at the same time it is anxiety. Dreaming, spirit projects its own actuality, yet this actuality is nothing, but innocence always sees this nothing outside itself. Anxiety is an attribute of the dreaming spirit[...] The concept of anxiety is hardly ever seen treated in psychology, so I must point out that it differs altogether from fear and similar concepts that refer to something definite; whereas anxiety is freedom’s actuality as the possibility of possibility.”<sup>34</sup>

The first part of this quotation to dissect is the fact that in a state of innocence, humans are not yet characterized by spirit.<sup>35</sup> Here, the human is not yet a self; no ego is posited. Innocence is further

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32 Id., 53.

33 Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, 13.

34 Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 50-51.

35 Recall that this is congruent with being characterized as self-aware and falling under the definition of Sartrean consciousness.

explicated later in this analysis: “In innocence, the human being is not merely animal, for if at any moment in his life he were merely animal, he would never become a human being. So spirit is present but as intermediate, as dreaming.”<sup>36</sup> Kierkegaard asserts that in a state of innocence our spirit is “dreaming”. Spirit “projects its own actuality” to the being who feels this projection outside of itself as a *nothing*. Put ambiguously, anxiety is “freedom’s actuality as the possibility of possibility”. It discloses itself *before* itself in time. Before humans become free, they feel anxiety in the sense that they have an inkling within them that communicates that they may *become* free, become a “self” whose actions are free. The reason the being in innocence feels this call as a nothing is because what is pulling us (spirit) is *nothing* to us; we are not it yet. Self-awareness and spirit exists in the future but is a nothing *now*. Why, then, can humans feel what is not yet posited as anxiety? The answer lies in our conception of ourselves as a synthesis.

Life, characterized by the will to power, needs to self-overcome. Life needs to be in anxiety to self-overcome. We now know this. Recall the discussion in §3 of the distinction between a being-in-itself and a being-for-itself. A chair or an animal, in pure finitude, is a being-in-itself insofar as it is what it is; there is no consciousness of the distance that exists between itself because there is no distance. An infinite singularity is a being-in-itself for the same reason. There is no consciousness of itself and therefore no gap to exploit in consciousness. There is no intentional distance between the object and the subject because the singularity is wholly itself and nothing else. Humans, however, are unique. Humans are a synthesis of the infinite and the finite. If we were strictly infinite, we would be beings-in-themselves: “the introduction of infinity into consciousness, aside from the fact that it fixes the phenomenon and obscures it, is only an explicative theory expressly designed to reduce the being of consciousness to that of the in-itself.”<sup>37</sup> Analogously, if we were strictly finite, strictly body, we would also be beings-in-themselves. We would be no different than a chair or a dog, which is what it is and is incapable of self-consciousness that manifests as a result of any distance within itself. Humans, then, need to be a Kierkegaardian synthesis constituted by ambiguity - what Sartre similarly fashioned a “being-for-itself”: “The self refers, but it refers precisely to the subject. It indicates a relation between the subject and himself, and this relation is precisely a duality [...] The

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<sup>36</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 53.

<sup>37</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 76.

self therefore represents an ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself, a way of not being his own coincidence, of escaping identity while positing it as unity-in short, of being in a perpetually unstable equilibrium between identity as absolute cohesion without a trace of diversity and unity as a synthesis of a multiplicity. This is what we shall call presence to itself. The law of being of the for-itself.”<sup>38</sup> This “duality” within a human is precisely what Kierkegaard calls the “synthesis”. By being an *ambiguous temporal synthesis*, we can be what we are not and not be what we are. We can be the self from which our past actions originated while simultaneously viewing our past as an object to be negated. We can be the self from which future conduct will emanate despite being separated from that self *through time*. Only in this ambiguity unique to being a human synthesis of the temporal and eternal can the will to power be achieved.

