

Nel corso dello sviluppo del pensiero occidentale, non vi è corrente che non si sia interrogata sulla natura umana e sui suoi fondamenti. L'Umanesimo, in particolare, costituisce il decisivo fenomeno culturale moderno che articola in modo trasversale la domanda sull'enigma dell'uomo.

Il presente volume intende fornire delle chiavi di lettura plurali e inedite volte ad attraversare e a comprendere, da una prospettiva squisitamente filosofica, ciò che costituisce il *proprium* dell'Umanesimo. Come si declinano i molti sensi dell'umano tra mondo antico e contemporaneo? Come si sviluppa l'Umanesimo moderno nelle sue trasversali declinazioni di *Humanisme* francese e *Humanismus* tedesco? È sufficiente ripercorrere la vulgata tradizionale che riconosce in questo movimento una *renovatio* erudita, pacificante e antiquaria del modello classico? Appare possibile, in ambito contemporaneo, concepire il soggetto *al centro*, sulla scorta del simbolo leonardesco dell'uomo di Vitruvio? Posta nel pieno della crisi valoriale e della decomposizione della soggettività, che tocca il suo apice di disumanizzazione nel sistematico e capillare ingranaggio di annichilimento che furono i campi di sterminio, la domanda sulla possibilità di restituire un senso alla "realtà umana" si fa inderogabile. A tale interrogazione giovani studiosi e celebri protagonisti del panorama filosofico internazionale hanno tentato di corrispondere, attraverso Platone, Terenzio, Cicerone, Ficino, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Arendt, Jaspers e Levinas, nell'auspicio di stimolare e provocare il lettore.

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in memoria

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fra rinascimento e contemporaneità

a cura di alberto giacomelli e sergio givone



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indice

Alberto Giacomelli, Sergio Givone

- 9 Introduzione
Umanesimo, Humanismus, Humanisme.
Filosofie dell'umano fra Rinascimento e contemporaneità

SAGGI

Luigi Miraglia

- 13 L'umanesimo e i suoi "principi primi"

Umberto Curi

- 37 Homo sum

Sergio Givone

- 47 Umanesimo, Humanismus, Humanisme

Massimo Donà

- 57 Sguardi dalla melanconia

Paolo Pagani

- 69 Sulla complessità dell'essere umano.
L'articolazione dell'anima in Platone e in Ficino

Giovanni Alberti

- 87 *L'In Philebum* di Ficino tra etica e metafisica

Chiara Pasqualin

- 103 Sokrates als Vorbild von Menschlichkeit:
Arendt und Jaspers im Vergleich

Alberto Giacomelli
125 L'Umanesimo e i suoi mostri.
Rinascite e naufragi dell'*humanitas* tra Hieronymus Bosch,
Friedrich Nietzsche e Thomas Mann

Pietro Gori
143 Nietzsche, Europe and the Renaissance

Richard A. Cohen
157 Husserl's Salvific Phenomenology: for a New Humanity

Marco Gigante
177 L'"altro" Umanesimo: tra Heidegger e Grassi

Francesco Cattaneo
191 Ripensare l'"umanità" dell'uomo.
Per un attraversamento storico-concettuale
della *Lettera sull'"umanismo"* di Martin Heidegger

Mario Vergani
219 Una chiave per l'Umanesimo di Levinas: la preghiera

IN MEMORIA

Umberto Curi
235 Remo Bodei. In mortem

237 Abstracts

243 Gli Autori

Umanesimo, Humanismus, Humanisme

Pietro Gori

Nietzsche, Europe and the Renaissance

I. *A European event*

The way in which *Twilight of the Idols* was supposed to end is relevant to understanding Nietzsche's anthropological ideal, that is, the type of man destined to deal with the «sort of destiny of a task» outlined in his late works (TI, *Preface*).¹ As we read in the letter Nietzsche sent to Heinrich Köselitz on September 12, 1888 (KSB 8, p. 443), the final chapter of the book was indeed the section *Skirmishes of an Untimely Man*, whereas Nietzsche had originally intended the chapter *What I Owe to the Ancients*, with its autobiographic flavour, to be part of *Ecce Homo*.² The last three paragraphs of the *Skirmishes* are devoted to Goethe, one of the few figures of whom Nietzsche speaks positively in his 1888 book. For Nietzsche, Goethe is «the last German [he has] any respect

¹ Nietzsche's works are cited by abbreviation, section title or number (when applicable), and paragraph number. Posthumous fragments are identified with reference to the Coll/Montinari standard edition and are cited by group number, fragment number, and year. The abbreviations used are the following: HH = *Human, All Too Human*, eng. transl. Cambridge University Press, 1996; OM = *Assorted Opinions and Maxims* (in HH); WS = *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (in HH); GS = *The Gay Science*, eng. transl. Cambridge University Press, 2001; BGE = *Beyond Good and Evil*, eng. transl. Cambridge University Press, 2002; GM = *On the Genealogy of Morality*, eng. transl. Cambridge University Press, 2004; TI = *Twilight of the Idols*, eng. transl. Cambridge University Press, 2005; A = *The Antichrist*, eng. transl. Cambridge University Press, 2005; PF = *Posthumous Fragment*, in *Writing From the Late Notebooks*, eng. transl. Cambridge University Press, 2003; KSB = *Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienaufgabe in 8 Bänden*, dtv/de Gruyter, Berlin 2003.

