

André Luís Mota Itaparica

NIETZSCHE ON THE “SOVEREIGN INDIVIDUAL” AND AGENCY

1. The Sovereign Individual in On the Genealogy of Morality

Nietzsche states, at the beginning of the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, that nature has bred humans as a kind of animal endowed with the capacity to make promises. This serves as the point of departure for developing a hypothesis regarding the emergence of morality, one that reaches back into the prehistory of humanity and may therefore be understood as naturalistic.¹ At the core of his genealogy lies the idea that morality is the result of a process through which humans gradually domesticated themselves and became social animals. This transformation occurred through the development of a series of capacities that enabled them to commit to their word and to experience responsibility for their actions. At the culmination of this process, there emerges the figure of an individual who, liberated from communal customs, possesses the prerogative of autonomy: he is capable of fulfilling his promises independently of external powers. This “sovereign individual” is, according to Nietzsche, “the possessor of an enduring, unbreakable will”: “The proud knowledge of the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*, the consciousness of this rare freedom and power over himself and his destiny, has penetrated him to his lowest depths and become an instinct, his dominant instinct: [...] this sovereign human being calls it his *conscience* [...]” [Nietzsche 2006: 37; KSA 5: 194].

By describing the sovereign individual in this way, Nietzsche employs – positively – the metaphysical and moral language of free will and responsibility, a framework he had already dismissed as illusory both before and after *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Insofar as this passage appears to contradict the vast majority of Nietzsche’s positions on freedom of will, autonomy, and the nature of human action, it is not surprising that it has provoked significant controversy among Nietzsche’s commentators, particularly in Anglo-American scholarship.

© André Luís Mota Itaparica, 2026

¹ The claim that the genealogical account is naturalistic remains contested. Even among its proponents, there is disagreement about how such naturalism ought to be understood, how it relates to normativity, and whether it entails either a genetic or a naturalistic fallacy. I take Nietzsche to espouse a form of liberal naturalism that excludes transcendent explanations and affirms a continuity between philosophy, the natural sciences, and the humanities. Such naturalism, therefore, does not culminate in scientism, which constitutes the principal target of critics of philosophical naturalism. Christian J. Emden has examined and synthesized these issues [Emden 2025].

This article aims, first, to present the two principal currents of interpretation: on the one hand, commentators who affirm the figure of the sovereign individual as compatible with Nietzsche's philosophy; on the other, scholars who contend that this passage should be read as ironic, since it not only denies Nietzsche's resolute fatalism but also stands in tension with the most significant ideas in his philosophy. Second, it adopts a position within the controversy.²

2. Free Will and Responsibility in Nietzsche's Later Philosophy

The "morality of custom" describes how conscience arises from the aggressive drives that human beings were compelled to repress when they were forced to live communally. Conscience first emerges as bad conscience, following a prolonged "mnemotechnic of cruelty" through which communal rules are internalized by means of punishment. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche states that the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality* "offers the psychology of the *conscience* – which is not, as people may believe, 'the voice of God in man': it is the instinct of cruelty that turns back after it can no longer discharge itself externally" [Nietzsche 2005: 136; KSA 6: 352]. Thus, given the origin of conscience, Nietzsche appears to maintain that conscience is always a form of bad conscience, which seems to preclude a positive account of this concept.

Conscience presupposes that human beings are free and responsible for their actions. Nietzsche, however, beginning with *Human, All Too Human*, rejects the concepts of free will and responsibility, a position he maintains through *Twilight of the Idols*. In that latter work, Nietzsche devotes an entire chapter to the "four great errors", which may be understood as an extended argument culminating in the rejection of free will and responsibility. This argument follows two principal lines: first, Nietzsche dismantles the psychological assumptions that underpin the metaphysical belief in free will; second, he recapitulates the thesis presented in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, namely, that the priest, relying upon the metaphysics of free will, equates bad conscience with sin.

For Nietzsche, the notions of free will and responsibility emerge from a misinterpretation of causality. First, he identifies the error of confusing cause and effect. In this instance, the driving force behind an individual action is viewed as the result of free will, when, in reality, it is nothing more than an expression of character. As an example, Nietzsche mentions the case of Cornarism: Cornaro's diet was regarded as the cause of his longevity, whereas it was, in fact, determined by his physiological constitution.

