TRANS-HUMANITIES

Title : Strange Freedom in Nietzsche and Beauvoir

Author(s) : Emily Anne PARKER

Source : *Trans-Humanities*, Vol. 7 No. 1 (2014), pp. 47–69
Published by : Ewha Womans University Press
URL : http://eiheng.ewha.ac.kr/page.asp?pageid=book10&pagenum=060600
Online ISSN : 2383-9899

Strange Freedom in Nietzsche and Beauvoir

Emily Anne PARKER (Towson University)

"… yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet."
– Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

I. Introduction

It is not necessary that the study of ethics, the irreducible question of how to live, requires a rational concept of the human as uniquely capable of reflecting on life. Already in various traditions – in that of Laozi, in the tradition of Nietzsche – images of ways to involve myself "in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain our world and our participation in it" appear (Anzaldua 103). These traditions suggest that ethics does not require a concept of the human at all. But neither do they deny the role of unpredictable valuing in non-volitional elaborations of life. Gloria Anzaldua's lines offer a challenging political statement of what is necessary: new images, new symbols, new figures of material connection and affinitive difference (Anzaldua 103; Haraway, "A Manifesto" 13; Haraway, *When Species* 4).

This essay explores the relationship between two writers whose work is engaged in such a project. I am interested in the surprising commonalities between the will to disclose being in the early work of Simone de Beauvoir and the will to power in the late work of Friedrich Nietzsche. Beauvoir's much-discussed notion of transcendence in *The Second Sex* is initially elaborated in terms of the will to disclose being in the *Ethics of Ambiguity*. I argue that both recall the will to power in Nietzsche, though Beauvoir does not explicitly acknowledge this. It seems that the will to power on Beauvoir's reading is in danger of affirming individualism. Beauvoir agrees that there is a certain singularity that is necessary to existence, but she prefers the image of the

Trans-Humanities, Vol. 7 No. 1, February 2014, 47–69

ambiguity of relational singularity, which forwards the de-centered give and take of wills-to-disclose-being, to that of the will to power as she seems to find it in Nietzsche. The essay proceeds in three parts. In the first part "How Did Beauvoir Read Nietzsche?" I demonstrate that it is unclear both how Beauvoir read Nietzsche and whether Beauvoir intended the will to disclose being as an appropriation of the will to power. But as I explain in the second part "Beauvoir's Rejection of the Bare Will to Power," the will to disclose being as the mutual disclosure of inherently relational singularities does offer a response to what Beauvoir calls the "bare will to power." However, as I explain in part three "Beauvoir's Will to Power," this bare will to power in fact resembles what Nietzsche himself deplores. To make this point I discuss a specific passage of *Twilight of the Idols*. From this we can see that Beauvoir's will to disclose being so strongly resembles the will to power, that it becomes clear that Beauvoir's concern must have been to insist on the relational nature of the will to disclose being/will to power, and clearly not to reject the will to power itself. This is why she refers qualifiedly to what she rejects as the "bare will to power."

A few brief remarks about how I understand "the will to power" in Nietzsche are in order. Nietzsche claims in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "Above all, a living thing wants to discharge its strength-life itself is will to power" (15). The figure in this short and enigmatic phrase is not easily summed up, but my interest is in its simultaneous expression of ecological continuity and dispersal of bodily agencies or wills. At one and the same time with this notion Nietzsche suggests that all of existence is growing, changing, and dying, and that there is no one vantage point from which to experience and therefore to know this flux. Roger Ames makes a similar point when he writes of Nietzsche's will to power as perspectivism:

> It underscores the inevitability of interpreting a world from *some* perspective, but a perspective that is fluid. At the same time, we are unable to entertain this world from *every* perspective, or, equally, from no perspective. (145)

Ames cites a crucial passage for my purposes, from *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: "In every now, being begins; round every Here rolls the sphere There. The center is everywhere" (217–18). But the very next sentence reads: "Bent is the path of eternity" (218). As Ames points out, Nietzsche obviates the supposed line between reality and appearance. It is because there is only desire which

gets elaborated "through eternity," not by means of one incorporeal desire but *as* countless corporeal ones. Not only this, but each agent is only abstractly consistent as *one* agent. For Nietzsche "the will" is in fact a vacuous term. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he writes that the will is "this multifarious thing that people have only one word for. On the one hand, we are, under the circumstances, both the one who commands *and* the one who obeys" (19). In a claim out of which Gilles Deleuze will make much, my body is "only a society constructed out of many souls" (19). Elizabeth Grosz, one of Deleuze's most influential interpreters in feminist studies, expresses a similar idea when she claims that bodies and communities are constituted by "forces that may be construed as competing microagencies rather than as the conflict between singular, unified, self-knowing subjects or well-defined groups" (6; Hird 111). Abstraction in the form of an "I" or a "we" is an aftereffect, and Nietzsche himself compares this to the way that "the ruling class identifies itself with the successes of the community" (20). In other words, agency or power is microagency, which can be viewed collectively only in the abstract. Agency is lived non-collectively. And this is the aspect of the will to power that Beauvoir seeks not so much to reject as to amend. The potentially competitive aspect of this picture is always in danger, Beauvoir suggests, of suggesting a legitimate mode of non-teleological events in Nietzsche's writing. Thus she rejects what she will call the "bare will to power," a mode of willing as the "will to be" which forgets its inherently relational character.

Ⅱ. How did Beauvoir read Nietzsche?

