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## Life –The Mystery of Pain, Delight and Death

By Prof. Aleksandra Pawliszyn

*University of Gdansk ul Bazynskiego, Poland*

*A Dream about a River-* Anameless life and death river– a river of eternal changing– glittering, gasping and tempting in its existential eroticism. A priestess of desires and lusts watches over the boundless power of the life cult – like the sparks of a hissing volcano –invading the core of existence. When the priestess` mouth whispers spells, in order for the eroticism of existence to break free from the limits of its concrete body, divine lovers open the mystery of joy, and their souls wallow in the magic dimension of life`s corporeality, to set free the boundless power of the life cult.

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# Life –The Mystery of Pain, Delight and Death

Prof. Aleksandra Pawliszyn

## I. A DREAM ABOUT A RIVER

A nameless life and death river – a river of eternal changing – glittering, gasping and tempting in its existential eroticism. A priestess of desires and lusts watches over the boundless power of the life cult – like the sparks of a hissing volcano – invading the core of existence. When the priestess' mouth whispers spells, in order for the eroticism of existence to break free from the limits of its concrete body, divine lovers open the mystery of joy, and their souls wallow in the magic dimension of life's corporeality, to set free the boundless power of the life cult...

## II. THE CORE OF EXISTENCE – DELIGHT

Human existence has not dispensed with pain, however, as Nietzsche notices, the miracle of coming into being is, at its core, delight, shining joy upon the world. Let us quote the words of the author of *Also sprach Zarathustra*: “– delight wants the eternity of every thing, – eternit wants without end, without end!”<sup>1</sup> Revealing the joining of the human body with divine corporeality would be the delight of being in the universe, without any limits. And, the delight of being in the universe would be in the bodily junction of life and death's disinterestedness, bringing a joy which cuts through suffering. Let us listen to how Nietzsche's Zarathustra sings about it: “The world – heap of depths Deeper than reality, thinking, dreaming. Pain – the depths' sovereign –, But – over pain – delight, deeper is sobbing.”<sup>2</sup>

Beyond reality and dreaming then, human existence will reach the depths of the whirling world. Whirling by the irresistible force of lusting for life, stirring the human being – just as in the beginning sentenced to death and suffering, he had to fight for particles of sense, the sense which likes to hide in the depths. And, as to Nietzsche, the sovereign of the depths is pain... That is why delight is sobbing – because it is lined by pain. Nietzsche's Zarathustra, like a priestess emanating

a lust for life feels it as delight, although it is mixed with suffering; feels it as rapture by coming into being, as admiration over that which was pulled out of the forces of nonexistence, yet this rapture will bloom in pain...

## III. THE MYSTERIOUS PULSE OF EXISTENCE

As a singer of life, Nietzsche affirms pain, but that which is registered in human existence, so that the human being can taste the fullness of existence and can measure swords with the force of the creation of the universe.

In the context of existential apogee swollen by death, lovers' sobs are like an explosion of the great life and death mystery, which reveals itself through paroxysms of pain and delight – the eruption of excess caused by the struggle with the predominant forces of the universe. Now, the rattling of the marvel of united bodies will explode the power of creation, joining that which is separate into one pulsating life, a river of monads whose sound is made the mysterious pulse of existence. The delight following on from the eruption of excess will be an infinite abyss of existence, marked by unrestrained bleeding wounds, breaking through every abomination before life, by the abundance of human existence. Existence, flowing down through tears of enchantment filling the internal and mysterious canals of existence, over participation in the power – which here contains death – of an existential explosion...

Let us notice, that an eternity without end could symbolize the river of existence – eternal births and deaths, playing a life and death symphony, pulsating with the rhythm of a power that neutralizes every evil – which as pain, does not serve creative development, but gives extermination.

## IV. THE UNSUPPORTABLE ASPECTS OF ETERNAL RETURN?

One can also treat the eternal flow of the existential river according to Schopenhauer rather than Nietzsche, as S. Žižek seems to do. If Nietzsche propagates the cult of life and, in spite of the suffering following on from existence, exposes delight, whose “sobbing is deeper”, for Schopenhauer, life is something unreasonable, unable to be tamed by anything but onward pressure, without any aim. Therefore, for Žižek, Nietzsche's idea of eternal return is an “unsupportable aspect”, which the Slovenian psychoanalyst has connected with instinct, which does not seem to match Nietzsche's philosophical intentions. Žižek writes: “The unsupportable aspect of the ‘eternal return of the same’ –

*Author: University of Gdańsk ul Bażyńskiego 1 A 80-952 Gdańsk, NIP (PL), Dr hab. Aleksandra Pawliszyn, Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Journalism, University of Gdańsk, 4 Bażyńskiego, 80-952 Gdańsk, Poland. e-mail: robertdolewski@gmail.com*

<sup>1</sup>F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für und Keinen, Sämtliche Werke*. [Our translation is after the Polish issue translated by W. Berent, idem, *Tako rzecze Zaratustra. Książka dla wszystkich i dla nikogo*, Warszawa 1990, p. 402.]