Spirit is the glue that posits this ambiguous synthesis. Spirit, too, is itself ambiguous: “[spirit] is in a sense a hostile power, for it constantly upsets the relation between soul and body, a relation that does have subsistence but then doesn’t have it, because it receives it first through spirit. it is, on the other hand, a friendly power that wishes precisely to constitute the relation.”<sup>39</sup> The relation between soul and body is described as hostile because through its synthesizing soul and body, soul and body realize they are not unified. Spirit gives them the relation only to posit that they are separate. However, this act also is a friendly power since it wishes to reconcile the two. *As a result of this ambiguity, the result of this synthesis, the human, is in a state not only of ambiguity but of anxiety*: “What then is the human being’s relation to this ambiguous power; how does spirit relate to itself and to that which conditions it? It relates as anxiety.”<sup>40</sup>

Spirit allows life to be conscious of itself and become a being it is not. If spirit did not exist: one of two states would exist that would prevent the will to power from manifesting: one, that which seeks to execute the will to power would be *infinite*; or two, that which seeks to execute the will to power would be *finite*. Both are beings-in-themselves for the reasons outlined above, and both are unable to be conscious under the Sartrean conception of consciousness as a being able to be what it is not. Spirit creates an amorphous human that is neither one nor the other, positing that all-crucial distance within the self

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38 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 76-77.

39 Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 53.

40 Ibid.

that allows for self-overcoming. For the “self” in self-overcoming in Nietzsche’s definition of the will to power, the self must “represent an ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself, a way of not being his own coincidence, of escaping identity while positing it as unity-in short, of being in a perpetually unstable equilibrium between identity as absolute cohesion without a trace of diversity and unity as a synthesis of a multiplicity.”<sup>41</sup> With this definition of spirit and self, we can arrive at a crucial point:

If spirit is the conglutinating force positing the conscious synthesis of temporal and eternal as a *self*, and humans, as this synthesis, relate to spirit in anxiety, this shows that *anxiety can thereby be characterized as a pull into ambiguous selfhood away from a being-in-itself in innocence*. This explains the feeling of anxiety accompanying the all-too-human affection of homelessness, experiencing oneself as “other” and “fragmented”. As humans “fall” into selfhood, their synthesis renders them anxiously aware of their ambiguity and nothingness. We desperately want to be beings-in-themselves, whose existence is a given, who have no internal tension. This explains much of our other fundamental affection, love, which will be expounded in further detail later. However, due to our being syntheses of the finite and the infinite, which both constitute beings-in-themselves, our existence is a constant project, a constant ambiguity, and a constant striving. We are constantly in a state of inner homelessness, of not being at peace and whole with ourselves. *Only in this turbulent and intermediate state as a synthesis of temporal and eternal, however, can we be consciously aware of and exploit the distance wedged between ourselves by time*. This anxiety surrounding selfhood also explains why humans attempt to negate their selfhood through conformity or bad faith.

It is worth once again summarizing the ground we have covered at this juncture. First, we defined the will to power as the “*eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying*” force of life. With this definition, we realized that in order to self-overcome and create beyond itself, life must first be conscious of itself. However, in order for a being to be conscious, it must be “a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself.”<sup>42</sup> With this, we posited that a singularity would not be able to be conscious of itself because there is no being other than itself. An infinite singularity is a being-in-itself. Next, we realized that humans

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41 Sarte, *Being and Nothingness*, 77.

42 Id., 47.

are conscious in that we are, through our ambiguous character, able to become beings which we are not. This stems from the conception of a self, which is never a “whole” whose being is a given; rather, selfhood implies a distance and incompleteness existing within the self which is made possible through its being in Sartrean consciousness. This ambiguous character is lent to us in tandem with our being syntheses held together by spirit, which we relate to in anxiety. If we relate to spirit in anxiety, anxiety can thereby be defined as a pull into selfhood. If anxiety is a pull into selfhood, and selfhood allows for creation through its unique condition as a being-for-itself, and the will-to-power requires a being-for-itself in order to envisage and self which it is not, then anxiety is a catalyst for the will to power. Here, we seem to have arrived at the answer to the question of individuality. Only through a fragmented ego who can become what it is not by virtue of its ambiguous being is the will to power manifested. Life, in order to become what it is not, must have a relationship to a self which it is not in the future, something it cannot do if it is an unindividuated singularity. Such a being would be all beings to exist and ever exist and in no way could envisage a being that it can be because it is that being. To exhibit the will to power, a being must take form in an ambiguous, paradoxical, individuated human form: one that is in a state of anxiety due to its incompleteness. In a human, selfhood and being are never a state but a continuous striving, a continuous consciousness of itself and transcendence of itself into a new self.