² Nietzsche decided to add the chapter on the *Ancients* to *Twilight of Idols* just before sending back the final proofs of the book to the editor. This can be explained by a twofold editorial strategy: first, this section gives Nietzsche's book perfect circularity, leading back to the "tragic" attitude toward life that characterized the ancient Greek world and that Socrates irremediably undermined; second, it links two volumes that are supposed to prepare the ground for the forthcoming *Revaluation of All Values* by presenting Nietzsche as a philosopher (*Twilight of the Idols*) and as a man/author (*Ecce Homo*). On this, see P. GORI, C. PIAZZESI, "Un demone che ride". *Esercizi di serenità filosofica*, in F. NIETZSCHE, *Crepuscolo degli idoli*, eds P. Gori, C. Piazzesi, Carocci, Roma 2012, pp. 9-35.

for» (TI, *Skirmisches* 51), a thinker for whom Nietzsche has a deep affinity, mainly because of his “untimeliness”. In Goethe, Nietzsche finds an expression of what Germans lack, that is, a *realist* approach to life which, for Nietzsche, is the crucial feature of future philosophers. Furthermore, Goethe conceived of a «strong» type of man, a «spirit [...] who has *become free*» and «stands in the middle of the world with a cheerful and trusting fatalism» (TI, *Skirmisches* 49) – that is, precisely the sort of human being that Nietzsche displays as an upholder of *Dionysian* wisdom.

It is not my intention to examine why Nietzsche thought this of Goethe. I am rather interested in the significant fact that, because of this interpretation, the latter is introduced in TI, *Skirmisches* 49 as «not a German event but a European one». This definition indeed prompts a series of questions. What does it mean to be a *European* (event), for Nietzsche? And in what sense does he contrast this with being *German*? From the way Goethe is presented here, it is clear that the first attribute has a positive meaning, while being German – as any Nietzsche reader knows well – is hardly a good thing. But the answer might not be as trivial as it seems, especially since it involves secondary questions about the sense this attribute has in Nietzsche. Is it political? Or is it a purely cultural issue? Or is the question even subtler, such that Nietzsche is in fact dealing with a matter that is anthropological at its very core?

As is often the case in Nietzsche, there is no one-sided answer to these questions. They are in fact intertwined, and it is impossible to maintain a strong distinction between the political, cultural, and anthropological aspects of the issue. What makes TI, *Skirmishes* 49 interesting is that it contains all the elements of a conceptual constellation that can help us to deal with the matter. “German”, “European”, and “Free spirit” are the main notions involved, and how Nietzsche relates them – how he (albeit implicitly) suggests that one should deal with them – deserves thorough investigation, to be carried out in light of his attempt to realize a countermovement to the nihilistic pessimism he attributes to Schopenhauer: that is, an attempt at a *revaluation of all values* (cf. GS 357 and PF II[411], 1887-88). I therefore aim to shed light on what it means, for Nietzsche, to overcome German culture, but also on the sense in which and the extent to which we can call ourselves Europeans. Finally, I aim to clarify why future philosophers should be prepared to leave this latter attribute aside, that is, to *de-europeanize* themselves, thus becoming *supra-europeans*.³

³ Duncan Large writes of a «self-de-europeanization of the Good European», in Nietzsche (D. LARGE, *Nietzsche's Orientalism*, «Nietzsche-Studien», 42, 2013, pp. 178-203, p. 195). The Nietzschean notion of the “supra-european” (*über-europäisch*) appears e.g. in BGE 255; in PF 34[149]; 35[9]; 41[7], 1885; and PF 2[36], 1885-86. On this, see M. BRUSOTTI, *Européen et supra-européen*, in P. D'ORIO, G. MERLIO (eds), *Nietzsche et l'Europe*, Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris 2006, pp. 193-211.

Nietzsche's interest in Europe can be traced back to the late 1870s, when he started dealing with the problem of German culture and civilization. In WS 215 we learn that Europe – including «America [...] insofar as it is the daughter-land of our culture» and, within geographical Europe, «only those nations and ethnic minorities who possess a common past in Greece, Rome, Judaism, and Christianity» – is not a political space but rather a cultural one.⁴ German culture is left out of this picture, or at least it plays a secondary role insofar as it is the expression of a nationalistic attitude, which Nietzsche considers quite dangerous and detrimental to civilization. This is well expressed in a passage from *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, where Nietzsche reflects on the idea that «to be a good German means to degermanize oneself» (OM 323). Here, we read that one must not stop at the level of national character if one «labours at the *transformation* of convictions, that is to say at culture» (ivi). The national appearance of a people is like a girdle that must be burst open, for Nietzsche; if a people «remains stationary, if it languishes, a new girdle fastens itself about its soul, the crust forming ever more firmly around it constructs as it were a prison whose walls grow higher and higher» (ivi). Cultural development is therefore only possible if we manage to get rid of what *hitherto* defined us as a people, if we learn to grasp what is different from us, what lies outside the realm of our culture and civilization, absorbing those elements that can help our own culture to grow. Applied to Germans, Nietzsche argues that one must first ask oneself not only «What is German» in general, but rather «What is *now* German» – that is, what characterizes the German people historically, socially and politically – in order to see how it «can grow more and more beyond what is German», through the assimilation of the «*ungermanic*» (ivi).

