

Título do Projecto: Nietzsche on Nihilism and the Value of Art — Fragments

The main objective of the project is to promote internationally relevant research on Nietzsche's conception of nihilism and the way in which his view of the value of art and the relationship between art and life remains crucial today. Nietzsche's view of art is characterised precisely by the fact that it focuses on the "value" of art and subordinates the questions of Aesthetics to critical reflection on values and the crisis of nihilism in modernity.

As regards the concept of nihilism, the project assumes that this continues to be a key-concept for the interpretation of the values that predominate in contemporary culture, and it assumes that, in spite of the fact that Nietzsche's conception of nihilism is at the origin of all subsequent conceptions of nihilism, it still lacks a comprehensive clarification, from both the philological and the philosophical point of view. In part, this is due to Heidegger's errors of interpretation, which remain influential. His errors, as well as the errors of other early influential readers of Nietzsche, have only begun to be criticised and debunked by the Nietzsche research in the last 20 years. And this task is not yet complete.

The project aims to show that this clarification of the concept of nihilism is crucial for the research on the value of art, particularly for the research on the Nietzschean claim that the value of art resides in the "affirmation of life" and that art is a decisive "counter-movement" for the "battle against nihilism".

In order to achieve these aims, the project will produce a set of "fragments" of what a complete investigation of its theme might be, especially in regard to the relation between art and nihilism in Nietzsche's thought. Those "fragments" include: (a) the publication of a collection of essays on Nietzsche and nihilism in European culture; (b) the development of previous research of the team on the relationship between Nietzsche and Fernando Pessoa; (c) the publication of a collection of essays on "Nietzsche and the arts"; (d) the organisation of an international conference on the importance, but also on the errors, of Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche, especially of his view of the value of art and the concept of nihilism.

All team members of the project are experts on one or more crucial aspects of the project. The core of the team is an international Nietzsche research group. This group, previously designated "Nietzsche International Lab" (NIL) and recently rebaptised as "Lisbon Nietzsche Group", exists since 2009, and it integrates 8 FCT Post-doc fellows working on Nietzsche at the Instituto de Filosofia da Nova (Ifilnova). Since 2010, it has been awarded two FCT research projects and is currently executing a project financed by the FCT and the DAAD. The proposed research project will involve coordination and networking between the Lisbon Nietzsche Group and some of the most important European Nietzsche research groups.

A significant rise in the level of Nietzsche scholarship in the last twenty years has brought Nietzsche into the mainstream of philosophy. Even the most committed analytic philosophers have become interested in his naturalism, as well as in his critique of values. His conception of nihilism is a relevant theme of contemporary ethics, aesthetics, and political philosophy. The textual and historical study of his writings has also become a matter of first-rate scholarship. In the field of so-called “continental” philosophy, and particularly in “continental” aesthetics and philosophy of art, interest in Nietzsche remains as lively as it has been for more than 60 years. The proposed project aims to foster the very best philological and philosophical Nietzsche research and scholarship from both the “continental” and the Anglophone lines of interpretation.

Nietzsche’s view of nihilism seems to imply that all value is just a human projection — so that, for example, truth and goodness are nothing more than metaphysical fictions — , and yet he also seems to see in art a legitimate way of valuing and establishing tables of values, in fact of values that “affirm life” and hence counter the hostility to life involved in all nihilistic ways of valuing and looking at the world. This tension between the view that all metaphysical, moral, and religious valuing is vacuous and the view that art is a legitimate way of valuing and giving positive value to life (or “the earth”) is the main issue at stake in this project.