## §6: SELFHOOD IS SELF-ANNIHILATION

By being ambiguous selves transfixed in time through constant negation and becoming, we are in a state of continuous self-annihilation and self-creating. This means that the ego is, in every sense of the word, set up to be destroyed. Here we arrive at the Nietzschean notions of self-sacrifice, self-annihilation, and “going under” outlined in §2. By virtue of us being syntheses are we never a whole; we are amorphous in that we are beings-for-themselves who can exploit the distance engendered by consciousness and therefore continuously become anew. Nietzsche believed that “Whoever must be a creator always annihilates.”<sup>43</sup> The ego, in this characterization of continuous self-annihilation, can be conceived of as *a piece of wood making the flame burn brighter by being destroyed. Like fuel to an engine of the monstrous*

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<sup>43</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 171.

*will to power is the ego.* To execute the will to power, we must do as Zarathustra did: “I overcame myself, the sufferer; I carried my own ashes to the mountains; I *invented* a brighter flame for myself.”<sup>44</sup> Only through our destruction can we become anew. Nietzsche told us that “And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides”. Not only are we the will to power - and this is the crucial point of this paper and what Nietzsche never expressly stated - the will to power is nothing without us. To self-overcome and create, it needs the human.

## §7: SELF-ANNIHILATION AND FATAL LOVE

If humans are characterized as ambiguous syntheses, and consequently in a state of self-annihilation, it is worth expounding in more detail this idea of self-sacrifice; something that is interestingly found in our conception of love.

The Swiss writer Denis de Rougemont offers a fascinating commentary on the myth of Tristan and Iseult in his work *Love in the Western World*; one that, independently of the concept of the will to power, paints the individual in a similar fashion as Nietzsche. De Rougemont begins his analysis by emphasizing the prominence of love and death as intertwined themes through European literary history: “Love and death, a fatal love—in these phrases is summed up, if not the whole of poetry, at least whatever is popular, whatever is universally moving in European literature, alike as regards the oldest legends and the sweetest songs. Happy love has no history.”<sup>45</sup> Already we can see overlaps with Nietzschean thought: “Love and perishing: that has rhymed for eternities.”<sup>46</sup> Further, De Rougemont claims that “What stirs lyrical poets to their finest flights is neither the delight of the senses nor the fruitful contentment of the settled couple; not the satisfaction of love, but its passion. And passion means suffering. There we have the fundamental fact.”<sup>47</sup> Here, we see the theme of annihilation already intertwined with - and seemingly paradoxically - love. What has moved human beings for centuries are not stories of happy endings and contentment in our love; rather, we crave the suffering and striving accompanied by the act.

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44 Id., 143.

45 De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, 15.

46 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 235.

47 De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, 15.



The point of departure De Rougemont takes in his analysis of the Tristan Myth is the mechanics of the plot; to avoid summarizing the entire story, he argues that the two lovers, Tristan and Iseult, do everything in their power *not* to be with each other. Every small obstacle to their unification is met with utter dejection. To this point, De Rougemont proclaims that “Objectively, not one of the barriers to the fulfillment of their love is insuperable, and yet each time they give up. It is not too much to say that they never miss a chance of getting parted. When there is no obstruction, they invent one, as in the case of the drawn sword and of Tristan’s marriage. They invent obstructions as if on purpose, notwithstanding that such barriers are their bane. Can it be in order to please the author and reader?”<sup>48</sup> The act of striving towards each other, the act of overcoming barriers *to* their love, is paramount to the object of their love. In short, Tristan and Iseult love the act of loving more than the object of their love; they love striving *toward* one another. The same can be said of the reader following along. What makes the story interesting and ignites the flame within us is imagining the lovers overcoming the obstacles to their love, not their union.