Beauvoir does not make it clear whether she considered herself to be writing in a Nietzschean mode, and though there are exceptions little work has been written on the relationship between their respective works (Bergoffen; Miller). She does write in *Pyrrhus and Cineas* that Nietzsche did not anticipate "Nietzscheanism" any more than Epicurus "Epicureanism" or Christ the Inquisition (Beauvoir, "Pyrrhus" 109). But her two mentions of Nietzsche in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* are more informative. In the first, she attributes to Nietzsche the rejection of the "deceitful stupidity of the serious man and his universe" together with Hegel, Kierkegaard and Sartre (Beauvoir, *Pour une morale* 60; *Ethics* 46). But unlike in the case of Nietzsche she distances her views from those of Hegel and Kierkegaard. Earlier she has distinguished her

own view which rests upon the singularity of the individual and within the community from Hegel's particularity insofar as the latter can be assimilated in a totality (*Pour une morale 24*; *Ethics* 17). Later in the book she will suggest that Kierkegaard's suspension of the ethical is not ambiguous enough (*Pour une morale* 165; *Ethics* 133). The "painfulness of an indefinite questioning" comes, she explains, precisely from the absence of a divine voice: "the important thing to us is to know whether, in given conditions, Isaac must be killed or not" (*Pour une morale* 165; *Ethics* 133). Whether or not Beauvior's reading of Kierkegaard is a fair one,[1] Beauvoir appears to set Hegel and Kierkegaard aside in a way that she does not set Nietzsche aside. And so this brief mention suggests that Beauvoir did read Nietzsche quite sympathetically.

In the second and final place where Nietzsche appears in the *Ethics of Ambiguity*, unlike in the case of Hegel and Kierkegaard from whom Beauvoir explicitly distances her work, Beauvoir's reading of Nietzsche is unclear (*Pour une morale* 91; *Ethics* 71–72). There she corrects those who would, in exalting the "bare will to power," attempt in vain "to make of existentialism a solipsism." The bare will to power is "bare" insofar as it acts in ways that express itself as isolated from and yet all-powerful over the other. I will return to this passage in a moment, but here my interest is in what she means when she says that these are "like Nietzsche" (*Pour une morale* 91; *Ethics* 71–72)? This is simply not clear. For Beauvoir this attempt to identify existentialism as a theory of wills in discrete opposition is "as widespread as it is erroneous" (*Pour une morale* 91; *Ethics* 71–72). Does Beauvoir mean that this widespread and erroneous interpretation is wrong about Nietzsche or about existential social philosophy? Is it that there are some who are as mistaken as Nietzsche himself was in articulating an unambiguous account of "the individual, knowing himself and choosing himself as the creator of his own values, [who] would seek to impose them on others" (*Pour une morale* 91; *Ethics* 71–72)? Or is it that this interpretation is in fact wrong about Nietzsche, whose articulation of the will to power is itself not in fact bare, and therefore misses the ambivalent character of power – as both power over and power with – that his work admits and explores? The passage on page 46 which I quoted above would suggest the later, but again this is unclear.

One answer to this question might be found by referring to the ways in

1. Kierkegaard himself would appear to have been making implicitly the very same point (Kangas 129).

which Beauvoir writes of Nietzsche in *The Second Sex* (1949), the publication of which follows closely on the heels of the publication of the *Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947). She quotes him in a number of places. These suggest that she reads Nietzsche as advocating the very "bare will to power" that she denounces in the *Ethics of Ambiguity*. Three lengthy quotations from *The Gay Science* serve to demonstrate interpersonal exertions of power over the other (Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe II* 280–81, 546, 567; *The Second Sex* 485, 683, 698). But she also refers to Nietzsche in articulating the limited moral stances available to a "hetaera," a courtesan or woman hired in ancient Greece to serve as an educated, feminine companion. She is interested in the hetaera as the necessary corollary to the prostitute, as she is interested in all sex work as a corollary to the social esteem reserved for the socio-sexual role of wife. The hetaera in other words is held in a kind of relatively high regard, to which she must consent in order to secure this position. Beauvoir regards the hetaera as necessarily devoted in this pursuit to the desires of specific men as well as to men imagined as a group: the courtesan might adopt "a more or less well assimilated Nietzscheanism; she will affirm the right of the elite being over the vulgar" (*Le deuxième sexe II* 454; *The Second Sex* 617). The hetaera is an "adventurer," who in the *Ethics of Ambiguity* Beauvoir has explained does not "become conscious of the real requirements of h[er] own freedom, which can will itself only by destining itself to an open future, by seeking to extend itself by means of the freedom of others" (*Pour une morale* 77; *Ethics* 60). The adventurer is in other words a mode of the will to be, the mutually exclusive or bare will to power. The hetaera's fate rises and falls with her ability to approximate the desires of others, with her ability to deny the real requirements of her own positive and concrete freedom, not with her ability to resist and therefore feed the desires of the other as other. Her own singularity is not welcomed in the gaze of the dissimilar other. Thus the scope for moral justification in the life of the hetaera is confined to self-justification, affirming oneself as "the elite being over the [supposedly] vulgar [prostitute]" (*Le deuxième sexe II* 454; *The Second Sex* 617). And so this passage suggests that Beauvoir does read Nietzsche as a proponent of the "bare will to power" which she deplores.

A similar reference to Nietzsche appears early in *The Second Sex*, in the discussion of historical interpretations of gender as dualistic:

> Aristotle's idea that woman is merely matter, and "the principle of movement which is male in all living beings is better and more divine,"

> is an idea that expresses a will to power that goes beyond all of what is known. (*Le deuxième sexe II* 133; *The Second Sex* 87)

Here it is explained that it is precisely because there is no fact of the matter about what a "woman" is or what one should be like that suppression of sexual diversity is possible (*Le deuxième sexe I* 115; *The Second Sex* 75). Oppression is the exercise of this will to power "that goes beyond all of what is known," to exert itself absolutely in the form of this utterly creative if unfound-ably dualistic myth.

