

## An Agonistic Education. A commentary on the conception of education in Nietzsche's early work

Miguel Matilla

[mmatilla@jazzfree.com](mailto:mmatilla@jazzfree.com)

*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*<sup>1</sup> includes an acceptance of the adjective “agonistic” that makes it appropriate to describe the conception of education in Nietzsche’s writings from the so called “period of youth” or “first period”, that is, the period which ended in 1876 with the publication of the fourth and last untimely meditation, entitled *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. This acceptance, which is used in Biochemistry, is the following: “of relating to, or acting as an agonist”, which is “a substance which initiates a physiological response when combined with a receptor”. Or more accurately, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology*<sup>2</sup>, an agonist is “any ligand, especially a drug or hormone, that binds to receptors and thereby alters the proportion of them that are in active form, resulting in a biological response. A conventional agonist increases this proportion, whereas an inverse agonist reduces it.”

Used in a figurative sense, this term serves to synthesize Goethe’s words that Nietzsche placed as a motto at the beginning of the second untimely meditation, entitled *On the uses and disadvantages of history for life* (1874): “In my case, I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity.”<sup>3</sup> That is to say, if anything does not augment or invigorate our activity then it does not educate us truly. Or, which is logically equivalent, if anything truly educates us then it augments or invigorates our activity; that is to say, it acts as a conventional agonist on us. To sum up, everything that truly educates us is agonistic. It seems to me that the adjective “agonistic”, in the figurative sense of “relating to or acting as an agonist on us”, and where the noun “agonist” means “all that increases our activity”, expresses an outstanding feature<sup>4</sup> of true education as young Nietzsche conceived it. Next I will try to argue for this.

### 1. *Bildung* is liberation.

In the first paragraph of the third untimely meditation, entitled *Schopenhauer as educator* (1874), there is a key text for understanding Nietzsche’s conception:

[...]; for your true nature lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you usually take yourself to be. Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you what the true basic material of your being is, something in itself ineducable and in any case difficult to access, bound and paralysed: your educators can be only your liberators. And that is

<sup>1</sup> Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche: *Untimely Meditations*, Translated by R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 59 (HL, KGW III 1, S. 241, 1-3). The translations of Nietzsche’s texts, which are not included in this book, are mine.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps another outstanding feature is expressed by the adjective “untimely”.

the secret of all culture <*Bildung*>: it does not provide artificial limbs, wax noses or spectacles – that which can provide these things is, rather, only sham education <*Erziehung*>. Culture is liberation, the removal of all the weeds, rubble and vermin that want to attack the tender buds of the plant, an outstreaming of light and warmth, the gentle rustling of nocturnal rain, it is imitation and worship of nature where nature is in her motherly and merciful mood, it is the perfecting of nature...<sup>5</sup>

This true basic material of our being, whose liberation is the task of our educators, is our productive uniqueness: “Each of us bears a productive uniqueness within him as the core of his being”<sup>6</sup>. To be aware of this uniqueness is unendurable for the most of us because we are “...lazy, and because a chain of toil and burdens is suspended from this...”<sup>7</sup>. The process, which drives us to be what we are, is a laborious and arduous one. It is a natural process of development, not an artificial process of addendum. Our true educators, when liberating our productive uniqueness, are stimulating our productivity and therefore increasing our activity. To sum up, our true educators are agonistic.

As regards the vegetable metaphor of the plant “Man”, that is suggested in the last lines of the quoted text, it appears more explicit in several writings of the middle and the last periods<sup>8</sup>. According to etymologists, it seems that the Latin word *cultura* is the source of the German word *Kultur*<sup>9</sup>. And the same happens to the English word “culture”, the Spanish *cultura*, the French *culture*, the Italian *cultura*, etc. The Latin noun *cultura* -ae was formed adding the suffix -ura to the Latin verb *colo* (*colere colui cultum*) which had several meanings besides “to till, cultivate, farm (land); to grow, cultivate (fruit, crops, etc.); to keep, breed (animals, etc.)”<sup>10</sup>. One of these meanings, “to decorate, adorn, embellish”<sup>11</sup>, was used by Nietzsche in several places to formulate the contrast between a true, authentic, productive culture – the culture he fought for<sup>12</sup>, to a false, hypocrite, sterile culture – the culture of the Germans of his time. In short, a necessity for life versus a decoration of life:

... he will then begin to grasp that culture <*Cultur*> can be something other than a *decoration of life*, that is to say at bottom no more than dissimulation and disguise; for all adornment conceals that which is adorned. Thus the Greek conception of culture will be unveiled to him – in antithesis to the Roman – the conception of culture as a new and improved *physis*, without inner and outer, without dissimulation and convection, culture as a unanimity of life, thought, appearance and will.<sup>13</sup>

False and superficial, that is, because one endured the contradiction between life and knowledge and completely failed to see what characterised the culture <*Bildung*> of genuine cultured peoples <*Culturvölker*>: that culture <*Cultur*> can grow and flourish only out of life; while among the Germans it was stuck on like a paper flower or poured over like icing-sugar, and was condemned to remain forever deceitful and unfruitful. The education <*Erziehung*> of German youth, however, proceeds from

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 129-30 (SE 1, KGW III 1, S. 336-7, 34-15). The addition, in angled brackets, of the German terms used by Nietzsche is mine.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 143 (SE 3, KGW III 1, S. 355, 20-1).

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 143 (SE 3, KGW III 1, S. 355, 24-5).

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. KGW VII 3, 34[74], 34[176].

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. F. Kluge: *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1999 (23. Auflage).

<sup>10</sup> Up to ten acceptations are collected in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. One of them is “to look after, keep going, tend (things)”.

<sup>11</sup> This sense has not survived in the current Spanish and, as far as I know, in English either.

<sup>12</sup> Young Nietzsche considered himself a fighter for the culture. See e.g. the letters to C. Von Gersdorff, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1872, (KSB 3, S. 286, 8-13) and to C. Fuchs, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1874, (KSB 4, S. 220, 43-7).

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 123 (HL 10, KGW III 1, S. 329-30, 33-6). Nietzsche wrote nearly always “*Cultur*” instead “*Kultur*”.

precisely this false and unfruitful conception of culture <Cultur>: its goal, viewed in its essence, is not at all the cultivated man but the scholar, the man of science, and indeed the most speedily employable man of science, who stands aside from life so as to know it unobstructedly; its result, observed empirically, is the historical-aesthetic cultural philistine <Bildungsphilister>...<sup>14</sup>

This contrast between the scholar, the man of science, and the cultivated man takes different modulations in Nietzsche's writings from the first period: the rational or theoretical man versus the intuitive man, the scientific man of philosophy versus the philosopher, the man of learning versus the genius, the sick wise man versus the joyful creative man, etc<sup>15</sup>. The central point of this conflict is sterility versus fertility:

...that the scholar is by nature *unfruitful* – a consequence of how he comes into existence! – and that he harbours a certain natural hatred for the fruitful man; which is why geniuses and scholars have at all times been at odds with one another. For the latter want to kill, dissect and understand nature, while the former want to augment nature with new living nature...<sup>16</sup>

For young Nietzsche the procreation of genius was the goal of true culture, which imposes on every human being the task of working to establish adequate conditions for the emergence of great men, the task of fighting against everything that impedes human existence to reach its plenitude. All of us are under the obligation to “*promote the production of the philosopher, the artist and the saint within us and without us and thereby to work at the perfection of nature*”<sup>17</sup>. In terms of the vegetable metaphor: true culture is like a nocturnal rain that enlivens the plant “Man”, like the careful hands of the agriculturist who removes everything which impedes it to give all its fruits<sup>18</sup>. To sum up, true culture is agonistic.

At this point, I would like to make a digression on this vegetable metaphor. Patrick Wotling has dealt with it at length in a chapter of his book *Nietzsche et le problème de la civilisation*<sup>19</sup>. There, it asserts that “it is Stendhal from whom Nietzsche borrows this metaphor of the plant man, which Stendhal himself borrows from Vittorio Alfieri...”<sup>20</sup>. This borrowing seems doubtful to me. On the one hand, according to the pieces of information, which are given in the book's introduction<sup>21</sup>, it seems that Stendhal's work did not influence young Nietzsche.

On the other hand, in Emerson's writings there is also a vegetable metaphor: “Man is that noble endogenous plant, which grows, like the palm, from within

<sup>14</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 117 (HL 10, KGW III 1, S. 321-2, 35-14).

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. the last paragraph of *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* and the chapter 18 of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 173-4 (SE 6, KGW III 1, S. 395-6, 31-4). Also: “*Save your genius! It is necessary to cry this to people, liberate it. Do all to provoking it.*” P. F. 1875 (KGW IV 1, 5[182]).

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 160 (SE 5, KGW III 1, S. 378, 6-9).