With this established, De Rougemont proceeds to make a larger claim about what this reveals about human nature; after all, “It is only ‘silly’ questions that can enlighten us; for behind whatever seems obvious lurks something that is not.”<sup>49</sup> A myth, he says, discloses a secret. This secret is that we “love love more than the object of love, to love passion for its own sake, has been to love to suffer[...] passionate love, the longing for what sears us and annihilates us in its triumph - there is the secret which Europe has never allowed to be given away.”<sup>51</sup> The question then remains: why do humans flock towards stories of passionate suffering? Why do we crave this suffering, this love whose “effulgence culminates in [our] self-destruction?”<sup>52</sup> The answer, and if the similarities with Nietzsche are not already apparent, is that “Both passion and the longing for death which passion disguises are connected with, and fostered by, a particular notion of how to reach understanding [...] man reaches self-awareness and tests himself only by risking his life.”<sup>53</sup>

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48 Id., 37.

49 Id., 38.

50 Interestingly, Nietzsche had a strikingly similar quote on page 144 in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: “Is not the strangest of all things proved most nearly?”

51 De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, 50.

52 Id., 51.

53 Ibid.



Here, we see the will to power in the individual not only in anxiety but in love<sup>54</sup> as well. The reason why we love loving more than the object of our love is that “Whatever I create and however much I love it - *soon I must oppose it* and my love; thus my will wills it.”<sup>55</sup> In being defined as amorphous and correlatively self-annihilating creatures substantiating the will to power, we must be in a continual state of striving *towards*, becoming and overcoming. This tendency of creation in self-destruction is so fundamental that it takes root in - at least a part of - our conception of love. In passionate love, we cannot be satisfied with its unity. We *need* the constant opposition, the incessant overcoming of barriers to love. This is precisely the reason the myth of Tristan and Iseult has gripped us for centuries: because we ourselves are characterized by the will to power’s continuous striving. We are drawn to stories such as *Romeo and Juliet* in which the lovers “can never be united till, bereft of all hope and of all possible love, they reach the heart of utter obstruction and experience the supreme exaltation which is destroyed in being fulfilled.”<sup>56</sup> De Rougemont is, of course, referring to death as the “heart of utter obstruction”. The lovers in such stories, whether Tristan and Iseult or Romeo and Juliet, much to our enthrallment, obsess in the ecstasy of what it means to be a human - to constantly overcome obstacles - to the point that they reach unity in the ultimate obstacle of death. This *craving for death* is indicative of the point proved in §8, that the self is set up, by its ambiguous definition, to be constantly annihilated. Tristan and Iseult crave death just as Nietzsche proclaims we do: “Spirit is the life that itself cuts into life: with its own agony it increases its own knowledge. Did you know that? And the happiness of the spirit is this: to be anointed and through tears be *consecrated as a sacrificial animal*.”<sup>57</sup> Just as the will to power is a constant suffering and self-sacrifice, passionate love is “suffering, something undergone [...] To love love more than the object of love, to love passion for its own sake, has been to love to suffer [...] passionate love, the *longing for what sears us and annihilates us in its triumph* - there is the secret which Europe has never allowed to be given away.”<sup>58</sup>

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54 Importantly, in “passionate” love. There are many types and classifications of love, and at this juncture I am only analyzing this one (not to say that the will to power is not present in other classifications of love).

55 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 227.

56 De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, 53.

57 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 216.