It would seem then, that while Beauvoir cites Nietzsche as a source, she also finds in Nietzsche articulations of the vicious forms of the supposedly discrete will to power and the will to power as a futile attempt to exert power over the other in the way that Aristotle regards "woman." She does not explicitly appropriate from his work any positive figure which can illustrate the necessary relationality of what she calls the will to disclose being. She does not explicitly acknowledge his notion of the will to power either in its expression as affirmation and creation or in its social nature.

Ⅲ. Beauvoir's Rejection of the Bare Will to Power

What is clear is that for Beauvoir the "bare will to power" ignores my role in the becoming of the other, but ironically is nevertheless an effort to limit the other (*Pour une morale* 91; *Ethics* 71–72). The will to disclose being and its later expression in her work as transcendence are characterized by affirming my responsibility to aid when I can the becoming of the other as someone fundamentally different from me. The will to disclose being enables becoming powerful in mutual collaboration with this irreducible other. This is also the case for Nietzsche, as Georges Bataille has famously suggested and as Vanessa Lemm has more recently explored ("Critical Theory"; *Nietzsche's Animal*). But as I have said it is not clear whether Beauvoir shares this reading of the will to power in Nietzsche. Instead she presents a critique of the "bare will to power," I argue, in distinguishing what she calls the will to be from the will to disclose being and to distinguish immanence from transcendence. In this way, for Beauvoir the will to disclose being and transcendence suggest an ethics that presupposes and affirms rather than aims to reconcile difference.

As I have explained, my confusion over how Beauvoir reads Nietzsche

arises from her sympathetic mention of him on the one hand (*Pour une morale* 60; *Ethics* 46) and her denunciation of many of his illustrations of the will to power on the other. She seems to take Nietzsche's will to power to be most often a "bare will to power" (*Pour une morale* 91; *Ethics* 71–72), even if Nietzsche himself did not ethically equate all expressions of the will to power. Beauvoir distinguishes between the will to disclose being, which I want to suggest is so close to Nietzsche's own will to power as to be indistinguishable, and the will to be, which I will suggest Nietzsche himself deplores. My point is that Beauvoir distinguishes between two different modes of desire, and in doing so denounces the "bare will to power" as both naive and unethical and forwards the relationality of the will to disclose being.

Beauvoir distinguishes between the will to be and the will to disclose being in order to articulate how "*contenu singulier*" (*Ethics* 29; *Pour une morale* 38) of a life can be lived well. The will to be seeks to control while the will to disclose being seeks to affirm the bodily alterity of the other as well as the agency of the other. The necessary ethical distance between myself and the other and between these two modes of willing is presented syntactically in the French. The existential affirmation of being for Beauvoir is the *vouloir dévoiler l'être* the want or will to disclose being, not the *vouloir être*, the will to be (*Pour une morale* 17; *Ethics* 12). In this way, the necessary disclosure of being occupies the syntactical distance between desire and being. The will to disclose being might then be thought of as the affirmation of the necessity for creativity with the other, an affirmation that fundamentally creative orientation to the world is an inextinguishable moment of all material life.

The will to disclose being and transcendence are used interchangeably in the *Ethics*. Both are ways of speaking about the valuation that is necessary to life. The will to be and immanence are ironic evidence of these movements of "positive and concrete" freedom (*Pour une morale* 42; *Ethics* 32). Beauvoir's "will to disclose being" is a "having-to-be," which is not determined by supposed species characteristics, which Beauvoir most often expresses as the fallacy of attributing existence to an automatic or fixed "nature." In *The Second Sex* with one line she makes clear that she doesn't mean to deny nature so much as the cultural determination of that nature. She sums up her previous chapter on biological data: "Nature does not define woman: it is she who defines herself by reclaiming nature for herself in her affectivity" (*Le deuxième sexe I* 78; *The Second Sex* 49). This is not an equation of the self with consciousness; it is an insistence that the body becomes in being lived while at the same time being

an object in the world among and for others. And this assessment of nature is what leads her to deny that speciation can serve as a normative guide. Beauvoir puts it this way:

> In his surpassing toward others, each one exists absolutely as for himself; each is interested in the liberation of all, but as a separate existence engaged in singular projects. So much so that the terms "useful to Man," "useful to this man" do not overlap. Universal, absolute man exists nowhere. (*Pour une morale* 112; *Ethics* 139)

This transcendence is not something unique to human life. As she writes in *The Second Sex*, "without coming to any conclusion about life and consciousness, we can affirm that any living fact indicates transcendence, and that a project is in the making in every function" (*Le deuxième sexe I* 43; *The Second Sex* 26; Mussett 131). Not only does this line recall the one I quoted above from *Beyond Good and Evil* that "life itself is will to power" (15), but also the "separate existence engaged in singular projects" is of broad significance for Beauvoir. It is especially this notion that is the unground of *The Second Sex*, an essay which advocates sexual diversity and the folly of trying to dualistically or otherwise confine or define it. Instead, as she puts it in the *Ethics of Ambiguity*, "it is only as something strange, forbidden [*étranger, interdit*], as something free that the other is revealed as other" (*Pour une morale* 85; *The Second Sex* 67). The normative figure of life of the ethics of ambiguity affirms this claim: that the will to disclose being is of the other as an other. On the other hand the "will to be" or immanence is the desire for an existence which is determined either by one's species life or by the unilateral claims of the legal and/or conceptual colonizer. Often these "wills to be" operate together, the one appealing to the other. But the syntactical and ethical distance must also be affirmed between myself and "the snow field where I slide" which is *étranger, interdit*, incapable of being fully and directly possessed by me (*Pour une morale* 18; *Ethics* 12).