This is not a matter of mere politics, however. *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, § 323 is a starting point for a set of reflections that Nietzsche would carry out over a decade. It shows how deeply culture and politics are intertwined and, most importantly, that these issues can be projected on a purely philosophical plane. By this I mean that Nietzsche is not primarily focused on the political problem of nationalism; rather, he aims to stress that this attitude and the culture it presupposes influence the spiritual development of a people. Thus, it seems possible to further elaborate the question Nietzsche poses by asking what a German would *become* were he to succeed in *degermanizing* himself. Would he still be a German? Or would he become a different type of man, someone who still holds his “Germanness” inside him as an early stage of development? As the passage on Goethe seems to imply, it might be argued that Nietzsche considers Europe a broader cultural dimension that can host

⁴ As Ralph Witzler observes, for Nietzsche Europe is primarily and most importantly a «spiritual attitude», R. WITZLER, *Europa im Denken Nietzsches*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2001, p. 199.

this human type. This idea can also be defended on the basis of *The Wanderer and His Shadow* 87, where nationalism is presented as the «sickness of this century».⁵ At our stage of culture, Nietzsche argues, it is fundamental «to learn to write well and even better», which means «also to think better; [...] to become translatable into the language of one's neighbour; to make ourselves accessible to the understanding of those foreigners who learn our language» (*ivi*). This is multiculturalism at its finest. For Nietzsche, the development of a people depends on its ability to understand the representatives of other cultures but also to make oneself accessible to them. Any attempt to limit that attitude is detrimental to the growth of civilization and, as Nietzsche observes, makes impossible the rise of «free spirits» and «good Europeans», who in a near future are meant to «direct and supervise the total culture of the earth» (*ivi*). As early as 1878, then, Nietzsche outlines the conceptual triad that we find in the late passage on Goethe: the good European and the free spirit are presented in opposition to the German bearer of “petty politics” (cf. BGE 208 and GS 377), which attempts to affirm sterile nationalism. Given the importance of these figures within Nietzsche's thought and the fact that they intertwine the cultural, political and anthropological plane, it is clear that they deserve further exploration.

2. Good Europeanism and Free-Spiritedness

From what has been argued thus far, it can be maintained that Nietzsche characterizes the European viewpoint in contrast to the German perspective of his time, in particular as an attempt to go beyond the short-sighted nationalism that he observes throughout his fatherland. But it is also clear that the question is not limited to the political plane, as the context of TI, *Skirmishes* 49 also suggests. For Nietzsche, Europe has a variety of anthropological manifestations, some of which embody the spirit of that cultural realm properly and contribute to its further development. This is what chiefly interests Nietzsche. His treatments of Germany, Europe, and other socio-political and cultural dimensions always focus on the human types that grow out of these dimensions, with the aim of outlining an educational path (an ideal of *Bildung*) that will give birth to a “strong” and “healthy” form of mankind. In the following section, I will say something about the kind of “strength” one can attribute to

⁵ Nietzsche's peculiar way of treating culture from a medical viewpoint is well known. On this, see e.g. D. AHERN, *Nietzsche as Cultural Physician*, Pennsylvania 1995, and P. VAN TONGEREN, *Vom “Artz der Kultur” zum “Artz und Kranken in einer Person”. Eine Hypothese zur Entwicklung Nietzsches als Philosoph der Kultur(en)*, in A. URS SOMMER (ed.), *Nietzsche - Philosoph der Kultur(en)*, de Gruyter, Berlin - New York 2008, pp. 11-29.

Nietzsche's late ideal of the "new philosophers" and the "Europeans of the future" and how it can be achieved. For now, allow me to deal with the two figures introduced in WS 87, for they are crucial to understanding Nietzsche's conception of the relationship between politics, culture, and anthropology.

The two (often related) concepts of the "good European" and the "free spirit" occur over a broad time period in Nietzsche's work, although they only appear in a limited number of passages. As noted above, Nietzsche introduces them in the late 1870s, but it is in his late period (1885-1888) that their importance to Nietzsche's philosophical project is revealed. It is not my intention to deal with them exhaustively here, as thorough studies on them have been already published.⁶ Instead, I will focus on one aspect that I take to be worthy of attention, that is, the connection between good Europeanism and free-spiritedness on the one hand and the issue of the "type of man" as it appears in Nietzsche's late writings.

After a period that can be defined as one of productive sedimentation,⁷ both the good European and the free spirit reappear jointly in the 1886 *Preface to Beyond Good and Evil*, where they finally reveal their philosophical relevance. Here, Nietzsche presents these figures as the last stage of a spiritual development that is supposed to overcome the dogmatic heritage of Western (i.e. Platonic and Christian) metaphysics. Being «neither Jesuits nor democrats, nor even German enough, [...] *good Europeans* and free, *very free spirits*» are, for Nietzsche, «the heirs to all the force cultivated through the struggle against [the dogmatist's] error» and the upholders of the «magnificent tension of spirit» that has been created «in Europe, the likes of which the earth has never known: with such a tension in our bow we can now shoot at the furthest goals». This passage aligns thematically with TI, *Skirmishes* 49. Indeed, a primarily philosophical issue is explored in both texts, and free-spiritedness is ascribed to a European – not a German – "event". But the *Preface* contains something more, a few elements that play an important role in BGE and that have to do with the anthropological status of the modern citizen. By speaking of «Jesuits and democrats», in fact, Nietzsche outlines a well-defined political framework, the effects of which on Western civilization are displayed, for example, in BGE 62 and 203. In both paragraphs, Nietzsche stresses the *degenerative* consequences of Christian-European morality and culture – that is,

⁶ On this, see e.g. A. VENTURELLI, *Die gaya scienza der "guten Europäer"*. *Einige Anmerkungen zum Aphorismus 377 des V. Buchs der Fröhlichen Wissenschaft*, «Nietzsche-Studien», 28, 2010, pp. 180-200; P. GORI - P. STELLINO, *Il buon europeo di Nietzsche oltre nichilismo e morale cristiana*, «Giornale Critico della Filosofia Italiana», 7/XII, 2016, pp. 98-124. Of some interest, despite the controversial thesis she defends, is also M. PRANGE, *Nietzsche, Wagner, Europe*, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2013.

