

Thus Spoke New Philosophers: Interpreting Nietzsche and His Dangerous *Maybes*¹

But who has to concern himself with such dangerous maybes? For that one has to wait for the advent of a new species of philosophers, such as have somehow another and converse taste and propriety from those we have known so far—philosophers of the dangerous ‘maybe’ in every sense.²

These new philosophers are the representatives of Dionysian power that challenges the well-established stability of knowing by positing *maybes* to the origin and process of “will to truth.” What differentiates the old and new philosophers, in this sense, is their purpose of pursuing knowledge—learning about the world. Such *maybes* signify the affirmation of life force embedded in “*will to power*.” Old philosophers build on an historically constructed system of knowing and imprison themselves by taking an oath to “thing-in-itself,” marching to a unified destination where they would proudly declare “truth.” Therefore, the road on which old philosophers reside becomes wider and more crowded because *will* itself is an attractive power. In this collective fashion, explore this truth-oriented journey is so convincing that old philosophers become too fearful to ask What is truth? and “*What* in us really wants ‘truth’?”³

Undoubtedly, both old and new philosophers affirm the power of *will*. However, old philosophers use this power to become; whereas, new philosophers to overcome. But why are such *maybes* dangerous in Nietzsche’s statement?

¹ Interpreting Nietzsche’s ideas in this paper is deeply indebted to my class discussions, but the writing of this paper remains the work of my thinking, offering some solitude for my reflection. Thus, if anything that makes sense derives from the wisdom of my class; otherwise, accounts for my ignorance.

² Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche and Walter Arnold Kaufmann, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010). Part One, subsection 2.

³ Part One, subsection 1.

From the outset, *maybes* comprise the threat to the prominence of historically significant worship of seeking the truth, which, according to old philosophers, has been unquestionably ascribed to human beings without exception. Isn't it dangerous for new philosophers to challenge this solid tradition by suggesting a new possibility that changes the whole cosmos that has been well-tended by old philosophers? To ask is to challenge and such a gesture necessitates courage and a strong will.

As the danger is foreseen, something more dangerous for new philosophers situates upon their journey of learning. Different from old philosophers, the direction for new philosophers is unclear. Sadly, the operation of *will to power* is one-way traffic for each new philosopher. In other words, no one can tell where they should start and how they will proceed. Isn't it more dangerous when walking all by yourself on this journey and could have no idea even when you are lost? Luckily, there is no such thing as being lost for new philosophers. The biggest danger lurks when they doubt about their will and end up in a comfort zone of old philosophers' prison. Thus, "dangerous maybes" is a warning labeled by Nietzsche out of courtesy, forecasting the abyssal uncertainty that induces destruction and promises creation.

Such a "dangerous 'maybe' in every sense" continues and co-exists with each new philosopher as he/she/they takes off. Isn't it much more dangerous for new philosophers who indulge themselves in the abundance of *will to power*? Willing that infuses power is a fountain of youth as it generates an everlasting energy of living. While old philosophers celebrate their full-stop marathon by revealing the monumental truth, new philosophers observe their open-ended journey by transforming the status quo.

To be a new philosopher is to be a free spirit. It is “the will to ignorance, to the uncertain, to the untrue!”⁴ A free spirit speaks to what it is rather than what it will be; it engenders certain attitudes and feelings. “Even if *languages*, here as elsewhere, will not get over its awkwardness, and will continue to talk of opposite where there are only degrees and many subtleties of gradation.”⁵ Language unfolds itself in a particular manner that causes ambiguity of understating the quality of the main subject. Being a free spirit is not so much free from some outside pressures as returning to a recognition of being ignorant. This laid the foundation for its happiness of being a free spirit by giving a birth from an old philosopher’s prison.

A free spirit seeks the depth of living experience as it is, without either presumption or prejudice. Every discovery is a result of learning, and learning is through meditation and reflection. In other words, approaching a free spirit is “not as its opposite, but—as its refinement!”⁶ Free spirit helps new philosophers to learn about the world instead of understanding it. If the purpose of being a free spirit is to understand, it easily turns out to be a means to master, to dominate, and to become occupied. Ultimately, a dogmatic understanding disconnects from and alienates the possibility of becoming a free spirit and ends up being a cocoon. This is worse than suicide because the ambitious complication and suffocation blind the light of any hope of life joy, causing a miscarriage of free spirit.