To will this disclosure that being entails is to will the ethical distance within myself and between my own and the singular freedoms of others. This can be seen by putting the very idea of ambiguity together with a passage in which Beauvoir explains what "freedom" is: it is the capacity to surpass the given toward a future which is underdetermined. There are determining factors. For example, the freedom of the other "defines my situation and is even the condition of my own freedom" (*Pour une morale* 113; *Ethics* 91). It

is because of this notion of freedom that she is able to criticize the will to be of the capitalist (though elsewhere the obligatory "we" of socialism is of equal concern):

> When a party promises the directing classes that it will defend their freedom, it means quite plainly that it demands that they have the freedom of exploiting the working class. A claim of this kind does not outrage us in the name of abstract justice; but a contradiction is concealed there in bad faith. For a freedom wills itself authentically only by willing itself as an indefinite movement through the freedoms of others; as soon as it withdraws into itself, it denies itself on behalf of some object which it prefers to itself: we know well enough what sort of freedom the P.R.L. (Parti républicain de la liberté) demands: it is property, *la jouissance*, capital, comfort and moral security. We have to respect freedom only when it is intended for freedom, not when it strays, flees itself, and resigns itself. (*Pour une morale* 113; *Ethics* 90)

This passage suggests that "existence" and "existential" for Beauvoir mean temporally, materially becoming across irreducible difference. It is a notion of existence that presupposes irreducible others and alteration. But as is clear from this passage, becoming cannot be enacted for Beauvoir in isolation. Positive freedoms might conflict, but also she argues that this conflict or disharmonious-ness must be expressed and affirmed. It is not desirable that you and I should agree on our multiple ends. Irreducible difference among wills is a value, something to be cherished and "saved." This will mean that the violent conflict of wills is possible (*Pour une morale* 147, 169, 195; *Ethics* 118–19, 136, 157). To fight is never ethically justifiable insofar as justification is always to come [*toujours à venir*] (*Pour une morale* 143; *Ethics* 115). But to withdraw from such non-dialectical struggle would be to deny the desire that is necessary to disclosure and transcendence and thus joy.

Beauvoir insists that, "For a freedom wills itself authentically only by willing itself as an indefinite movement through the freedoms of others; as soon as it withdraws into itself, it denies itself on behalf of some object which it prefers to itself" (*Pour une morale* 113; *Ethics* 90). And, differently: "Only the freedom of others keeps each one of us from hardening into the absurdity of facticity" (*Pour une morale* 91; *Ethics* 71). This requires that to will freedom or disclosure of being is to will the freedom or disclosure of being of the singular

other, and to will the freedom of the singular other is to will my own peculiar freedom. This notion of freedom is thus not materially possible in solitude; it depends for its very possibility on the character of my relationships with others. What is more, ethics is only possible given such a constitutively incomplete notion of the social relation. It is in this sense that there is nothing decided in advance with regard to disparate ends. Life is a disharmony of desires which are nevertheless constitutively oriented by each other. That is precisely what Beauvoir means by ambiguity. Though this tension requires thinking in concrete detail about what will allow for the freedom of each singularity in a social context ever changing by means of singularities, I would argue that for Beauvoir this is a way of insisting on singularity as opposed to life as shared. Freedom is not something I give to you. It is you. And you are a condition of my own freedom. So it is also the case that I am not able to determine my life absolutely, as Beauvoir explains in this passage:

> For, in a metaphysics of transcendence, in the classical sense of the term, evil is reduced to error; and in humanistic philosophies it is impossible to account for it, man being defined as complete in a complete world. Existentialism alone gives … a real role to evil … Yet it is because there are real dangers, real failures and real earthly damnation that words like victory, wisdom or joy have meaning. Nothing is decided in advance, … (*Pour une morale* 44–45; *Ethics* 34)

So the affirmation of the complex disclosure of singularities which are unfinished in a perpetually unfinished world is also crucial: the will to disclose being is the affirmation of this quality of the world as unfinishable. Humanistic philosophies, as she names them here, are ones which define humanity as a part of a correlatively defined and finished cosmos. But humanistic philosophies in her view are bound to deny that ethics is precisely the practice of living with the other whom I can neither control nor predict.

Thus Beauvoir responds to the bare will to power as the futile attempt to exercise power over the other. This is neither ethical desire, nor is it truly powerful insofar as my own life as well as the other resist my naive will to be, to remain unchanged and fixed. The vulnerability of my desire to the desires of others is nevertheless for her desirable insofar as it is only in relationships that disclosure and transcendence engage in existential becoming. According to Beauvoir's theory of desire, even if one does affirm competition among

individuals, this is only to emphasize the degree to which they are not reducible to each other. There is no shared lived experience. "We" are irreducible to each other. And so we are not really a "we" at all. The center is everywhere.

Beauvoir argues that what differentiates a desire for disclosure from the desire for complete control over the other is the affirmation of a responsibility to allow for the agency of the other. To see freedom as if it were an individualistic phenomenon conclusively denies the disclosure of being as a mutual process only achievable by means of others. This is because our separate, dissimilar freedoms are not only singular but also inextricable in their becoming. In this way Beauvoir responds to Fyodor Dostoevsky's famous suggestion in the character of Ivan Karamazov in *The Brothers Karamozov* that "everything is permitted" (*Pour une morale* 21; *Ethics* 15–16). Beauvoir writes that her contemporaries invoke this claim as a way of avoiding the difficulties of local, concrete responsibility. She suggests that they conflate the becoming of each one with the absolute absence of ethical direction. But it is not according to an abstract justice that colonizing or gender-dualizing or other modes of oppression can be denounced or even articulated. The ethical direction of becoming emerges in the instant, between singularities and reconstitutes their becoming. The "will to be," this fantasy of ambiguity's lack is evident in the flatly self-confounding will of the Partie Republicain de la Liberte; it is self-confounding in that the will to be appears only because of the inherent disclosure that it itself is. Beauvoir's concern is that the P.R.L. advantageously mistakes singular wills, singular projects for exploitable labor. It desires them as a certain type of static resource for its own command; this is an exertion of the will to be, the will to control or to dominate, expressed by the members of the P.R.L.