Second, in the "error of false causality", Nietzsche reveals that the mistake lies in the very idea of mental causation. This error, in turn, is based on a mistaken interpretation of internal facts of consciousness, which treats the will as the cause of action and presumes that this cause is mental and belongs to a substantial subject. This leads to the third error: attributing an imaginary cause to the subject.

From the conjunction of these psychological errors regarding causality, the priest derives a metaphysical theory of action in order to assign guilt and responsibility to the individual: "The whole of ancient psychology, the psychology of will, was conditioned by the desire of its architects (the priests at the head of the ancient community) to establish their right to inflict punishment – or to assign the right to God [...] People were considered

² Acampora [2004], Hatab [2008], and Leiter [2011] have called into question the traditional view of the sovereign individual as an ideal of autonomy.

'free' so that they could be judged and punished so that they could be *guilty*: consequently, every act *had to* be thought of as willed, every act had to be seen as coming from consciousness" [Nietzsche 2005: 181; KSA 6: 95].

3. The Controversy over the Sovereign Individual

Despite the unexpected use of traditional language of agency in that passage of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, interestingly, the vast majority of interpreters associate the sovereign individual with an affirmative dimension of Nietzsche's philosophy. For John Richardson, Nietzsche announces a new conception of freedom: "So the challenge is to say what this freedom is, in the sense in which Nietzsche affirms and preaches it, and to distinguish this from the sense in which he denies and rejects it" [Richardson 2009: 128]. For this reason, Ken Gemes adds, the language Nietzsche employs should not be mistaken for the libertarian version of will and responsibility. On the contrary, it expresses a conception of freedom that presupposes a kind of person capable of realizing the autonomy of a unified agent: "The sovereign individual, who has a unified, independent, protracted will counts as having a genuine character, being a person. Modern man, who is at the mercy of a menagerie of competing forces, internal and external, has no such character" [Gemes 2009: 38]. Thus, even though Nietzsche avoids the usual connotations of the term "freedom", it is precisely this concept that he applies to the sovereign individual: "To be sure, freedom is not the term Nietzsche prefers, although as we have seen, despite its dangerous associations, it is one he uses" [Pippin 2009: 80].

However, there are commentators who reject this more literal reading. Lawrence Hatab, for example, argues that the sovereign individual embodies the modern ideal of rational autonomy and, as such, remains a vestige of the slave morality shaped through the morality of custom: "The sovereign individual is the result of the 'long history' that has made people calculable and uniform, in the name of promise and moral responsibility" [Hatab 2008: 76]. Christa Acampora, for her part, contends that interpreting the sovereign individual in that traditional manner constitutes not only a misreading of the passage from *On the Genealogy of Morality*, but also a mischaracterization of Nietzsche's philosophy [Acampora 2004: 147].

By taking a position within the controversy, Brian Leiter elevated the tone of the debate. Drawing on his fatalistic reading of Nietzsche's philosophy – according to which all human actions result from type-facts encompassing an individual's psychological and physiological characteristics – Leiter regards the figure of the sovereign individual as a persuasive definition. According to Leiter, Nietzsche challenges the self-image of the human being as free and responsible by altering the content of traditional concepts while simultaneously exploiting their emotional impact: "Nietzsche engages in what Charles Stevenson would have called a 'persuasive definition' of the language of 'freedom' and 'free will', radically revising the content of those concepts, but in a way that aims to capitalize on their positive emotive valence and authority for his readers" [Leiter 2011: 102].

There are numerous reasons behind these revisionary interpretations. The appearance of the sovereign individual in *On the Genealogy of Morality* is the only passage in which Nietzsche refers to such a figure throughout his entire corpus. His description – hyperbolic, pompous, and saturated with the traditional language of autonomous agency – invites suspicion of a parodic intent. Furthermore, although the sovereign individual appears to be liberated from the morality of custom, he nonetheless emerges as its product. The principal

theme of the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality* lies in its depiction of the formation of conscience as bad conscience and consciousness of guilt. In the end, the sovereign individual may be interpreted as an ironic portrayal of the self-image of the autonomous agent fabricated by modern philosophy – that is, as a rhetorical device employed to critique the philosophical tradition and to persuade the reader to embrace an alternative conception of human agency.

