



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## Self-becoming, culture and education from Schopenhauer as educator to Ecce Homo

Chouraqui, F.; Large, D.; Martin, N.

### Citation

Chouraqui, F. (2021). Self-becoming, culture and education from Schopenhauer as educator to Ecce Homo. In D. Large & N. Martin (Eds.), *Nietzsche's Ecce Homo* (pp. 189-206). De Gruyter.  
doi:10.1515/9783110246551-014

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licensed under Article 25fa Copyright Act/Law \(Amendment Taverne\)](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3274986>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Frank Chouraqui

# Self-Becoming, Culture and Education

From *Schopenhauer as Educator* to *Ecce Homo*

**Abstract:** This essay traces the changes in Nietzsche's notion of self-becoming from the time of the *Untimely Meditations* to *Ecce Homo*. It argues that the place of self-knowledge in the process of self-becoming recedes as Nietzsche matures, and that this resolves a number of tensions present in the early writings, notably tensions concerning the relations between individual and cultural agency.

It is now widely acknowledged that Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* (1873–1876) offer great insight into his later projects. *Ecce Homo's* subtitle – “How One Becomes What One Is” – takes over Nietzsche's idiosyncratic formula of greatness, whose first sketch we find in *Schopenhauer as Educator* (UM III), a text which famously opens with this declaration: “Be your self! All you are now doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself” (UM III 1). There, Nietzsche uses the figure of Schopenhauer as an “educating figure”, that is to say, a figure whose impact on culture informs, supports or encourages the flourishing of mankind. For Nietzsche, the aim of education is self-becoming and the great lesson of Schopenhauer is precisely the *possibility* of self-becoming.

In this essay, I examine *Ecce Homo* and *Schopenhauer as Educator* together in order to investigate the evolution of Nietzsche's thought on self-becoming and culture. Although the two texts have a lot in common, there is a shift in emphasis between them. This shift is twofold: first, Nietzsche's view of the method for self-becoming shifts from *self-knowledge* to *self-creation*; second, the status of cultivation shifts from the individual to the cultural.

## 1 Education: From Self-knowledge to Self-creation

The contrast between the two texts is nowhere sharper than in the question of self-knowledge. In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche writes that self-knowledge is “the best way to find oneself” (UM III 1). In *Ecce Homo*, on the contrary,

he writes: “[T]hat one becomes what one is presupposes that one doesn’t have the remotest idea what one is” (EH II 9).

This tension between the need for self-knowledge and the need for self-ignorance informs much of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, and it will provide insight into Nietzsche’s later thinking on the issue. Daniel Breazeale correctly points out that in *Schopenhauer as Educator* this tension is played out into a dialectic of “essentialism” (which requires self-knowledge) and “anti-essentialism” (which excludes it). The advantage of the anti-essentialist view, Breazeale suggests, is that it requires one to *actively* transform oneself; the advantage of essentialism on the other hand, is that it allows for a notion of self-becoming that is not “blind” or “arbitrary”: there is something that we are to become and that stands as a criterion for our progress towards that goal (Breazeale 1998, p. 15).

In fact, this tension simply spells out the paradox of *any* reflexivity insofar as reflexivity always establishes a proximity *and* a distance within a self: there would be no reflexivity if both terms were strictly identical but there would be no reflexivity either if both terms were strictly external to each other. Indeed, this paradox involves complications for the early Nietzsche, and his understanding of the term “becoming”. In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, it is clear that Nietzsche expects the reflexivity of self-becoming to *lead* into the non-reflexivity of self-identity. That is to say, he expects becoming to lead into being. Thus, it is easy to see why Nietzsche will later (and in *Ecce Homo* in particular) be led to rework the strict opposition that is taken for granted in the early work, in light of his deepening of questions surrounding the relations of being and becoming.

In both *Ecce Homo* and *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche is very clear as to who his audience is: the modern man is a victim of timeliness and identifies with what is not himself but a general historical and social fiction. Such a man sees himself everywhere *but* in himself. He declares:

[H]e who lets concepts, opinions, past events, books, step between himself and things – he that is to say, who is in the broadest sense born for history – will never have an immediate perception of things and will never be an immediately perceived thing himself [...] if a man perceives himself by means of the opinions of others, it is no wonder if he sees in himself nothing but the opinions of others! (UM III 7; see also EH II 2–3)

Thus Nietzsche regards his task as making our current condition of unselfing lead out of itself. In his words, we must divert the “objective” towards the “subjective” (UM III 4). Although this may seem paradoxical, Nietzsche in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, begins with a reverse movement: in order to move from the objective to the subjective, we must begin by portraying the subjective in the guise of the objective in order to make it accessible to the reader, who is conta-

minated with objectivism. For such a man, Nietzsche contends, can only approach himself if he is presented with himself as an object, as a man whose sense of self has been lost (UM III 4).