⁷ Cf. P. GORI, P. STELLINO, *Il buon europeo di Nietzsche oltre nichilismo e morale cristiana*, cit., pp. 103-112.

how it affects the human type physiologically.⁸ In BGE 62, «the European of today» is famously described as «a herd animal, something [...] sick and mediocre», the final product of a process of «deterioration of the European race» of which Christianity is to be blamed. The same idea is further stressed in BGE 203, where Nietzsche deals with the democratic movement as an expression of European Christianity's interest in keeping «everything living that can be kept in any way alive» (BGE 62). Nietzsche considers «the democratic movement to be not merely an abased form of political organization, but rather an abased (more specifically a diminished) form of humanity, a mediocritization and depreciation of humanity in value» (BGE 203). Furthermore, he interprets the activity of modern socialists as the cause of «the total *degeneration of humanity* [...] into the perfect herd animal», which for Nietzsche is only a «brutalizing process of turning humanity into stunted little animals with equal rights and equal claims» (*ivi*).

As in BGE 62, attention is paid first and foremost to the «*Typus 'Mensch'*» that arises from this cultural and political framework, but Nietzsche now moves a step beyond the diagnostic moment. He does not provide a mere passive observation of the fact that «the religions that have existed so far [...] have played a principal role in keeping the type “man” on a lower level» (BGE 62); on the contrary, Nietzsche seems to be confident of the fact that the same conditions that determined the actual state of affairs can give birth to a countermovement whose outcome will be «*new philosophers*, [...] spirits who are strong and original enough to give impetus to opposed valuations and initiate a revaluation and reversal of “eternal values”; [...] men of the future who in the present tie the knots and gather the force that compels the will of millennia into *new* channels» (BGE 203). In line with what we read in the *Preface* to BGE, Nietzsche imagines the growth of a new human type as a further development of a spiritual path involving Western humanity, for he believes it «has still not exhausted its great possibilities» and that only «a favourable accumulation and intensification of forces» is needed to produce this effect (BGE 203). Thus, what Nietzsche tells the free spirits – for this passage is explicitly addressed to them – is that a revaluation of values and the anthropological modification it involves must be carried out from the inside, by exploiting the conditions of our own existence. In other words, to contrast Christian-European morality it is necessary to follow Christian-European morality to its extreme consequences, or, as Nietzsche suggests, to «outgrow Christianity and [become] averse to it – precisely because we have grown *out* of it» (GS 377).

⁸ The theme of *degeneration* in Nietzsche has been recently explored by Ken Gemes in his forthcoming paper *The Biology of Evil: Nietzsche on Entartung and Verjüdung*, «The Journal of Nietzsche Studies».

The realization of «Europe's longest and most courageous *self-overcoming*» (GS 357) is perhaps the main characteristic of the good Europeans, the «rich heirs of millennia of European spirit» to which Nietzsche commends his «secret wisdom and *gaya scienza*» (GS 377). It is precisely *because* they are Europeans that they can overcome Europe. They are the good ones *among* Europeans, this goodness being a spiritual condition of strength and health that enables oneself not to be affected by the disease of Western metaphysics and its morality – in a word: free-spiritedness (cf. BGE 203 and WS 87). It is worth mentioning that Nietzsche deals with good Europeanism in light of the issue of a «strengthening and enhancement of the human type» (GS 377) in the *Gay Science* as well. In my view, this is a clear sign of the important role that the anthropological problem plays in Nietzsche's late philosophy and of how strongly it is intertwined with the figures he outlined almost ten years earlier. To further support this idea, it is possible to consider the *Genealogy of Morality*, for the observations on the good Europeans that Nietzsche published in GS 357 also appear in the second to last section of the third essay of the 1887 book – where, quite significantly, Nietzsche announces the forthcoming publication of «*The Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values*» and declares the future task to which he will devote himself in the following years. This task, as is well known, is to take care of the problem of the value of truth, thus touching on the very core of Christian morality and, supposedly, destroying it from the inside (cf. GM III 24 and 27). Yet it can also be argued in this case that Nietzsche's urge to accomplish this task is primarily anthropological if we consider that in the *Preface* to the *Genealogy* he portrays morality as «the danger of dangers» and as that which is to be blamed «if man, as species, never reached his *highest potential power and splendour*» (GM, *Preface* 6).⁹ His attempt is therefore to tear open this cultural girdle so as to allow humanity to grow, free at last, a feat that can be accomplished by contrasting the principle of Western thought – that is, the «will to truth» – with the anti-dogmatic *perspectivism* that Nietzsche mentions in the *Preface* to *Beyond Good and Evil* and that he apparently attributes to the good Europeans and free spirits.