The Second Sex must be read through this concern for the providing for and enabling of relational singularity. It is not an argument for a transcendence that should be allowed. Lives are necessarily disclosed in situation. *The Second Sex* is instead an argument for enabling culturally the "free movement of a transcendence" (*Le deuxième sexe II* 238; *The Second Sex* 748). This would allow for the saving of the unfamiliar freedom that those named women also are, the bodily existence irreducible to those recognized as men that each one already is in itself in an again irreducible mode. When Beauvoir addresses the concern that "woman" might become obsolete if the free movement of transcendence is allowed for, she writes that this is a thin veil for the widespread reluctance to relinquish political and economic power over others:

> I do not see an absence of boredom in this world of ours nor that freedom has ever created uniformity. First of all, certain differences between the man and the woman will always exist; her eroticism, and thus her sexual world, possessing a singular form, cannot fail to engender in her a sensuality, a singular sensitivity: her relation to her body, to the male body, and to the child will never be the same as those man has with his body, with the female body, and with the child; those who talk so much about "equality in difference" would be hard put not to grant me that there are differences in equality. Besides, it is institutions that create monotony.… (*Le deuxième sexe II* 661; *The Second Sex* 765)

This is a passage that might lend credence to readings of Beauvoir in which sex is essential however unpredictable gendered practices are. But here is where the chapter on "The Lesbian" must not be erased. In it I would argue that she aims to demonstrate non-normative sexuate and sexual variance and the inability of these to translate into some gendered fate. However, if, as Beauvoir writes, "there is no rigorous biological distinction between the two sexes" (*Le deuxième sexe I* 192; *The Second Sex* 417), the text itself undermines the terms male/female and men/women which structure a great deal of it. Whatever formations of gender dualism are enabled, these are active responses to "cultural compulsion" (to use a phrase of Judith Butler, even if I depart from her reading of Beauvoir in other ways) which are never ultimately successful in the effort (12). So I read these closing lines of the work through the critique offered in this earlier chapter which insists that singularity is not only inextinguishable in life, but it must be valued and enabled to proliferate. Anything else, Beauvoir suggests, would be injustice. And the question of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex* is how this can be enabled. But there is only the anxiety of utter non-inevitability which asks whether this will does or does not allow for the singularity of the other as other. If this will to disclose being, if this transcendence, is enabled for each singular freedom, Beauvoir wagers, "while she posits herself for herself, she will nonetheless continue to exist for him *as well*: recognizing each other as subject, each will remain an *other* for the other [original emphasis]" (*Le deuxième sexe II* 662; *The Second Sex* 766). The recognition that Beauvoir advocates here is of dissimilar bodies, of the subject as a lived as well as material body. Pace Luce Irigaray, the notion of reciprocity that Beauvoir invokes clearly does not mean mutual recognition as sameness (Irigaray 9–14). Each will remain for the other an other insofar as their singular freedoms are reciprocally appreciated.

What must be reciprocal is the disclosure of relational singularity.

Ⅳ. Beauvoir's Will to Power

Thus whether or not Beauvoir understood herself to be responding to Nietzsche, she does denounce the "bare will to power." And so while Beauvoir's relationship to Nietzsche is explicitly unclear, another way to approach the question of their relationship is to compare the works themselves with this rejection of the "bare will to power" in the background. And here I find that there is more than a striking affinity between Beauvoir's ambiguous ethics of relational singularity and the "will to disclose being" and what Vanessa Lemm calls Nietzsche's affirmative biopolitics which cultivates collaboratively "inherently singular, nontotalizable forms of animal life" (*Nietzsche's Animal* 152). Both articulate a normative figure of life for which a concept of humanity is unnecessary.

Nietzsche laments that the history of philosophy in the Greek tradition has tended to be defined homogeneously and arrogantly by one who "paints a picture of himself on the wall and says '*ecce homo*!'" (175). In fact "reality shows us an enchanting abundance of types, a lavish profusion of forms in change and at play" (175). For Nietzsche, this applied to all forms of life, without regard for any sort of human exceptionality. Thus a life well-lived consists first of all in affirming oneself as a bodily singularity. To imagine a different figure of oneself and develop new habits can be productive, but this begins in the appreciation of the self as a singularity, not as a potential to be molded according to a preconceived actuality. This is precisely the meaning of becoming who you are (as in the subtitle of *Ecce Homo* cited here in the volume *The Anti-Christ*): affirming one's singular materiality, arrived at through historical and material processes. Affirmation is only possible as a gesture which values what one is as the locus in which one imagines what one hopes to become.