His method for doing this is to use the monumental figure of Schopenhauer. As a historical and cultural object, the figure of Schopenhauer is accessible even to the sick, “unselfed” man. The educating figure belongs outside of the self, in the objective realm. Nietzsche’s intention, however, is to use the figure of Schopenhauer in order to offer us a *reflection* of *ourselves*. He presents the movement from reflexivity to self-identity in terms of a dialectic of knowledge and its “effects”. Roughly speaking, the process goes thus: a) *Knowledge* of the tutelary figure creates b) Emotions, from which is deduced c) *Self-knowledge* which enables d) *Self-becoming*. a) and c) belong to the realm of knowledge, while b) and d) are existential states. In Breazeale’s terms, a) and c) represent the “essentialist” input and b) and d) the “anti-essentialist” (he changes “anti-essentialist” to “existentialist” in a later essay (Breazeale 1997, p. xix). In the rest of this discussion, I will call the movement from a) to b) “inspiration”. The movement from c) to d) I will call “decision”.

## i Inspiration

Inspiration must be understood as a spontaneous desire for the creation of an unknown object, accompanied by the trust that this object will be revealed when the work is complete. Breazeale correctly shows that, for Nietzsche, inspiration is the mechanism by which one turns one’s encounter with a great figure into a means of self-knowledge; it is the criterion for the choice of an educator.<sup>1</sup> In his second *Untimely Meditation (On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life [UM II])*, Nietzsche had already approached monumental history in terms of an “inspiration” (*Anreizung*) that encourages one “to imitate, to do better” (UM II 2). Monumental history is the history of great men; it “awakens some who, gaining strength through reflecting on past greatness, are inspired with the feeling [*beseligt fühlen*] that the life of man is a glorious thing” (UM II 2). Further, Nietzsche defines this “inspiration” in terms of *possibilities*: one “learns from it that the greatness that once existed was in any event once *possible*, and may thus be possible again” (UM II 2).

---

<sup>1</sup> “What have you truly loved hitherto? What has exalted your soul? Place before yourself the series of these revered objects and perhaps they will provide you, through their nature and series, with a law, namely, with the fundamental law of your own true self.” Quoted in Breazeale 1998, p. 17.

The way that greatness in the educator inspires greatness in the disciple can therefore be recognized as the experience of *possibility*. For Nietzsche, possibility is not on the side of the epistemic content of the fact but of its experiential content because it is always understood in the first person: “[I]f this is possible, it is possible for me”, says the disciple. Accordingly, *Schopenhauer as Educator* goes further than *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* in defining greatness: to be great is no longer to be a monument of history, but to be oneself. In other words, greatness is a different thing for each person and is not attached to any great deed; it is attached to a *pathos*. This is crucial, because it means that the act of “imitation” mentioned above, which is presented as the result of inspiration, needs to be qualified. What is to be imitated in the great man is no single action or object, no *fact* about him, it is simply this one thing: that the great man was himself. In fact, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* expresses concern with the potential misunderstandings of this notion of inspiration and how it may lead to fanaticism. Nietzsche writes: “monumental history deceives by analogies, with seductive similarities, it inspires the courageous to foolhardiness, and the inspired to fanaticism” (UM II 2). Inspiration therefore, is an open and ambivalent process whose outcome in either education or fanaticism can only be decided by the nature of the disciple. The problem remains unsolved until *Ecce Homo*, where Nietzsche declares in the chapter “Why I Am So Clever” that the key lies in the personal “taste” of the disciple (EH II 8) and that “all questions of politics, the ordering of society, education have been falsified down to their foundations because the most injurious men have been taken for great men” (EH II 10). As Nietzsche maintained since the *Untimely Meditations* and until *Ecce Homo*: our hero has to be a mirror to ourselves, and indeed, Schopenhauer teaches us precisely this (UM III 4).

In other words, we will get from our “educator” only what we invest in him. This gives rise to some worries: choosing an educator is a fully active act on the part of the disciple. In fact, it is a direct consequence of the reflective project of self-becoming: if the disciple is to find herself in the educator, then the educator can only be defined after the disciple. Hence, there is every reason to believe that such an act will be carried out in a fashion directly proportional to the level of “taste” of the disciple.

This is why Nietzsche’s final word on inspiration in *Ecce Homo*, which relies on constraint and breeding, is also a final attempt at avoiding the fanatical potential of the emphasis he once placed on inspiration. For the later Nietzsche, if knowledge of the other is to lead into self-knowledge, its *inspirational* dimension has to outweigh its *factual* dimension; the ratio of factual knowledge and inspiration must always remain in favour of inspiration. If this *imbalance* is not achieved, we run the risk of fanaticism that is to say, an attitude that seeks self-be-

coming through *imitation*, and not *inspiration*. Indeed, by the time of *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche has dramatized the difference between imitation and inspiration which he now presents as strictly analogous to the difference between self-becoming and unselfing: he who is inspired becomes himself while he who imitates is a “zero”: “What? You are looking for something; you want to multiply yourself by ten, by a hundred? You are looking for disciples?—Look for zeros!—” (TI IX 14).<sup>2</sup> In other words, imitation is the reduction of the disciple to the educator; inspiration on the other hand, is the reduction of the educator with (and by) the disciple. This is why in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche opposes being “grounded in oneself” and being a “selfless” and an “objective” man:

You have to be firmly grounded in *yourself*, you have to stand on your own two feet to be able to love at all. At the end of the day, this is something women know all too well: they could not care less about selfless, purely objective men. (EH III 5)

In other words, an objective man is an object for himself, because he identifies with another man who is the object of his thought.