<sup>18</sup> For the metaphor of humanity like a great fruit tree, see the paragraph 189 of *The Wanderer and his Shadow*.

<sup>19</sup> Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995, pp. 273-96.

<sup>20</sup> “C'est encore à Stendhal que Nietzsche emprunte cette métaphore de la plante homme que Stendhal lui-même emprunte à Vittorio Alfieri...” (*Op. cit.*, footnote p. 277).

<sup>21</sup> See *Op. cit.*, first footnote p. 33. It seems that Nietzsche read a book of Stendhal for the first time during his stay in Sorrento, from the autumn of 1876 to the spring of 1877.

outward.”<sup>22</sup>, “Man is endogenous and education is his unfolding.”<sup>23</sup>. As far as I know, Nietzsche approached Emerson’s work in at least three different epochs of his life<sup>24</sup>.

Also, some German translations of Emerson’s books have survived from his personal library<sup>25</sup>. Specifically the trace of the first approach is recognisable in several texts from the first period. Here, I will remind only the mentions of Emerson that Nietzsche made in the first two essays he wrote<sup>26</sup> and the quotation at the end of the third untimely meditation<sup>27</sup>. In my view, the influence of Emerson’s work in young Nietzsche is worthy of attention. Especially in two subjects: the genius as educator-liberator and the notion of the untimely. Both require a separate treatment and remain for the future.

But I am not going to assert that Nietzsche borrowed this metaphor from Emerson. These kinds of affirmations are terribly problematic and practically impossible to prove. Instead, I suggest that it makes no sense to talk of borrowings in relation to this methaphor. To support this I will make good use of the following text:

The poets made all the words, and therefore language is the archives of history, and, if we must say it, a sort of tomb of the muses. For, though the origin of most of our words is forgotten, each word was at first a stroke of genius, and obtained currency, because for the moment it symbolised the world to the first speaker and to the hearer. The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry. As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images, or tropes, which, now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin. But the poet names the thing because he sees it, or comes one step nearer to it than any other.<sup>28</sup>

With these words of Emerson in mind, I propose that the metaphor of the plant “Man”, to some extent, is fossilised since several centuries in the German language and the others mentioned. It is due to the fact that Cicero and Horace already used the Latin word *cultura*, the common source, in the sense of “the training or improvement (of the faculties)”<sup>29</sup>.

Now I return to the conflict between the scholar, the man of science, and the genius, the cultivated man.

## 2. The way of relating to the past.

This conflict is especially patent in their different ways of relating to the past. A posthumous fragment of 1875 shows it with clarity:

The duty should be to *overcome* the Hellenic with the action. However, to do so, one should first know it! – there is a thoroughness, which is but the pretext for inactivity. Let’s think of what Goethe knew about antiquity: certainly not as much as a

<sup>22</sup> R.W. Emerson: “Representative Men: seven lectures” in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, v. IV, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 6. Notice the nuance (endogenous) introduced by Emerson.

<sup>24</sup> In 1862, when Nietzsche was student at Pforta, in 1878 and in 1881-2.

<sup>25</sup> *Versuche* (Hannover, 1858, translated by Fabricius), *Über Goethe und Shakespeare* (Hannover, 1857, translated by Grimm), *Neue Essays* (Stuttgart, 1876, translated by Schmidt).

<sup>26</sup> In 1862, entitled “*Fatum* and History” and “The Freedom of Will and *Fatum*”.

<sup>27</sup> SE 8, KGW III 1, S. 422, 11-25. Taken from “Circles”, *op. cit.*, v. II, pp. 183-4.

<sup>28</sup> “The Poet” in *op. cit.* v. III, p. 13. Probably this paragraph had reminded you of Nietzsche’s posthumous essay entitled *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral sense* (1873). Nevertheless, notice that the last phrase marks an important difference between both thinkers.

<sup>29</sup> See the mentioned Latin Dictionary: “*Cultura...animi philosophia est*” (CIC.*Tusc.*2.13).

philologist and still enough to fight fruitfully with it. Even one *should* know of a thing no more than what one could make. Moreover, the only way of really *knowing* something is trying to *do* it. If one tries to live as the ancients then, at the moment, one will get a hundred miles closer to them than with all erudition. Our philologists do not show that, in one way or another, they emulate antiquity – this is why *their* antiquity has no effects on their pupils.