This is exactly the area of questioning that Beauvoir articulates in insisting on freedom not as freedom from the interference of the other, but freedom as a relational singularity which changes by means of its relationships with the other as other. *Singulier* suggests odd, strange, unique. It demands a specific sort of relationship: one which renounces power over the other as other. There is no power over the other as other; there is likewise no giving of freedom to the other. There is only one's own power with the other. Relation is assumed by

Beauvoir, but the desire for possession, the desire to "trap being" in principles, categories or divisions, is futile (*Pour une morale* 39; *Ethics* 30). Singularity will always exceed attempts to control it. As I have already pointed out, in *The Second Sex* she refers to this as a nature (*la nature*) that does not determine, that one must reclaim for oneself in one's affectivity (*affectivité*) (*Le deuxième sexe I* 78; *The Second Sex* 49). While Beauvoir's existentialism would seem to be in question here, what she is referring to as natural is the impossibility of controlling the unpredictable, bodily other in his or her singularity. She argues that freedom has never given rise to homogeneity or uniformity. In this way, Beauvoir distinguishes strongly between the mistaken notion of "being a woman," conforming to or confronting a supposed biological dichotomy, and *becoming* one might say a race-, gender-, gender/sex-, class-, ability-, religious-, sexuality-specific singularity through mutually relational disclosure. Beauvoir's interest here is most often to articulate a human singularity, though she would not put it this way because there is no descriptive content that could define the "human" (*Ethics* 112; *Pour une morale* 139; *Pyrrhus and Cyneas* 106–07; *Pyrrhus et Cinéas* 238). Still, I find her work as committed as Nietzsche was to his own project of renaturalizing himself, of reading himself "back into nature." This would be to refigure oneself as a nature that is constantly changing and active. Beauvoir's explicit comments on nature, discussed above, suggest that she shares this rejection of stasis in any mode and of reading herself back into that flux.

With this understanding of their projects in mind, I now want to explain that the distinction between the will to disclose being and the will to be is similar, both in structure and in import, to Nietzsche's distinction between the will to power on the one hand and taming and breeding as examples of the potential cruelty of the will to power on the other (Lemm, *Nietzsche's Animal* 12–13). Beauvoir's will to power however forwards the relationality of all desire. She insists that the wills of others are prior to my will to disclose being. It is in this respect that we should read Beauvoir's treatment of the oppression of Algerians as an expression of the French colonists' will to be, as well as her treatment of the oppression of "the Jew, the negro or the native whom [the tyrant] encloses in his immanence" (*Pour une morale* 126–29; *Ethics* 101–03). Nancy Bauer has rightly observed that how the other sees me conditions my choices:

> … what Beauvoir pays attention to is not just the question of what my

> phenomenological status is at any given moment but also how the Other's response to me, as a being whose very Otherness consists in his having revealed his capacity for subjectivity by Looking at me, influences my choice of what to do. What is of interest to Beauvoir, in other words, is that what I decide to do, how I find and cultivate my garden is necessarily conditioned by how the Other responds to me (147)

However there is also something utterly non-volitional in Beauvoirean freedom. Butler comes close to suggesting this when she writes:

> One acts, one produces, and there in the result-the deed, the workis the trace of a freedom that was-must have been-operative all along. One does not know one's freedom until after the fact, and this is why we are at once responsible and unknowing about ourselves. ("Beauvoir on Sade" 178)

Though Butler has been widely criticized for neglecting the agency of bodies, it would seem to be the active freedom of the body that she almost suggests here. Perhaps this is why the freedom that is the body of the other is equally unclear to me as I am her other. The will to be presumes that the other is someone I can either control or direct. It is thus a fundamental misunderstanding of the inextinguishable strangeness of the other. Singularity can never be extinguished by my will to control her, but the gaze of the other plays a crucial role in my lived experience (of myself as body).

Beauvoir writes, "man does not create the world. He succeeds in disclosing it only through the resistance which the world opposes to him" (*Pour une morale* 37; *Ethics* 28). This ineliminable give and take recalls the reverberating power of desire in a specific passage of Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols* on the wills to power he calls taming and breeding (184; *Werke* 426–27). In a section of this difficult passage in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche claims famously that there are no moral facts. Morality is the imposition of meanings that are not inherent in social realities. And so Nietzsche is undertaking a social critique. Instead of extending the will to power as the will to morality he says we have to try to understand the way in which moralities have determined social and material phenomena. One mode of the will to morality in this passage is taming or domestication, of which Nietzsche takes the Christian notion of "sin" to be a prime example. While Nietzsche claims elsewhere that "whatever is done out of love takes place beyond good and evil" (*Beyond* 70), he claims

here that insisting on the sins inherent in the embodied casing of the pure soul is cruel. Taming is perhaps what one might call shaming, a will to power which aims to control the other by inspiring in her an inescapable self-hatred. But the other mode of the will to power in this passage and the one in which I am interested is his concern with the very idea of breeding "a particular race or type" (*Beyond* 70). Though he criticizes in this section Plato, Confucius, and "the teachers of Judaism and Christianity" he disturbingly begins to make his point with the laws of caste as he reads them. As David Smith has argued, Hinduism and Buddhism appear to be of interest to Nietzsche "not in themselves but as alternative positions from which to continue his attack on Christianity" (38). For Nietzsche the point is that the Laws of Manu as moral standards have in their effort to distinguish classes of people created the bodies of some as deviant and irredeemable (Brobjer 300–18). Among the list of social realities that Nietzsche traces to the will to morality in the Laws of Manu, "Sudra women are forbidden to come to the aid of Chandala women in childbirth, who are, furthermore, not even allowed *to help each other* … Sanitary policing like this is bound to succeed … " (*The Anti-Christ* 184–85; *Werke* 427). Such classification, such breeding, for Nietzsche is a terrifying sign of the power of creativity, an indication of the fragility of life in its openness to the power of the other. But such fragility, such vulnerability is also itself power. It is a passage like this in which Vanessa Lemm will be interested (though she does not discuss it specifically) because it indicates that for Nietzsche biopower is evidence of the "missing link between animality and creativity" (*Nietzsche's Animal* 154). Instead of a gesture of intimate administrative overreach biopower is a term for the profuse creative power through which bodies become for better and for worse. In Beauvoir's language we can say that biopower is a term for the profuse creative power through which bodies as lived and as bodies in the world and thus for others are disclosed in their being.