## ii Decision

This problem surfaces again in *Schopenhauer as Educator* when it comes to the effect of self-knowledge for self-becoming (UM III 5). It is a matter of drawing from this new knowledge a *real* outcome, or in Nietzsche’s words, a “practical activity”, “in short, to demonstrate that this ideal *educates*” (UM III 5). This explains why he says that one obtains from their encounter with an educator a “chain of duties”, which can weigh heavily on some of us (UM III 5). However, this chain is no different from this “fundamental law of [one’s] own true self” mentioned earlier. So why should it be experienced as a “weight”? Once more, it is the balance between crystallized facts and their inspirational value that holds the answer: As a “chain of fulfillable duties,” the law of the self is, to use Heidegger’s expression, “exact but not correct” (Heidegger 2002, p. 58). It may represent accurately who one is, but it transforms self-becoming into a set of duties, that is, into an external project. As such, it only estranges us further from ourselves: we become parodies of ourselves. We encounter the same problem as we did with the question of imitation: the focus is shifted from the “pathos” – or existential disposition – to the *facts*. Thus we can see how *Schopenhauer as Educator* plays an ambiguous game with the notion of knowledge.

---

<sup>2</sup> See also, for example, EH Preface and GS 255.

From the outset Nietzsche identifies the paradox involved in self-becoming, namely that it bridges the gap that separates a world of unselfing from one's true self and that in so doing it both affirms and denies the incommensurability of both terms. As with most incommensurables, Nietzsche seeks to bridge this gap thanks to a speculative movement of knowledge and experience. Yet the presence of knowledge within self-knowledge is problematic because it involves a certain degree of *freedom* for the subject: the freedom to choose their educator, to choose how this educator will reflect their true self, and finally, the freedom to act upon the discovery of their true self. In short, there is no device yet to ensure that the model of inspiration (where one discovers one's true self by experiencing his emotional response as a marker of his deepest kinship) prevails over the model of imitation (where one is deceived by one's identification with the non-self). In order to achieve this, Nietzsche says that he needs to "conscientiously reduce this new circle of duties to a formula" that will contain the right balance of inspiration over factuality (UM III 5). It is in *Ecce Homo* that such a formula is presented.

There, we encounter the opposition of knowledge and inspiration in a radicalized form. The third section of the account of *Zarathustra* is devoted entirely to the question of inspiration and it is worth noting that it opens by establishing a sharp contrast between inspiration and *knowledge*:

Has anyone at the end of the nineteenth century a distinct conception of what poets of the strong ages call *inspiration*? [...] One hears, one does not seek, one takes, one does not ask who gives, a thought flashes up like lightning, with necessity, unfalteringly formed—I have never had any choice. (EH III Z 3)

For Nietzsche, this characterization of inspiration is connected to a certain use of language: in *Ecce Homo*, he devotes section 4 of "Why I Write Such Good Books" to what he calls his "style", that is to say, a use of language that emphasizes the experiential dimension of his own thoughts over their objective content and manages "to communicate a state, an inner tension of *pathos* through signs." For Nietzsche "every style is *good* which actually communicates an inner state" (EH III 4). The device that ensures that language will always have an effect that prevails over its epistemic meaning is metaphor. In the section on *Zarathustra*, he affirms that metaphor is "mighty" and he declares: "the involuntary nature of image, of metaphor is the most remarkable thing of all" (EH III Z 3), because it is the "return of language to the nature of imagery" (EH III Z 6); that is to say, among other things, of perception. Metaphor is "mighty" because it produces physical reactions, its effect is physical, "involuntary" and not intellectual: it creates in one "an ecstasy whose tremendous tension sometimes discharges it-

self in a flood of tears, while one's steps now involuntarily rush along, now involuntarily lag, a complete being outside of oneself" (EH III Z 3).

### iii Amor Fati

This "being outside of oneself" should not be confused with unselfing. On the contrary, it is described as absolute coincidence with one's self, for in this state, "everything is in the highest involuntary but takes place as a tempest of a feeling of freedom, of absoluteness, of power, of divinity" (EH III Z 3). In *Ecce Homo*, "inspiration" is presented as making the inspired poet "merely a mouthpiece, merely a medium of overwhelming forces" (EH III Z 3), yet the context makes it clear that it does so without "unselfing" him.

