Nietzsche im Film

Projektionen und Götzen-Dämmerungen

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„Sounding out idols"

Knowledge, History and Metaphysics in *Human, All Too Human* and *Twilight of the Idols*

I

1888 is an important year for Friedrich Nietzsche, since he finally found a plain for his literary project originally called *Will to power*, and that after many revisions the philosopher defined just as „an attempted transvaluation of all values".[1] At the end of this year Nietzsche published all the material he thought not to be usable for his last project, and that he didn't put into the *Antichrist* (that, according to Mazzino Montinari, should be the opening book of the ‚Transvaluation'). Thus was born *Twilight of the Idols*, a book that constitutes the most drastic of Nietzsche's stances on several perspectives he criticised during his life.[2]

Both the main object of Nietzsche's inquiry and the purposes he wants to achieve with this text are clearly presented in the *Preface*. In this section the essay is described as a great *declaration of war* directed against the *eternal idols*, „*ewige Götzen*, an die hier mit dem Hammer wie mit einer Stimmgabel gerührt wird, – es giebt überhaupt keine älteren, keine überzeugteren, keine aufgeblaseneren Götzen … Auch keine hohleren … Das hindert nicht, dass sie die *geglaubtesten* sind" (KSA, GD, 6, 58). Thus, Nietzsche's aim is to ‚sound out' these eternal idols. He turns to them with a specific tool (a ‚hammer') that could amplify their vibrations and make him able to testify their being ‚hollow'. The philosopher just wants to mate Western philosophy, a tradition of thought regarding for so long world attributes as fixed and unchanging that is now impossible to suppose them to be different. Therefore, he pays attention to the conceptual forms generated by human beings during their history, and that men consider as an irreplaceable landmark for their worldview.

If we want to fully comprehend which role does *Twilight of the Idols* play in Nietzsche's thought and, above all, in the larger project of *Transvaluation*[3], our investigation could start

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[1]   KGB III, 5, *Brief an Heinrich Köselitz*, 13. Februar 1888. A critical analysis of the many publishing projects of a book called *Wille zur Macht* Nietzsche wrote in his notebooks from 1885 has been conducted by Mazzino Montinari in his *Nietzsches Nachlaß von 1885 bis 1888 oder Textkritik und Wille zur Macht*, in: Mazzino Montinari, *Nietzsche Lesen*, Berlin, New York 1982, 92–119 (a previous version of this text has been published in: KSA 14, 383–400).

[2]   KGB III, 5, *Brief an Heinrich Köselitz*, 12. September 1888.

[3]   Once again in the *Preface* one can find the remarkable detail of dating: the day printed is „September 30, 1888, on the day when the first book of the ‚Transvaluation of All Values' was completed", the

from these first pages. Indeed, many contents of the *Preface* should be explained, e. g. what does Nietzsche mean talking about the emptiness of the idles and (leaving the metaphor for a plainly speaking) which tool must the philosopher use to let them vibrate adequately. Necessarily, the starting point of this inquiry must be the main object Nietzsche deals with in his book from 1888, i. e. that ‚true world' he defines as the metaphysical horizon itself. As we know, in a central page of *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche sums up the main moments of the long way leading men to get rid of any metaphysical heritage, and that gets through the gradually removal of the dualism coming from Plato's defining a ‚world of Ideas'. The confutation of the ‚true' world and the full refusal of any demarcation between two planes (something that involves the removal of the ‚apparent' world, too), is carried out by proving that the metaphysical dimension has absolutely no content, and that it is merely constituted by entities that have no match with real beings (KSA, GD, 6, 80 f.).