Being a free spirit is not a solution but a choice. This means you cannot have it but only live it. Questions, like the Sphinx, present themselves in a way that offers the clue to seek answers. Being a free spirit reclaims the autonomy of questioning. However, it is different from fitting yourself under the mask of Sphinx. Instead, such questioning symbolizes your attitude of

⁴ Part Two, subsection 24.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

ignorance that is open to new possibilities. Old philosophers blind themselves to witness these landscapes because they vote for certainty, and they only care about truth. Uncertainty, on the other hand, inhabits the creativity of seeing and feeling the world by breathing in and out rather than through transcending. The acceptance of uncertainty also affirms the infinite energy of life force as it positions a free spirit in an on-going threshold of overcoming.

The goal of overcoming directly announces the agenda of a free spirit—to seek *untruth*. If the concept of “truth” is historically constructed and eventually becomes a mirage, how do we perceive *untruth*? Certainly, a philosopher who denies everything said about the “truth” is not a free spirit. New philosophers explore *untruth* by embracing their ignorance and uncertainty. Therefore, *untruth* is not partial but the whole. In the eyes of a free spirit, *untruth* describes a way of engaging with living life that synthesizes the style of being a free spirit. Without the long-term tradition of cultivated dogmatism, such a “refinement” as a form of simplification brings the joy of creation.

At a certain point, some questionable voices may emerge: what is a dead “free spirit” or can you unfree a “free spirit?” Clearly, those inquiries are not from new philosophers. Only old philosophers are still obsessed with truth vs. untruth, dead vs. alive, and free vs. unfree. In order to enjoy life, a free spirit recalls a strong will to ignorance, to the uncertain, to the untrue—to afford a creation of world inspired “dangerous maybes.” A free spirit reflects the power of life force. Every spark of this life force creates a venue in the name of *maybes* for the birth of new philosophers. Although being a free spirit envisions solitude, new philosophers gain momentum by advocating the acceptance of diversity comparable to the generosity of a forest or an ocean.

It is notable that self-overcoming is not an automatically operated process, though life force does promise the inclination of self-overcoming. As a self-centered intimate reflection,

self-overcoming requires carefully listening to one's heart. "Not the river is your danger and the end of your good and evil, you who are wisest, but that will itself, the *will to power*—the unexhausted procreative will of life."⁷ Will, as a manifestation of life force, is powerful and it determines the trajectory of self-overcoming. However, without recognizing the sovereignty of will and acknowledging the power of will, such a will remains homeless as it merely flows with the river, wasting all the energy you potentially grant it. Thus, utilizing your will to achieve self-overcoming requires an active affirmation. Regardless of good and evil, self-overcoming is a way of being at the nexus of the past and future and beyond evaluation. Because self-overcoming lives as time goes and shares qualities from both the past and the future, it is free from judgement. On the other hand, self-overcoming originates from the *will to power*— "the unexhausted procreative will of life" rather than the will to truth—a once-and-for-all mission.

Self-overcoming is essential to the nature of the living. "He who cannot obey himself is commanded."⁸ The attunement to *will to power* introduces the sense of responsibility. All the new philosophers share this responsibility as they refuse to obey and pose *maybes*. If living includes the struggling of obeying and commanding, it indicates that self-overcoming engenders a structure to happen. Such a structure underlies a dynamic mechanism between stabilizing and destabilizing. However, keeping in mind that *maybes* are "dangerous," living merely resides at the crossroad of obeying and commanding. It is the old philosophers' thought that pushes you to fall into this either/or trap. New philosophers will tell you to be is to overcome, not to settle down. Therefore, self-overcoming engages with revolutionary transformation in which a free spirit helps you navigate through "dangerous maybes."