We can now go back to the original sentence from *Ecce Homo*: "[T]hat one becomes what one is presupposes that one doesn't have the remotest idea what one is" (EH II 9). We can now see how this sentence echoes the concern expressed in *Schopenhauer as Educator* that a chain of ideals would weigh too heavily on our shoulders. For Nietzsche, we are larger and more complex than this set of ideals and pieces of self-knowledge can grasp; further, there is a logical inversion in seeking self-knowledge *in order to* become oneself because it is easy to confuse our true self with the self that we are being at present, precisely the one we need to shed: for Nietzsche the risk is for the "instinct to understand itself too early":

The entire surface of consciousness—consciousness *is* a surface—has to be kept clear of any of the great imperatives. Even the grand words, the grand attitudes must be guarded against! All of them represent a danger that the will risks 'understanding itself' too early (EH II 9)

That is to say, one must not turn to self-understanding before achieving their own self-becoming. In short: self-understanding and self-becoming are mutually exclusive. In *Ecce Homo* therefore, the refusal to understand oneself provides full freedom for the true self to express itself "subterraneously": "[I]n the meantime, the organizing idea destined to rule [the true self] grows and grows in the depths—it begins to command, it slowly leads back from sidepaths and wrong turnings..." (EH II 9).

Nietzsche links this renewed idea of self-becoming to the thought of *amor fati*: the ignorance of oneself in self-becoming is a sign of self-sufficiency and absolute peace, a peace that is, Nietzsche claims, offered by his "innermost na-



ture” of *amor fati*, (EH IV)<sup>3</sup>. The rejection of self-knowledge in favor of fate (and implicitly *amor fati*) is famously expressed in *On the Genealogy of Morality* through the opposition of “fatalism” and “*le petit fatalisme*” (GM III 24). This sheds light on the logical inversion between the conceptions of self-becoming advanced in *Schopenhauer as Educator* and *Ecce Homo*: the true self no longer appears as a future project pursued by the “untrue self”; rather, it is by affirming the true self that the untrue self will be overcome. To put it another way, what has been called “decision” above, namely, the move from self-knowledge to self-becoming by appeal to a “chain” of *factual* duties, is re-formulated through *amor fati*. This explains why in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of his efforts to rejuvenate language in *Zarathustra*: there, he suggests, language is no longer descriptive of *facts* but affirmative, that is to say, expressive and performative. On several occasions in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche defines Zarathustra’s language as “dithyramb” and in turn dithyramb as the language of affirmation (EH III Z 7). The dithyramb is also built to transcend words and their factual meaning: it does not *describe* but it *impacts*: “[T]o have understood, *that is to say experienced*, six sentences of that book, would raise man to a higher level of mortals” (EH III 1, my emphasis). If we remember the characterization of “inspiration”, we can now clarify the role of *amor fati*: the dithyramb arises from inspiration and expresses a superior truth that is not found in facts. Similarly, *amor fati* offers us an ecstasy into the higher whole that looks beyond particulars. This makes self-knowledge suddenly irrelevant to the attainment of self-becoming, because it appears now that self-becoming is brought about by self-affirmation and expression. This expression needs to be protected, and this is why Nietzsche affirms clearly that self-ignorance is the guarantee of this protection.

For Nietzsche, *amor fati* presents itself as a formula for “pure affirmation” (GS 276). This affirmation is the affirmation of “necessity” and it can also be found in *Schopenhauer as Educator*: “[A]ll that can be denied deserves to be denied” (UM III 153). Later on, Nietzsche goes on to affirm that only the particular can be denied (Z I ix; TI IX 49), and that the pathos of denial is precisely “*le petit fatalisme*” which turns the undeniable *whole* into a series of discrete and deniable *facts*.

I therefore propose that Nietzsche’s thought of *amor fati* is one of his most accomplished attempts at a critique of the traditional recourse to consciousness

---

<sup>3</sup> See also EH II 9: “I do not want myself to be other than I am, but that is how I have always lived. I have harboured no desire”.

in education. *Amor fati* is first and foremost a critique of “local fatalism”<sup>4</sup> (Dennett 1984, 105): in *amor fati*, all local facts, events and objects become disregarded and revalued in light of the fact that denying any one of them would amount to denying the whole of reality. On the contrary, Nietzsche’s fatalism is opposed to “*le petit fatalisme*” or “factualism” and *Zarathustra* already declared: “They meet an invalid, or an old man, or a corpse- and immediately they say: ‘Life is refuted!’ But they only are refuted, and their eye, which seeth only one aspect of existence” (Z I ix)<sup>5</sup>.

This opposition between *amor fati* and “local fatalism” leads necessarily to a form of education which does not rely on the analytic abilities of consciousness, with its “chain of duties”, but to a holistic education which offers an attitude to oneself that achieves self-becoming without necessitating self-knowledge. With *amor fati*, therefore, we can understand better the hidden reasons why Nietzsche considers the concepts of “choice”, “decision”, “consciousness”, “facts” and discrete “duties” as part of the web of objective thinking which constitutes not the means but the main obstacle to self-becoming.

