

Nietzsche na fenomenologia

Near things: leisure time and rest. Phenomenology of idleness in Friedrich Nietzsche

Perto das coisas: tempo de lazer e descanso. Fenomenologia da ociosidade em Friedrich Nietzsche

Paolo Scolari¹ 

¹ Catholic University of Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy

ABSTRACT

Both outdated and product of his times, Nietzsche warns us not to be a John-a-dreams, but to look around and see clearly how men live each day. In his judgements and polemics, Nietzsche reveals himself as an attentive observer of his reality and problems of his time. His attention permeates themes that make up the rhapsodic existence, public and private, of those who live in modern society, which are rarely considered by most people and very rarely receive attention from a philosophy that is still too far-removed and detached from the reality of everyday life. Academic philosophizing still remains hypocritically focused on great questions, neglecting the most properly human issues. Nietzsche believes he has a keen eye for transforming the familiar into a problem, a task that includes inquiring leisure time and rest.

Keywords: Nietzsche; Phenomenology; Leisure time; Rest; Everyday life

RESUMO

Tanto extemporâneo quanto produto do seu tempo, Nietzsche nos adverte quanto a sermos sonhadores que não olham ao redor e não vêem como vivemos nosso cotidiano. Em seus juízos e polêmicas, Nietzsche se revela um observador atento de sua realidade e dos problemas do seu tempo. Sua atenção perfaz temas da rapsódica existência, pública e privada, daqueles que vivem na sociedade moderna, os quais raramente são considerados pela maioria das pessoas e raramente recebem atenção de uma filosofia que ainda se distancia muito da realidade da vida cotidiana. A filosofia acadêmica ainda permanece hipocritamente focada nas grandes questões, negligenciando as questões mais propriamente humanas. Nietzsche sabe ter um olhar aguçado para transformar o familiar em problemas, tarefa que inclui a problematização do tempo de lazer e do descanso.

Palavras-chave: Nietzsche; Fenomenologia; Tempo de lazer; Descanso; Vida cotidiana

«I am far from any idea of philosophy as a system that comprehends everything and explains everything; rather I prefer a more minute, more occasional philosophy, which finds in everything a cause to reflect on its meaning, in every moment of social life a pretext for reasoning on the human world».

G. Anders

A LOOK AT NEAR THINGS. A PHILOSOPHY *EN PLEIN AIR*

In his monumental work on Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger identifies in Nietzschean thought five key concepts, five pillars on which Nietzsche builds his remarkable interpretation: «nihilism», the «transvaluation of all values», the «will to power», «eternal recurrence» and the «superman». Yet although Heidegger's theoretical perception is certainly extremely acute and penetrating, in extending it there is the risk that something might be lost. Its limitation, in fact (if indeed one can talk of limitation in this context), seems to be that it professes to recapitulate all of Nietzsche in these few cornerstones, as if they represented the only way to approach his thinking¹. Consequently, by reducing the entire Nietzschean philosophy to this selection, everything that does not belong to it risks being confined to the shadows or considered as merely functional to it, as if it pertained to a 'minor' Nietzsche. To do so, however, would be to let slip through our hands a world which, as we approach his writings, seems to advance resolutely towards us – a world of everyday life, one might say. Indeed, Nietzsche's philosophizing is invariably inspired by what is most real and concrete of all that he sees before him, with which he is in constant dialogue and debate. His is a long, hard look at everyday existence.

In Nietzsche we have a very close-up view of the type of philosophizing that Günther Anders called *en plein air*². The philosopher from Röcken, in fact, was well aware of the importance of living in the moment; both outdated and a product of his

¹ Cfr. HEIDEGGER, **Nietzsche**, 563-573.

