

## *The Torque of Thought*

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In an essay on the marionette, Heinrich von Kleist writes:

[Marionettes know] nothing of the inertia of matter, that quality which is most resistant to the dance: because the force that lifts them into the air is greater than the force that binds them to earth [...] Puppets need the ground only in order to touch it lightly, like elves, and reanimate the swing of their limbs through this momentary stop. We humans need it to rest on so that we can recover from the exertion of the dance. This moment of rest is clearly no dance in itself; the best we can do with it is make it as inconspicuous as possible.

Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* is thought engaged in dance. The concept is not engaged in an opposition to the Will to Truth, but skips over and above it, with insouciance. When we think of the will to power, it must no longer be in terms of potency, capability, or domination: it must be in terms of grace, as a mode of being that will "know nothing of the inertia of matter." All matter will be moving, always inoperative, toward nothing except its own continued movement, a ceaselessly sustained power.

The dance only aspires toward that which it is, disclosing neither truth nor rule, but rather the persistence of itself as flux and torque. Nietzsche's Zarathustra, the emblem for the *overman* and the will to power incarnate, admits, "I would only believe in a God who could dance." Zarathustra cannot, on principle, recognize an arbiter of values that mandates its rule by the administration of justice. His God fails to discern a need for vengeance against the ground, against the realities that bind one to life, because this God discerns a need for what pulls one down. One needs the source of drag "in order to touch it lightly." To be like marionettes is to be in need of the "force that binds them to earth."

Grace simply cannot be if the pull from above has no medium for its poetry (gravity, the ground). Life, as a feature of the universe, is a dancing phenomenon; by all astrophysical and cosmic measure, it is a culmination and consequence of upward-pulling strings playing with and against the downward tug of gravity. Life is the culminated miracle of an alchemy that appropriates this opposition, and someday we will say that the only genre capable of honestly expressing life is one that is graceful.

Masses of force pull on each other, set each other to orbiting, and their circling movements, longing to come closer to each other, are never granted consummation. They are goaded by the delusion of a possibility that is also their sustenance. If we would like to understand the mechanics of the moon's orbit we should watch water circle a drain or a nickel dropped into a coin spinner: we see things with a horizontal velocity able to indulge a bit of play with the omnipotent source of the centripetal pull, the earth. These phenomena are coy, they delay consummation, but always yield and collapse in the end.

The moon, too, is constantly pulled to the earth, but it spins around an eternal drain and consummation never arrives. For each semi-rotation from the moon we might imagine an earth with arms repeatedly trying to pull its partner closer. But the pull offsets the puller while also generating a great momentum that sends the moon past its terra-target. And so the earth pulls again, the moon misses, and an infinite centrifugal force away is impelled by the attraction of the centripetal. They are spinning partners who are in constant need of the very force that should terminate them.

Grace is this dogged irresolution, the moving form generated by an incessantly provocative and displacing force, a forward advance that advances only a beginning again, a goal that decides its own failure to meet the goal. It is a hankering for climax whose thirst for closeness only guarantees a distance capable of teasing it with the aspiration and idea of closeness still. The end of a time imagined only guarantees another inaugurated origin, over and over again. Grace is, in this way, a confusion of time: its sustenance and sustainability are the false promise of a possibility. The seconds pass so that the seconds can begin and pass again.

The dance of the marionette lives under the same playful laws of planetary orbits, which are the same repetitive laws that condition life. Under this government of time, a climax exists for the sake of an unending inauguration. This confusion of time, not surprisingly, appears to us in a form that also seems to confuse the force of gravity. Things don't seem to fall. The pull of gravity is converted so that, through this alchemy of motion, levity is what appears and, as Simone Weil describes grace, we see that "wings raised to the second power can make things come down without weight."

As Maurice Blanchot claims, rightly, "If there were a unity of force there would be no force at all." The stars, storms, and seasons understand and live this transformative dance of matter: they are in need of force and counterforce. The marionette would leave the earth or collapse. The stars and planets, whose perfect spheres and discs are sculpted by the play of soaring and falling gravities, whose drama is irresolvable and cyclical, distribute this same wisdom in the redundant order of autumn and spring. In the constellations and on earth we see a nimble aptitude for balance, a harmony wrought by the tension of polar forces. The human, too, can become amongst the cosmic, as a metaphor for existence, but only as the dancer who longs upward while making the pull downward into her accomplice in the creation of grace.

When a talented dancer is able to evoke the moving image of hostility or playfulness or idolatry, we would be philistines to judge her on the moral basis of any of these evocations, because we already know that she is only a conduit whose movement, if performed well, is meant merely to channel and inspire these emotions. Moral qualities are changing colors to her, spirits driving a given movement. To arraign the dancer would be naive; she is an unconsenting marionette who represents back to us the dictation of moods and tones imposed by the music that animates her.

Thought, too, can be carried by a kind of music—the kind that is the moving thrum of life. It can become synced to the fluctuation of living, and this is how grace rejects the false order of the Will to Truth. Thought is freed and moves with the moving order of living.

Grace is a Dionysian and dispersed force, a "unique force without unity," in that it refuses and cannot exist in a single time or space. It manifests as a play between past and future and appropriates the pull of the ground for uses in the next and ever-following leaps, always overflowing, never here nor there alone. Seeing the will to power as a dance gives us a phenomenon that abides by the conflicting qualities of force, another word for power, that Blanchot names: dance "escapes optical reference" and yet seems to be "still aspiring to the light of day."

Grace refuses all light-based references to itself; since it cannot be optically pinpointed it is not an object. Because it is dispersed, because it is composed of where it has formerly been and where it will be next, grace would be something else entirely if made frozen by the image. Its shape, which is not singular but a composite of other borrowed shapes from future and past, is hence shapeless. The human who dances therefore exists in a mode of constant becoming.

Grace that is at rest alone has lost its leap. Without rest, the dancer hangs. Thought that does not dance—thought that thinks in optically referable frozen forms—is thought that emulates a cosmic order in which the sun has ceased to set, the seasons have lost their equinox, and life is no more.

The dancer does more than solely affirm the gravity that must pull her leap back down to the ground; she forgets all functions of contempt, objects of resentment. Vengeance becomes something that is not viable because she desires the downward pull so that she may touch it lightly, play along with it, garner its favor in the respite before the next movement. The dance is the darkly lit truth in which art both embodies and sanctifies the eternal recurrence, “as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness.” In the dancer’s movement Nietzsche’s self-overcoming is given form:

This, my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my “beyond good and evil,” without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself—do you want a name for this world? [...] This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!