⁷ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978). Part Two, subsection 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*

With responsibility comes pressure. For new philosophers, this pressure comes from life force and drives them to creations, while old philosophers treat this pressure as poison to lure you to give up your free spirit. Thus spoke old philosophers, “Commanding is harder than obeying; and not only because he who commands must carry the burden of all who obey, and because this burden may easily crush him.”⁹ To affirm the life force is to posture yourself as a free spirit and to enjoy the “the unexhausted procreative will of life” by respecting the rhythm of life and living, which is distinct from commanding. To command is to interfere, to disrupt, and to rape, which violates the rhythm of life and living. Don’t you smell jealousy, hatred, or revenge?

A free spirit won’t desire to command because it loves life and being alive. It is hardly to imagine a spirit can enjoy itself if it only wants to command. This unequal relationship is toxic since it builds a prison by victimizing itself as if to declare war on the whole world. Sadly, the first and biggest enemy is himself because he turns self-overcoming into self-destroying. This is worse than suicide because it causes irreversible chaos. This is even worse than the old philosophers; at least these old philosophers would pretend that they love and care about this world.

Will is powerful and *maybes* are still dangerous. If free spirit is the last hope for new philosophers, please watch out for those “dangerous *maybes*.” Imagine that there is a conversation between old and new philosophers discussing free spirit, then old philosophers may call a free spirit a cult as it is selfish and immoral in every sense. “What is wrong with sending scholars into new and dangerous hunting grounds, where courage, sense, and subtlety in every way are required, is that they cease to be of any use precisely where the ‘great hunt,’ but also the great danger, begins: precisely there they lose their keen eye and nose.”¹⁰ Behold, new

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Part Three, subsection 45.

philosophers! The dangerous *maybes* are all around in this “great hunt” where all the old philosophers come together and start to cage themselves, this time, in the name of religion. If self-overcoming requires an affirmation of your life force, the cost of getting a membership in this religion is your claim of this *will to power*. This is a clean-cut transactional relationship between you and the religion only if such an affirmation is transferable. Suddenly, old philosophers get irritated by people who selfishly describe their religion as a marketable business. What an unholy thought! The questions here is what they are hunting and why.

The attitude of the religious is a certain belief that something else is more powerful than life force. What is more attractive is that whatever is more powerful delivers a solid answer to you. Learning about what is religious in a historical context easily comes to a conclusion that the only the religious speak truth, provide certainty, and offer profound knowledge that accept no disagreement. It is such a deep tragedy that after collecting all the people’s affirmations of their life force, all we see is a beautiful dead fish. What I see is when old philosophers arrived at their destination after their expedition, they start to laugh at new philosophers because they believe free spirit is nothing but evidence of sins. Is that the purpose of becoming religious so that you can feel better than those who are non-religions? Isn’t such a behavior a total denial against their power of will to overcome? Will those old philosophers miss those days before they moved into this birdcage and wipe their tears when no one is around?

All I hear and witness is sacrifice and such a sacrifice is not so voluntary.

If the religious uphold the utmost propriety, new philosophers need to retrieve their life force, break these cocoons of artificial spirituality, and fly out of this birdcage. New philosophers who live as free spirits have no affiliation with the religious because they prioritize the affirmation of their *will to power*. A free spirit is not religious because it embraces ignorance,

uncertainty, and untruth. Living as a free spirit allows a way of learning in life that indicates the possibility of overcoming. In this process, the way of learning is multifaceted, and the goal of learning is a sustainable cycle embedded life force; it is learning to be, to remember, and to forget.

However, in the world of the religious, learning is a second-class citizen compared to knowing because knowing always promises the results. The religious worship the knowledge, the certainty, and the truth. You must have a religious thought before you can access it because the will to truth is not the affirmation of life force but only a byproduct of your regulated thinking. Some people call this regulation morality; some call it law. The religious build themselves a shelter, and after that they reside there only because they are unwilling to leave this shelter. Deep in their heart, they have to resist that voice and temptation to escape this shelter and return to their homes. In order to enhance their shelter, they add more regulations on being religious. Beyond that, they don't overlook the people outside of this shelter. The goal is to be generative and extensive.

All of a sudden, the whole forest is full of various birdcages. The world outside of these cages becomes irrelevant. The thirsty for free spirit has been forgotten and even censored. How many free spirits will survive after all? To the will belongs power. If people are selfless enough as they say and willing to give up their autonomy of life force to religions, why can't they be selfish once and enjoy self-overcoming by accepting their will to free spirit.