The revisionary interpretation provoked much discussion among Nietzsche specialists. This debate, however, had little impact on Brazilian Nietzsche scholarship, although Leiter’s article has been published in Portuguese [Leiter 2019], as has Hatab’s introduction to *On the Genealogy of Morality* [Hatab 2020]. The great majority of Brazilian interpreters maintain a traditional reading of the sovereign individual as Nietzsche’s model of autonomy – at once the result and the overcoming of the morality of custom – also in the context of a possible approximation between Nietzsche and Kant: “the hypothesis of an approximation between the idea of freedom present in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, associated with the figure of the ‘sovereign individual’, [...] and the idea of freedom, not as a presupposition, but as a result of moral action, in the Kantian sense, is plausible” [Paschoal 2018: 105]. This does not mean, of course, that the controversy around the figure of the sovereign individual is unknown to Brazilian commentators. Moreover, some articles published in Portuguese by European scholars have mentioned the revisionary interpretation [Pietropaoli 2023; Porcher 2023].

4. Assessing the Controversy

The controversy concerning the status of the sovereign individual should not be regarded as a mere isolated philological issue; rather, it is central to understanding the complex question of agency in Nietzsche’s philosophy. This complexity arises from an apparently insoluble tension between his critique of free will and his exhortation of attitudes that require some degree of spontaneity in human agency. In general, the resolution – offered by both sides of the debate – consists in emphasizing that Nietzsche’s model of agency does not rest upon the conception of a subject capable of determining his will through rational and free choice, as defended by modern philosophy. In this respect, the disagreement between the two sides of the controversy may be less substantial than it initially appears.

In this respect, Leiter stands as an exception. Unlike most commentators, he maintains that Nietzsche unequivocally rejects any notion of free will, autonomy, or responsibility. It is not a matter of assigning a positive meaning to these traditional concepts, but rather of denying them altogether. To adopt a vindictory stance on these issues, according to Leiter, is to overlook the narrative presented in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, in which Nietzsche recounts the emergence of bad conscience as a product of the morality of custom. For Leiter, when Nietzsche employs the language of freedom and responsibility as a persuasive definition, he abandons the traditional meaning of that language, retaining only its external form – the words themselves – while imbuing them with radically new meanings that preserve their emotional resonance in order to guide his readers toward a new ideal.

Leiter’s interpretation has the advantage of situating the passage from *On the Genealogy of Morality* within the broader context of Nietzsche’s philosophy, particularly his theory of action. In other words, Leiter addresses the problem of the sovereign individual

from the wider perspective of Nietzsche's corpus, linking it to his theory of types. As a result, Leiter's reading entails the epiphenomenalism of the will, which restricts the possibilities of action to the typological traits of an individual (causal essentialism). According to Leiter, Nietzsche seeks to reject the Enlightenment hope that it is possible, through the autonomy of reason, to overcome inequalities among individuals. Ultimately, Leiter invites the reader to embrace Nietzsche's hard fatalism, thereby ruling out any attempt to interpret the sovereign individual in a way that would soften his philosophy: "Nietzsche does not believe in freedom or responsibility; he does not think we exercise any meaningful control over our lives; he does not think that his revisionary sense of 'freedom' – the 'long, protracted will' as he puts it in the passage from GM, II, 2, with which we began – is in reach of just anyone, that anyone could 'choose' to have it" [Leiter 2011: 119].

Leiter's arguments appear to align more coherently with Nietzsche's corpus, and the isolated appearance of the sovereign individual – alongside Nietzsche's well-known use of rhetorical devices – may indeed suggest that this figure functions as an ironic figure toward humanity's self-delusion regarding freedom. Nevertheless, some recent articles have pointed to compelling clues that reopen the possibility of a positive deployment of the concept of autonomy in Nietzsche. This certainly calls for a more nuanced interpretation of the issues at stake, a broader contextualization of the *Genealogy*, and a reconsideration of the responses that have thus far been offered.