#### iv Will to Power

This later rejection of self-knowledge in favor of self-becoming results in the rejection of the original argument for self-knowledge. When the argument posited that one had to *represent* to oneself the objective of their transformation in order to achieve it (thereby placing self-becoming in the dependency of conscious decision), Nietzsche’s discovery of the self as will to power makes self-becoming without self-knowledge possible. According to Nietzsche, we can direct our efforts towards an unknown object, in this case, oneself. If “decision” can become “expression” in *amor fati*, it is because the intellect no longer possesses the monopoly of this directionality, and therefore, because directionality becomes distinct from representation. In fact, the doctrine of the will to power extirpates di-

---

<sup>4</sup> Both Robert Solomon (Solomon 2006, 184) and Maudemarie Clark (Clark 1990, 182) seem to support the “local view” although they offer no arguments for their preference. For a more extended critique of the local fatalism readings of Nietzsche, see Chouraqui 2015a, p. 272ff.

<sup>5</sup> Fate extends far beyond the bounds of our own narrow outlook, for us to judge it and “pick and choose” as the “local” view contends would be like shooting in the dark. See also, among many others: “What is most intimate in me teaches me that everything that is necessary, seen from above and interpreted within a *higher* economy, is also the useful in itself – one has to not only endure it, but also to *love* it . . . *Amor fati*: here is my innermost nature” (NW Epilogue 1).

rectionality from the jurisdiction of the understanding (that is to say, from the realm of conscious decision, of discrete facts and objective chains of duties) to place it firmly in the instinctual realm: if the model of self-knowledge proposed in *Schopenhauer as Educator* finds its relevance in the necessity to ensure that what one becomes is precisely oneself, this involves that the process of self-becoming is made up of three instances: the actual self, the movement of transformation (becoming) and the self that is to be attained (the “true” self). Of course, this view relies on a strict sense of “what one is” envisaged as a perfect state applicable to both the untrue self (as a criterion of its failure) and the true one (as a criterion of its success), obviously making the transition problematic: it seems that such a sense of “what one is” is so demanding that it makes it incommensurable to the current state: that of “not being oneself”.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche overcomes this tension by reversing the problem: it is now the transitional virtue of “becoming” that is given priority over the state of univocal being. This move was made possible by the discovery of the will to power as an attempt to stabilize his ontology of becoming. Such an ontology allows the inclusion of the project of self-becoming within being: if being is becoming, we can attain being without *aiming at* anything. Out of the three elements mentioned above (the current self, the self that one truly is, and the becoming supposed to lead the former into the latter), only two become necessary, namely, the present self and the movement of becoming. Therefore, a deep grounding in the present self is sufficient to ensure a projection towards the true self.

This point is controversial. John Richardson for example, gives a remarkably concise expression of the opposite view, namely, the view that Nietzsche’s notion of the will to power installs consciousness and intentionality within becoming, making any transformation the result of a conscious and thematic representation. In the context of his critical examination of Nietzsche’s opposition to Darwin, he writes: “Nietzsche’s terms ‘will’ and ‘drive’ suggest an intentional end-directedness – that either power or survival is an intended goal” (Richardson 2002, p. 545). If, as it seems, Richardson means by this any form of teleological structure (and not just a projective structure), this seems to me to be in sharp opposition with several passages, and most notably with one in section 12 of the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, in which Nietzsche draws a sharp distinction between causes and purposes, and emphatically tries to avoid misunderstandings of the type Richardson seems to fall prey to here. Nietzsche insists in this section that results occur without purpose, and that human activity, and organic life in general, is the expression of an impulse and not of a purpose. He writes unambiguously: “[T]he origin of the emergence of a thing and its ultimate usefulness, its practical application to a system of

ends, are *toto coelo* separate”; and further, “every purpose and use is just a *sign* that the will to power has achieved mastery... the ‘development’ of a thing, a tradition, an organ, is therefore certainly not its *progressus* towards a goal, still less is it a logical *progressus*” (GM I 12). It must be admitted therefore, that the appearance of the will to power in Nietzsche’s philosophical vocabulary allows for a new form of becoming, precisely a becoming powered from behind, as it were, and not teleologically determined. From now on, becoming oneself can credibly be described as achievable regardless of any self-knowledge, and even, as possible only by ignoring who one is, so as to avoid self-objectification and self-parody.

## 2 Culture: From Generalized Education to the Politics of Breeding

The opposition between self-becoming and self-knowledge has consequences for Nietzsche’s early account of education: for the early Nietzsche, education is essentially a negative movement, a *getting rid* of what stops us from being ourselves, of the “unself” inside us. It acts from the outside in, and this is for the reasons described above, that is to say, for paradoxical reasons. Precisely because Nietzsche is attempting to extricate the great individual from the herd, he needs to account for the web of connections that maintains this individual in a state of sickness (UM III 3). In his usual manner, Nietzsche devotes much of *Schopenhauer as Educator* to the portrait of the philosopher confronted to an unresponsive and scornful social environment. Such a social climate, he insists, is unfavourable to the attainment of greatness. This means that the ideal of self-becoming has consequences outside the individual and that it requires a new social order to become sustainable: an appeal to culture has now become indispensable.