² ANDERS, **L'uomo è antiquato**, 4.

times, he tells us plainly not to be a «John-a-dreams», to «look around» and see clearly how men «live each day»³. In his slighting, plain-spoken judgements and his impassioned polemics, Nietzsche constantly shows how attentive an observer he is of the reality and problems of his time; as Karl Jaspers points out, it is difficult to find a topic on which he has not expressed his opinion⁴. His attention rests on those small themes («*all the nearest of things*», as he likes to call them in *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, the second part of the second volume of *Human, All Too Human*) that make up the rhapsodic existence, public and private, of those who live in modern society: «the twenty-four hours of the day», «eating, dwelling, dressing, social relations», «way of life», «division of the day», «occupation and leisure», holidays and rest, marriage and friendship – all small realities which, as Nietzsche himself observes, are «very badly observed by most people and very rarely given much attention» by a philosophy that is still too far-removed and detached from the reality of everyday life (from which Nietzsche himself constantly and contentiously distanced himself), an abstract, academic philosophizing that is «hypocritically» interested only in the «most important things» and the great «questions» but inevitably ends up with the «neglect of what is human». Nietzsche, on the other hand, believes he has «a keen eye» for «*the smallest and most everyday* [Alltäglichstes] *things*», and always succeeds in the «difficult» enterprise of «viewing the familiar as a problem»⁵.

OTIUM ET BELLUM. WORKERS VS IDLERS

These «*near things*» also include «leisure time» and «rest». Nietzsche was altogether a man of the 19th Century, and specifically of its last decades; all his works, in fact, are imprinted with the customs and experiences of the citizens of his era. This

³ NIETZSCHE, **Ecce Homo**, § The Untimely Meditations, 1; NIETZSCHE, **L'anticristo**, § 38; NIETZSCHE, **David Strauss**, § 4.

⁴ JASPERS, **Nietzsche**, 119; KAUFMANN, **Nietzsche**, 101, 108.

⁵ NIETZSCHE, **Human, All Too Human, II**, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, §§ 5, 6, 16; NIETZSCHE, **The Gay Science**, §§ 7, 355.

was an era characterised by the acute ambivalence of idleness. On one hand there was positivism, the second industrial revolution and an almost idolatrous exaltation of production and economy, which were inexorably driving the entire social fabric to drastically undervalue rest time in favour of the frenetic, continuous pace of work. On the other hand, a zealous democratic lifestyle made it possible for everyone (or almost everyone) to enjoy now and then moments of rest and leisure, albeit in the intervals of a strict working pace. In contrast to an abruptly increasing contempt for idleness, which today is regarded as slothfulness and even in Nietzsche's day was derisively dubbed (as he recalls) the «*father of all vices*», was a counter-movement whose goal was to deliver up this same idleness into the hands of as many people as possible⁶.

With regard to the question of idleness in Nietzschean philosophy, the first aspect that one immediately notices is its distinct discriminating role in an anthropological context – wherever we find *otium* there is invariably an interpersonal division originating from social inequality. To Nietzsche, as a pro-reactionary devotee of the Hellenism of the past, the separation between work-time and leisure-time implies, in fact, that both are firmly rooted in two antithetical social categories. The famous antagonism between gentlemen and servants, even before it became crystallized in *Beyond Good and Evil* as a struggle between two contrasting moral conceptions⁷, is decanted in the aphoristic pages of the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*, where it is presented as a duality of times. A «higher culture», Nietzsche bluntly asserts, may arise «only where there are two castes of society: the working caste and the idle caste»⁸. And if the majority of men are forced to work, then idleness is the prerogative only of the noble few: «the most aristocratic [of all manners] is that of being able to endure boredom»⁹. Despite living in an atmosphere characterised, as we said earlier, by a growing democratization of idleness, Nietzsche's position is *tranchant*: true *otium* will

⁶ NIETZSCHE, *Human, All Too Human, I*, § 248; cfr. DE MARTINO, *Stanchi del lavoro*, 9-11; cfr. DE MARTINO, *Ars vivendi*, 9-60; cfr. AA.VV., *Nichts Besseres zu tun*, 9-24; cfr. RIVA; SEQUERI, *Segni della destinazione*, 346-349.

⁷ Cfr. NIETZSCHE, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 260.

⁸ NIETZSCHE, *Human, All Too Human, I*, § 439.

⁹ NIETZSCHE, *Frammenti postumi, 1881-1882*, 11 [30].

always be exclusively aristocratic. The famous motto «*otium et bellum*» is echoed once again in an aphorism from *The Gay Science*: «'Nobility and honour are attached solely to *otium* and *bellum*' – that was the ancient prejudice!»¹⁰.