Allow me to sum all this up. Nietzsche's reflections on good Europeanism and free-spiritedness in the period from 1885 to 1887 form a coherent and integrated picture of a turning point in cultural history. Nietzsche observes the (to his mind) critical situation of a society that is not growing as one might expect it to insofar as its institutions, both political and educational, are obstacles to its development. As a result, mankind is becoming weak, for the

⁹ The anthropological problem of the "Typus Mensch" in Nietzsche has been explored in particular by Richard Schacht. See e.g. R. SCHACHT, *Nietzsche and Philosophical Anthropology*, in K. ANSELL PEARSON (ed.), *A Companion to Nietzsche*, New Jersey, Hoboken 2006, pp. 115-132.

physiological always corresponds to the spiritual, and one cannot separate the cultural from the anthropological. But this can be stopped. Even better, we can turn this around and achieve the improvement of the human type by changing our political and cultural systems. All we need are new guiding figures capable of countering the current state of affairs due to their higher spiritual condition and “great health”.¹⁰ Nietzsche’s development of his early criticism of German nationalism and its supposedly “Great politics” is therefore positive, and perhaps even optimistic. Although the good European and the free spirit seem to be only *ideal* figures that will never be properly realized (much like the community of readers to whom Nietzsche refers during his late period),¹¹ the overall progress of the European as a human type is observed as actually having been set in motion. In BGE 242, Nietzsche talks of «the *European in a state of becoming*», as «an immense *physiological* process» that is taking place «behind all the moral and political foregrounds that are indicated by formulas like [...] “civilization” or “humanization” or “progress”», formulas which give respect to what is «simply labelled as Europe’s *democratic* movement». As noted above, Nietzsche’s viewpoint is not merely cultural or political; he considers European events through the lens of a philosophical anthropologist, giving attention to what humankind has become and, especially, to what it might become. He believes that «the same new conditions that generally lead to a levelling and mediocritization of man – a[n] [...] able herd animal man – are [...] suitable for giving rise to exceptional people who possess the most dangerous and attractive qualities» (*ivi*). But this will be possible only when men finally «overcome atavistic fits of fatherlandishness» (BGE 241), when they accept that a secure but sterile reaffirmation of traditional values is not the best solution for their culture or for themselves as human beings. This is precisely what Nietzsche defines as «good Europeanism», that is, the ability to grow *out* of the culture that has represented our own soil. In line with his 1878 remarks, Nietzsche thus conceives of «an essentially supra-national and nomadic type of person [*Art Mensch*] who, physiologically speaking, is typified by a maximal degree of the art and force of adaptation» (BGE 242). Those «born Mediterranean, [...]

¹⁰ See e.g. HH II, *Preface* 6. For more on this, see e.g. M. LETTERI, *The Theme of Health in Nietzsche’s thought*, «Man and World», 23, 1990, pp. 405-417, and M. FAUSTINO, *Philosophy as a “Misunderstanding of the Body” and the “Great Health” of the New Philosophers*, in J. CONSTÂNCIO, M.J. MAYER BRANCO (eds), *Nietzsche on Instinct and Language*, de Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2011, pp. 203-218.

¹¹ In HH I, *Preface* 2, Nietzsche expresses his doubts about the actual existence of “free spirits”, which for him are a regulative idea for future humanity. On the contrary, he sometimes talks of the good European as an existing figure, or, better, of good Europeanism as an attitude that has already been realized in certain individuals. In any case, it is worth considering that in the 1886-1888 works Nietzsche often uses the first person plural when speaking of the good Europeans and free spirits (e.g. BGE, *Preface*, 203 and 243; GS 377). On this, see P. GORI, P. STELLINO, *Il buon europeo di Nietzsche oltre nichilismo e morale cristiana*, cit., pp. 111 ff.

those rarer and rarely satisfied people who are too far-ranging to find satisfaction in any fatherlandishness, and know how to love the south in the north and the north in the south» (BGE 254), are the kinds of people who learned to write well and to think better, who have become translatable and accessible to others, and who are conversely ready to hear what foreign cultures have to share. The strength of this people seems to reside precisely in its power of adaptation, as well as in the *tolerance* it possesses as its most important feature.

Returning to the issue of the anti-nationalistic attitude, to be read in light of Nietzsche's overall anti-Germanism, we find a hint that will help us in our discussion of the last element that is meant to complete the picture of the anthropological ideal that Goethe helps Nietzsche to outline – that is, the question of what kind of (spiritual) strength characterizes the «spirit who has become free» and embraces a purely Dionysian faith. In the next section, I will try to deal with this issue by focusing on a further element that, albeit apparently in contrast to what has been said thus far, I believe will in fact prove relevant to my overall purpose: Cesare Borgia and the civilization of the Italian Renaissance.

3. *Great men, great health*

Twilight of the Idol's Skirmishes of an Untimely Man can be interpreted as a metaphorical raid on (or incursion into) modernity, which Nietzsche performs in the context of his «great declaration of war» against Wagner, Germany, and Christian Europe more broadly.¹² The aim of the section is thus to deal critically with the thinkers and intellectual movements that Nietzsche believes to be the most representative expression of the culture of *décadence*. Among these are a number of positive figures, however, such as Goethe, who at least represents certain positive features of an ideal future humanity. Another figure whom Nietzsche speaks positively of, a few pages before introducing Goethe, is Cesare Borgia, the finest representative of the Italian Renaissance. Nietzsche's portrayal of him is somewhat problematic, for Borgia apparently embodies those elements that can be found in the most superficial misinterpretations of Nietzsche's "higher men" and "overman". Nevertheless, a *careful* reading of what Nietzsche writes about can help us – as always – to view these observations from the right perspective and to show their coherence with the overall picture depicted in *Twilight of the Idols*.

As is well known, Nietzsche had positive things to say about the Italian Renaissance, describing the period as «the last great cultural harvest that

¹² Cf. TI, *Preface*; Nietzsche's letter to Köselitz, September 27, 1888, KSB 8; and Nietzsche's letter to Overbeck, October 18, 1888, KSB 8.