58 De Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, 50-51.

## §8: SYMPOSIUM LOVE

Passionate love, however, is not the only type of love that elucidates the human condition; we are given another interpretation of love by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*. In Diotima's dialogue with Socrates at the end of *Symposium*, the goddess defines love as love for the infinite, something we achieve through procreation: "Procreation is everlasting and immortal as far as is possible for something mortal. Eros necessarily desires immortality with the good, from what has been agreed, since its object is to possess the good for itself forever. It necessarily follows from this account, then, that Eros is also love of immortality."<sup>59</sup> In our anguished, fragmented, finite state, we are painfully aware of our mortality; this is the negative concomitant of executing the will to power. In becoming syntheses through spirit do we become conscious of the nothingness of our being. The self, as outlined in §6, is set up for annihilation. As a result, the human self, in its anguished realization of its finitude "seeks so far as it can to exist forever and be immortal. It can do so only in this way, by giving birth, ever leaving behind a different new thing in place of the old, since even in the time in which each single living creature is said to live and to be the same—for example, as a man is said to be the same from youth to old age— though he never has the same things in himself, he nevertheless is called the same, but he is ever becoming new while otherwise perishing, in respect to hair and flesh and bone and blood and the entire body."<sup>60</sup> Although individual humans are mortal, the will to power of life is immortal. Through our procreation, driven by love, by striving towards one another, we immortalize life. In addition to infantilizing life through physical procreation, we can also achieve a sort of meta-immortality of our knowledge through our unique ability to gain knowledge iteratively through generations: "Study, by introducing again a new memory in place of what departs, preserves the knowledge so that it seems to be the same."<sup>61</sup>

The individual will not be around forever, and nor will the human race. Some day, and hopefully, humans will evolve into what Nietzsche calls the "overman" just as humans evolved from apes. To the overman, humans will be apes.<sup>62</sup> No being, in its ambiguity, can overcome the devastating reality of its finitude. It can, however, eter-

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<sup>59</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 207a.

<sup>60</sup> Id., 207d.

<sup>61</sup> Id., 208a.

<sup>62</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 124.

nalize the will to power through love. Through procreation and the iterative passing down of knowledge through generations, intelligent life immortalizes itself. The will to power is *real*; life continually dies only to create something new; in this process, it has discovered amazing things about itself. While the concept of a human as merely a kindling for the eternal flame of the will to power may seem disparaging, I posit that it is beautiful beyond words. Though everything is transitory and finite, we all constitute an awe-inspiring, eternal will to power. Diotima says that “it is in this way that all that is mortal is preserved: not by being ever completely the same, like the divine, but by leaving behind, as it departs and becomes older, a different new thing of the same sort as it was.”<sup>63</sup> For the will to power to be infinitely self-overcoming, to be preserved, it cannot be a singularity. It needs life to be a synthesis that can exploit the nothingness between itself through its ambiguous relationship with time.

## §9: CONCLUSION

Humans are intermediate beings. We are made so by spirit in anxiety, rendering us insatiably craving wholeness in love either through self-annihilation or appeal towards the infinite. The human, however, can never be a being-in-itself. Yet another reason that our existence is ambiguous is that we did not ask for self-consciousness, yet the self is our responsibility.

Knowing that selfhood is what drives the will to power and can beget the overman, let us not hide from it. Let us not subjugate our “self” by hiding from it in conformity. We must embrace the ambiguity of our existence rather than seek some objective truth external to us. Only through self-exploration, suffering, and self-overcoming can we do what is most beautiful: create beyond ourselves.

Humans have, throughout time, gradually adopted more and more de-centering outlooks on the world. It began with geo-centric decentering: humans realize their planet is not the center of the universe. Then, in horror, we realized that man was not specially created and rather is a result of billions of years of evolution. Next, we realize that even our own egos, our own selves, are mysteries to us.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps now it is time for another de-centering. Let us realize that humans have an ethical duty to safeguard our distant future, and that we must ensure

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<sup>63</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 208b.

<sup>64</sup> Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*.

the being into which we will evolve is both something we are proud of and capable of thriving. Humans are not the end of the evolutionary ladder of life. It would be a shame to throw away the gift of the will to power, to make humanity the end of the ladder through our selfishness. Nietzsche believed that it is time for humanity to set itself a goal. It is time to look at humanity's purpose and future more practically. After all, isn't the most disenfranchised being that which isn't born yet?<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> This is an aspect of "longtermism", which endorses ethical consideration for beings who are not yet born, i.e., a being such as the overman.

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