In addition to all this, in Nietzschean thought, as in antiquity, the celebration of *otium* invariably coincides with a revulsion towards productive work. Besides, Nietzsche sustained that a «faculty for idleness» never finds its full strength in itself, but is constantly fuelled by the belief that «labour degrades», referring to manual labour as opposed to the purely intellectual effort of aristocrats¹¹. In ancient society «the slave worked under the pressure of the feeling that he was doing something contemptible: 'doing' was itself contemptible». Work, simply 'doing', itself appeared vile and shameful, a disgrace to be despised because it humiliated man, depriving him of his freedom and bringing him down to the level of slaves and beasts. The working activity, comments Nietzsche in the same aphorism in *The Gay Science*, «was afflicted with a bad conscience», to the point that «a man of good family *concealed* the fact that he worked if need compelled him to work»¹².

SLUGGARDS VS IDLERS

This division is not reduced, however, to a mere historical reconstruction of the phenomenon of castes as belonging to a past that is as vague as it is glorious. Like a two-faced Janus, on one hand Nietzsche's gaze delves eagerly and with little constraint into the aristocratic past of the Greeks, while on the other is turned lucidly on the present. His is a double gaze, then, almost like a rubber band rhythmically stretching and slackening. It is a gaze that appears to constantly exalt the nostalgia of past glories, which undoubtedly affects his judgment of contemporary life, while at the same time it expresses all his polemical irreverence and reveals a surprising insight into how modern man lives, calling us, perhaps, directly into question.

¹⁰ NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, § 329; cfr. LOSURDO, *Nietzsche*, 737-741.

¹¹ NIETZSCHE, *Frammenti postumi, 1884-1885*, 35 [76]; LOSURDO, *Nietzsche*, 725.

¹² NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, § 329.

In the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche realizes that in the modernity that he is confronted with daily, the «voice of the olden time» is «vanishing»; it does not find «ears to hear it» and receive its legacy. He is aware, indeed, of the social «advantages of our epoch that bring with them a backward movement and an occasional undervaluing of the *vita contemplativa*», and laments that «time to think and tranquillity in thought are lacking»¹³.

In another aphorism from the same work, Nietzsche adds to this line of thought a caveat, which itself seems to carry a subtle critique of modernity. After referring once again to the leisured caste, he adds the phrase «capable of true leisure»¹⁴. Here we have a paradoxical division within the division, where it is not just moments of relaxation that are separated from moments of work – it is as if Nietzsche introduces here a dichotomy within idleness itself, causing it to split into ancient idleness – *'otium'* – and modern idleness – 'leisure time'. In the era of frenetic work in which Nietzsche himself lived, the word 'idleness' no longer adequately expresses the concept of *otium*, since there is always a risk of confusing this *otium* with mere rest or leisure time, which is constantly used in connection with work. As Nietzsche himself said a few years earlier, modernity knows only «*otium sine dignitate*», as opposed to Cicero's *otium cum dignitate*¹⁵. While in the past idleness indicated an apex of existence, and was therefore essential to living a virtuous contemplative life, in modern society it is an activity that has become impoverished, void of all meaning, a form of escape and detachment from existence itself, reduced to a mere break that serves merely to allow us to resume our daily routine occupations with renewed energy. According to Nietzsche, in fact, it is work itself that hypocritically guarantees modern man the little leisure time he needs to «lead a comfortable existence»: «a period of work which allows him sufficient leisure for his intellectual development» and recreation¹⁶.

¹³ NIETZSCHE, **Human, All Too Human, I**, § 282.

¹⁴ NIETZSCHE, **Human, All Too Human, I**, § 439.

¹⁵ NIETZSCHE, **David Strauss**, 61.

¹⁶ NIETZSCHE, **Sull'utilità e il danno della storia per la vita**, 78; RIVA; SEQUERI, **Segni della destinazione**, 339; HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, **Dialettica dell'Illuminismo**, 145.

