









Assess Nietzsche's idea of the "Will to Power"

Throughout his works, Friedrich Nietzsche develops a fundamental foundation which forms part of all his other concepts – this is his "Will to Power." Being very much the centre of his philosophy, it is an extremely complex concept that has connections to all areas of his ideas, be it ethics, metaphysics or aesthetics. However, it does have several flaws. First of all, it goes against Nietzsche's perspectivism and outright rejection of metaphysics. Suggesting that an objective metaphysical concept such as the Will to Power exists is tantamount to admitting failure at the first hurdle. Nietzsche never addresses this issue. In addition, the Will to Power as the sole part of life itself seems entirely counter-intuitive. Is it not clear that other things affect our judgment than the desire to overcome all others? He never really explains how the Will to Power is meant to be the ultimate moral goal, either. His philosophy here falls victim to the fact-value gap. Just because life  the Will to Power, it does not necessarily follow that we  follow it as our only ambition. The Will to Power is complicated further by Nietzsche's automatic division of people into "masters" and "slaves." Clearly, the Will to Power cannot apply to the slaves, as that would be a contradiction in terms. This makes it extremely difficult to justify that the Will to Power in fact  life itself for everyone.

The Will to Power is notoriously hard to define on itself, as it is inherently defined by both its causal principles and the effect of the doctrine itself. Nietzsche describes, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, a hierarchy of "drives" which are the core of human existence. Each of these drives is attempting to gain dominance over the other. This relationally constituted structure is the Will to Power. Likewise, every living being is imposing  Will to Power onto others. From this, it would follow that all actions are, in themselves, products of the Will to Power, be it procreation, alimentation or any action at all. No other variables affect our judgment. This, I disagree with. How can Nietzsche explain actions performed against your natural instinct? Yes, I can admit that (in Nietzsche's view) it is morally wrong, but there is no categorical barrier which stops me from breaking those morals. Clearly, then,  actions cannot be derived from the Will to Power.

Nietzsche introduces the Will to Power primarily in opposition to the old Christian values of compassion and piety, which he believes must be "reversed."  According to Nietzsche, Christians reject the Will to Power and suppress it completely, which in itself seems to contradict his definition of it. Nevertheless, he posits the Will to Power as the ultimate end of any moral system, not just Christianity.  All systems of morals are "a sign-language for the Will to Power." From these, we can assume that Nietzsche believes that because the Will to Power is life itself, then obviously all morals must also be the Will to Power. This is erroneous. Hume famously illustrated the fact-value gap many hundreds of years before Nietzsche's time, yet he still seems unable to escape it. It does  follow that because life is the Will to Power, we ought to follow it blindly. Nietzsche never addresses how this is meant to work as an ultimate moral goal – he assumes that life would lead us there. Realistically, I don't think this is reasonable. Quite clearly, our instincts do not always tell us to follow the Will to

Power religiously, even in the animal kingdom (where perhaps we observe a more pure form of the instinct) where creatures have shown to be compassionate and willing to submit.

Drawing from the Will to Power, Nietzsche posits his philosophical ideas. These are positive expressions of the Will to Power: the rejection of objectivity; the "New Philosopher" who is the embodiment of the Will to Power; the doctrine of Eternal Return (which is the ultimate embrace of the Will to Power); and his ultimate master/slave society where the WtP governs all and keeps the strong strong (whilst weakening the weak). I accept that these can generally be inferred from the Will to Power if it is valid, but it is this conditionality that causes problems. Maudemarie Clark argued that Nietzsche's whole philosophy was based on this, but she also points out that this implies causality – something which Nietzsche radically objects to several times. This picks him out as the dogmatic philosopher he spends the first part of *Beyond Good and Evil* criticising – merely projecting his own view onto others. The Will to Power, again, seems absurd.

Leading on from this is Nietzsche's conception of metaphysics and epistemology. Nietzsche detests the metaphysicists (Plato and the Christians in particular) and argues that they are denying the Will to Power, and, therefore, life itself, by looking for answers in another realm. They are, he states, blinded by a "Will to Truth." However, isn't the Will to Power a metaphysical concept? I believe that Nietzsche's description of it as all-encompassing makes this a distinct possibility. Not only does this undermine the Will to Power, but also, once again, Nietzsche's entire philosophical doctrine. Another of Nietzsche's problems with past philosophers, which is connected to the above point, is their obsession with an objective truth. He says that all we have which we can call "truths" are our interpretation of our own perspectives. So how can the Will to Power be anything but an interpretation from Nietzsche's perspective? It cannot possibly be objective – this is against his epistemological principles! It is impossible to accept this. However, another interesting point by Clark is her theory of "omniperspectivism," where there can be a theoretical objective truth if one was to see a situation from all possible perspectives. This would give the Will to Power a theoretical grounding, but still fails to establish it as the practical device which Nietzsche advocates it as.

One final point to make is about Nietzsche's morality – master and slave morality. He suggests that in a perfect society, the strong would live for their own existence only, exploiting the weak not only for their benefit, but also as an exertion of power. This solves the problem of the relative term "power" (as power only exists in relation to something less or more powerful). But, if life itself ~~w~~^{is} the Will to Power, shouldn't the weak have it as well? Wouldn't they be living according to the same rules? This illustrates clearly the practical problem of the Will to Power, even in Nietzsche's own morality.

These points I believe show that the Will to Power, although inspiring theoretically, is absurd and impossible in practice. Nietzsche does not offer enough explanation for

us to accept it as a serious philosophical concept, and it eventually displays the weaknesses of Nietzsche's entire philosophy.