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 403.

Nietzsche's name of the dimension of fundamental instinct – relies on the radical close implied by that idea: to assert and accept in full an 'eternal return of the same' means to renounce every openness, every belief in Messianic Otherness."<sup>3</sup>

Let us suspend for a while the matter of believing in otherness and emphasize, that according to the author of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the desire of every creature to live, especially the vine, is invariably connected with suffering. Nevertheless, in spite of this, every "child" of existence wants to live, in order to become mature, "joyful and lingering, – longing for everything, and, what is more, higher and brighter."<sup>4</sup> So, it does not seem that joy is unsupportable, rather pain is unsupportable, but as to Nietzsche, it is fundamentally subdued by delight, which, let us repeat: "sobbing is deeper". Thus, deeper than suffering and pain it would reach the joy of life allowing us to appreciate the proper value of existence. One could talk here about pain, but as if it had entered into life in order that its happening and also its extraordinariness could, by ravishment, explode, following on from creative penetration into the existential tissue.

But one could also talk about the pain connected with extermination, with a contempt for life. I think that in terms of this pain Nietzsche would not agree. For him, the eternal return of the same means rather, not the transferable existence of happenings, but the miracle of eternal life regenerating, which in spite of generating pain, at its depth is trembling in delight. So, the eternal return here does not close, but on the contrary: opens up to the creative invasion of the human being into existence.

## V. THE PAIN AND DELIGHT OF LIFE

Let us note that both the instinct and desire that psychoanalysts write about are in existence in general, which Nietzsche describes as the eternal return of everything. It seems that it might be possible to treat his idea of the eternal return as the vehicle for instinct, but in that case it must take into consideration the difference of thinkers in two distinct dimensions: the philosopher and the psychoanalyst. It might also be possible to recognize the eternal return of everything as "the unsupportable" motif of existence, but – let us emphasize – it is not an interpretation that would comply with the intention of the author of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. So, I do not think that Žižek is right when he writes that Nietzsche "neglects that absolute gap between the organic body and madness' rhythm of instinct, to which bodily organs, 'partly objects', are submitted"<sup>5</sup>. This is beca-

use, as we know, for Nietzsche, life, in spite of pain, trembling by delight and realized in fullness – is definitely not a limitation to the instinctive side of existence – something which psychoanalysts, as it were, skeletonize, taking the richness from the entirety of existence.

## VI. THE METAPHYSICAL POWER OF EXISTENCE

Let us repeat then: Nietzsche's approval of the bodily side of existence stressed the joyous form of existence itself – its power to tear out from the abyss of nonexistence the bright oasis of life's happening. One could say that it is metaphysical power interpreted as a kind of instinct, but by metaphysical provenience; so, as instinct pushing to reveal that which is out on the edge, away from light – that which is in the depths of darkness. Therefore, approval of existence that has happened is at the same time approval of the joy following on from existence, because it has been completed. The ecstasy from existence does not confer any rights, apart from an ecstasy of the joy of life... Nietzsche notices however, that: "delight does not want either heirs, nor children – delight wants itself, wants eternity, wants reversion, wants 'everything, which is always the same'"<sup>6</sup>. And this means that the joy following on from the happening of life has to stop everyday life and kill the vanity of routine aims, for it has to transcend the monotony of the daily round of hellish repetitions. Joy then, as the delight of existence itself, lives by aspects which are transgressive rather than those which are "unsupportable".

Let us emphasize here the connections between the transgressive aspects with which the human being attempts to keep up with the predominant forces of existence and nonexistence. Human existence ought to be grasped then as heroism—as an almost superhuman power allowing us to measure swords with that which rises above human possibilities. So, in spite of the terror of being overcome by the abysmal forces of existence and nonexistence, the human being takes up the glove as a mortal, suffering hero, who by his suffering tears out from the eternal river of changes an enclave of creativity and sovereignty, in this way conquering death, finiteness and the vanity of his existence.

## VII. THE POWER OF EXISTENCE INSCRIBED IN THE HUMAN BEING

That the eternal return of the universe can be recognized as a curse or blessing – is a matter of interpretation by the person who actually participates in life. Similarly, to treat that return as being closed to change or open to new possibilities is also a matter of interpretation. The metaphysics of the eternal reversion is such a fundamental characteristic of existence in general, that its reduction to psychoanalytical instinct by

<sup>3</sup> S. Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*. [Our translation is after the Polish issue translated by A. Chmielewski, idem, *Przekleństwo fantazji*, Wrocław 2001, p. 49.]