And here we see what appears to be Nietzsche tossing out an ironic provocation at his fellow citizens (and indeed, perhaps his readers also): «You do not suppose that in speaking of idleness and idlers I am alluding to you, you sluggards?»¹⁷.

BREWERIES, TAVERNS, PARTIES, CHURCHES. MÜSSIGANG VS MUSSE

In modernity, as we have seen, the everyday life of citizens alternates rhythmically between work and leisure time, day-to-day movements of an age that Nietzsche constantly monitors, almost like a seismograph. In an age where work continues from morning to evening, now and then the machine must stop and the workers be given a moment of rest; idleness thus serves as the only alternative to the incessant and frenetic activity of work. To a lover of the ancient *otium* such as Nietzsche, this alternative incarnated by idleness can only be met with sarcasm and contempt: in *Daybreak* the workers are described as «poor beasts of burden» that are «worn out daily» and «must not be denied their ‘holidays’ – as they call this idleness-ideal of an overworked century in which one is for once allowed to laze about, and be idiotic and childish to one’s heart’s content»¹⁸.

This sort of democratization of idleness immediately picks up and carries with it another problem. In a society where everyone can – in fact is practically required to – take time off and go on holiday, how is it that Nietzsche claims that he sees only «Germans» who «no longer have time for any *otium*»¹⁹?

The answer to this question seems to lie in one of Nietzsche’s *Unpublished Fragments*, in which he denounces as a «curious mark of my epoch» the fact that modern men are «frequently tired» and that, for this reason, «their amusements are dear to them». In modernity, idleness has completely lost its original meaning and been reduced to a mere palliative for combating the weariness and sheer exhaustion of the daily grind. In the same *fragment*, Nietzsche continues to express his disgust by giving

¹⁷ NIETZSCHE, *Human, All Too Human, I*, § 284.

¹⁸ NIETZSCHE, *Daybreak*, § 178.

¹⁹ NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, § 329; NIETZSCHE, *Human, All Too Human, I*, Preface, § 8.

a full and explicit phenomenology of the places of the city, both sacred and profane, in which citizens spend their social life and daily free time – though, paradoxically, not only is this ‘free time’ not free, but it has reduced them to the condition of «slaves».

Their taverns and wine bars, their pleasant entertainment, their parties, their churches: all this is so mediocre, because it neither consumes, nor therefore requires, any spirit of energy. – *Otium!* But this is the idleness (*Müßiggang*) of those who still have all their energy.²⁰

In modern times, idleness has degenerated to such a degree that it is even called differently. With a semantic slip that is possible in German, Nietzsche is intent on emphasising how the ‘free time’ of the common people, which he calls by the more mundane and derogatory term of *Müßiggang* (which might be translated as ‘inactivity’ or ‘laziness’) is completely different from true idleness, to which he gives the more noble terms of *Musse* or *otium*²¹. If in Hellenism the division of time corresponded to a peremptory either-or between two distinct and clearly-defined social classes, in the modern age even *otium* itself is split in two. After all, idleness is not *otium*; the modern-day ‘*dolce far niente*’ has absolutely nothing to do with the old, authentic *otium*²².

OTIUM / NEGOTIUM, ΣΧΟΛΗ / ΒΑΝΑΥΣΙΑ

The most serious consequence of this bizarre division of time is that it causes the logic of work to overstep its own perimeter into that of idleness. In the modern age, work and free time are categories with somewhat indistinct contours and tend to seep out of their own borders and mingle together: «How close work and the worker are now even to the most leisurely among us!»²³. Spilling over into free time, an excess of work ends up deteriorating idleness itself by undermining its original essence, which is a completely different thing from the working world. In modern society one has the

²⁰ NIETZSCHE, **Frammenti postumi**, 1881-1882, 11 [294].

²¹ Cfr. AA.VV., **Nichts Besseres zu tun**, 16.

²² NIETZSCHE, **Daybreak**, § 256; cfr. PIEPER, **Leisure, the Basis of Culture**, 36-41; cfr. DE GRAZIA, **Of Time, Work and Leisure**, 7-8.

