

# SEXUAL PRESENCE AS A SYMPTOM OF THE POST- HUMAN

Patrice Renaud, PhD

Université du Québec en Outaouais

Institut Philippe-Pinel de Montréal

Patrice.renaud@uqo.ca

# The Sloterdijk affair : toward the post-human

*Rules for the Human Zoo: a response to the Letter on Humanism (1999)*



*Letter on Humanism (1946)*



# The Sloterdijk affair : toward the post-human

- In accordance with Heidegger, **Sloterdijk** concludes that humanism has failed to respect its commitment to "to save men from barbarism"
- Assuming that "reading the right books calms the inner beast", the humanists believed that inhibitory education would help to tame Man

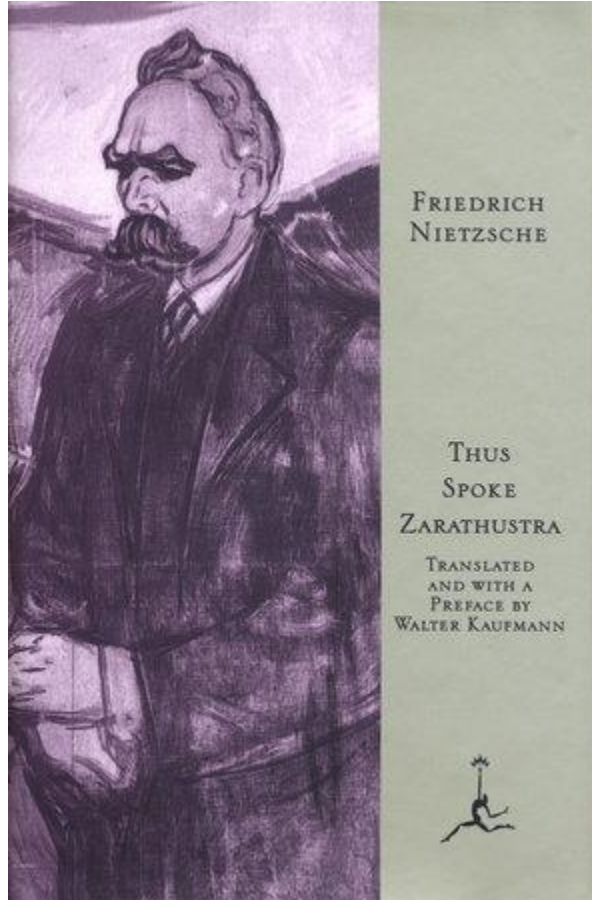
# The Sloterdijk affair : toward the post-human

- According to Heidegger, **but not to Sloterdijk**, this failure is first of all due to the fact that humanism did not aim high enough, that it stuck too closely to the Aristotelian definition of Man as a *rational animal*
- The Heideggerian answer: to be wary of technology because it veils the true identity of Man which is to be closer to Being i.e. *to the language by which presence happens*

# The Sloterdijk affair : toward the post-human

- Sloterdijk takes the opposite view of the Heideggerian's by explaining the failure of humanism not as a departure from Being or from any founding language but as the non-recognition of the inevitable animality of the human being

# The Sloterdijk affair : toward the post-human



- *In the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of Zarathustra, Nietzsche leads the reader to the distinction between breeders and super-breeders, humanists and post-humanists*

# Post-humanism and the channelling of sexuality

- According to the French philosopher Joëlle Proust (2011), a post-human species would have a natural or artificial lineage that diverges from *homo sapiens sapiens* according to several characteristics, and primarily according to its *reproductive mechanisms*

# Post-humanism and the channelling of sexuality

- One of the key parts of the transhumanist movement is therefore the exploitation of virtual reality (VR, and other simulation techniques) in order to create experiences conducive to this selection that will lead to the post-human (Kurzweil, 2005)



# Sexual presence

- As invited by Lombard and Jones (2004, 2013) we have put forward a definition of **sexual presence** as a “second order” technologically mediated experience with a psychophysiological state of sexual arousal, including a subjective erotic perception, whose content and extent are determined by the interplay between individual psychobiological predispositions, idiosyncratic past experiences, and what is sexually afforded by a mediating technology (Renaud et al., 2014, 2016)
- Thus defined, sexual presence necessarily echoes to “first-order” sexual presence, i.e. the non-technologically mediated experience of sexuality

