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Moments of Willing: On the Existential Power to Will a Change to Self and World

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ABSTRACT
'Will' might be a term for the energy that moves individual lives forward. 'Wilfulness' references character: how exercises of will characterise an individual's life. 'Intention' focuses on the aim of an act of willing – while not everything one wills is what one intends – and 'desire' refers to the wish for something – but not necessarily something one either wills or intends to happen. 'Motivation' describes the reason behind a particular act of willing. All these terms might be distinguished from 'agency', a more general capacity to have an effect on the world and also to react to the world. A conceptual complex such as the above, under the rubric of an individual's 'existential power', introduces the possibility of better doing justice to the phenomenological complexity of the conscious lives of research subjects, and also the dignity of that living. The life-history of one Rickey Hirsch is briefly adduced as case-study.

'Yea, something invulnerable, unburiable is in me, something that gallops over rocks: it is called *my Will*. Silently doth it proceed, and unchangingly throughout the years.' Friedrich Nietzsche (1999[1883]:75)

Preamble: Humanism and Culture

An opening chapter in a collection bears a responsibility: opening a debate, offering a conceptual ground. It might also be a provocation. My position is that an anthropology of willing and the will is an opportunity further to pursue what Michael Jackson has called a 'pragmatist critique of culture': annulling essentialistic notions of culture that would misconstrue the social phenomenon as 'a foundation or final cause' rather than simply 'an idiom or vehicle of intersubjective life' (2002:117–25). To assign 'culture' its proper place, is to clarify that a culture is not a thing-in-itself, with identity and agency. A culture does not denote a coherent set of collective practices and ideas determining the structure or content of personal consciousness (see Cohen 1994; Rapport 1997, 2008; Irving 2011). Culture is not another term for 'ontology', the *reality* of worldly nature, including the human (see Gellner 1995; Rapport 2010; Stade 2014). A culture cannot be a bearer of rights, or the constituent unit of a civil society (see Wikan 1999; Amit and Rapport 2002; Demian 2008). Nor is culture the same as 'civilization': the deepening fund of human achievement and knowledge (see Barry 2001; Rapport 2011). The condition of being human is to be anthropologically disclosed, in short, not through collective nouns and identity

terms – such as 'culture' – but through endeavouring to reproduce the 'open-endedness and ambiguity of lived experiences' whereby culturo-symbolic forms and classifications meet individual agency in a universal human struggle to 'strike a balance between autonomy and anonymity' (Jackson 2002:126). In this article, by means of an anthropology of willing, I pursue a phenomenological and humanistic approach to the matter of culture and society. Against the anti-humanism of structuralism and post-structuralism, I take the subjective and individual consciousness of human research subjects to be the (elusive) first *explicandum* (Cohen and Rapport 1995).

I am aware that phenomenology, after Edmund Husserl, has been taken in two very different directions regarding the question of willing, as epitomised by the distinct works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas. For the first, to be human is to be 'condemned to be free'. Freedom is an ontological given, irrespective of cultural constructions of personhood, and independent of social configurations of individual liberty. Each human is responsible for their behaviour: deciding for themselves, moment to moment, what will be the meanings of what they will find around them and how they will attend to those findings (Sartre 1975:352; Rapport 2017). By contrast, for Levinas, the subjectivity of the Ego can be characterised as an essentially passive, patient summons: a passion, an obsession, a persecution, rather than a site of free actions. The subject's bodily sensations are prior to will or consciousness; they make the subject ethical – engaged responsibly with the other – but they do so in the way of 'a disequilibrium, a delirium, undoing thematization, eluding *principle*, origin and will' (Levinas 1981:81; Rapport 2015a, 2019, 2024). In other words, the place of the will in the economy of subjective being is not a given in phenomenology. The anthropologist might claim therefore that it is open to empirical investigation: I would say that the different papers collected in this volume attest to the different empirical forms taken by human will – including 'unwilling', 'wilful subjection', 'the will to pain' and 'the will to despair' – and the different phenomenologies that may derive from those empirical forms.

For both Sartre and Levinas, notwithstanding, culture is something that individual being transcends. It is through their sentient being-in-the world that individuals create their identities, and the well-spring of their awareness and its contents find their source in the living (finite, frail, discrete, unique) body. 'Mortality does not belong to culture', as Levinas puts it (1987:100), and the humanity of selfhood and otherness exists 'before cultures and their alluvions and allusions' (Levinas 1990:295). The phenomenological 'necessities of being in the world' include the meaning, direction and purpose that the individual self is responsible for, constituting its sociocultural situations by virtue of its activities (Sartre 1997:46). A humanistic science would rightfully free human life from the mythic worlds of culture: the violence these exert on reason, the division they introduce, 'the cruelty they perpetuate in social customs' (Levinas 1990:273).