Mark Migotti [2013], Guy Elgat [2019], and R. Lanier Anderson [2022] challenge the claim that passages in which Nietzsche speaks positively of freedom in human agency are rare within his corpus. As Elgat has emphasized, although Nietzsche employs the expression "sovereign individual" only once, numerous passages throughout his work contain cognate terms used in contexts that closely resemble those in *On the Genealogy of Morality* [Elgat 2019: 7]. In fact, *Dawn* and *The Gay Science* feature aphorisms that portray the free individual as one who has liberated himself from the dominion of tradition and community, thereby becoming capable of determining his own conduct. The most striking instance appears in an aphorism that addresses the morality of custom directly: "The free human being is unaccustomed and immoral because, in all things, he wants to depend upon himself and not upon a tradition: in every primitive state of human society, 'evil' is tantamount to 'individual', 'free', 'arbitrary', 'unusual', 'unforeseen', 'incalculable'" [Nietzsche 2011: 10; KSA 3: 22]. Here, Nietzsche employs language that resurfaces later in the second essay of *Genealogy of Morality*, indicating how this "free human" emerges through the overcoming of the morality of custom: "In relation to the way of life of humankind for entire millennia, we present-day humans live in a very unaccustomed, immoral age: the power of custom is astonishingly enfeebled and the sense of morality so refined and lofty that one can say it has well nigh evaporated" [ibid.: KSA 3: 21]. In this regard, Brusotti contributes substantial historical insight to the discussion concerning Nietzsche's use of the expression "*souveränes Individuum*". According to him, Nietzsche adopts the expression in a positive sense in order to polemicize against Eduard von Hartmann: "Nietzsche adopts the pejorative expression 'sovereign individual'. Hartmann's attack on '*individuelle Souveränität*' and the underlying reductive concept that 'characterizes' it [...] prompts Nietzsche to present an alternative notion of sovereign individuality" [Brusotti 2019: 35].

Another issue concerning the sovereign individual involves clarifying the nature of the promise and commitment to which he is bound. João Constâncio, Mark Migotti, and R. Lanier Anderson have rightly observed a distinction between the kind of promise

associated with traditional morality and the kind that Nietzsche attributes to the sovereign individual. Within the morality of custom, the promise is always related to the community and to tradition. It generates conscience as bad conscience. Therefore, it is neither autonomous nor free. In contrast, although the sovereign individual arises from the morality of custom, he is no longer bound by it. Accordingly, his capacity to promise no longer concerns the community. Rather, it involves the ability to make a promise to himself – to possess the strength and resolve to keep his word, independent of any external authority: “Un-free human beings only make and keep those promises that society demands of them, they only promise and feel responsible for what is already commanded by others (or by an impersonal ‘other’, by ‘society’). But sovereign individuals, free human beings, are able to make and keep promises that they make to themselves” [Constâncio 2012: 154].

According to this interpretation, conscience can also be understood as the capacity to fulfill self-imposed obligations. If this is the case, Nietzsche may offer a positive account of conscience: it is not always bad conscience as consciousness of guilt. As Avery Snelson observes, “Bad conscience is ‘gloomy’ because it is a self-punishing faculty that produces feelings of guilt [...], whereas conscience confers a capacity for voluntary reliability” [Snelson 2024: 578]. In fact, the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, although placed before the second in the text, presupposes earlier historical models of free action, such as those found in Ancient Greece, models of what Nietzsche would regard as instances of free action. The nobles of antiquity, Nietzsche believes, endowed human action with a positive yet fatalistic meaning, knowing how to manage the atavism of bad conscience: “These Greeks, for most of the time, used their gods expressly to keep ‘bad conscience’ at bay so that they could carry on enjoying their freedom of soul: therefore, the opposite of the way Christendom made use of its God” [Nietzsche 2006: 64-65; KSA 5: 333]. After the first transvaluation – the rise of Christianity – the priestly interpretation of bad conscience as sin once again became dominant.

Anderson goes a step further, seeking to reconcile the theory of agency with Nietzsche’s theory of drives. To this end, he appeals to the notion of force as a central component of the will of the sovereign individual – a will capable of directing and unifying a multiplicity of drives: “Nietzsche’s views about autonomy thus depend on his psychology of strength and weakness. Failures of autonomy are cases of psychological weakness, traceable to inner conflict among the agent’s attitudes in which the whole is unable to control some recalcitrant drive. Conversely, achieved autonomy is the distinctive self-relation manifested in psychological strength – a coherent integration of the attitudes, in which each is governed by its place in the whole, and psychological weakness is overcome” [Anderson 2022: 380].