*To study rivalry* (Renaissance, Goethe) and *to study desperation!*<sup>30</sup>

I will deal with the matter of rivalry below. As regards Nietzsche's critique of the philologists and the philology of his time<sup>31</sup>, it was the underlying theme in the five public lectures, entitled *On the future of our educational institutions*, that Nietzsche gave in 1872 in Basel<sup>32</sup>. These lectures were a Nietzsche's attempt to get hold of the new generation of philologists<sup>33</sup>, another episode of his fight for true culture. It is convenient to point out here that these lectures were mainly focused on secondary school, because of its condition of fulcrum engine of the educational system, and that

the most its teachers were philologists<sup>34</sup>. Nietzsche's critique was severe:

Philologists die because of the Greeks – we could console ourselves about it – but antiquity itself shatters in the hands of philologists.<sup>35</sup>

*Our position in relation to classic antiquity is at bottom the ultimate cause of the unproductiveness of modern culture:* because we have taken all this modern conception of culture from hellenized Romans. We must *separate* antiquity: if we learn to know its only productive period then we shall *condemn* all the alexandrine Roman culture. But, *at the same time we shall condemn all our position in relation to antiquity and our philology with it!*<sup>36</sup>

*All-important and general things of a science have become accidentals or are missing at all. [...] Classic antiquity, separated from the practical efforts that pretend to learn from it.[...] To sum up, all sciences are practised without a practical turn, that is, of a different way that the true men of culture have practised them. Science as a way to earn one's bread!*<sup>37</sup>

I cannot deal here with the enormous challenge that is Nietzsche's consideration of science as problematic. In almost all the writings from the first period there are reflections on science and men of science. Barbarism and the modern cultivation of science appear linked in several places<sup>38</sup>. I will limit myself to make a brief comment on another science that concerns the past: history.

<sup>30</sup> KGW IV 1, 5[167]. In two posthumous fragments from the same year: "According to Goethe, the ancients are 'the desperation of their imitators'." (KGW IV 1, 3[48]), "The way in which Goethe has taken antiquity: with a soul always ready to rival." (KGW IV 1, 5[172]). For the distinction between the philologist-poet (Goethe, Leopardi) and the philologist-erudite, see KGW IV 1, 5[17].

<sup>31</sup> It was the theme of a collection of notes, from the years 1874 and 1875, for a planned untimely meditation entitled "We the philologists".

<sup>32</sup> From 16<sup>th</sup> January, a few days after *The Birth of Tragedy* was published, to 23<sup>rd</sup> Mars 1872.

<sup>33</sup> See the letters to C. von Gersdorff, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1869 (KSB 2, S. 386, 36-40), and to F. Ritschl, 30<sup>th</sup> January 1872 (KSB 3, S. 282, 18-24).

<sup>34</sup> See the second lecture (KGW III 2, S. 167, 6-16).

<sup>35</sup> Third lecture (KGW III 2, S. 195, 10-2).

<sup>36</sup> P. F. 1875, KGW IV 1, 5[47].

<sup>37</sup> P. F. 1873, KGW III 4, 28[4].

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. the chapter 8 of the first untimely meditation, entitled *David Strauss, the Confessor and Writer*, and the first paragraph of the chapter "The Untimely Meditations" in *Ecce Homo*.

In the second untimely meditation, which is a protest manifesto against the domestication of the youth of modern man, Nietzsche diagnosed the sickness that obstructed the Germans of his time from having a true culture: an hypertrophy of historical sense. This sickness was being inoculated to the youth by means of the educational system, which produced thinking, writing and talking machines, configurations of historical instruction, etc. The origin of that sickness was the modern demand that history should be a pure science. A conceptual seism was changing the relationship between history and life:

...I trust that *youth* has led me aright when it now *compels me to protest at the historical education <Erziehung> of modern man* and when I demand that man should above all learn to

live and should employ history only *in the service of the life he has learned to live*.<sup>39</sup>

The historical culture <*Bildung*> of our critics will no longer permit any effect at all in the proper sense, that is an effect on life and action...<sup>40</sup>

We need it <history>, that is to say, for the sake of life and action, not so as to turn comfortably away from life and action, let alone for the purpose of extenuating the selfseeking life and the base and cowardly action.<sup>41</sup>

The historical education of the youth, in the hands of the philologists, was not at the service of life. What was learnt was not turned into life, but decoration of life that had no effects on student's action. That is to say, it was not an agonist for him. To sum up, the way of relating to the past of the youth of modern man was not agonistic.

