CHAPTER III

Nietzsche's "Will to Power" and "The Artistic Will"
In his earlier years, Nietzsche was greatly influenced by Schopenhauer. It was in Leipzig that this great philosopher came under the influence that was to shape his literary career. Chancing one day at a book shop on a copy of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*, he was drawn to the author by his ideas and language. Copleston analyses Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche:

he found in him an absence of pose,
a fundamental honesty, a speaking
for himself alone, a brewing air of
candour... Besides honesty, Nietzsche
found in Schopenhauer the joy of facing
the suffering.28

Nietzsche agrees with Schopenhauer that man's life is suffering and that we live in the dominion of chance and error. What concerns him is whether it

28 Frederick Copleston, *Friedrich Nietzsche*,
is inevitable that man must become pessimistic about life and, therefore, renounce it as Schopenhauer had done or whether to confirm it. Later Nietzsche is determined not only to confirm it but also to conquer it.

Nietzsche views the world as an exceedingly mysterious force. To him the world is a chaos and not a cosmos. Man, he believes, is confronted by a chaotic world and his fundamental experience is that of suffering. In the sickness of his soul Nietzsche sees everywhere futility, purposelessness and uncertainties of the values of life. This condition he calls 'nihilism'. Nietzsche's 'Nihilism' has little to do with the ordinary connotations of the term. By 'nihilism' he means a thoroughly disillusioned conception of a world which is as hostile to human aspirations as he could imagine it to be. It is hostile because it is totally indifferent to what we either hope or believe. Life, he thinks, has no meaning or purpose beyond itself.

Nietzsche's pessimism is not a pessimism of weakness which results in despair or resignation. Unlike Schopenhauer's, his is a pessimism of strength, for it affirms the world in all its pain and contradiction. He holds the view that life is at bottom
indestructibly pleasurable and powerful. He, therefore, rejects Schopenhauer's philosophy of resignation and transforms it into a doctrine of cosmic affirmation. He is convinced that:

although existence is pain, the answer does not lie as with Schopenhauer, in the denial of the Will to live, but in life's ecstatic affirmation of its suffering and pain... suffering is no agreement against life.\(^29\).

Nietzsche was of the opinion that the Greeks were sensitive to suffering and were fully aware of the truth about human existence. Through the mouth of Silenus, Greek folk wisdom expresses the view that men are the children of chance and affliction and that it would have been better not to be born, and that the next best thing is to die quickly. However, the Greeks, according to Nietzsche, reversed the wisdom of Silenus into an affirmation of existence:

To die soon is worst of all of them, the next worst to die at all.\(^30\).

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Like Aeseylus the Greek Tragedian, Nietzsche perceives the mystery of suffering. Life for Aeseylus is an adventure and in his plays there is nothing of the Schopenhauerian resignation or passive acceptance. Greek spirits meet calamity boldly. Prometheus, though helpless and faced by a great power, remains invincible. He does not yield to Zeus and refuses to pronounce even one word of submission which will set him free. To the messenger of the gods he replies:

Thinkest thou I dread the ire
Of these young gods of thine, and come before
Their thrones? I take no thought of them.
Therefore
Begone the way thou comest? Thou shalt not
Wrest
From me no word of what thou questionest.\(^{31}\)

In this way the Greek writer sees mankind confronting pain and facing life boldly and thus remaining forever undefeated.

Nietzsche finds that Christianity teaches its followers to flee and hate life. The Greeks on the other hand view life as an enjoyable game. Out of their needs they invent the Olympian gods interposing

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a world of Art between themselves and the world of suffering, casting a veil of beauty over the abyss. Having seen the true nature of things, man is in need of such solace. Art alone can make the terror and absurdity of human existence bearable. Nietzsche, therefore, attributes to the Greek the knowledge that life can best be understood and justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon.

Since Schopenhauer's philosophy sets renunciation and denial of life as the ultimate goal, Nietzsche, in The Birth of Tragedy struggles to liberate himself from Schopenhauer's influence. Like Arnold he attributed the cause of his 'Nihilism' to the shattering of definite religious faith. According to him, 'Nihilism' might be a state of anarchy but anarchy must also effect the necessary transition to health. Inspired by this condition, Nietzsche transforms Schopenhauer's doctrine of the Will from a negative into a positive philosophy of affirmation. He is of the opinion that the recognition of the meaninglessness of life should not lead us to "a negation, a no, a will to nothingness". Rather he feels it is an intoxicating fact to know that the world is devoid of meaning and yet say 'yes' to it as it is. According to him, we should, therefore, accept his formula of 'Amor Fati' - loving
one's fate - and say yes to nature and life as a whole.