²³ NIETZSCHE, **The Gay Science**, § 188.

impression that, paradoxically, real rest, real leisure time no longer exists: true vacation, in the Latin sense of *vacare*, 'to be idle', is no more. The divinisation of «doing» has taken away all space from the contemplative life of *otium*, tearing down the wall that Nietzsche, as a devotee of ancient Greece, had dualistically erected between it and work. Once this social barrier fell, says Antimo Negri, *otium* became incorporated in *negotium* (*nec-otium*), and σχολή in βαναυσία²⁴. Unlike in ancient times, where idleness was a separate lifestyle from work, in the modern age man only needs *otium* to help him recover from the fatigue of *negotium* – and yet this fatigue will still be with him during these times of rest, preventing him from enjoying them to the full; even in these moments of freedom, says Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*, «one is tired and wants not only to 'let oneself go' but also to lay oneself down and *stretch oneself out* unceremoniously to one's full length and breadth»²⁵.

Referring to Nietzsche, Karl Löwith expresses the meaning of this very well when he points out that man, as soon as he no longer has to work, relieves himself of the burden of work by throwing himself into the simple pleasures of free time. But after fleeing from work he throws himself into pleasure completely. The logic remains the same: not only is idleness reduced to a short interval between two long spells of work, but it becomes itself frenetic activity. Wearing oneself out with work and the anxious pursuit of leisure are two sides of the same coin, which Nietzsche calls the era of the «incapacity for *otium*»²⁶.

In the dynamics of modern society, the strict division between free time and work time appears to have been completely eliminated and replaced by a fragmentary schizophrenia of time, a dissociation which, in its mobility and fluidity, paradoxically represents an iron cage. Man is compelled to occupy even the few moments of free time that he is granted from his work – even just by thinking about it, by remembering precisely that same work. «Even in his sleep he does not throw off the yoke», says

²⁴ NEGRI, *Nietzsche*, 148; NEGRI, *Filosofia del lavoro*, I, 31-34.

²⁵ NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, § 329.

²⁶ NIETZSCHE, *Frammenti postumi, 1882-1884*, 7 [167]; LÖWITH, *Da Hegel a Nietzsche*, 428.

Nietzsche, «but like an emancipated slave still dreams of his misery, his forced haste and his floggings»²⁷. In modernity the contrast between *otium* and *negotium* is both unpredictable and exasperated – these two concepts have become moments that have no value separately, but take on meaning only when placed in relation with each other. Work is inseparable from leisure time, which in turn is inconceivable without workdays; each one has meaning only as the negation of its opposite. In the end, work time and leisure time paradoxically coincide, the former proving to be as occupied as the latter. Modern-day idleness is not separate from the logic of work, which is unable to offer an alternative to itself that does not immediately fall back on it. Once man possesses this freedom from work that he has strived so hard to win, the Sunday he has dreamed so much of during his working days, it reveals itself to be a vain illusion²⁸.

Even though in the modern, industrious city the ancient division may appear extemporaneous and obsolete, Nietzsche sustains (as Antimo Negri argues) that only leisure time which is not dialectically connected with work itself can be a genuine alternative to work. In his writings he refers repeatedly to the dualism based on which freedom and slavery, culture and *banausia*, school and business, theoretical life and practical life, etc. are terms which are distinctly separate and absolutely irreducible to each other, mutually repelling without the possibility of establishing any relationship of alternation. In modern times the aristocratic *σχολή* is not mere rest. In Nietzsche's thought, in fact, it does not correspond to 'free' time, since this latter exists only as a part of man's 'occupied' time²⁹.

The disgrace of idleness. The need for recreation and the duty towards health

The main cause of this extraordinary situation in which modern society has been plunged lies, according to Nietzsche, in the overvaluation of work time. Since «more

²⁷ NIETZSCHE, **David Strauss**, 61.

²⁸ Cfr. RIVA, **Idoli della felicità**, 43-72.

²⁹ NEGRI, **Nietzsche**, 147, 150-152; cfr. GÖDDE, „Das beschauliche Element in großem Masse verstärken“. Zu einer Theorie der Muße bei Friedrich Nietzsche, 77-95.

and more, work gets all good conscience on its side», it acts in a totalitarian way on man's existence and gradually invades his leisure time. The result is both paradoxical and dramatic: in the «age that has forgotten what idleness is», «leisure and idleness» are no longer «noble things».

