

Friedrich Nietzsche-A Theoretician of Modern Democracy

The deeper one penetrates into various aspects of Nietzsche's political philosophy, the clearer it becomes that Nietzsche's political philosophy 'merits' reconstruction not only in broad historical terms. In other words, if we succeed in understanding the political perspectivism of Nietzsche's ideas, we might also be able to contribute substantially to the received canon of political philosophy.

An immediate question--which nonetheless defies an ultimate answer--is why only today does Nietzschean philosophy present itself as a significant paradigm of political theory? At first, it seems not impossible to give an answer by pointing to the politically-motivated expropriation which the whole of Nietzsche's philosophy repeatedly fell victim to. Tendentious interpretations have often amounted to straightforward falsification. (Paradoxically, what the authors of these insidious attempts have mostly been attracted by were not the specifically political components of Nietzsche's thought. Politically-motivated interest in such notions as 'The Will to Power' or the 'Eternal Return' has played a much more significant role than the Nietzschean critique of modern etatism, for instance.) I do not intend to develop or return to my previously expressed views on expropriations of Nietzsche's philosophy, though these expropriations are in many cases without doubt 'diabolically' sophisticated. In the following paper, I am going to focus exclusively on the hermeneutical problem of the currency of Nietzsche's political philosophy.

I have already touched upon a superficial aspect of this problem: the crude and totalitarian misinterpretations of Nietzsche's philosophy. Essentially, however, the problem is of a hermeneutical nature. This is because the actual consequences of the misinterpretations (in their given historical and systematic contexts) have placed Nietzsche's political philosophy in a specific hermeneutical space. That is to say,

they have re-contextualized Nietzsche's explicitly articulated texts. Thus not independently from the falsifications, but also not purely as a result of them, a hermeneutical situation has been created in which Nietzschean ideas could no longer be apprehended as embodying a full-blown and legitimate paradigm of political philosophy. The real hermeneutical phenomenon at issue here could therefore be defined as a thoroughgoing change in the conditions of theoretical perception making the correct apprehension of a paradigm hermeneutically impossible.

The decisive influence of Marxism on political philosophy has certainly played an important role in this peculiar modification of the conditions of theoretical apprehension. This is because the real Nietzschean paradigm has necessarily appeared as 'prior to Marx' and thus as a historical, if not even as an antiquated attempt. Since the Marxist paradigm itself has begun to fall into pieces, however, the Nietzschean paradigm of political philosophy could shake off both the fatal consequences of falsifications and the secondary role assigned to it due to the dominance of the Marxist paradigm. (In fact, this claim remains true irrespective of the actual theory one chooses to identify the Marxist paradigm with. Neither does it presuppose value-judgements with regard to the decline of the Marxist paradigm.)

The contribution of the collapse of the Marxist paradigm to revitalizing Nietzsche's political philosophy can also be grasped in more concrete terms. The Marxist paradigm can be basically seen as a holistic political (and sociological) agenda founded on the notion of class-struggle. This thesis can be formulated with a reasonable degree of certainty, although power-oriented Bonapartism-theory has offered an alternative within Marxism itself, or at least, it has made significant contributions towards a more refined political theory.

By contrast, Nietzsche's political philosophy, his theory of democracy in particular, rests on a notion of society located within the conceptual framework of the sociology of knowledge and culture (even if Nietzsche's political philosophy does not ignore the symptoms of crisis recognized by Marx's political philosophy of the class-struggle). ...