Nietzsche's 'Nihilism' finds its culmination in the doctrine of 'Eternal Recurrence'. According to Nietzsche, there is no beginning and end and no middle either to the story of the world. The philosophy of Eternal Recurrence teaches that whatever there is will return again and that whatever there is, is a return of itself. The world according to this doctrine repeats itself infinitely and exactly. The same situations will happen again without end exactly as they always have been and as they are happening now. Nietzsche considers Eternal Recurrence as the only genuine alternative to the view that the world has or can have a goal or purpose or final state. If each state of the world recurs, the same thing is repeated and there is no chance of a finale in nothingness. Eternal Recurrence, therefore, offers the possibility of a joyous affirmation of the same in that world.

In Schopenhauer's negation of the Will to live:

Nietzsche came to see the great danger of mankind, its most sublime temptation and seduction . . . to nothingness . . .
the beginning of the end... the will turning against life\textsuperscript{32}

Thus Nietzsche came to reject his great teacher Schopenhauer because of his 'no' to life. Schopenhauer's philosophy encourages the individual to assume a negative and passive attitude based on weakness. Nietzsche on the other hand, preaches the affirmation of life, the great 'yes' to life. Unlike his master he does not call for less life or for Nirvana. He finds that because of pain and suffering, life is good and desirable and for this very reason, Nietzsche calls for more vigorous and joyful acceptance of it. Nietzsche accepts Schopenhauer's conception of the primordiality of pain and suffering but he rejects his pessimistic philosophy of resignation only to transform it into a doctrine of cosmic affirmation.

In this cosmic affirmation, the fundamental instrument of acceptance is the will to power. The will to power does not coincide with Schopenhauer's will to live. Nietzsche defines life itself as the will to power and men, like all other creatures in

\textsuperscript{32} Copleston, \textit{Friedrich Nietzsche}, op. cit. p. 156.
the universe are driven by its impelling force.

Nietzsche holds the view that will to power is the generic trait. It is not only something we possess but it is also something we are. Thus human beings and all other objects of nature are will to power:

all driving force is Will to Power;

there is no other physical, dynamic or psychic force except this.

Will to Power is the centre of all other drives and according to Nietzsche, these drives are only its instances.

The striving for power implies hurdles to cross and involves both pleasure and displeasure. Displeasure increases man's thirst for more and more power and acts as a stimulus to it. As a result, displeasure does not dampen or lessen man's thirst for power but "acts as a lure of life and strengthens the will to power". Pleasure, according to Nietzsche, is an excitation of the feeling of power

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34 Ibid, p. 369.
by an obstacle. The Will inspite of pain and suffering, is never satisfied but finds pleasure in resistance and "all expansion, incorporation, growth means striving against something that resists."

Mill's pleasure principle identified happiness with pleasure and Nietzsche's power principle also does the same. But whereas Mill states that pleasure or happiness is the summum bonum of life, Nietzsche observes that "pleasure is only a symptom of the feeling for power . . . pleasure is an accompaniment, pleasure is not the motive."

The underlying trait of the Will to Power is, according to Nietzsche, a constant strife. For this reason, Nietzsche does not recognise the freedom of the will. According to him, 'will' implies constant struggles or strife and as a driving force it expresses itself only through them. It differs from freedom which means unstriving. Unlike fear which is a negative motive, Will to Power makes a forward march fighting its way as

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it does so. Nietzsche does not agree with Hegel's concept of political freedom and for that matter with any concept of freedom. According to him, freedom is unstriving and Will to Power as an inner drive is continual striving.

In his earlier years, Nietzsche conceives of Will to Power as a craving for worldly success. Later on, he realises that it is a basic psychological drive. Nietzsche's idea of the Will to Power keeps on changing with the progress of time and the maturity of his mind. To Nietzsche, power means worldly power and he also refers to it as the will to dominate. The various interpretations of the Will to Power as physical or military or political are, therefore, the result of the change of his idea.