# The Nietzschean sexual instinct

- The philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche was strongly influenced by the work of the psychophysicologists of his time (Gauchet, 1992)
- From the discovery of the neuron and cerebral automatism consequently followed a process of dismissal of consciousness as the **primum movens** of individual action, as well as a fundamental questioning of the very possibility of **free will**

# The Nietzschean sexual instinct

- If Nietzsche's philosophy can undoubtedly be described as a philosophy of instinct (Assoun, 1982), it is the idea of **Will to Power** that nevertheless remains the cornerstone of Nietzsche's thought
- This Nietzschean central principle federates all the instincts, making them work together, despite conflicts, in view of an ever greater achievement of power

# The Nietzschean sexual instinct

## The pivotal role of illusion

- This perpetual gain can only be achieved by maintaining a **fundamental illusion**, an illusion of continuity, truth, identity, and especially **the illusion of the ego** as a synthetic concept that masks the sum of individual wills dwelling in each of us (Nietzsche, 1968)

# The Nietzschean sexual instinct

## The pivotal role of illusion

- Indeed, according to Nietzsche each organ has its own will, purpose and intentions (Nietzsche, 1882, 1997): "The " person " itself is to be understood as an illusion: the main objection is in fact heredity, inasmuch as a prodigious amount of formative forces from much older ages constitute the continual stability of the person"

# Nietzschean instinct and Freudian drive

- While the Nietzschean Will to Power may in some respects resemble the psychoanalytic concepts of libido and sexual drive, it is clearly distinguishable from them by its *monistic ontology and by the fact that it embraces all manifestations of matter*, both inert and living

# Nietzschean instinct and Freudian drive

- In Freud, the sexual drive is based on somatic sources (erogenous zones and processes) and is designed in a **dualistic way** to explain the origin of intrapsychic conflicts
- Furthermore, according to the economic point of view of the Freudian drive, the latter operates essentially through **energetic loss**, that is, in an **entropic** mode (Assoun, 1982, Freud, 1915)

# Nietzschean instinct and Freudian drive

- On the other hand, the Nietzschean sexual instinct is only a creature of the Will to Power and sexual reproduction is solely one form of expression among others for the Will to Power
- Hence Michel Haar's affirmation: "*Every force, every energy whatever it may be, is Will to Power - in the organic world (impulses, instincts, needs), in the psychological and moral worlds (desires, motivations, ideas), and in the inorganic world itself - inasmuch as "life is just a special case of the Will to Power"* (Haar, 1977)



# Nietzschean instinct and Freudian drive

- This metamorphosis of the sexual instinct is active especially in art and its corollary, the creation of illusions: "*The illusion of the sexual instinct is a fishing net which, when torn, always repairs itself again*" (Nietzsche, 1882, 1997)

# Nietzschean instinct and Freudian drive

- Contrary to the Freudian drive, the Nietzschean sexual instinct is not a matter of an energetic loss or discharge but rather it is about a surplus of nervous energy that is transferred outside the organism and that reorganizes itself in a **negentropic** way, adding to the complexity of the world

# A redoubled illusion: from first-order to second-order sexual presence

- As explained, illusion in the Nietzschean sense acts as a protective shield against the Dionysian forces at work behind appearances
- This Dionysian chaos threatening the individual in his Apollonian facade is not only contained and held back by the illusion of the individual self, but at the same time put at the service of the Will to Power by increasing the energy potential of the latter

# A redoubled illusion: from first-order to second-order sexual presence

- The first-order sexual presence, that of sexuality between animals, operates first by *masking* the absurd lack of meaning of the relationship of the blind forces on which the biological generation depends
- It is thus put at the service of the human lineage

# A redoubled illusion: from first-order to second-order sexual presence

- Second-order sexual presence, that produced by the encounter of the human organic and the technological inorganic, protects against the deep meaning of this encounter
- *This meaning is that of the appearance of the post-human and disappearing of the human*

# A redoubled illusion: from first-order to second-order sexual presence

- This second-order sexual presence is, in our opinion, a symptom of the post-human in that it redoubles, it redoubles according to the transitive and intransitive sense of the verb to redouble
- By this we mean, it *remakes illusion* and, in doing so, it *contributes to the extension of the domain of the Will to Power*

” This is the CENTRAL SCRUTINIZER... You have just destroyed one model XOJ-37 Nuclear Powered Pan-Sexual Roto-Plooker. And you're gonna have to pay for it! So give up, you haven't got a chance.”

**Sy Borg, Joe's Garage, 1979**

**Frank Zappa** (a very good friend of  
Vaclav Havel)

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