In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, culture is defined as “the promotion of superior beings”; as such, it is the “trans-figuration of nature”. Nature, too, aims at the promotion of the higher individuals but its method is economically wasteful. The task of human culture is to rationalize the “extravagance” of nature by ensuring that there is no waste of higher natures and that all superior attempts reach home (UM III 7).<sup>6</sup> It is a duty that applies to all of us, not just the geniuses. In addition, the process of culture is dependent on self-knowledge: one must

---

<sup>6</sup> “[Nature] propels the philosopher into mankind like an [arrow, it takes no aim but hopes it will stick somewhere” (UM III 7).

know who one is in order to adopt one's proper position in society: the best would be to be a higher being. Failing that, one's duty is to support the development of those who are, by serving them.<sup>7</sup>

## i The Great Man in an Indifferent Environment in *Schopenhauer as Educator*

Of course, Nietzsche is already aware of the difficulty of achieving such a social order, because “though one may be ready to sacrifice one's life to the state, for instance, it is another matter to sacrifice it on behalf of another individual” (UM III 162).<sup>8</sup> The only way to attain such a “condition”, he suggests, is to attach oneself to an educating figure. Consequently, this puts culture in the dependence of education, and it is clear in *Schopenhauer as Educator* that Nietzsche views culture as a form of generalized education.

Here, the problem described above reappears: any proper education, if it is to provide self-knowledge, involves activity not on the part of the educator but on the part of the student and this activity, in turn, is uncontrollable insofar as it teaches only what the student puts into it.<sup>9</sup> The risk is that the choice of educator will simply mirror the self-*mis*understanding of the disciple. Nietzsche is aware of this problem; he opens his section on culture by acknowledging that if his concept of culture is correct, education as previously described (in terms of self-knowledge) becomes an inadequate method of achieving culture and in a passage already cited he declares:

Now, in face of such objections I am willing to concede that in precisely this respect our work has hardly begun and that from my own experience I am sure of only one thing: that from the ideal image it is possible to fasten upon ourselves a chain of fulfillable duties, and that some of us already feel the weight of this chain. But before I can conscientiously reduce this new circle of duties to a formula I must offer the preliminary observations. (UM III 5)

---

<sup>7</sup> “Culture is the child of each individual's self-knowledge and dissatisfaction with himself” (UM III 6). See also Nietzsche 2006.

<sup>8</sup> “[I]t is hard to create in anyone this condition of intrepid self-knowledge because it is impossible to teach love; for it is love alone that can bestow on the soul, not only a clear, discriminating and self-contemptuous view of itself, but also the desire to look beyond itself and to seek with all its might for a higher self as yet still concealed to it” (UM III 6).

<sup>9</sup> “Ultimately, no one can extract from things, including books, more than he already knows” (EH III 1); see also a letter from 1885: “the person who stands before these paintings with youthful and raging senses and with great expectations will find just as much truth as he is able to see”. Quoted in Breazeale, 1998, p. 22.

In other words, the carrying over of the difficulties linked to self-knowledge – namely that it provides a multitude of facts and not a “pathos” – becomes an obstacle for a theory of culture and will have to be overcome later thanks to a unique formula that will not act as a chain – that is to say, that will not be calcified into any piece of fixed objective knowledge – but will precisely create a “pathos”.

## ii The Great Man in a Hostile Environment in *Ecce Homo*: Will To Power

In Nietzsche’s later texts, starting around 1884, the freedom of the weak becomes defined as something essentially hostile to any education. This move coincides with the introduction of blind directionality via the hypothesis of the will to power. For Nietzsche, all power is permanently discharged so that unless it encounters a greater constraining power, any individual will discharge its power outwards. This leads Nietzsche to shift his original view of the great man as simply solitary (UM III 3), into that of a man confronted by *hostility*.<sup>10</sup> Those who have achieved self-becoming are able to discharge all of their power outwards, and therefore, they would constitute a threat to the weak. One key to this insight can be found in Nietzsche’s encounter with Darwin and his famous rejection of what he takes to be Darwin’s understanding of the “survival of the fittest”. Just a few months before the writing of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche notes: “Strange though it may sound, one always has to defend the strong against the weak” (WP 685).

It should be noted, however, that the aim of culture remains the same in this new context: precisely in Darwin’s alleged error, Nietzsche reaffirms the challenge of a transfiguration of nature, and re-establishes the question of the economics of life introduced in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. In *Ecce Homo*, he describes the Great Man as having to grow spikes like a hedgehog in order to protect himself from the spirit of the age, yet this process of growing spikes is “exhausting” and wasteful (EH II 8). In the case of the Great Man then, the “extravagance” of nature has not been ruled out, instead, it has been dramatized by appeal to the concept of the will to power: in fragments 13:14 [123] and [133] of Spring 1888, Nietzsche opposes Darwin precisely on account of the fact that what he calls the “lucky strokes” enjoy a life expectancy inversely proportional to their greatness. The argument, which takes over the metaphor presented in

---

<sup>10</sup> “Self-preservation [for the great man] manifests itself most unambiguously as an instinct for self-defence” (EH II 8).