As stated earlier, the power to dominate has one more characteristic -- to march forward to more and more power. But this will to power is also a prisoner and a spectator of all things. It can never go back to the past. In the section entitled "On Redemption" in Part II of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche regrets the fact that time does not run back: 

"..."
The Will cannot will backwards; that it cannot and time's desire - that is the will's most lonely affliction. "That which was" - that is what the stone which it cannot roll away is called ... 38

The limitation to get back to the past results in the will's willing for higher power:

The will that is the will to power must will something higher than any reconciliation with the past or time7. 39

Nietzsche states that the highest degree of the Will to Power is the power to overcome oneself. He views the world as a battle ground where every element seeks to dominate over others and to impose its own order. Thus the world has no fixed shape or form because of the constant fights which take place in it.

The self is also conceived as eternally coming into being because the will to power is internalised and out of internal conflict the self is

39 Ibid, p. 163.
reborn at a higher level of strength and consciousness. To the question "What is this self that is constantly coming into being?", Zarathustra has an answer:

"Behold ... I am that which must overcome itself again and again ... call it will to procreate or impulse towards a goal, towards the higher, more distant, more manifold: but all this is one ..." 40

According to Nietzsche, the power to overcome varies in quality and quantity, e.g. physical power or power to overcome one's neighbour cannot be classed in the same category as the power to overcome the self. The quality of the power is as important as the quantity and for Nietzsche, the ultimate end is not brute power. The self is the greatest obstacle for the Will to power to overcome. In doing so, the will faces the hardest task to control one's own passions and impulses. This is the reason why the Will to power linked with Nietzsche's ideal of self-perfection and self-overcoming, can convincingly explain human suffering. The death of a martyr or ascetic does not imply his

love for pleasure but it convincingly pleads that such a person goes to his death because of man's great love for power. The Will to power is, therefore, behind religion, morality, social and political systems, for all these reveal the striving for power.

Nietzsche explains all human behaviour in terms of the Will to Power and implies that this Will resides not only in the strong but also in the powerless, for those who want pity are also prompted by the Will to Power. To him the best specimen of the human race is one in whom the Will to Power is strongest. According to him, Napoleon is one of the finest specimens of the Will to Power. But Nietzsche believes that even Napoleon will be surpassed by the Superman in whom the Will to Power will attain its zenith.

Will to Power in itself is neither good nor bad, it simply is -- it is 'becoming' and is dynamic and, therefore, it is not 'thing-like'. The world is simply an aesthetic phenomenon, neither good nor bad, that is to say neither beautiful nor ugly.

In Nietzsche's philosophy, Will to Power is related to Nihilism. Nihilism is needed to clear
the way for creativity, to make it plain that the world is without significance or form. Will to Power imposes upon that unshaped substance the form and meaning which we cannot live without. The Will's power of transforming the formless into a thing of beauty is possible because of the conflict of wills, in which the victor imposes the form. Having no intrinsic forms, a world of will would be formless, but since wills are always acting upon one another, form is always imposed.

In The Birth of Tragedy Nietzsche says that art is Will to Power in its full form. For him, art transforms the actual into the beautiful and makes life bearable by representing it as possessing purpose and coherence.

The Nietzschean artist possesses the power to command and give form to himself and ultimately turns the ugliness and shapelessness of the actual into the beauty of the ideal.

Nietzsche firmly believes in the power of art and when he declares in The Birth of Tragedy that the world seems "justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon" he refers to the important place art must occupy in life. Art, according to him,
occupies no less a claim to objective truth than science. Man is an artist by birth, for he spontaneously seeks to express images the way he feels and perceives the world.

In addition to the world we live in, there is another world created by the artist's genius. This is the art-world into which we can escape from time to time and find rest from the presence of pain and suffering of existence. This art-world of Nietzsche is essentially Schopenhauerian, for Schopenhauer believes, as we have seen, that in the contemplation of art man turns away from the life of pain and strife.

Nietzsche speaks of dreams and intoxication as ways of satisfying certain urges which call for art. He finds that there are two kinds of art that correspond to the primitive modes of escape which dreaming and intoxication illustrate. Apollinian art is like dream and Dionysian art is like intoxication. The evolution of art is due to the interactions between these artistic expressions.