Nietzsche finds the origin of this metaphysical dualism in men's refusal of the testimony of senses; in fact, while they ‚do not lie' and show us nature's becoming, our intellect processes a scheme we incorrectly consider as the true world structure (ibid., 75). The image presented by rational thinking gains in value for its usefulness, but soon men forget his fictional and purely utilitarian quality. This confusion is defined by Nietzsche as the first idiosyncrasy of the philosophers, as he wrote in Aph. 1 of the section *„Reason" in philosophy* (ibid., 74). Indeed, they hold but a cluster of „concept-mummies", still and fixed. Their ‚stiffness' is the reason why these notions could be used as bricks to build the realm of ‚truths', but in doing so men didn't realise that they're working with something intrinsically false, i. e. which substance doesn't correspond to the external image. The origin of the ‚true' world is exactly the declaration of one being into the eternal flux of natural becoming, an idea that in *Gay Science* Nietzsche presented as functional to men's preservation (KSA, FW, 3, 469 ff.), but that we must not confuse with a criterion to define something as real. This evolutionary perspective can be found in many passages in which Nietzsche tries to outline the nature of that ‚truths' of which the metaphysical dimension laying next to the world of becoming is made up. We can read it in a note from 1888: „Die Verirrung der Philosophie ruht darauf, daß man, statt in der Logik und den Vernunftkategorien Mittel zu sehen, zum Zurechtmachen der Welt zu Nützlichkeits-Zwecken (also ‚principiell', zu einer nützlichen *Fälschung*) man in ihnen das Kriterium der Wahrheit resp. der *Realität* zu haben glaubte. Das ‚Kriterium der Wahrheit' war in der That bloß die *biologische Nützlichkeit eines solchen Systems principieller Fälschung*: und da eine Gattung Thier nichts Wichtigeres kennt als sich zu erhalten, so dürfte man in der That hier von ‚Wahrheit' reden. Die Naivetät war nur die, die anthropocentrische Idiosynkrasie als *Maß der Dinge*, als Richtschnur über ‚real' und ‚unreal' zu nehmen: kurz, eine Bedingtheit zu verabsolutiren. Und siehe da, jetzt fiel mit Einem Mal die Welt auseinander in eine wahre Welt und eine ‚scheinbare'" (KSA, NF, 13, 336).[4]

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same day that in *Antichrist* Nietzsche calls „the day of salvation, the first day of year One" (KSA, A, 6, 254); see also KSA, EH, 6, 354 ff.

[4]   The title of this fragment is exactly *Ursprung der ‚wahren Welt'* (KSA, NF, 13, 336), and in the notebook Nietzsche marks it as *Capitel I* of a work he wanted to write. Therefore, it must be part of the material he collected planning his *Will to power*, and that finally didn't find place in *Antichrist*.

This dualism of realities depends upon human inability of understanding that the categories of reason are nothing but tools of our mind, which human beings uses to adapt in a better way themselves to the environment and, consequently, win the struggle for life. Nietzsche defines as ‚true' this schemes of thought, since they represent an unavoidable aim for the species. He doesn't debate men considering as truth what is just a falsification; rather, he detects as unjustified the idea that these ‚truths' could correspond to something in the real world. Their origin as mere thought symbols confines them into the logical realm, and any attempt to give them an ontological value has no ground. Thus, the distinction between a ‚true' world and a ‚world of appearance' arises from human disposition to see all logical schemes as substances. In the final section of this note, Nietzsche defines this disposition as „der größte Irrthum, der begangen worden ist, das eigentliche Verhängniß des Irrthums auf Erden" (ibid., 337). These schemes are but human resources to adapt themselves to the environment, a falsification that enable men to overcome Nature, „um Herr zu werden über die Realität, um auf eine kluge Weise die Realität *mißzu-verstehen*" (ibid.). The first result of the ‚anthropocentric idiosyncrasy' is a misjudgement of the main attributes of reality; thus, the rising of a metaphysical world view depends tightly on this inability to evaluate the role of the logical schemes.

II

Nietzsche's aim to close ‚old' western philosophy and show a new way of looking at the world must consider this aspect; that's why he often addresses himself to the question of human knowledge. Since his early writings (most of all in *Human, all too human*) Nietzsche presented the same thoughts on the origin of a ‚true' world, and dealt with the question of the ‚errors' of knowledge. In 1878 he expounds some thoughts about the role played by the language on human's life: „Die Bedeutung der Sprache für die Entwick-elung der Cultur liegt darin, dass in ihr der Mensch eine eigene Welt neben die andere stellte, einen Ort, welchen er für so fest hielt, um von ihm aus die übrige Welt aus den Angeln zu heben und sich zum Herrn derselben zu machen. Insofern der Mensch an die Begriffe und Namen der Dinge als an *aeternae veritates* durch lange Zeitstrecken hindurch geglaubt hat, hat er sich jenen Stolz angeeignet, mit dem er sich über das Thier erhob: er meinte wirklich in der Sprache die Erkenntniss der Welt zu haben" (KSA, MA-1, 2, 30).