Recent research on Nietzsche’s conception of nihilism shows a relatively clear divide and dissension between “continental” and “Anglophone” literature. The continental Nietzsche research tends to interpret nihilism as a cultural condition that cannot really be “overcome”, particularly in view of Nietzsche’s scepticism with regard to (normative) truth; the Anglophone Nietzsche research, by contrast, tends to highlight Nietzsche’s efforts to “overcome” nihilism, as well as his efforts to preserve and value naturalistic “relative truth” (even if he indeed rejects the idea of a metaphysical, absolute truth). But on both sides (and especially on the Anglophone side of the divide), there is still work to be done on Nietzsche’s sources and how his conception of nihilism emerged from his engagement with such authors as Bourget or Turgenev. Moreover, the most influential interpretation of Nietzsche’s conception of nihilism — that of Heidegger — has been challenged in many ways, but a thorough investigation of its tenability and cogency is still needed. Dismissing Heidegger’s interpretation by pointing out that Nietzsche’s philosophy is merely critical and experimental, and not metaphysical, does not respond to the charge that his philosophy remains implicitly metaphysical in the Heideggerian sense of “ontotheological”.

In Anglophone secondary literature, REGINSTER 2008 has for some time been the main work on Nietzsche’s conception of nihilism. There are, however, several aspects in this work which the international Nietzsche research has found problematic: (i) the tendency to reduce Nietzsche’s conception of nihilism to a meta-ethical question; (ii) the absence of any convincing criteria to account for the nihilism of “last men”; (iii) the

absence of any convincing criteria to account for the fact that Nietzsche considers Platonism and Christianity to be “nihilistic”; (iv) the thesis that Nietzsche’s project is the “overcoming” of nihilism, as mentioned above. This last point is the one which has been most contested in the “continental” Nietzsche research.

But the project aims to clarify, in particular, Nietzsche’s view of the value of art and the relationship between nihilism and art. In order to do this, the team will be invited to engage with a set of fundamental questions: What do Nietzsche’s sources on art and nihilism say? Does Nietzsche value art from a fictionalist point of view, that is, because art creates “fictions” (e.g. myths) and these are able to function as “honest illusions” (i.e., illusions that we know to be illusions), which give meaning to life? Is art “the great stimulans of life”, the “counter-movement” in the “struggle against nihilism” because art creates fictional values in which free-spirits can pretend to believe? Or is art, and particularly tragic art, an “intoxication” that reveals the “awful truth” and gives us courage to face it? What can art do in the age of the extreme nihilism of “last men”? How can art possibly play the role of a “counter-movement” against the all-pervasive nihilism of the posthuman, postmodern, posthistorical? These questions are only superficially analysed in the most influential recent articles and books on Nietzsche on art. BRANCO/ HAY 2017 shows that there is much to be gained from a reconsideration of Nietzsche’s relationship with Kantian aesthetics, and BRUSOTTI/ SIEMENS 2017 and CONSTÂNCIO/BAILEY 2017 show that the whole question of truth, value, and nihilism is greatly implicated with Nietzsche’s engagements with Kant’s view of cognitive and moral judgments, as well as with questions about the meta-ethical status of values. CONSTÂNCIO/ BRANCO/ RYAN 2015 shows the importance of Nietzsche’s problematisation of subjectivity for the clarification of his view of the status of value and, hence, of the value of art. SCHRIFT 1995 shows the relevance of such authors as Deleuze, Derrida, and Lyotard for this debate.

BRANCO M.J.M./ HAY, K. (eds.), *Nietzsche’s Engagements with Kant and the Kantian Legacy, volume III: Aesthetics, Anthropology, and History*, London/New York, Bloomsbury, 2017

CONSTÂNCIO, J./ BRANCO, M.J.M./ RYAN, B. (eds.), *Nietzsche and the Problem of Subjectivity*, Berlin/ Boston, de gruyter, 2015

CONSTÂNCIO, J./ BAILEY, T. (eds.), *Nietzsche’s Engagements with Kant and the Kantian Legacy, volume II: Nietzsche and Kantian Ethics*, London/New York, Bloomsbury, 2017

BRUSOTTI, M./ SIEMENS, H. (eds.), *Nietzsche’s Engagements with Kant and the Kantian Legacy, volume I: Epistemology and the Problem of Metaphysics*, London/New York, Bloomsbury, 2017

SCHRIFT, Alan D., *Nietzsche’s French Legacy*, London/ New York, Routledge, 1995