Taming and especially breeding make clear that the will to power is just as relational for Nietzsche as the will to disclose being is for Beauvoir. Just as the will to be on Beauvoir's account mistakes itself for a being without desire or a being whose desire plays no role in the life of the other, taming and breeding are wills to power that forget of their oppressive creativity, suggesting the freedom of bodies to become either in suffering or in bodily difference that is held to no standard. Taming and breeding thus share with the will to be in being both gestures of control and futile attempts to destroy the other as other.

Given David Smith's analysis of Nietzsche's orientalist engagement with

Hinduism, we can say that Nietzsche's concerns must be applied to his own reading. Nietzsche's critique of the Laws of Manu demonstrate an ineliminable will to the Laws of Manu as an alternative position from which to continue his attack on Plato, Judaism, and Christianity. This layering upon layering of social criticism allows for an example of Nietzsche's claim that "to *make* morality you must have the unconditional will to its opposite. This is the great, *uncanny* problem … [original emphasis]" (*The Anti-Christ* 185; *Werke* 428). In other words when making normative claims, one risks vilifying *someone*. But it was Nietzsche's own perhaps impossible aim to move from vilifying individuals to critiquing social norms of morality as respectability. Culture is the culturing of bodies and natures in Nietzsche, but there is nevertheless no truth of the matter, no fixedness to what Donna Haraway has called, in an effort I think to make this very point, naturecultures. To move oneself from the desire to tell the fixed truth of a social reality, instead to examining its dynamics for the traces of an uncanny "freedom that was," is as crucial to Nietzsche's interest in the multifarious affectivity of will to power as it is to Beauvoir's interest in the will to disclose being.

It is in this spirit that *The Second Sex* insists upon the ethical desire necessary to the disclosure of particularly gendered identity and expression-specific and gender/sex-specific singularity. No singularity can embody a fixed concept of "woman," let alone a concept of humanity. Insisting on equality is not enough for this reason. It is precisely because those prefigured as women have only ever dreamed for themselves a complementarity to a supposed androgyny, their "être-pour-les-hommes" that equality is insufficient (*Le deuxième sexe I* 234; *The Second Sex* 156). What does need to be reciprocal is the appreciation of the role of desire in the becoming of lived and material bodily singularity. It is in this context that the chapter in *The Second Sex* on maternity, which begins with an argument for legalizing access to birth control and abortion, should be read. Contra Julia Kristeva who argues that Beauvoir "devalues" maternity in the name of a masculine universal (229), this is not an argument for a libertarian attitude towards these reproductive technologies, for legalizing the conscious choice of contraception and abortion, but rather a demand that sexed singularity be affirmed, so that maternity itself can become a matter of affirmation (in response to forced sterilization) or not. As Beauvoir describes it, pregnancy is never a volitional choice; it is a pleasant surprise or a fear that cannot be endured. In this way it is one moment of simultaneously being a body in a world of mutually strange others and living as body. Pregnancy can

take the form of the will to disclose being if extended the necessary social gaze, in the form of affirmation of the ethical termination of pregnancy as well as the possibility of ethical pregnancy itself, both of which require an active, affirming gaze of the other as other. Neither of these according to Beauvoir would be rationalistic endeavors; they would be matters of desire.

Beauvoir rejects the supposed complementarity that gives "women" any meaning that it currently has. On similar grounds, she rejects any concept of humanity. Law for Beauvoir would be better to safeguard for "separate existents … their *singular freedoms*" (*Pour une morale* 24–25; *Ethics* 18), not a generically human freedom which either currently exists or might become possible. This aspect of Beauvoir's writing together with the will to disclose being suggests that her work resists any concept of the human. Let me return to a passage I have cited above. There Beauvoir writes that "it is only something strange, forbidden, as something free, that the other is disclosed as other" (*Ethics* 67; *Pour une morale* 85). She goes on to write on the same page, "passion is converted to authentic freedom only if one destines his existence to other existences through the being – whether thing or man-at which he aims, without hoping to entrap it in the density of the in-itself" (translation altered). Thus the desire necessary to the disclosure of life is an orientation with respect to life beyond the human: land, painting and statue. No thing has positive independence or separation (*Ethics* 67; *Pour une morale* 85); it is only possible to affirm, to love in disclosure of the other as other, whether "thing or man." It is in these terms that Beauvoir's will to power is expressed – positively and as a figure of the will to disclose being as it differs from the will to be. For Beauvoir ambiguity must be affirmed precisely because in concrete political life these two are extremely difficult to distinguish. However, I would suggest that Nietzsche's frequent conflation of the desire to control and the desire to create under one term – the will to power – is part of what leads to Beauvoir's insistence on the affirmed relationality of the will to disclose being as distinct from the will to be.

V. Conclusion

While Vanessa Lemm has shown that in Nietzsche the possibility of the transhuman requires affirming a biopolitical account of material freedom as social responsibility for bodily, animal lives, this would not of course mean

assuming discrete responsibility. This is because Nietzsche, like Beauvoir, is careful to articulate wills to power as collaboratively involved in the elaboration of bodily differences, neither their creation nor control. Much is and should be beyond my control. I am not the center; the center is everywhere. However, such humility appreciates *its own role* in what Beauvoir names the desire for disclosure and Nietzsche names the will to power. For Nietzsche the will to power is an image or figure of life that has no need for the human as exceptional or unique among other animals. As I have discussed, in Beauvoir likewise all life strives for transcendence. But Beauvoir forwards the inherent relationality of this image, and she fears that Nietzsche does not say enough to distinguish between tyrannical and ethical modes of the will to power. This I argue is a way of understanding Beauvoir's own distinction between the will or want to disclose being on one hand and the will or want to be on the other. Though she does not explicitly affirm animality, the will to disclose the being of the other as other in Beauvoir nevertheless has a Nietzschean, transhuman import: ethics in Beauvoir must be elaborated from within one's perspective as a lived and material body among others in whose life and lived experience I play an irreducible role and yet whose lived experience I do not share.