The language is essential to let human beings orientate in the world and win the struggle for life, since they own a resource other animals don't have. However, the power of this tool has soon been overestimated, and today men consider language as the expression of the highest knowledge of things. The main error of human beings is the ‚belief' in found truth, the idea that language could show the real qualities of things and that words are more than mere labels. „Jetzt erst" writes Nietzsche „dämmert es den Menschen auf, dass sie einen ungeheuren Irrthum in ihrem Glauben an die Sprache propagirt haben" (ibid., 30).[5] Maybe the times are changing. Maybe in this century (19th) men could get rid

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5   Since the title of the Aph. is *Die Sprache als vermeintliche Wissenschaft*, and in this page Nietzsche considers the language as „die erste Stufe der Bemühung um die Wissenschaft" (KSA, MA-1, 2, 30), one can see the correspondence between the „dawning" (*dämmern*) on men that their language

of the greatest weight of metaphysics, and refuse the misleading dualism of realities that Plato set up. To achieve this goal we should realize that the world of thought symbols is merely an image of becoming, and that the ‚real‘ objects are still beyond that image, or behind it (KSA, FW, 3, 472 f.). The basic event, from which the ‚creation‘ of a world of concepts laying next to the one we live in directly follows, is men's inability in making a distinction between the pure ‚logic‘ activity of the intellect and a way of reasoning that could describe the ‚ontological‘ ground of the world. But Nietzsche knows that human intellect's ‚fallibility‘ is physiological, a quality acquired during the development of the organism. Intellectual errors have so great value as tools for the struggle for life that it is not possible to imagine a human being describing the world in a different way.

In *Human, all too human* Nietzsche states the ground idea of these observations, i. e. the fact that „was wir jetzt die Welt nennen, ist das Resultat einer Menge von Irrthümern und Phantasien, welche in der gesammten Entwickelung der organischen Wesen allmählich entstanden“ (KSA, MA-1, 2, 37). Knowledge plays a leading role in men's adaptation to the environment, since it provides the only access to the external world which human beings can count on, and its conformation helped the species to preserve itself.[6] Thence, the reason of men believing in two different worlds is that their knowledge schematizes external data and generates a reality of ‚things‘, ‚substances‘ and ‚bodies‘.

The elements constituting the ‚true‘ world, these ‚idols‘ against which Nietzsche will write in 1888, come from our intellect. Moreover, the crucial inference making us create a ‚true‘ world, since we attribute the quality of ‚reality‘ to the ‚world of error‘ made of thought symbols, is our claiming a mere ‚logical scheme‘ to be an ‚ontological entity‘. Therefore, the starting point of Nietzsche's characterizing the objects he deals with in *Twilight of the Idols* is exactly his evolutionary theory of knowledge. The German philosopher presented for the first time this perspective in his writings from 1870's, but in the following years he carried on the idea that our word's falsification has a deep biological value. Indeed, human beings cannot survive without that world they've created and that now consider as real; that's why Nietzsche justifies their calling it ‚true‘. One must remark that he talks about a ‚true‘ world only in his last years of thought. Before 1885 he wrote about the metaphysical need of men as the cause of their creating a ‚world of his own‘, ‚another world‘, or a ‚World Behind‘; probably, with the new term ‚true‘ he wanted to define something different. Therefore, one can better comprehend Nietzsche's defining the dimension of metaphysics and, consequently, obtain a final clarification of the emptiness of eternal idols, looking at the basic qualities of the notion of ‚truth‘ he deals with during his working years, starting from the reflection he set out in his notes for *Human, all too human*.

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generates a mere falsification of the real world, and the same „dawning“ (even *dämmern*) on the „five or six minds“ Nietzsche talks about in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Aph. 14 of the idea that natural philosophy is only a *world-exposition* and *world-arrangement*, and not a *world-explanation*; i. e. the idea that science has no explanatory power.

6   In *Gay Science* Nietzsche states that a different way of processing sensations could not be as useful for men's self-preservation as the one we inherited; indeed, those beings who made inferences as we do were favored with a bigger probability of survival (KSA, FW, 3, 471 f.).