Not only «has respect for a contemplative life diminished», however. In the labour movements and trade union protests of the 19th Century, with their «untiring and incredible speeches» on the «blessing» and «dignity of work», and the «exaltation» and flaunting of its «rights» by its «apologists», the disgrace is shifted from work to leisure, from an active life to a contemplative life, from *negotium* to *otium*. Nietzsche traces the features of modern man who is «ashamed of keeping still; long reflection almost gives people a bad conscience» for stealing a few moments from working life, to the point «where one can't give in to the desire for a contemplative life (that is, taking a walk with ideas and friends) without self-contempt and a bad conscience». While to the ancient Greeks work was a «a necessary disgrace, of which one feels *ashamed*», something that was cursed and had to be concealed, in modern times the working activity is publicly placed on show, and it is free time that is hidden. Our modern-day morbid concentration on work leads to a contempt of idleness, which is now regarded with discomfort. We feel embarrassment, even guilty, at being found 'empty-handed', and try to justify our idleness as merely a necessary and beneficial moment of respite from overwork.

In the constant, vertiginous controverting of his pointed observations, Nietzsche is intuitively aware that an actual culture change is taking place in Western society. Since all existence is monopolized by hard work, «the desire for joy already calls itself a 'need to recuperate' and is starting to be ashamed of itself». An «excursion in the countryside», away from the city, the quintessential place of work today, is now undertaken only because «one owes it to one's health»³⁰. Leisure is a mere panacea for regaining our

³⁰ NIETZSCHE, *Daybreak*, § 173; NIETZSCHE, *Cinque prefazioni per cinque libri non scritti*, III, 95-98; NIETZSCHE, *Human, All Too Human, I*, § 284; NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*, § 329; NEGRI, *Nietzsche*, 148; cfr. MCGINN, *Nietzsche on Technology*, 687-689.

strength after our daily efforts; at the same time, however, it casts a significant shadow over work. While idleness is beneficial to man's health, in fact, it is work that deteriorates it.

FROM SACRED, BORING SUNDAY TO THE DESIRE FOR MONDAY

In the modern age, then, leisure time is no less organised and controlled than work, and remains paralysed in the perpetual pursuit of 'occupied' time to the point of becoming an extension of the same. It is simply a reverberation of the intense rhythm of work, imposed from the outside and compulsively maintained even during weary breaks. It is still unable to emancipate itself and give itself a new name. '*Outside work*' time, '*non-activity*', '*free*' time – all these are weighty terms that are still too closely bound to their opposite, namely, 'working activity' and 'occupied' time.

Nietzsche presents us with the image of modern man who is no longer able to regard Sunday as the absolute day of rest, from which he must not look back at his working days. His precious few «Sundays of freedom», in fact, are forcibly set in the gaps between interminable «week-days of bondage, dependence, and service». They are merely a temporary interlude, a weekly break from *negotium*, «or else he will not endure life.» Yet this interlude is not *otium* – it is not an unconditional vacation that is able to conclusively end *negotium* and lead to absolute *otium*³¹. While he incessantly thinks about his day of work, modern man lives with constant nostalgia for a condition that is at last emancipated from the need for the working week.

In the poem *Il Sabato del villaggio*, Giacomo Leopardi sings: «Diman tristezza e noia / reheran l'ore, ed al travaglio usato / ciascuno in suo pensier farà ritorno» («tomorrow sadness and tedium / the hours will bring / and to their accustomed toil / each in their own thought will turn»). Here Sunday leaves us dissatisfied, because we immediately see that its promise is unfulfilled. The day of rest always brings with it the

³¹ NIETZSCHE, *Human, All Too Human, I*, § 291; NIETZSCHE, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 189.

thought of workdays; man waits in disappointment as he feels that time is slipping away inexorably, and that tomorrow has already begun yesterday³².