The papers in this collection concur that interrogating the phenomenological complex in which human consciousness sits and out of which individual lives emerge – including their willing – is fundamental to an anthropology that hopes to provide a sufficient testament to the complexity of lives, the personality of lives, the experiencing of lives. In the phrasing of Anthony Cohen: 'If we do not do descriptive justice to individuals, it is hard to see how we could do it for societies' (1992:229).

Introduction: Power and Capacity

In '*I Am Dynamite*' An Alternative Anthropology of Power (Rapport 2003), I put forward the proposition that the concept of power could contain more than was conventionally understood and represented in social science. Alongside an appreciation of the *structural power* of what was institutional, corporate, collective, impersonal and not-individual to impact upon what was individual, there existed the *existential power* of individual human beings to create world-views – personally meaningful and viable environments for themselves – and moreover to traverse these individual environments in the pursuit of their own life-projects. While social structures may be deemed to constrain, even mould, individual expression, nevertheless individual consciousness remained a manifestation of uniqueness and a source of transcendence; we do not do justice to our research subjects if we

understand their consciousness merely to be an emanation of certain systems of structural-institutional formation, coercion and control. The relationship between a personal consciousness and self-control – the control over an individual life and its lived course – was the issue that '*I am dynamite*' set itself to examine. How is the anthropologist to understand the relation between an individual's conscious idea of themselves and the control they are able to exert over the course of their lives? To what extent can we posit self consciousness as equating with, or translating into, self determination? If an individual can be seen to determine the objectives of a life, also the means by which those objectives are to be met and the criteria by which gratification in terms of those objectives is to be evaluated, then should we not recognise them as also possessing the existential resources – emotional, intellectual, physical – to escape the sway of exterior forces – social structures and institutions, ideologies, discourses, systems of signification – and so achieve a freedom from circumstances beyond themselves?

Two questions are combined here: 'What are the conscious resources or capacities of individual human beings?'; and, 'What is the relation between those capacities and the social, cultural and natural circumstances in which they might find themselves by accident of birth?' My argument was that there existed an existential power that individuals possessed over and against impersonal, social-structural or institutional conditions that schools of social science had had a tendency almost exclusively to focus upon. In considering who or what determined the lives individuals led – both the courses of action they adopted and the meanings they accorded to those actions – individuals had the capacities *and* had the practical possibilities of construing their lives in terms of the pursuit and achievement of their own goals – their own life-projects – and of escaping the influence of external social-structural forces and of other individuals that might have wished to have directed them in other ways.

My particular focus in what follows – first theoretic and then ethnographic – is on the nature of that existential power that enables this self-determination, and the place of will within it.

The Bodily Nature of Existential Power

'Consciousness' is the concept that has, since the late sixteenth century (and especially the writings of Rene Descartes and the Cambridge Platonists), been philosophically deployed to specify aspects of the human condition: experiencing, introspecting, knowing, and intending. Significantly, even by 1727 an English definition tied consciousness intrinsically to willing:

> '(a) "The reflex Act, by which a Man knows his Thoughts to be his own Thoughts," (b) "the Direct Act of Thinking; or (which is of the same Import;) simple Sensation," or (c) "the Power of Self-motion, or of beginning of Motion by the Will"' (cited in Thiel 1991:80).

Thought and sensation; willed movement; self awareness. Human existence is an experience of essential inwardness, encompassing what we sense, what we conceptualise and classify, what we interpret, including an inward awareness of what is outward. In Ralph Waldo Emerson's nineteenth-century phrasing, the world is 'a procession of facts [which] flows perpetually outward from a centre in the individual self' (1981:95). Our knowledge of the world comes to us by virtue of our embodiment, our bodily capacities. We know what we know courtesy of a cognitive, affective and conative consciousness. As a further consequence of this, we never with certainty know things as they might really be in themselves. Our human world is a refracted world, known through the prism of a personally embodied consciousness.