[Europe] still could have brought home», but which the Germans stole (A 61). For him, the Renaissance was in fact «the *revaluation of all Christian values*, an attempt [...] to allow the *opposite values*, noble values to triumph» (ivi). Or at least it would have been, if only the Reformation had never occurred and Luther had not «*re-established the church*» (ivi). As Nietzsche observes in *Human, all too Human* I, 237, «The Italian Renaissance contained within it all the positive forces to which we owe modern culture [and ...] which have *up to now* never re-appeared in our modern culture with such power as they had then». Unfortunately, «the great task of the Renaissance could not be brought to completion, [for] the protestation of German nature grown retarded [...] prevented it» (ivi). Among these positive forces we find «liberation of thought, disrespect for authorities, [...] enthusiasm for science» (ivi), and, most importantly for the late Nietzsche, the affirmation of an aristocratic, noble individualism that would prevent the levelling of education and culture that characterized modern Europe.¹³

Nietzsche's view is deeply inspired by Jakob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), where Nietzsche encountered an alternative interpretation of humanism to that which was popular in his time and which can be contrasted to the Wagnerian project of restoring antiquity.¹⁴ As Martin Ruehl observes, Burckhardt's view of the Renaissance should be read in light of Nietzsche's anti-German and anti-Wagnerian critique of culture. For Wagner, «Renaissance Italy was a "corrupted world", imbued with a superficial aestheticism whose dissemination into the North proved to be "detrimental" to the development of a genuine German *Kultur*».¹⁵ Furthermore, he thought that the Renaissance humanists lacked «a true understanding of the tragic nature of Ancient Greek civilization», and thus their attempt to restore antiquity was destined to fail.¹⁶ In Nietzsche, it is quite the opposite. The Renaissance is the historical dimension on which the agonal and aristocratic spirit of ancient Greece would have been restored if it had been possible to complete the cultural event that the German Reformation had put a stop to. It is precisely in Burckhardt that Nietzsche encountered the idea that «the great task of a cultural renewal could be carried out by a small group of superior human beings»,¹⁷ healthy individuals who understood

¹³ Cf. M. RUEHL, *Burckhardt and Nietzsche on the Modern Self*, in ID., *The Italian Renaissance in the German Historical Imagination, 1860-1930*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 86.

¹⁴ See on this T. GONTIER, *Nietzsche, Burckhardt et la "question" de la Renaissance*, «Noesis» 10, 2006, pp. 49-71. References will be given to the open access version, available at <https://journals.openedition.org/noesis/422>.

¹⁵ M. RUEHL, *Burckhardt and Nietzsche on the Modern Self*, cit., p. 74.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ivi*, p. 80.

that history is a battleground of instincts and power.¹⁸ Furthermore, Burckhardt allowed Nietzsche to realize the important shift from a historical-sociological to an anthropological-psychological viewpoint, which characterizes GM I, 16 and TI, *Skirmishes* 37 and 44, for example.¹⁹ In these texts, Nietzsche focuses on the *higher* nature of the men of the Renaissance as a product of social and political conditions that enabled the development of precisely the kinds of traits that are contrasted in BGE 62 to traits deemed *degenerative*: being «high and hard enough to give human beings artistic form; [...] strong or far-sighted; [...] noble enough to see the abysmally different orders of rank [*Rangordnung*] and chasms of rank between different people».

This idea of a fundamental difference between individuals is reaffirmed in TI, *Skirmishes* 37, where Schopenhauer's «*moral of pity*» and the Spencerian ideal of altruistic progress is criticized in particular.²⁰ Nietzsche calls this conception *Pathos der Distanz* (cf. JGB 257 and GM I, 2) and views it as the actual promoter of a cultural and historical development. History fears stasis; stasis is the result of balance among forces; therefore, any state of affairs resulting in equilibrium is to be avoided if one wants the process to continue. Conversely, instability is desirable, for it is full of possibilities, giving rise to a plethora of new events. This idea is implicit in Nietzsche's observation that «“equality” [...] essentially belongs to decline: the rift between people, between classes, the myriad number of types, the will to be yourself, to stand out, what I call the *pathos of distance*, is characteristic of every *strong age*» (TI, *Skirmishes* 37). Socialism and the democratic movement are expressions of this *décadence* in politics, for their ideal undermines further changes both on the cultural and on the anthropological plane. As noted above, the development of a cultural process in fact implies the development of the human type; therefore, a “higher man” can only grow out of a social context where agonal forces are powerful and the tension separating individuals is great. But this is precisely the image of the Renaissance that Nietzsche finds in Burckhardt, whose positive evaluation of that age focused not on the intellectual movement inspired by Classical antiquity which was popular at the time but rather on the social and political conditions that allowed the Italian genius to rise.²¹ Accordingly, Nietzsche maintains

¹⁸ Cf. L. FARULLI, *Immagini in movimento: l'Italia del Rinascimento tra Jakob Burckhardt e Friedrich Nietzsche*, «Horizonte», I, 2016, pp. 32-73: 63.

¹⁹ Cf. T. GONTIER, *Nietzsche, Burckhardt et la “question” de la Renaissance*, cit.

²⁰ On this, see M.C. FORNARI, *Die Entwicklung der Herdenmoral. Nietzsche liest Spencer und Mill*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2009.