*Schopenhauer as Educator* of nature's random propelling of great men is a direct transposition of the argument for a transfiguration of nature. Yet, there is one difference: it is no longer a question of *promoting* the hero against a background of *neutral* randomness, it is now a question of *defending* him against the weak. Here, there is no doubt that the model of voluntary education (with its multiple potentially disastrous misunderstandings – especially on the part of the weak) becomes far too feeble and that only *constraint* will make the individual submit to another, higher individual.

This shift is crucial for two reasons: first, it involves a move away from the individual-based model of education towards a specifically political model: there can be no self-becoming without *everyone's* self-becoming. Second and consequently, it leads to a view of politics as *breeding* and constraint.

### iii The Appeal to Breeding as Constraint

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche reminds us of the *provisional* character of the remarks presented in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. The *Untimely Meditations*, he says, were “first expressions” (EH III UM 3). That is to say, among other things, that according to Nietzsche, these essays record the beginnings of his search for the final formula mentioned above. The provisional aspect of UM 3 suggests that Nietzsche's project lies beyond offering an educational model of the relationship of the educator and the disciple; Nietzsche is really attempting to create a philosophy that *in turn* can educate, a philosophy based on this one formula.<sup>11</sup> This has great consequences for the conception of culture as generalized education: we cannot expect people to attain self-knowledge as long as they are the ones charged with freely determining this knowledge. In other words, what one should expect from Nietzsche is a “stimulus” that is not reflexive but *external* (Breazeale 1998, p. 18). This structure removes the object of reflection from the ambiguity where it once found itself – being altogether a historical object and a monumental educator. Paradoxically, this appeal to pure externality rids us of the problems related to the ambivalence of reflexivity spelled out above. The key that makes such an externality worth cultivating lies precisely in the fact that this new formula is *all impact* and no intellectual meaning. Nietzsche himself emphasizes the shift that occurred between the *Untimely Meditations*

---

<sup>11</sup> In his account of the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche affirms that he used Schopenhauer “as one takes an opportunity by the forelock, in order to say something, in order to have a couple more formulas, signs, means of expression in [his] hands” (EH III UM 3).

and *Ecce Homo*: “[W]here I am today [as opposed to at the time of the *Untimely Meditations*], at a height at which I no longer speak with words but with lightning bolts – oh how far away I was from this in those days!” (EH III UM 3).

Of course, all of this depends on Nietzsche’s ambition to provide a transformative experience that is not essentially propositional. This is the great challenge that it took the entirety of *On the Genealogy of Morality* to meet. By section 24 of the third essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche has shown that, far from eradicating them, the will to truth only transformed the beliefs in moralistic ideals into a belief in an ideal truth. Yet all these ideals are not essentially distinct, for they are all *ascetic* ideals. For Nietzsche, we must offer a new ideal, one of a nature entirely other than these. We must overcome the fact that the discovery that the will to truth was ascetic only complicates matters by finding an “ideal” that can inspire us even as it does not present itself as true. To be sure, these high demands place Nietzsche in the most difficult situation, at the close of a book throughout which it has been suggested that “ideals” are *essentially* supported by the affirmation of backworlds [*Hinterwelten*], and therefore are necessarily ascetic.

Nietzsche’s hope lies precisely in the *inspiring* power of experience: we must be driven to action, or to transformation, by our *experience* of a thought and not by our *belief* in it. The task therefore, is to provide a thought whose *impact* overpowers its *truth content* to the point that it creates a response regardless of its being true or not, a thought in short, whose signifier exceeds the signified. After all, this mechanism is nothing other than the one used by the slaves as their secret weapon in their “revolt in morality”: the fear elicited by any talk of afterlife and punishment has led the beautiful, blond beasts to distrust themselves without any examination of the truth of such claims.<sup>12</sup> Even in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche foresaw that forcing men into a cultivating society would have to be done by means of discourse, yet a discourse that would be entirely performative: “One has to compel man to take [the goal of culture] seriously, that is to say, to let it inspire them to action. I consider every word behind which there does not stand such a challenge to action to have been written in vain” (UM III 184).