Both the individuality of the human condition of consciousness, and the moral value of this, were aspects of consciousness that nascent liberal political philosophies (John Stuart Mill, Ralph Waldo Emerson) and existential ones (Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche) alike were keen to establish as foundational. 'Every new mind is a new classification', Emerson explained (1981:158), for which it is impossible to predict what would be known or made of the world. Through their consciousness, individual human beings constructed universes of experience, of meaning and order, which were particular to themselves, coming to 'live in a web of ideas, a fabric of [their] own making' (Langer 1964:126). Emerson further elaborated:

> I make my circumstance. Let any thought or motive of mine be different from that they are, the difference will transform my condition and economy. I—this world which is called I—is the mould into which the world is poured like melted wax. The mould is invisible but the world betrays the shape of the mould. You [may] call it the power of circumstance, but it is the power of me. (1981:95)

Even while, as social science might observe, individual experience is situated in particular socio-cultural milieus, it is none the less true that human beings are ever confronting themselves with events of their own construal, set in meaningful environments equally of their own personal creation.

'Existential power' may be a name for this capacity to be self-making (Jackson 1997:22). This power is at once something *metabolic*, something pertaining to individuals as discrete physical organisms, and something *intelligent*, pertaining to the capacity to sense and make sense of what lies beyond their organismic boundaries. By 'metabolic' I mean something similar to Gregory Bateson when he described individual human beings as discrete 'energy sources' (1973:126). While the bodily boundaries of human beings may be permeable, and while they are dependent on energy-transfers across these borders, inasmuch as they exist, individuals have a physical and ontogenetic distinctiveness that differentiates them from the rest of the world. As discrete energetic organisms, individuals begin, from before birth, to become distinctly themselves: to accrete identities and personalities. This takes place through activity-in-the-world: through directed movement and through intelligent assessment of what the senses relay to be the results of that movement. Bateson referred in this connection to the 'organism-in-*its*-environment' (1973:426; emphasis added): what develops is a personal, environing 'sensorium' within which individual consciousness dwells. The energy behind this activity-in-the-world remains individually sourced throughout the lifetime of the organism. It is also individually managed and directed. From the moment the individual energy source begins (in the womb) moving in its environment and becoming itself, a unique history of embodiment, of worldly engagement, unfolds and grows which compasses its own logics, its own habits, its own ways of doing and being—and its own purposes.

This is not to say the individual organism-plus-environment is alone in the world. It is discrete but it is not alone. The organism embarks upon a distinct voyage of activity-in-the-world (-in-its-world) and sense-making, but it is surrounded by otherness: a plurality of other things-in-the-world, inorganic and organic, some of which are engaged in comparable voyages to its own. However, since each individual centre-of-energy is driven by its own metabolism, within its own embodiment and along its own historical course of activity-in-the-world, how each will react to other things is not determinable; more specifically, it is difficult, if not impossible, to predict how one human being will both react to and affect another human being with whom it comes into contact. This is so, to repeat, because each is set upon its own life-course, each is engaged in furthering a life-world whose direction and logic has been distinct from the moment 'it' began; also, because each engages with others from the position of outsider: each is dependent on bodily sense-making apparatuses which are discrete and distinctive to itself, which imbue it with its own perspective on the world and with no other. Otherness remains a matter of mystery: the living density, uniqueness and irreducibility of individual being (Throop 2010:271). There may be 'attunement' between individual and environment, but that relationship – and that environment – derives from, and continues to depend on, an existential uniqueness (Zigon 2017:63).

This is very different to how personal identity is conceptualised in a structuralist social science, and where power is determined to reside in and derive from abstract and impersonal entities and forces such as 'social structures', 'institutions', 'discourses' and 'habituated practices'. It is these abstractions that are accorded 'identity', and are seen as somehow responsible for their own effects – controlling those functionaries (individual and 'dividual') said to be living within their compass, whether or not the latter are aware of their being thus controlled. (Post-structuralism would go so far as to claim that such impersonal forces are responsible for giving rise to the consciousness of their human functionaries *tout court* – responsible for their conceiving of the possibility of there being something called 'personal' experience and 'individual' power – thus conflating social structure and agent.)