²¹ Cf. T. GONTIER, *Nietzsche, Burckhardt et la “question” de la Renaissance*, cit., p. 7. Accordingly, Ruhel (*Burckhardt and Nietzsche on the Modern Self*, cit., p. 89) maintains that «tyrannical self-fashioning, according to Nietzsche, [...] aided the growth of culture. Under a tyranny, he argued [in GS 23], “the individual is usually most mature and ‘culture’, consequently, most developed and fertile”».

that the «Renaissance [is] the last *great age*», a historical period antithetical to modern Europe, «with our virtues of work, modesty, lawfulness, and science – accumulating, economic, machine-like – [...] a *weak age*» (ivi). What is the product of the modern age? The herd animal. What was the product of the Renaissance? Cesare Borgia – and, perhaps most importantly, a type of man who can tolerate his power and therefore *resist* him.

This is the point I would like to stress. Despite the fact that Cesare Borgia is defined as «a “higher man”» and «a type of *overman*» (ivi), it seems to me that the main contrast we find in TI, *Skirmishes* 37 is not actually between him and us, but rather between us and the people of the Renaissance. Nietzsche indeed observes that «we should be under no illusion that Cesare Borgia’s contemporaries would not laugh themselves to death at the comic spectacle of us moderns, with our thickly padded humanity, going to any length to avoid bumping into a pebble» (ivi). Thus perhaps we should not focus on Borgia himself, on the attributes we can ascribe him, but rather evaluate this anthropological figure in terms of what he accomplished, the role he played in his historical and political context – and the *reactions* he generated from his people. This does not mean that we must reject Nietzsche’s positive assessment of Borgia, which is indisputable. For Nietzsche, Borgia symbolizes a *strong age*; he is the «iconic negation of all the sickly instincts [...] of those Last Men populating Europe»,²² and his ascension to the papal throne would have constituted the realization of the Renaissance as a countermovement to Christianity, in fact (A 61). At the same time, however, Borgia seems to be an incomplete figure, as it were, or at least he does not seem to embody the type of man Nietzsche invites us to look for. Indeed, in TI, *Skirmishes*, Nietzsche’s path through the various manifestations of modernity does not stop with Cesare Borgia but rather continues until we encounter Goethe and the «spirit *finally become free*», which the latter apparently conceived of and which can be viewed as the actual anthropological ideal of the late Nietzsche. The characters Nietzsche attributes to this human type do not correspond to his description of Cesare Borgia. The «strong, highly educated, self-respecting human being» described by Nietzsche is «skilled in all things physical and able to keep himself in check»; he «could dare to allow himself the entire expanse and wealth of naturalness» and «is strong enough for this freedom»; most importantly, he is «a person who is tolerant out of strength and not weakness because he knows how to take advantage of things that would destroy an average nature» (TI, *Skirmishes* 49).

Tolerance is the key term for defining the kind of strength that is peculiar to the new humanity, future philosophers, etc. As we read in the important fragment written in *Lenzer Heide* (PF 5[71], 1886-1887), Nietzsche indeed con-

²² M. RUHEL, *Burckhardt and Nietzsche on the Modern Self*, cit., p. 102.

siders the «strongest» human beings to be «the most moderate, those who have no need of extreme articles of faith, who not only concede but even love a good deal of contingency and nonsense, who can think of man with a considerable moderation of his value and not therefore become small and weak: the richest in health, who are equal to the most misfortunes and therefore less afraid of misfortunes – men who are *sure of their power* and who represent with conscious pride the strength man has achieved». In the light of this, it can be argued that the highly educated (*hochgebildet*) free spirit Nietzsche describes is not a tyrant, but nor is he a passive victim of tyrannical forces. On the contrary, he is characterized by a moderate nature that allows him to avoid succumbing to the affirmative power of men such as Cesare Borgia, to *resist* this power, thus revealing his actual strength. But this is the very dynamic of the *will to power*, properly interpreted, that is, not a violent affirmation of self over others, a will to dominate permanently and to obliterate what is different from ourselves, but a «relationship of tension» between «dynamic quanta», whose very «essence consists in their relation to all other quanta, in their “effects” on these» (PF 14[79], 1888). According to this picture, the «degree of resistance» is as important as the «degree of strength» (*ivi*), and neither of these is a fixed amount. What can be observed is only the result of a never-ending process that in fact defines both subjects involved. Correspondingly, Nietzsche held that the value of a human being, his spiritual strength and health, must be tested in order to be defined and that this can only be achieved if extreme individuals such as Cesare Borgia exist.

It is now clear why I suggest that the role played by Cesare Borgia can be evaluated indirectly, by looking at the impact that a man like him has on his historical, social and cultural framework. In Nietzsche, Cesare Borgia is an example of an individual who, unlike the weak *decadents* but like his contemporaries, manages his instincts precisely *because of who he is*, because of his tyrannical nature and behaviour. Thus, as with the other «great human beings» mentioned by Nietzsche in his writings, Cesare Borgia's greatness rests in his being a *necessary stimulus* for the education (*Bildung*) of the strong humanity imagined by Goethe (cf. TI, *Skirmishes* 44).