The formula sought after would be the “great cultivating idea” of Eternal Recurrence delivered later by Zarathustra (WP 1056). In a note from 1884, Nietzsche declares: “To the paralyzing sense of general disintegration and *incompleteness* I opposed Eternal Recurrence” (NF 1883–84, 24[28]: KSA 10/662). It is not our pur-

---

12 For an extended analysis of the place of hyperbole in the slave revolt in morality, see Chouraqi, 2015b.



pose here to determine how the idea of Eternal Recurrence opposes incompleteness, but it is enough to stress how Nietzsche's declaration confirms the link between eternal recurrence and self-becoming. The "sense of incompleteness", which is the challenge posed by the modern condition of unselfing in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, and which was to be overcome by education, must now be overcome by a thought that Nietzsche famously describes in several notes from 1887 as "a means of breeding and selection".<sup>13</sup> In fact, *Ecce Homo* makes it clear that *amor fati* and Eternal Recurrence are intrinsically linked by their pathos of affirmation and he concludes *Ecce Homo* by affirming the necessity to *breed* in order to re-establish the natural order in relation to self-becoming: "In the concept of the 'selfless' or the 'self-denying'... all that which ought to perish—the law of selection crossed" (EH IV 8). And this "crossing of the law of selection" calls for the thought of Eternal Recurrence as a breeding thought. Therefore, it seems that Nietzsche expects the thought of Eternal Recurrence to bring about a social and individual rearrangement grounded beyond knowledge, and whose members dwell in *amor fati*.<sup>14</sup> In this formula, it seems that Nietzsche has found the perfect balance in a thought whose impact necessarily outweighs its propositional content – a hyperbole.

### 3 Conclusion

It has now become clear that the movement that led Nietzsche from his first sketch of self-becoming and of culture in *Schopenhauer as Educator* to his most mature formulae for these in *Ecce Homo* is structured by the ambiguities contained in the first. The younger Nietzsche viewed self-becoming as the outcome of a singular education that dialectically mixes factual knowledge with existential experiences. The appeal to knowledge was already problematic for Nietzsche: he needed to maintain self-knowledge in order to ensure that one was not mistaken in one's goals, but he knew that this appeal also left the door open to self-deception. Similarly, Nietzsche established culture as the promotion of great men, defining its role in relation to nature, as its "transfigura-

---

<sup>13</sup> For example, 12:9[8] (1887) and 11:26[376] (1884).

<sup>14</sup> "No longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty" (11:26[284] 1884) "abolition of 'knowledge in itself'" (11:26[283] 1884). In the terms of this discussion, "Eternal Recurrence" presents itself as a *possibility* and thus as an experience. According to Nietzsche, the mere idea of Eternal Recurrence is an idea that must be *endured* (11:26[376] and 11:26[283] of 1884), which implies that the very *thought* of it, not even its being a proven reality is an idea that most will be unable to endure.

tion". Again, this required self-knowledge in order to identify one's role in culture and this view of culture amounted to a generalization of education as defined above. This appeal to knowledge created tensions within Nietzsche's early text, because it built oneself and culture *themselves* into objects of knowledge and rules of conduct. The problem with this objectivism was that it maintained the subject's relationship to itself within the external relationship of the object.

The later developments in Nietzsche's writings, however, allow us to ease the tension at work in the early text. If self-knowledge seems to be a necessary (albeit problematic) element of self-becoming, Nietzsche's later discovery of the self as drives allows for a new solution. One no longer needs to know *who* one is in order to *become* it: self-becoming is no longer a project, but an existential mode of being in its own right. The true self is no longer teleologically conceived as an aim, even less as a represented or imitable object. Indeed, in the section of *Ecce Homo* entitled "Why I am a Destiny" Nietzsche's text moves from the imperative of self-becoming to the question of great politics. One of the most salient points however, is that Nietzsche presents himself as an *example* of self-becoming and of *amor fati*, but *not* as a "hero", ("I am the reverse of a heroic nature" [EH II 9]) or as an educating figure. Indeed, this is Nietzsche's most concentrated warning against drawing facile parallels between the educating figure of Schopenhauer in *Schopenhauer as Educator* and that of Nietzsche himself in *Ecce Homo*; after all, it was Schopenhauer's personality and not his ideas that was to edify us, whereas in Nietzsche's case, it is the exact opposite: Nietzsche's legacy is a break in history, not through his personal place in culture, but through the thoughts he has sown in culture and which are meant to become educating experiences of possibilities.

As regards *education*, this involves a shift from on the one hand a negative education that "liberates" one from the non-self that one finds oneself embedded into and on the other hand the direct affirmation of *amor fati*. This does not remove the element of liberation from self-becoming, but it reverses its place in the process: where liberation through a series of acts of consciousness was seen as a precondition for self-becoming in the early text, liberation is now seen as simultaneous with self-becoming. Nietzsche has replaced self-knowledge with self-expression.

As regards *culture*, this involves a shift from a generalized education to a politics of breeding: the introduction of the doctrine of the will to power makes it impossible to rely on the voluntary submission of the weak, as Nietzsche still did in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. Instead, one needs a more forceful cultural device than mere education and self-knowledge. Culture becomes a matter of breeding.

These two advances call for a device that would present itself as an *experience* and not an *object of knowledge* whilst at the same time offering a compelling force that would permit the re-establishment of the natural hierarchical order that was reversed by the advent of the weak: such is the place of the thought of Eternal Recurrence in Nietzsche's thinking about culture.