<sup>4</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach...*, p. 400.

<sup>5</sup> S. Žižek, *The Plague...*, p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach...*, p. 400/401.

Žižek, is essentially a limitation of the philosophical thought of Nietzsche.

It seems likely that this is a reduction of the metaphysical mystery by the Slovenian psychoanalyst; revealing in the face of the Other (as to Levinas) the mystery of “desire felt by the Other”<sup>7</sup>. It is also doubtful that it is what Žižek calls the “subjective devastation”, a state of being, the medium of higher power, possessed by the artist and the deviant<sup>8</sup>. Unless, of course, in the case of the deviant, one can talk about devastation, while in the case of the artist, the fulfillment of the subjective by the power of existence as creativity. And here, it is as well to note the contemporary hermeneutic thinkers: the truth grasped by the creator in the work of art has to extend into the world hitherto unknown ways of being before a receiver, as if augmenting his existence. As to human maturity, about being “his own cause”<sup>9</sup>, according to Žižek, it seems to mean taking responsibility either for one’s own life, or for the life of the Other.

However, on the other hand, one could grasp dynamic impersonal existence as a kind of instinct, but this leads us here – let us emphasize – to reach and creatively develop the entire existential endowment in which the human being is participating. So, one could talk about a metaphysics of instinct, but at the same time would have to signal the level of considerations we are dealing with. We should emphasize that we may try to reread into the human being the power of existence itself, in which case corporeality could take on many variations.

## VIII. THE WORLD WRITTEN BY CORPOREALITY

One of the more interesting descriptions of corporeality seems to be Merleau-Ponty’s proposition of philosophy based on the category: scattered corporeality (*la chair*). The author of the ontology of corporeality asks about the border between the human body and the corporeal tissue of the world: “Where to draw the line of the border between the body and the world, when the world is corporeal tissue?”<sup>10</sup>. The author of *Le Visible et l’Invisible* grasps the spectacle of the world’s happenings as if lined by “corporeal tissue”, comprehended as an incarnated principle” – a kind of element of existence (here: the Entity). Merleau-Ponty writes: “The tissue of corporeality is neither matter, nor mind, nor substance. One can define it by an old notion, ‘the element’. As it names water, air, earth and fire, it means,

a general thing, half way between an individuality of space and time, as if an incarnated principle, which carries a style of being everywhere that is also just a particle of it. The tissue of corporeality in that meaning is ‘an element’ of the Entity.”<sup>11</sup> We are dealing here with the material carrier of the power of existence – corporeality. Metaphors used by the French phenomenologist, such as “thicket” or “pulp”, of the tissue of corporeality, suggests that this corporeal element is everywhere; in the horizontal order of the world (the Entity), and in the vertical. In such a case, existence takes on the shape of living dispersed corporeality, where the human being was, in the beginning, “a bit of living jelly”<sup>12</sup>, annexing a fragment of the corporeal tissue, going into a contour of a body.

## IX. THE WHIRL OF IMPERSONAL LIFE

The dynamic of impersonal existence is worth considering in the context of the analysis of death by Bataille. The author of *L’Histoire de l’erotisme* exposes it as inseparable from death decay and putrefaction, which are carriers of life. “Moreover life is a formation of decay, relying both on death and dung.”<sup>13</sup> Bataille multiplies descriptions of slippery and sticky putrefaction, which is, as it were, boiling with life. And, although it awakens abomination, it also tempts. The French thinker ascertains: “However, surely, it (putrefaction – AP) lies at the foundations of imaginings about nature as shaped by humans; according to which decay is finally a recapitulation of the world, from which we come out of, and, to which we go back into, in a way that shame – and terror – are connected both with death and birth.”<sup>14</sup> Decay as the recapitulation of life becomes a terrific whirl of impersonal forces that makes us feel ashamed, filling our world, but not to the very end. As if the unbearably durable carriers of impersonal life are sometimes brought together to create personal life, or, as a kind of liquid, a dispersed corporeality, according to Merleau-Ponty, which, after a while, coagulates into the shape of a body. It also seems as if the dynamic of life is carried upon impersonal waves of concentrations and dispersions.

Exposing the uncontrollable dynamic of existence, the author of *L’Histoire de l’erotisme* notices that “life is a geyser, exuberant excess, an opposition of balance and stability. It is a turbulent movement, exploding and becoming exhausted”<sup>15</sup>. As this shows, nothing is absolutely lifeless, only sometimes, some constellations become exhausted in the storm of excess living particles of the world.

<sup>7</sup> S. Žižek, *The Plague...*, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> See, *ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l’Invisible suivi de notes de travail*, 1964. [Our translation is after the Polish issue translated by M. Kowalska, J. Migasiński, R. Lis, I. Lorenc, *idem*, *Widzialne i niewidzialne*, Warszawa 1996, p. 142.]