Both readings of the sovereign individual – positive and deflationary – have their strengths and persuasiveness, but also their shortcomings. It is a difficult question to resolve when the arguments are followed closely. Much of this difficulty arises from Nietzsche’s own texts, which seem to attempt a reconciliation of two apparently opposing tendencies: a critique of free will and a defense of free agency.

5. Free Will and Agency

In the controversy over the figure of the sovereign individual, both sides agree that the answer lies in the idea of an agent’s control over his drives and affects. Leiter, however, denies that Nietzsche holds any commitment to the notions of freedom and autonomy,

asserting that the agent's control does not stem from free choice but is merely the result of psychophysical facts. Consequently, these commentators also diverge in how they interpret Goethe's image, cited in *Twilight of the Idols*, of this form of freedom: "a strong, highly educated, self-respecting human being, skilled in all things physical and able to keep himself in check, who could dare to allow himself the entire expanse and wealth of naturalness, who is strong enough for this freedom", in short, a spirit "who has become free stands in the middle of the world with a cheerful and trusting fatalism in the belief that only the individual is reprehensible, that everything is redeemed and affirmed in the whole – he does not *negate any more* [...]" [Nietzsche 2005: 222-223; KSA 6: 151-152].

In the first case, for Leiter, human action is determined by typological facts. Goethe, then, exemplifies this ideal type that accepts and embodies the fatalism of being what one is: "Nietzsche would rather persuade select readers to the fatalism of a Goethe by co-opting the language of freedom itself to commend to them an attitude that is premised on the profound denial of one liberal ideal of freedom" [Leiter 2011: 118]. In the second case, for Anderson, the figure of Goethe illustrates how the idea of autonomy can be preserved on the basis of an individual who is sovereign in this specific sense, capable of controlling, unifying, and directing his drives [Anderson 2022: 380].

The answer to who the sovereign individual is, therefore, relates to these passages in *Twilight of the Idols*, where Nietzsche appears to articulate his concept of freedom. In light of these texts, the two interpretive currents tend to position Nietzsche either as a radical incompatibilist (there is no freedom at all) or as a compatibilist (there is a kind of freedom within his fatalism). Hence, the figure of the sovereign individual – central to understanding the notion of agency in Nietzsche – seems to hinge on the resolution of the classic metaphysical problem of freedom and necessity.

But that is not the case. Later Nietzsche rejects both the thesis of free will and that of determinism. Moreover, he does not typically conflate determinism with fatalism. The refutation of free will in *Twilight of the Idols* does not entail a defense of determinism. In fact, already in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche contests the thesis of the "unfree will" for the same reason he critiques that of free will: both presuppose the will as a causal faculty [Nietzsche 2001: 21; KSA 5: 35].

By contrast, the ideal of *amor fati* – embodied in Goethe – is independent of the modern problem of freedom and necessity. Nietzsche's conception of agency involves a notion of freedom unrelated to libertarianism and not reducible to a persuasive definition. Goethe exemplifies this agency precisely because he represents a model of individuality in which freedom emerges from a spontaneity that, through self-cultivation, becomes instinctive and necessary – much like what occurs in great artists: "Artists might have a better sense of smell even in this matter: they are the ones who know only too well that their feeling of freedom, finesse and authority, of creation, formation, and control. Only reaches its apex when they have stopped doing anything 'voluntarily' and instead do everything necessarily [...] – in short, they know that inside themselves necessity and 'freedom of the will' have become one" [ibid.: 108; KSA 5: 148].³

³ Michael Sardo has, alternatively, interpreted the mention of Goethe within a framework that emphasizes the social dimension of agency, aligning with the expressivist interpretation and contrasting with the romantic reading. To this end, he advances a dialogue between Nietzsche's theory of agency and the contemporary concept of non-sovereign agency: "Interpreting Nietzsche's writings on agency and responsibility through the lens of non-sovereignty generates interpretive and political-theoretical contributions. Interpretively, it makes sense of the various appraisals of agency, freedom, and responsibility

In sum, the refutation of free will in *Twilight of the Idols* rests on psychological analyses. The “doctrine” that Nietzsche opposes to free will alludes to a fatalism and presupposes the attitude of *amor fati*. As a psychological attitude, *amor fati* remains independent of the modern problem of freedom and necessity. For this reason, the solution to the enigma of the sovereign individual depends upon recognizing that Nietzsche’s theory of agency stands apart from that metaphysical dichotomy.