### 3. *Agôn*: the etymological sense. -

Two other acceptations of the adjective "agonistic" included in the first quoted dictionary are the followings: "Zoology (of animal behaviour) associated with conflict" and "polemical, combative". The last one is also, linked to Rhetoric, in *The Oxford English Dictionary*<sup>42</sup>, as well as this other: "of or pertaining to the athletic contests of ancient Greece; hence, pertaining to athletic feats generally, athletic". This acceptation retains the sense of the Greek term *agônisticos*: "of or pertaining to an *agônistes*, a combatant in the games". I will refer to it as the etymological sense.

Nietzsche himself used it, but in a broader sense, in some texts from the first period, especially in a posthumous writing from 1872, entitled *Homer on competition*<sup>43</sup>. There, it quotes the starting words of the Hesiod's poem, entitled *Works and Days*, in which is mentioned the existence all over the earth of two goddess of the Strife (*Eris*). A bad *Eris*, fatal, that drives men to the fight of mutual destruction (war), and a good *Eris*, beneficent, that drives men to the fight of mutual rivalry (competition). The later makes use of envy and jealousy to achieve her aims. According to Nietzsche, also Aristotle and in general the Greek antiquity, save the pre-Homeric one<sup>44</sup>, considered that envy was not a man's fault but a gift of a benefactress goddess. Envy was the incitement to competition – "the most noble Hellenic fundamental thought"<sup>45</sup> –, which was necessary to the good health of the city-state:

<sup>39</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 116 (HL 10, KGW III 1, S. 320-1, 31-5).

<sup>40</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 87 (HL 5, KGW III 1, S. 281, 8-10).

<sup>41</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 59 (HL, KGW III 1, S. 241, 16-9).

<sup>42</sup> Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, second edition.

<sup>43</sup> Or "Homer's contest". The original title is "*Homer's Wettkampf*". Also see the first lecture for a commentary on an agonistic student society (KGW III 2, S. 145-6, 16-5).

<sup>44</sup> Where cruelty and the pleasure of destruction, that is, the influence of bad *Eris*, seemed to prevail.

<sup>45</sup> KGW III 2, S. 286, 23-4.

This is the core of the Hellenic conception of competition: it detests domination of a single one and fears the dangers that this encloses; it is ambitious to protect against a genius with another genius.

Every talent has to develop fighting: this way the Hellenic popular pedagogy orders...<sup>46</sup>

For the ancients, however, the goal of agonistic education <agonalen *Erziehung*> was the well-being of the whole, of the city-state.<sup>47</sup>

Since his childhood, each Greek experimented within him the ardent desire to be, in the contests between city-states, an instrument for the good health of his city-state: in this desire his egoism became inflamed and also became bridled and circumscribed.<sup>48</sup>

According to Nietzsche, the original sense of the Greek institution of ostracism was avoiding the hegemony of a single genius. It was necessary that there were more than one, not only in order that mutually stimulated each other but also in order to mutually maintain measured limits. The well-being of the city-state needed the agonistic play of all the forces:

But in the same way that the Young who had to be educated competed between them, so did their educators. With jealousy the great music masters Pindar and Simonides were presented together; the sophist, supreme teacher of antiquity, competed with the sophist; even the most generalised way of teaching, the drama, was given to people in the form of a great contest between the great music and dramatic artists. Wonderful! 'Also artist bears artist malice'.<sup>49</sup>

The Hellenic agonistic education, which is sketched in these quotations, can be seen as a particular case of the agonistic education in the sense I am using it in this paper. Of course a very important one. Our rivals in a competition (athletic, dialectic<sup>50</sup>, poetic-musical, etc.) stimulate the development of our capacities, contribute to our cultivation of excellence (*arete*)<sup>51</sup>. That is to say, our rivals liberate our productive uniqueness and therefore they truly educate us.

Now I will introduce a fourth sense of the noun "agonist", the third sense is the Hellenic sense, that I will call "strict agonist": one of our agonists is a strict agonist if he is our rival in a no destructive contest which implies interaction. In this strict sense we cannot rival with the ancients as Nietzsche's posthumous fragment quoted before proposes. Neither a book can be our strict agonist: it does not respond to us when we ask it a question. And there are many other things that can truly educate us, and therefore be our agonists, but they are not our strict agonists: a way of life, a musical composition, a popular song, a theatre performance, a film, a painting, etc. It is relevant to stand out here the educational importance that the way of life of educators had for Nietzsche, rather than said or written words: "I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example...But this example must be supplied by his outward life and not merely in his books – in the way, that is, in which the philosophers of Greece taught..."<sup>52</sup>. As regards the difference between the last two introduced senses, I would like to remark that a strict agonist for us is not necessarily a human being. At present, I

<sup>46</sup> KGW III 2, S. 283, 11-6.