III

In the notebook entry stated above Nietzsche writes that the ‚criterion of truth' is the ‚biological usefulness of this system of falsification'. Since logical forms play a leading role for the preservation of the species, men believe them to be a good description of how reality is in itself. Nietzsche presented this idea all along his writings, from his first dealing with the question of human thought. For instance, in 1880 he wrote: „Die *gewohnten Gedanken* sind deshalb so hoch geachtet, ja zur Pflicht gemacht, weil sie eine Art *Bewährung* haben, mit ihnen ist der Mensch nicht zu Grunde gegangen. Dies ‚nicht zu Grunde gehen' gilt als der Beweis für die Wahrheit eines Gedankens. Wahr heißt *‚für die Existenz des Menschen zweckmäßig'*" (KSA, NF, 9, 306). Thus, Nietzsche tries replacing the common use of the term ‚truth' as ‚close to reality' with a notion that could respect human perspective; thence, he calls *true* only that thought useful for human beings winning the struggle for life. Indeed, he writes that „das Wahre ist *nützlicher* (den Organismus erhaltender)" (KSA, NF, 11, 109), and rejects the common antithesis between true and false, for his way of reasoning leads to a new perspective, that is beyond the idea of correctness and error.

Our intellect is not able to give a good description of the external world; thus, we can only consider as ‚truths' his falsifications, his ‚errors', since they proved their practical usefulness. Nietzsche knows that no other kind of knowledge is possible and that men's looking at the world schematizing and simplifying external data belongs ‚physiologically' to human beings. Therefore, he claims that the only way to define the notion of truth is looking at the biological plane and evaluate both truth and lie as errors: „(Wahrheit bezeichnet nicht einen Gegensatz zum Irrthum, sondern die Stellung gewisser Irrthümer zu anderen Irrthümern, etwa daß sie älter, tiefer einverleibt sind, daß wir ohne sie nicht zu leben wissen und dergleichen.) […] Die Werthschätzungen in irgend einem Verhältniß zu den Existenzbedingungen stehn müssen, doch lange nicht so, dass sie wahr wären, oder präcis wären. Das Wesentliche ist gerade ihr Ungenaues Unbestimmtes, wodurch eine Art *Vereinfachung der Außenwelt* entsteht – und gerade diese Sorte von Intelligenz ist günstig zur Erhaltung" (ibid., 503 f.).

Any description of the external world should be compared to the conditions for survival, instead of evaluated as more or less corresponding to its object. Its similarity to the original, and the precision in generating an image of nature are not important if they give no advantage to human beings. Our intellect falsifies the external world, but we cannot discuss its working, since it has been selected during the long lasting adaptation of human organism. According to Nietzsche, „unsere Organe (zum *Leben*) sind auf den Irrthum eingerichtet. […] Leben ist die Bedingung des Erkennens. Irren die Bedingung des Lebens und zwar im tiefsten Grunde Irren. Wissen um das Irren hebt es nicht auf! Das ist nichts Bitteres!" (KSA, NF, 9, 504). Every evaluation of the image generated by our mind is nothing but a comparison between ‚errors', which can be said more or less useful to human beings' preservation, more or less ineradicable, or just older than others.

During 1885 Nietzsche presented once again his view, emphasizing that the value of the notion of ‚truth' is strictly related with the fact that „ein organisches Wesen unserer Art nicht ohne ihn leben könnte" (KSA, NF, 11, 598). With these words Nietzsche defines the main qualities of the world of fixed forms, that dimension men create claiming the ‚errors' of their intellect to be ‚real'. Thus, from this outlook we can consider that the notion of a

‚true' world corresponds to that of a world ‚in which men can survive', and consequently leave any claim that the image of reality out intellect processes can be a good ‚explanation' of it.[7] We don't need this description to present the real properties of the world; the ‚true' world is not more real than the one of appearances, it is just more useful.