In modern times, however, Leopardi's logic appears paradoxically overturned. It is not workdays that are branded with a bad conscience («sadness and tedium»), but free days and Sundays. Sunday is no longer a day of festivity and rest, «of all seven the best loved full of hope and joy»³³. In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche describes the situation in which, gripped in the frenetic logic of 'necessity-work', in «those intervals when our needs are quieted and seem to sleep, boredom overtakes us». After an intense week of work, finding ourselves with nothing to do on Sunday inevitably creates boredom – and this boredom, which identifies itself as a «habit of working», a «new, additional need», will depend on the work activity itself. It also will become part of the dynamics of the satisfaction of needs, and «the greater the need, the greater our habit of working, perhaps even the greater our suffering from our needs».

As a way to «escape» this «boredom», the man described by Nietzsche devises three hypocritical solutions. Either he works «beyond what his usual needs require, or else he invents play», which, however, is also understood as «work that is designed to quiet no need other than that for working in general»³⁴. Or, as his third and last loophole, he goes so far as to make this boredom «sacred»³⁵.

These attempts, however, prove to be somewhat illusory; whatever form boredom takes, man will always be unable to bear it. In modern society, Nietzsche observes the hypocritical «*farce of many hardworking people*», who «by an excess of exertion, they struggle to gain free time», but «afterward know nothing better to do with it than counting the hours until they have elapsed.»³⁶ Before long, disconcerted and nauseated by their free day, they are increasingly impatient for it to end and even

³² LEOPARDI, *Il sabato del villaggio*, 225; NEGRI, *La potenza "esoneratrice" della tecnica e il sabato*, 202; NEGRI, *Filosofia del lavoro*, I, 32; RIVA; SEQUERI, *Segni della destinazione*, 331; HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, *Dialettica dell'Illuminismo*, 145; ADORNO, *Minima moralia*, 207.

³³ LEOPARDI, *Il sabato del villaggio*, 223-225.

³⁴ NIETZSCHE, *Human, All Too Human, I*, § 611.

³⁵ NIETZSCHE, *Frammenti postumi, 1884-1885*, 32 [10].

³⁶ NIETZSCHE, *Human, All Too Human, II*, *Mixed Opinions and Maxims*, § 47.

miss their working hours, to the point where they tragi-comically «invent the desire for Monday and workdays»³⁷.

RELIGION: NEW BUSINESS OR NEW ENTERTAINMENT?

This logic also applies to the religious Sunday. *Otium*, in fact, has its roots not only in ancient *ethos*, but also in Christianity. While Nietzsche does not in the slightest back down from his position as harsh critic of Christianity, he seems to elevate the contemplative life to an ideal not only from a Greek but also a Christian point of view. The extolling of rest and the ‘need’ for idleness, combined with the denouncement of active life, is a legacy of Christian thought as heir to Greek civilisation. After all, in the past «the Church had a monopoly on contemplation», and «the *vita contemplativa* always had to be first and foremost a *vita religiosa*»³⁸.

As Karl Löwith says, as long as the Church influenced the consciences of men and was able to set the parameters for the evaluation of their lives, the privilege of the contemplative life was founded on the superiority of meditation and reflection over all worldly actions. In modernity, however, even Christian logics are reversed. Laborious exertion has succeeded in dissolving the hierarchy between *otium* and *labor*, between reflection and earthly activity. Man no longer has anything to do on Sunday, which has consequently become the day of boredom³⁹.

In a couple of passages from *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche relaunches from a phenomenological point of view his tireless battle against Christianity, outlining the characteristic traits of «industrious» individuals living in the era of the death of God, who, on one hand, have forgotten to «sanctify Sunday», which has now become «tedious», but on the other have sanctified the workday. In the everyday rituals of such citizens, the day that was once dedicated to the Lord has now been sacrificed and immolated on the altar of «the god Work». To them, rest is only a «type of cleverly

³⁷ NIETZSCHE, **Frammenti postumi, 1884-1885**, 32 [10].

³⁸ NIETZSCHE, **The Gay Science**, § 280; NIETZSCHE, **Beyond Good and Evil**, § 58; NEGRI, **Nietzsche**, 156.