Nietzsche defends a conception of agency that stands at a considerable distance from the modern concepts of rationality and autonomy. In my reading, Nietzsche understands agency as the incorporation of certain attitudes. An agent’s free choice consists only in the decision to transform certain attitudes into instinct, that is, to internalize ideals of conduct in such a way that they can become habits of action. It is not a matter of deliberating and deciding, through free and rational choice, to act in a certain way at a given moment. Rather, it involves a decision to transform one’s entire manner of acting. It constitutes a genuine exercise of self-creation, involving thought but also the cultivation of certain practices (in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche discusses choices of reading, food, leisure, climate, so forth).

In this respect, it is important to stress that what Nietzsche proposes is not a form of behaviorist training, but the incorporation of attitudes that challenge any form of conditioning, since it involves the creation of a profoundly personal way of life. This task is accomplished through the individual creation of a second nature, that is, by transforming consciously desired attitudes into instincts: “We must learn *to think differently* – in order finally, perhaps very late, to achieve even more: *to feel differently*” [Nietzsche 2011: 71; KSA 3: 92]. According to Nietzsche, a transformation of thought must therefore culminate in a transformation of feeling. Only in this way – by becoming instinctive – will actions be truly free, just as the work of great artists, such as Goethe, is produced naturally and freely.

REFERENCES / СПИСОК ЛІТЕРАТУРИ

- Acampora, C. (2004). On Sovereignty and Overhumanity: Why it Matters How We Read Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* II, 2. In C. Acampora (Ed.), *Nietzsche’s on the Genealogy of Morals: Critical Essays* (pp. 147-161). Lanham: Rowman.
- Anderson, R. L. (2022). Nietzschean Autonomy and the Meaning of the “Sovereign Individual”. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 105(2), 362-384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12824>
- Brusotti, M. (2019). Die Autonomie des “souveränen Individuums” in Nietzsches Genealogie der Moral. *Nietzsche-Studien*, 48(1), 26-48. <https://doi.org/10.1515/nietzstu-2019-0003>
- Constâncio, J. (2012). “A Sort of Schema of Ourselves”: On Nietzsche’s “Ideal” and “Concept” of Freedom. *Nietzsche-Studien*, 41(1), 127-162. <https://doi.org/10.1515/niet.2012.41.1.127>
- Elgat, G. (2020). The individualization of conscience: What *Daybreak* (9, 10, 544) and *The Gay Science* (117) tell us about the sovereign individual. *Inquiry* 63(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2019.1669975>
- Emden, C. J. (2025). Nietzsche Postanalytic? Moral Psychology, Philosophical Naturalism, and the Return of Metaphysics. *Nietzsche-Studien*, 54(1), 254-316. <https://doi.org/10.1515/nietzstu-2025-0021>

in Nietzsche’s texts, without committing him to either determinism or voluntarism” [Sardo 2022: 113]. The principal challenge Sardo confronts is the tension between the democratic orientation of theorists of non-sovereign agency and Nietzsche’s aristocratic political ideals.