IV

We can now say that the ‚true world' Nietzsche wants to remove is exactly the dimension of those conceptual forms which had in the history of human beings' development a leading role. Thus, metaphysics is the universe of fixed forms (thoughts symbols, bodies, subjects and things) which ‚existence' men ‚believes' in. If we want to find a short and properly definition of what Nietzsche calls ‚eternal idols', maybe the terms the Austrian scientist Ernst Mach uses to describe metaphysical concepts are the most appropriate. In the first section of his work titled *Die Geschichte und die Wurzel des Satzes von der Erhaltung der Arbeit* (1872), he writes: „We call metaphysical those concepts which we've forgotten how we've reached".[8] In Mach's view metaphysics is an illusion of knowledge, and includes notions that we accept without any preliminary investigation revealing their dependence on the history of thought. His defining these notions closely fits with the conceptual forms Nietzsche opposes, all the more so because the latter seems to paraphrase Mach when, in 1873, writes that „die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, dass sie welche sind" (KSA, WL, 1, 881)[9], and recognises the merely utilitarian value of these intellectual labels.[10]

In his main writings Mach points out the fact that many scientific concepts, e. g. that one of ‚mass', are hollow, since they are nothing but thoughts-symbols generated by

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[7]   On the distinction between ‚explanation' and ‚description' see KSA, FW, 3, 472 f.

[8]   Ernst Mach, *Die Geschichte und die Wurzel des Satzes von der Erhaltung der Arbeit*, Prag 1872, *Einleitung*.

[9]   In this early writing Nietzsche for the first time presented his theory of knowledge, but his outlook is not yet signed by the idea of ‚natural selection'. Even though the philosopher talks about concepts useful for the preservation of the species, his ideas recalls some theses of Arthur Schopenhauer, and his language can be related to the linguist Gustav Gerber. Nietzsche defines truths „Metaphern, die abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos geworden sind" (KSA, WL, 1, 881), and not, as he does later, „Irrthümer". In my opinion this is a basic sign of a different perspective in considering human knowledge. Nevertheless, his main claim that truths has no absolute value, since they are mere *thought symbols*, is the same that the one he states in his later writings, and it is very close to Mach's ideas.

[10] The problem of a possible comparison between Nietzsche's thought and Mach's epistemology should be considered and deeply analysed in another place. In this paper I'd like to remark that, as studies stand now, it is not possible to affirm any mutually influence of one another. However, we know that Nietzsche had a copy of Mach's *Beiträge zur Analyse der Emfindungen*, published in 1886 an bought by the philosopher maybe in the same year. Moreover, in a notebook entry of 1882 Nietzsche notes down the title of Mach's essay on the conservation of work, a fact that can testify that the philosopher knows it, although *after* his writing *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sinn* (Alwin Mittasch, *Friedrich Nietzsche Naturbeflissenheit*, Heidelberg 1950, 21, 186). Therefore, the only way to study the deep correspondence of ideas between Nietzsche and Mach is an inquiry on the cultural ground which both refer to, i. e. the critical debate on the explanatory capability of materialistic mechanism in progress during the whole 19th Century.

schematizing, according to an economic purpose that can be found in the most general working of knowledge. Mach presents a close study, retracing the origin of these notions, and showing how they've been generated. Thus, he explains that they're strictly related with the history of our society and its cultural development; therefore, their value is not absolute at all. Most of all, Mach criticises the mechanistic world-view peculiar to the Newtonian tradition of thought for its believing these concepts to be absolute. Moreover, his project of an historical reconstruction of scientific thought is strictly related to the ‚biological‘ and ‚evolutionary‘ outlook characterizing his theory of knowledge. Mach (as Nietzsche does) upholds an evolutionary epistemology, i. e. the idea that our intellect is merely a product of the development of human organism, and like any other part of it is useful to the preservation of the species[11]. His defining concepts with terms used in the debate on evolution and natural selection (briefly, the idea that „Gedanke sind organische Processe"[12]) reveals that he considers them as something that has gradually evolved, indeed is still evolving. Therefore, they should not be seen as unchanging or absolute, since they're necessary related to the environment and couldn't reach any fixed form. Mach's investigation rises from these ideas, since he thinks that the only way to get the scientific realm rid of these dogmatic notions is a retrospective look on their genesis. In other words, we need to realize a history of human thought, an inquiry that Mach defines as driven by an „anti-metaphysical intent".[13] If metaphysics is the world of notions we isolate from the eternal becoming of concepts, history could clearly be the best instrument to compensate for this error.