<sup>47</sup> KGW III 2, S. 283, 24-6.

<sup>48</sup> KGW, III 2, S. 283-4, 35-3.

<sup>49</sup> KGW III 2, S. 284, 9-18.

<sup>50</sup> See KGW IV 1, 5[101]. Also see the paragraph 8 of "Socrates' Problem", in *Twilight of the Idols*.

<sup>51</sup> For a commentary on this subject, see David Owen: *Nietzsche, Politics and Modernity (A Critique of Liberal Reason)*, London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1995, p. 139.

<sup>52</sup> *Op.cit.*, p.136-7 (SE 3, KGW III 1, S. 346, 23-9).

can think of only one example, but one that plays an outstanding role in contemporary Occidental society: computer<sup>53</sup>.

I will make a summary. The set of all that is our agonist contains the set of all that truly educates us, which contains the set of all that is our strict agonist, which contains the set of all that is our agonist in the Hellenic sense, which contains the set of all that is our agonist in the etymological sense. All these subsets are proper subsets; that is to say, there are no two equal sets.

Of course that this picture, in which I have attempted to put in order my reflections on the conception of education of young Nietzsche, has many blank zones. I will point out some of them in an interrogative way. First: in what senses one could be an agonist for oneself? Nietzsche himself wrote that the richness of antitheses was a necessary condition for fecundity<sup>54</sup>. Second: what happens with the inverse agonists, that is, all that decreases or enervates our activity? It seems that contemporary

Occidental society is very rich in them. Third: could one talk about agonistic education beyond the human race? Perhaps the agonistic could be viewed in a biological framework. And fourth: a central question to finish. What kind of activity? It seems clear that many of our agonists do not educate us truly. In fact, quiet a lot of them try to destroy us, partially or completely. But this way drives me to one wasps' net: Nietzsche's critique to specialization<sup>55</sup>, Nietzsche's critique to the alliance between intelligence and property<sup>56</sup>, etc. Here, I will confine myself to quote one Nietzsche's text of 1878:

*The major fault of active men.* Active men lack usually higher activity: I mean the individual one. They are actives as civil servants, dealers, erudites, that is to say, as generic beings, but not as unique and singular persons; in that respect, they are lazy. The misfortune of active men is that their activity is nearly always a bit irrational. It makes no sense to ask oneself, for instance, in front of the banker who amass money, for the goal of his endless activity: it is irrational. The active men roll like stone rolls, according to the stupidity of mechanics. All men are divided today, as in all epochs, into slaves and free men; then who has not for himself two thirds of his day is a slave, be that as it may, politician, dealer, civil-servant, erudite.<sup>57</sup>

Finally I would like to make two comments. The first one concerns to the question if the preceding picture could be appropriate, with all the necessary nuances, beyond the first period of Nietzsche's work. There are some texts that seem to suggest an affirmative answer. But at the present I am not in conditions to argue convincingly for it and remains for the future. The second one concerns the genius named "Nietzsche" as agonist, or better, Nietzsche's work as agonist. One hundred years after his death, his work continues augmenting and invigorating the activity of many human beings all over the world. We, the participants at this conference, are an example. The number of books, papers, journals, conferences, societies, websites, chats, etc. related to him grows every day<sup>58</sup>. Nietzsche's hopes expressed in a letter to H. Köselitz, alias Peter Gast, have been amply fulfilled: "This is the *best* I hope: the provocation of the others' productivity and, as Burckhardt says, 'the increase of independence in the world'..."<sup>59</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> I am thinking about playing chess with a computer, using a flight simulator, etc. Computer as educator by means of interactive methods of learning.

<sup>54</sup> See the paragraph 3 of "Moral as Contra-Nature", in *Twilight of the Idols* (KGW VI 3, S. 78, 16-21).

<sup>55</sup> See the first lecture (KGW III 2, S. 161-2, 29-6 ; S. 162, 18-29).

<sup>56</sup> See the first lecture (KGW III 2, S.159-60, 15-18).

<sup>57</sup> The paragraph 283 of *Human, All-Too-Human*, v. I (KGW IV 2, S. 235-6, 21-2).

<sup>58</sup> Anyone who introduces the word "Nietzsche" in a searcher of Internet will find more than one hundred thousand references.

<sup>59</sup> 31st May 1878 (KSB 5, S. 329, 30-3).