- Gemes, K. (2009). Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual. In K. Gemes & S. May (Eds.), *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy* (pp. 33-49). Oxford: Oxford UP. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199231560.001.0001>
- Hatab, L. J. (2008). *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morality: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812002>
- Hatab, L. J. (2020). *Genealogia da Moral de Nietzsche. Uma Introdução*. São Paulo: Madras.
- Leiter, B. (2011). Who Is Nietzsche's "Sovereign Individual"? In S. May, *Nietzsche's on The Genealogy of Morality: A Critical Guide* (pp. 101-119). Cambridge: Cambridge UP. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139014977.007>
- Leiter, B. (2019). Quem é o "indivíduo soberano"? Nietzsche sobre a liberdade. (C. Brandão, R. B. Dalla Vecchia, Trad.). *Estudos Nietzsche*, 10(1), 69-90. <https://periodicos.ufes.br/estudosnietzsche/article/view/21313>
- Migotti, M. (2013). "A Promise Made is a Debt Unpaid": Nietzsche on the Morality of Commitment and the Commitments of Morality. In J. Richardson & K. Gemes (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* (pp. 509-525). Oxford: Oxford UP. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199534647.013.0023>
- Nietzsche, F. (1988). *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe* (Vols. 1-15). (G. Colli, M. Montinari, Hrsg.). Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Nietzsche, F. (2001). *Beyond Good and Evil*. (J. Norman, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge UP. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812033>
- Nietzsche, F. (2005). *Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Ideals and Others Writings*. (Judith Norman, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Nietzsche, F. (2006). *On the Genealogy of Morality*. (C. Diethe, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Nietzsche, F. (2011). *Dawn*. (B. Smith, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford UP.
- Paschoal, E. (2018). Da crítica de Nietzsche ao sujeito ao sujeito de sua crítica. *Cadernos Nietzsche*, 39(1), 93-119. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2316-82422018v3901aep>
- Pietropaoli, M. (2023). O noblesse oblige do indivíduo soberano. Sobre a Genealogia da moral de Nietzsche. *Cadernos Nietzsche*, 44(1), 41-60. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2316-82422023v4401mp>
- Pippin, R. B. (2009). How to Overcome Oneself: Nietzsche on Freedom. In K. Gemes & S. May (Eds.), *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy* (pp. 69-87). Oxford: Oxford UP. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199231560.003.0004>
- Porcher, F. (2023). Repensar o "indivíduo soberano" de Nietzsche. *Cadernos Nietzsche*, 44(2), 93-114. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2316-82422023v4402fp>
- Richardson, J. (2009). Nietzsche's Freedoms. In K. Gemes & S. May (Eds.), *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy* (pp. 127-49). Oxford: Oxford UP. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199231560.003.0007>
- Sardo, M. (2022). On Freedom and Responsibility in an Extra-Moral Sense: Nietzsche and Non-Sovereign Responsibility. *Nietzsche-Studien*, 51(1), 88-115. <https://doi.org/10.1515/nietzstu-2020-1018>
- Snelson, A. (2024). Conscience and Bad Conscience. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 33(2), 577-590. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12991>

Received / Одержано 13.11.2025

significant controversy among Nietzsche's commentators – particularly in Anglo-American scholarship – as it appears to contradict the vast majority of his positions on these subjects. First, the article presents the two principal currents of interpretation: on one side, commentators who affirm the figure of the sovereign individual as compatible with Nietzsche's philosophy; on the other, scholars who argue that the passage should be understood as ironic, since it not only contradicts Nietzsche's steadfast fatalism but also clashes with the central tenets of his philosophy. Second, the article advances a position within this ongoing controversy. In my reading, Nietzsche understands agency as the incorporation of certain attitudes. An agent's free choice consists only in the decision to transform certain attitudes into instinct, that is, to internalize ideals of conduct in such a way that they can become habits of action.

Андре Луїс Мота Итапаріка

Ніцше про «суверенного індивіда» і агентність

Ніцше характеризує суверенного індивіда, використовуючи метафізичну та моральну мову свободи волі і відповідальності. Тому не дивно, що цей опис викликав значні суперечки серед коментаторів Ніцше, особливо в англо-американських наукових колах. Адже такий опис, здається, суперечить переважній більшості позицій Ніцше з відповідної тематики. У цій статті, по-перше, представлені дві основні напрями інтерпретації: з одного боку, коментатори, які стверджують, що фігура суверенного індивіда сумісна з філософією Ніцше; з іншого боку, вчені, які стверджують, що цей уривок слід розуміти як іронічний, оскільки він не лише суперечить непохитному фаталізму Ніцше, але й суперечить центральним принципам його філософії. По-друге, у статті представлена моя власна позиція в рамках цієї суперечки, що триває. За моєю інтерпретацією, Ніцше розуміє агентність як втілення певних настанов. Агентів свобідний вибір полягає лише в рішенні перетворити ці настанови на інстинкт, тобто інтерналізувати ідеали поведінки таким чином, щоб вони могли стати звичками дії.

André Luis Mota Itaparica, PhD in Philosophy, Full Professor at the Federal University of Reconcavo da Bahia (Brazil).

Андре Луїс Мота Итапаріка, доктор філософії, професор Федерального університету Реконкаву-да-Баїя (Бразилія).

e-mail: itapa71@gmail.com