The argument is coherent and simple, and it follows directly from the premises; that's why one must not be surprised in finding that Nietzsche came to the same idea. Metaphysics arises from an oversight of being truths mere thoughts gradually evolved and still evolving, then the only way to follow is that of historical studies, and philosophy must be the ‚highest form of history‘: „Philosophie, soweit sie Wissenschaft und nicht Gesetzgebung ist, bedeutet uns nur die weiteste Ausdehnung des Begriffs ‚Historie‘. Von der Etymologie und der Geschichte der Sprache her nehmen wir alle Begriffe als *geworden*, viele als noch werdend; und zwar so, daß die allgemeinsten Begriffe, als die *falschesten*, auch die ältesten sein müssen. ‚Sein‘, ‚Substanz‘ und ‚Unbedingtes‘, ‚Gleichheit‘, ‚Ding‘ –: das Denken erfand sich zuerst und zu ältest diese Schemata, welche thatsächlich der Welt des Werdens am gründlichsten widersprachen, aber ihr von vornherein, bei der Stumpfheit und Einerleiheit des anfänglichen, noch unterthierischen Bewußtseins, zu entsprechen *schienen*" (KSA, NF, 11, 613).

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[11]   Donald Cambell used for the first time the term „evolutionary epistemology" in his essay on Karl Popper's philosophy of science (Donald Campbell, *Evolutionary Epistemology*, in: *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, hg. von P. A. Schlipp, La Salle 1974, Bd. 1, 413–463). The basic text that Mach wrote on this subject is the conference *Umbildung und Anpassung im naturwissenschaftlichen Denken* he read in 1882 and then published in Ernst Mach, *Populär-wissenschaftliche Vorlesungen*, Leipzig 1896 (a later version of this essay can be found in Ernst Mach, *Die Principien del Wärmelehre historisch-kritisch entwickelt*, Leipzig 1896).

[12]   Ernst Mach, *Die Principien der Wärmelehre*, Leipzig 1923 [1896], 360.

[13]   The *Preface to the first edition* of Ernst Mach, *Die Mechanik in ihrer Entwickelung: historisch-kritisch Dargestellt*, Leipzig 1883.

Nietzsche completely refuses the world of fixed and unchanging forms characterizing the „Platonic and Leibnitzian thought".[14] Indeed, Western thought is deeply involved in the metaphysics of ‚substances' he tries to overcome with a ‚dynamical' world view, with a philosophy that would become history. Nietzsche presents this view in other notebooks from the same year, e. g. writing that „[d]ie Begriffe sind etwas Lebendiges, folglich auch etwas bald wachsendes, bald Schwindendes: auch Begriffe sind eines elenden Todes gestorben" (ibid., 654). The idea that concepts are limited in time as any other living entity is the last evidence against men conceiving them as eternal and unchanging. Nietzsche's outlook is that concepts are but temporary resting points of an ever lasting development, and he assumes this idea as the ground of a theoretical critic to themselves. This operation should put them back to their origin and, once and for all, eliminate the truth value attributed by the men: „Noch jetzt" (writes Nietzsche) „ist die eigentliche Kritik der Begriffe oder (wie ich es einst bezeichnete) eine wirkliche ‚Entstehungsgeschichte des Denkens' von den meisten Philosophen nicht einmal *geahnt*" (ibid., 643). This last note lead us back to the pages of *Human, all too human* in which Nietzsche presented for the first time our knowledge as an evolutionary epistemology. In fact, in paragraph 16 of that work he calls our concepts and logical schemes „intellectual errors", and supposes the usefulness of the same „ontogeny of thought" quoted in the note from 1885. Moreover, in this page he clearly declares his biological outlook, and emphasizes the absolute becoming of world of representation, defining it as a painting that has gradually evolved, „ja noch völlig im Werden ist und desshalb nicht als feste Grösse betrachtet werden soll" (KSA, MA-1, 2, 36).