Works Cited

Ames, Roger T. "Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' and Chinese 'Virtuality' (*De*): A Comparative Study." *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*. Ed. Graham Parkes. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991. 130–50. Print.

Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007. Print.

Bataille, Georges. *On Nietzsche*. Trans. Bruce Boone. New York: Paragon House, 1992. Print.

Bauer, Nancy. *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy and Feminism*. New York: Columbia Press, 2001. Print.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *Ethics of Ambiguity*. Trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: Citadel Press, 1948. Print.

____. *Le deuxième sexe.* 2 vols. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949. Print.

____. *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté suive de Pyrrhus et Cinéas*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1944. Print.

____. "Pyrrhus and Cineas." *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Marybeth Timmermann. Eds. Margaret A. Simons, Marybeth Timmerman and Mary Beth Mader. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004. 89–149. Print.

____. *The Second Sex*. Trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. Print.

Bergoffen, Debra. "Nietzsche's Existential Signatures." *International Studies in Philosophy* 34:3 (2002): 83–93. Print.

Brobjer, Thomas. "The Absence of Political Ideals in Nietzsche's Writings: The Case of the Laws of Manu and the Associated Caste-Society." *Nietzsche-Studien: Internationales Jahrbuch fuer die Nietzsche-Forschung.* (2009): 300–18. Print.

Butler, Judith. "Beauvoir on Sade: Making Sexuality Into an Ethic." *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*. Ed. Claudia Card. New York: Cambridge UP, 2003. 168–88. Print.

____. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia UP, 2006. Print.

Deutscher, Penelope. "Dead Camp: Beauvoir on the Life and Death of Femininity." *Jan Van Eyck Academie*. Maastricht, Netherlands: Invited Presentation, 2011. Print.

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*. Durham: Duke UP, 2005. Print.

Haraway, Donna. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." *The Haraway Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 7–45. Print.

____. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. Print.

Hird, Myra J. *The Origins of Sociable Life: Evolution After Science Studies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

Irigaray, Luce. *je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*. Trans. Alison Martin. New York: Routledge, 1990. Print.

Kangas, David. *Kierkegaard's Instant: On Beginnings*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2007. Print.

_____. "Reading *The Second Sex* Sixty Years Later." *philoSOPHIA*: *A Journal of Continental Feminism* 1.2 (2010): 137–49. Print.

Kristeva, Julia. "Beauvoir and the Risks of Freedom." *PMLA* 124:1 (2009): 226–30. Print.

Lemm, Vanessa. "Critical Theory and Affirmative Biopolitics: Nietzsche and the Domination of Nature in Adorno/Horkheimer." *Journal of Power* 3.1 (2010): 75–95. Print.

_____. *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*. New York: Fordham UP, 2009. Print.

Miller, Elaine. "Saving Time: Temporality, Recurrence, and Transcendence in Beauvoir's Nietzschean Cycles." *Beauvoir and Western Thought from Plato to Butler*. Eds. Shannon Mussett and William Wilkerson. New York: SUNY Press, 2012. Print.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Trans. Judith Norman. Eds. Rolf-Peter Horstman and Judith Norman. New York: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.

____. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and other writings*. Trans. Judith Norman. Eds. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman. New York: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print.

____. *Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Modern Library, 1995. Print.

____. *Werke III*. Frankfurt: Ullstein Buch, 1976. Print.

Smith, David. "Nietzsche's Hinduism, Nietzsche's India: Another Look," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 28.4 (2004): 37–56. Print.

Abstract

This essay explores the surprising relationship between what Simone de Beauvoir calls the will to disclose being and what Friedrich Nietzsche calls the will to power. I argue that the will to disclose being is an appropriation of the will to power in Nietzsche. Both terms suggest an image of the ethical, the irreducible and unpredictable element of valuation necessary to all life, which does not require a concept of the human. Both the will to disclose being and the will to power affirm that bodies are subject to the power of non-volitional valuation, and this is what motivates the critique in both Beauvoir and Nietzsche of the will to morality as social critique. The essay proceeds in three parts. In the first part I demonstrate that it is unclear whether Beauvoir intended the will to disclose being as an appropriation of the will to power. The second part articulates the will to disclose being as the mutual disclosure of inherently relational singularities. The relational nature of the will to disclose being is a response to what Beauvoir calls the "bare will to power." However, as I discuss in part three, this bare will to power in fact resembles what Nietzsche himself deplores. My conclusion is thus that Beauvoir's will to disclose being forwards the relational nature of the will to disclose being/will to power but is too strongly an implicit appropriation of the will to power to be considered a rejection of the will to power itself.

Keywords: Beauvoir, Nietzsche, freedom, singularity, difference, power

Emily Anne PARKER is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Towson University. Her area of specialization resides at the intersection of feminist, dis/ability, critical race, and queer theories of political identity and bodily or material variance, 20th century French philosophy, postcolonial ecological ethics, and social philosophy. She is the author of essays on the work of Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir appearing in *Philosophy Today, Southern Journal of Philosophy, and Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*.
eparker@towson.edu

Received: 27 September 2013
Reviewed: 13 November 2013
Accepted: 15 January 2014