In the light of this, I would like to briefly make some final remarks. As I have tried to show, all of the elements considered thus far can be combined in a coherent picture that allows us to describe the human type that Nietzsche has in mind when he «give[s humanity] its most independent book» (TI, *Skirmishes*, 51). This picture involves two important Nietzschean figures (the good European and the free spirit), who may be viewed as expressions of a mere regulative anthropological ideal. Both Goethe and Cesare Borgia can be seen as tentative realizations and/or incomplete incarnations of this ideal. Neither properly represents it, but at the same time they both play a role in Nietzsche's attempt

to provide us with hints as to the direction in which Europe should move. Europe as a cultural space is in fact the main issue that interested Nietzsche. From 1878, Nietzsche contraposed it to the «petty politics» of German nationalism, which is detrimental to the human type because of how it obstructs the proper spiritual development of a people. Therefore, for Nietzsche, (at least a future) Europe seems to be a multicultural and «supra-national» space that hosts those who have learned to write well and, consequently, to think well, to become readable and comprehensible to other people, and finally, to be tolerant toward other cultures, merging them with their own. Good Europeans are precisely these kinds of people, healthier human beings who have resisted the dogmatic disease of nationalism and who have grown strong, transcending the boundaries of their original culture. In this sense, they are the heirs of Europe's own «self-overcoming», and they seem to be prepared to ultimately set aside this cultural dimension as well.²³ As I have suggested, the Renaissance plays a role in this picture and, broadly, in the development of Nietzsche's anti-*décadent* view. For Nietzsche, the Renaissance was indeed the historical and cultural period that made the kind of anthropological figures he praises possible, for it gave birth to «great men» such as Napoleon and Cesare Borgia, who acted as a stimulus to their people, thus allowing them to grow *strong*. Thus the positive way in which Nietzsche describes this age and its “finest products” does not undermine moderate interpretations of his late anthropological ideal. On the contrary, it helps us to understand the kind of strength one must attribute to «the spirit *finally become free*» and the sense in which Nietzsche describes him as being «tolerant out of strength and not weakness». The Renaissance allowed for the education (*Bildung*) of the human being precisely in that sense, not as a tyrant but rather as one able to *resist* tyranny and acquire new strength. My claim is therefore that Nietzsche is not interested in the Renaissance as an ideal, superior age to be restored; rather, his focus is on those elements that might allow the European event we are living to develop further, once it has finally freed itself from short-sighted political institutions.

²³ The fact that Nietzsche does not mention the “good European” after the publication of the fifth book of the *Gay Science*, while the free spirit is still referred to (e.g. in *Twilight of the Idols*), can be interpreted accordingly. On this, see P. GORI, P. STELLINO, *Il buon europeo di Nietzsche oltre nichilismo e morale cristiana*, cit., pp. 122 ff.

ALBERTO GIACOMELLI

Humanism and Its Monsters. Rebirths and Ruins of the Humanitas between Hieronymus Bosch, Friedrich Nietzsche and Thomas Mann

The contribution aims to question the traditional and classicist interpretation of Humanism. Through a brief analysis of the theme of “madness” in the late Medieval and Renaissance eras, it is intended to highlight Humanism as an age of transition and crisis. The “dark” side of this enigmatic phase of the history of Western thought is then investigated through the description of Hieronymus Bosch’s painting.

The painting *Ship of Fools*, in particular, constitutes the most convincing representation of Nordic Humanism and its “monsters”. The critique of traditional Humanism understood as a philological, erudite and rational movement emerges again in the controversy between Nietzsche and Wilamowitz on the approach to Greek antiquity. The final section of the paper is dedicated to the correspondence between Th. Mann and Kerényi, who wonder whether a Humanism-renaissance is possible after the tragic events of Nazism and war.

PIETRO GORI

Nietzsche, Europe and the Renaissance

This paper focuses on sections of Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols* that deal with Goethe, with the aim of reflecting on the anthropological ideal that Nietzsche outlines in his late period. I give particular attention to the way in which Nietzsche deals with concepts such as “German”, “(good) European”, and “free spirit”, connecting them in a coherent picture. Finally, I argue that the Renaissance plays an important role in Nietzsche’s anthropological project, for it helps to define the spiritual strength that characterizes the healthy type of man whom Nietzsche thought destined to realize his late philosophy.

RICHARD A. COHEN

Husserl’s Salvific Phenomenology: For a New Humanity

The article examines the situation of Edmund Husserl’s two lectures defending phenomenology as a new scientific humanism – “Philosophy as Rigorous Science” (1911) and “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man” (1935) – in the context of contemporary fascist politics, then and now. The essay follows three points: first, Husserl diagnoses political crisis as the consequence of an “objectivist” or “positivist” truncation of science; second, proposes this be corrected by a turn to consciousness as absolute source of meaning, i.e., a turn to phenomenology as genuine science; which, finally creates a new form of peaceful humanity dedicated to universal truth. There is also a fourth point regarding Emmanuel Levinas’s corrective to Husserl’s epistemological absolute, namely, the transcending ethical absolute as “ground” of intelligibility, i.e., the greater exigencies of responsibility, of each person for each other (morality) and of each for all others (justice). Thus, political crisis, fed by positivism, requires Husserl’s corrective phenomenology, but the latter, like all intelligibility, is itself oriented by morality and justice.

sue pubblicazioni: *Storia del nulla*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1995; *Luce d'addio*, Olschki, Firenze 2016; *Sull'infinito*, il Mulino, Bologna 2018; *Quant'è vero Dio*, Solferino, Milano 2018.

PIETRO GORI lavora come ricercatore presso l'Università NOVA di Lisbona, nella quale insegna Filosofia della Scienza e dirige il "Lisbon Nietzsche Group". Il suo lavoro si concentra particolarmente sulla cultura scientifica dei secoli XIX-XX e le sue implicazioni sul pensiero filosofico. In questo contesto emergono alcune figure chiave della sua ricerca, quali Friedrich Nietzsche, William James, Ernst Mach e Mary B. Hesse, alle quali ha dedicato numerosi articoli pubblicati su riviste internazionali e alcuni studi monografici, tra i quali si segnala *Nietzsche's Pragmatism. A Study on Perspectival Thought*, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2019.

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