Nietzsche's purpose to get rid of our inherited intellectual errors corresponds to Mach's idea of a genealogy of scientific concepts and of all other notions that became almost part of the basic endowment of the species. It would enlighten the history of the origin of the world of representation, and properly highlight the qualities of conceptual terms, i. e. their being but entities still evolving in compliance with the development of human organisms. The final outcome of this inquiry would be the determination of the absolute ‚emptiness' of the idea of ‚thing-in-itself' or, in other words, the refusal of the distinction between a ‚true world' and an ‚apparent world'. This emptiness is exactly the quality that in *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche attributed to the eternal forms, that, since are hollow and have no content, would resonate for so long when sounded out by the philosopher's ‚*hammer*'.

V

We can briefly draw some conclusions from these considerations. First of all, the deep correspondence between Mach's ‚anti-metaphysical' intent and the perspective Nietzsche follows in waging his ‚war' against eternal idols seems to be clear. The emptiness of the hypostatization of human's thought symbols is exactly their being taken out of the ever lasting process of becoming generating them. Nietzsche's ‚eternal idols' are the ‚concepts

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14   In a notebook from 1886/87 he defines this dimension as constituted by „jenen Bestand, welcher in der Sprache und den grammatischen Kategorien sich einverleibt und dermaßen unentbehrlich gemacht hat, dass es scheinen möchte, wir würden aufhören, denken zu können, wenn wir auf diese Metaphysik Verzicht leisteten" (KSA, NF, 12, 237).

which we've forgotten how we've reached' that in Mach's thought constitutes the world of metaphysics, and their lack of content comes from men's inability to look at them as becoming entities. The ‚sounding out' process, i. e. philosopher's testifying of their emptiness, can be made with that specific ‚hammer' that is the historical method of inquiry. This properly is the most useful tool for anyone who wants to objectively examine the characteristics of external world, and consequently remove the contraposition between a ‚true' world and an ‚apparent' one. Indeed, Nietzsche refers to this method in *Twilight of the Idols*. In the first paragraph of the section on ‚*Reason*' *in philosophy* he points out that the first philosopher's idiosyncrasy is their ‚lack of historical sense', that allows them to dehistoricize concepts and turn them into mummies. The philosophers should – as written by Mach – let history lead them by the hand[15], for that's the only way that could open their eyes to the specific qualities of the notions they use and on which they build a world-view destined to fall when the cultural environment will change.

This way of judging philosopher's work is not new for Nietzsche. Indeed, he presented the same critique in the opening pages of *Human, all too human*, together with a contrast which pregnancy for the present investigation is basic. In the second paragraph of this book we read that „Mangel an historischem Sinn ist der Erbfehler aller Philosophen", that „Mensch geworden ist, dass auch das Erkenntnissvermögen geworden ist", and finally that „es giebt *keine ewigen Thatsachen*: sowie es keine absoluten Wahrheiten giebt. – Demnach ist das *historische Philosophiren* von jetzt ab nöthig und mit ihm die Tugend der Bescheidung" (ibid., 25).[16]

This refusal of facts' eternity, so as his claim to a way of thinking that could deny the presumed absoluteness of truths, for their becoming with the whole world of nature, exactly defines the ground ideas out of which the critic to idols Nietzsche deals with projecting his ‚Transvaluation' arises. In 1878, ten years before his writing *Twilight of the Idols*, the philosopher is already involved in his war against metaphysics, and sees it from the same perspective that will characterize his later work. In the year in which he leaves philology for a strictly philosophical inquiry, Nietzsche has collected the equipment to face his biggest challenge yet and, most of all, he's selected his main tool. ‚History' will be his ‚hammer'. With it he'll sound out the main hypostatization rooted in Western thought, and clear the way for his main project of a ‚Transvaluation of all values'.

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[15] Ernst Mach concludes with this image his *Introduction* to *Die Geschichte und die Wurzel des Satzes von der Erhaltung der Arbeit*.

[16] In the first aphorism of this book Nietzsche contrasts „metaphysische Philosophie" and „historische Philosophie", calling the latter „die allerjüngste aller philosophischen Methoden" (KSA, MA-1, 2, 23). According to what Mazzino Montinari wrote to Delio Cantimori in 1963, we can say that in *Human, all too human* Nietzsche evaluates the history in a different way from the ideas he presented in the second *Untimely meditation* (Giuliano Campioni quoted this letter in his *Nota* to Mazzino Montinari, *Che cosa ha detto Nietzsche*, Milano 1999, 212 f.).