Nietzsche understand art as the great stimulant to life. It is what makes life possible and supportable. Art adopts the principle of 'lie'
and by so doing, transforms what is shapeless and ugly into a thing of beauty. It is Art, therefore, which makes life bearable by hiding the ugly truth of suffering and by translating it into the beautiful. Baudelaire agrees with Nietzsche when he speaks of the magic power of Art and refuses "to assign art the sterile function of immitating nature." 41

The dialectical process of art opposes the real world and at the same time it seeks to conquer and possess that world completely. Art, according to Nietzsche, thus leads man into direct communication with the world, transforms it so that he has power over it and ultimately says 'yes' to life. Thus for Nietzsche, art is understood as a transfiguration and an affirmation of human existence.

Art enables man to see an unending process of liberation from a spectacle of continual loss and chaos. Nietzsche holds the view that art transforms horrid reality into pleasure. It was art which enabled the Greek to view life as an enjoyable game. Art teaches them to incorporate

into plastic representation, the whole of phenomenal reality including its gristliest horrors; by translating the ghastliest of terrors to the eternal realm of artifact -- outside of life, beyond pain; free of contingency and mutability.\(^{42}\)

In Attic Tragedy, even suffering is justified. This power to create beauty out of suffering is what makes art superior to both Science or Philosophy. Nietzsche himself is a tragic figure in human history but in his philosophy he transforms the sufferings of his life and has the courage to say 'yes' to it and all the misery it holds for him. He observes:

Suffering might predominate and inspite of that a powerful will might exist, a 'yes' to life.\(^{43}\)

Attic tragedy is born because the Greeks are capable of the greatest suffering. They do not run away from the pains of life but face them boldly. Anyone who faces life bravely and re-affirms it with the creation of art wins the appreciation of Nietzsche. According to him, suffering and pain


\(^{43}\) Kaufman, Will to Power, op. cit., p. 23.
dampen the spirit of the weak and make them turn away from life and seek shelter elsewhere. Schopenhauer, Buddha, the Christians are examples of the weak. They run away from life and its suffering and negate it completely. Nietzsche says that it is only the strong who march forward in life with the help of art. Such people transform all sufferings into the beautiful.

Nietzsche finds in Greek tragedy the greatest achievement of art where form is imposed upon a resisting material and life is transformed into an aesthetic phenomenon of the highest order.

Like Greek religion, Greek art prefers life to extinction and, therefore, it deals with and accepts life and all its pain and suffering. Nietzsche finds this triumphant response to suffering "sublime" and the experience of the sublime is anything but Nirvana or Renunciation.

According to Nietzsche, Goethe typifies a great artist. He is a man of great power who faces life with all its sufferings and refuses to turn away from it. Such a person finds existence endurable. Though life is a tragic spectacle for him, he affirms it because it yet fascinates him.
Nietzsche preaches the affirmation of life because he refuses to escape from pain. He rejects Aristotle's theory of pity and fear. He also condemns and rejects Christianity because both consider pain and suffering as something negative and call either for their purgation or for overcoming them by means of faith. According to Nietzsche, Tragedy induces an ecstatic joy in the eternal process of creation and destruction. A catharsis of pity and fear implies an end to suffering. Nietzsche on the other hand points to affirmation and therewith transfiguration of suffering. He takes the Christian insistence on faith as a sign of the reduced vitality and therefore an example of 'no saying' to life. His Dionysian man, on the other hand, brims over with vitality and has the courage to affirm life by wholeheartedly saying 'yes' to it. The beautiful forms created by Nietzsche's artist are the result of a negation of truth. The famous dictum of Nietzsche "Truth is Ugly" echoes James's observation that art "muffles the ache of the actual". In art, the artist's vision is translated into an image and art seems to contain all of life. Art "throws its light upon all the abysses and terrors of existence and yet transfigures it in bright consciousness".
For Nietzsche, Greek tragedy is a triumph over the ills of life and is, therefore, a triumph over pessimism and the 'no' saying. Tragedy was for him:

The Greek triumph over pessimism, i.e. the pessimism of no saying, of resignation.

Tragedy convinces Nietzsche that life remains a realisable possibility and that true wisdom is achieved by the man who can say a jubilant 'yes' to life with all its travails and sorrows. Nietzsche therefore finds that tragedy as an art form is a passport to a healthy assertion of life and its joy to the conviction that life is worth living after all.