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Will to Power

Friedrich Nietzsche

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A basic element in Nietzsche's philosophical outlook is the will to power (der Wille zur Macht), which provides a basis for understanding human behavior — more so than competing explanations, such as the ones based on pressure for adaptation or survival. As such, according to Nietzsche, the drive for conservation appears as the major motivator of human or animal behavior only in exceptions, as the general condition of life is not one of emergency, of 'struggle for existence'. More often than not, self-conservation is but a consequence of a creature's will to exert its strength on the outside world. In presenting his theory of human behavior, Nietzsche also addressed, and attacked, concepts from philosophies popularly embraced in his days, such as Schopenhauer's notion of an aimless will or that of utilitarianism. Utilitarianists claim that what moves people is mainly the desire to be happy, to accumulate pleasure in their lives. But such a conception of happiness Nietzsche rejected as something limited to, and characteristic of, the bourgeois lifestyle of the English society, and instead put forth the idea that happiness is not an aim per se — it is instead a consequence of a successful pursuit of one's aims, of the overcoming of hurdles to one's actions — in other words, of the fulfillment of the will. Related to his theory of the will to power, is his speculation, which he did not deem final, regarding the reality of the physical world, including inorganic matter — that what holds true for man's affections and impulses, may also apply to the external world. At the core of his theory is a rejection of atomism — the idea that matter is composed of stable, indivisible units (atoms). Instead, he seems to have accepted the conclusions of Rudjer Boskovic, who explained the qualities of matter as a result of an interplay of forces. One study of Nietzsche defines his fully developed concept of the will to power as "the element from which derive both the quantitative difference of related forces and the quality that devolves into each force in this relation" revealing the will to power as "the principle of the synthesis of forces." Of such forces Nietzsche said they could perhaps be viewed as a primitive form of the will. Likewise he rejected as a mere interpretation the view that the movement of bodies is ruled by inexorable laws of nature, positing instead that movement was governed by the power relations between bodies and forces

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