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> G. Bataille, *L’Histoire de l’erotisme*, Paris, 1976. [Our translation is after the Polish issue translated by I. Kania, *idem*, *Historia erotyzmu*, Kraków 1992, p. 66.]

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

## X. IN THE ENTIRETY OF EXISTENCE THERE IS NO EMPTINESS OF NONENTITY

The philosophical statements of S. I. Witkiewicz lead us to the conviction that the entirety of existence, in the framework of that which appears as concrete existence, happens per se, without either beginning or end. The author of *Zagadnienie psychofizyczne* notices: "In the monadic system (...) the problem of 'the origin of life' does not exist at all, because there is nothing in the entirety of Existence (...), except for, 'life'"<sup>16</sup>. Appearing into this existence, some 'monster' might be able to notionally grasp existence by forms: duration and extension.

Let us consider that the metaphysics of material existence – exploding through an excess of life – is inquired into by Witkacy, also a living organism, which is, for him, reality itself and for itself. "So, the reality of itself and for itself is a living organism, consisting of none self-reliant organisms (...)." <sup>17</sup> The author of the concept of ontological pluralism does not presume anything in the world to be lifeless. For him, life is the basis for an existential game, even those fragments that we have to recognize as lifeless. One ought to emphasize that the philosophical thinking of Witkacy proposes the world as an "environing" breathe of life, whose ground consists of living parts. "Everything dead must consist of living parts, because they only have being for themselves."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, one can, after Bataille, talk about "The Entirety of Existence", which Witkacy named an exploding geyser of 'living monsters in their plurality, able to feel duration and extension, which the author of *Zagadnienie psychofizyczne*, names "an Individual Being" – as they could create different configurations of existence.

Witkiewicz is convinced that the apogee of existence pushed out the nonentity of emptiness. This conviction follows on from Witkacy's logical deduction that a lack of existence is "absolutely nonsense". "Nonentity as an empty Space, which one cannot think of as a form of Entity – is not able even to be thought about– is incomprehensible, is an absolute nonsense."<sup>19</sup> The impossibility of it, Witkacy's "down with thinking about nonentity" is like Parmenides' being by thought is like being near an entity, while nonentity, in his opinion, cannot even to be thought about. The river of existence then, is filled by the "germs of life", so, let us repeat, the emptiness of nonentity cannot be thought about.

Lively, individual material is for the author of the hypothesis of monadology a primordial fact, "not requiring (...) any, even the slightest general hypothesis (...) it is as if perfect in its primordially."<sup>20</sup>

## XI. CARVING INTO MATURE EXISTENCE

One can say that the perfect character of the absolute primordially of life reveals itself in all areas of human activity as the force calling the human being to creativity, which raises life up by means of the creative penetration of the power of existence. Hence, one can talk about a kind of sublimity of existence which constrains the human being to live by the passing away of the existential spark.

Let us sum up: the mysterious pulse of a still pulsating existence – the volcano of the power and forces of creativity – can reveal by death, pain and delight. It reveals itself through the corporeality of the world, penetrated by the eroticism of existence, which tempts and calls the human being to cut into the tumult of the noise of everyday life of his/her enclave of sovereignty marked by creativity. The enclave once immersed in is released by its extortion of the dimension of singing connected bodies, emanating the cult of life's sparks, which the free creature tries to grasp as sense. This sense tells us that it is worth living and suffering, because only in that way can we taste eternity by delight, lined by pain.

## XII. AWAKENING

The pale daybreak of morn flows down on the world. It still remembers the calm of late evening – with rain lying close to the window pane, murmuring like an angel's song in the nooks and crannies of the silence. It also remembers birch branches turning silvery in the unreal climate of the evening dusk. And now a morning coolness brings awakening – the dream is blowing away...

Awakening brings the memory of a dream, where a priestess of desires and lusts – joined with the power of lightening and with the invisible harmony of the river of existence – by a code of speech, calls for submission before the mysterious pulse of existence, which persuades the human being to be joyful about the miracle of life...

Awakening also brings a hint of reflection, to pluck out the singularity of life from the creative storm on the borders of the inscrutable, to continuously struggle with that which has overgrown the possibilities of the human being, throwing him into the existential geyser in order to ride out the terrible beauty of the universe – never to finish ... As never to finish is the spiritual power of such existential Titans as F. Nietzsche, G. Bataille, M. Merleau-Pont, S. I. Witkiewicz...

<sup>16</sup> Our translation is after the Polish issue: S. I. Witkiewicz, *Zagadnienie psychofizyczne*, Warszawa 1978, p. 82.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 111.