³⁹ LÖWITH, **Da Hegel a Nietzsche**, 429.

invented, cleverly interpolated period of fasting», and so they tend to «unconsciously lust for their week- and workdays»⁴⁰. «Self-forgetfulness in ‘daily labour’» has slowly «dissolved any religious instinct», causing these people to lose the meaning of faith and religion itself. «It is the modern, noisy, time-consuming, self-satisfied, stupidly proud industriousness which, more than anything else, gives people an education and preparation in ‘un-belief’»⁴¹.

In addition to losing the characteristic and necessary contemplative idleness that has distinguished it from the beginning – which «is not entirely alien to the aristocratic feeling that work is *disgraceful*» –, modern religion also loses its role of providing a temporary and eremitic refuge for all who seek a moment of respite from the hectic pace of everyday life. Religion is now reduced to a mere Sunday duty, just one more obligation among the modern-day citizen’s many occupations. The bourgeois-capitalist metropolis, which elevates work and family to the status of exclusive occupation and all-encompassing responsibility, leads human beings to be indifferent to religion. Modern man is totally absorbed by his frenetic everyday life. «They feel they are already busy enough, these good people», Nietzsche sarcastically comments, «whether it is with their businesses or their pleasures», their public and private life («the fatherland and the newspapers and familial obligations»), that «they do not seem to have any time to spare for religion», for which there is no longer any room in an increasingly busy existence.

There is one last, grotesque paradox. The religious practice is now so detached from human life as to be even misunderstood by the people of the city. «It is unclear to them whether it would be a new business or a new pleasure, – «since people can’t possibly be going to church just to spoil a good mood», they tell themselves»⁴².

⁴⁰ NIETZSCHE, **Beyond Good and Evil**, § 189; PASQUALOTTO, **Nietzsche: considerazioni attuali**, 447-448.

⁴¹ NIETZSCHE, **Beyond Good and Evil**, § 58; NIETZSCHE, **Daybreak**, § 173; NIETZSCHE, **The Gay Science**, § 359.

⁴² NIETZSCHE, **Beyond Good and Evil**, § 58; cfr. RIVA, **Ascesi, mondo e società**, 80-84.

AN EVERYDAY NIETZSCHE

In conclusion, this small phenomenology of idleness reveals the twofold advantage to be had by closely observing the various itineraries that can be followed in Nietzsche's judgements. First of all, there is the extensive documentation which, while on the one hand it brings out of the shadows some of Nietzsche's written material that has perhaps been less examined by critics, thus restoring and rehabilitating it, on the other hand it attempts to save many aphorisms and fragments from being manipulated, sacrificed in the name of exemplification, or treated as a mere appendage to the main theses. The second advantage, which is related to the first, is that this hermeneutic-textual approach produces a decidedly less generalistic view of Nietzsche's polemics, with greater emphasis placed on his phenomenologically rich exploration of life experiences.

Therefore, if we are to give an ethico-anthropological (and in some ways existential) interpretation of Nietzschean thought in order to bring to light his inherent thematic richness and gradually valorise his perspective on everyday life, it is essential that we listen constantly to his words. Only in this way will we be able to uncover small monographic paths, path that are in some ways still unknown or, in any case, little-trodden, paths that allow us to glimpse on the horizon a new kind of Nietzsche – an earthly Nietzsche, an observer of the human places of coexistence and a lover of «near things». A Nietzsche who, like his alter-ego Zarathustra, descends from the mountain of solitude to plunge headlong into the plains of the city (to quote Antimo Negri). A Nietzsche who is concerned with the very people of this city and their real, everyday problems – a *phenomenologist of everyday life*; a witness, as Sergio Moravia says, of the daily narrative that he investigated as the realm of *Human, All Too Human*⁴³.

⁴³ MORAVIA, *Itinerario nietzscheano*, 15; NEGRI, *Nietzsche nella pianura*, p. 12; CANTONI, *Umano e disumano*, 142; cfr. SCOLARI, *Nietzsche. Fenomenologo del quotidiano*.

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Authorship contributions

1 – Paolo Scolari

Philosophy Professor

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2924-5688> • paolo.scolari@unicatt.it

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