It can be argued that structuralist approaches collapse a vital distinction between the *symbolic forms* of a social reality on the one hand and, on the other, the deployment of those forms to carry certain *meanings* and to effect certain *work*. Form, as Georg Simmel insisted (1971), may never properly be seen as overwriting content. This is why, for instance, different individual incumbents of the same political office or social-structural status – functionaries of the same institution – will fulfil (define, maintain, extend, subvert, personalise, anonymize) their roles differently. Furthermore, the relationship between form and content, between the institutional and the individual, is not a mutual one: a relationship between equal things or the same kinds of things. The symbolic forms of cultural-institutional or social-structural normativity provide the medium through which social life is conducted. There remains, however, something ontologically distinct in the *agency* with which each individual is responsible for imbuing symbolic forms with meaningfulness, relevance and validity – for putting them to work – through their continued, intentioned use of them (and in so doing maintaining the role of such systems of symbols as synthesising processes in social life). Individual users are responsible for *animating* symbolic-cultural forms and so fashioning them to fit current purpose (without which use the institution would simply remain inert cultural matter). To claim for the institutional something akin to its own animating force and function is an hypostatisation; to apprehend the 'power' of institutions is to see their being worked, and resisted, and negated, in all manner of ways, for all manner of purposes and in every moment, by wilful individuals. There is a fundamental sense in which the formal and institutional is conditional upon the individual and existential. To recall Emerson's phrasing, worlds flow outward from their centres in individual selves: existential power *precedes* the worlds of relationships to which it gives rise; the institutional is epiphenomenal upon the existential. Analytically to posit power as essentially a matter of impersonal forces and institutions is to obfuscate, to reify and mystify. There are, to repeat, always individuals responsible for the ongoing animation, the working, of institutions. Institutions have a social existence only insofar as they continue to be personalised by individuals who use them towards the ends of their own sense-making.

Willing as a Conceptual Complex

The metabolic character of existential power – its being lodged in individual bodies and directed from those organic sources – also means that it is important to differentiate conceptually between the power of the individual agent on the one hand and the relationships with the environing world to which that power gives rise on the other. There is the ontology of existential power and there are the formal deployments and effects of that power. In structuralist theorising, this distinction – between agency and relationality – is dissolved. Here, individuals and dividuals, role-players and persons, as culture-members, are who and what they are – possess the intrinsic natures and inhabit the life-courses they do – due to the characteristics elicited through their relationships: they are the sum of their social relations. In Alfred Schütz's phrasing (1960), social science has tended to regard the individual actor as socially-driven rather than self-motivated: causal or 'because' motives predominate over intentional or 'in order to' motives – where individuals might be seen to be consciously and creatively responsible for determining and effecting thought and action. Contrariwise, in existential construal, individual power is ontologically prior to its effects and distinct from the diversity and fluidity of identities and relations to which it gives rise.

But what does it mean to say that human beings motivate themselves to activity in the world and to making meaning there? First that we recognise that among the identities and relations created and effected by existential power are the individual human being's relations with himself or herself: the identities he or she construes as being his or her own; his or her conscious sense of self. Indeed, perhaps the first and paradigmatic relationship in an existential exercise of power should be seen to concern individuals' relations with themselves. Before effecting relations with a world beyond, the individual determines to attend intellectually to that world: to put himself or herself in a position to make sense of that world and to keep on doing so. Emanating from

within themselves, existential power might be said paradigmatically to describe relations between two or more distinct states of consciousness or moments of embodiment *within* the individual. Existential power, in short, may engender relationships of two different kinds: with individuals' own selves and with others. In both cases power pertains to movement or transition from a past to a new state; it is an energy by which individuals effect a relation between different moments of their conscious being.

It is at this point that the word 'will' usefully enters the picture, a term that might specify *the energy that moves consciousness forward.* Max Weber spoke in this way of the 'will' of individuals (Emerson spoke of their 'force', John Dewey their 'impulse') (Beteille 1977:49). For Nietzsche in particular, wilfulness was a key term for comprehending human – and individual – nature. It was by virtue of being possessed of a 'will to power' that human beings were motivated to experience and to know; acts of feeling and perceiving, cognising and imagining, were wilful; they were also subjective, individual. By virtue of a will to power, individual human beings '*become* what they *are*' and mould reality in their image (Nietzsche 1994:161).

Nietzsche elaborated:

> The individual is something quite new which creates new things, something absolute; all his acts are entirely his own. Ultimately, the individual derives the value of his acts from himself; because he has to interpret in a quite individual way even the words he has inherited. (1968:403)

Wilfulness is a name for the driving force behind human individuals acts of self-creation, and how this is personally motivated. Even to talk of 'because motives' as Schütz does is perhaps a misnomer, a category mistake, conflating 'replying' and 'answering' (Wentzer 2017:37). For the external world only takes shape, only comes to contain things with particular effects – with particular 'causal' relations to Ego – when apprehended by individuals in particular ways for particular purposes. Just as 'structural' or 'institutional' power is actually a way of expressing the form that institutional workings take when experienced within the context of particular individual lives, so a 'because' motive is a particular kind of 'in order to' motive. 'I acted because' is a trope: the reason an individual gives for *determining* to act in a particular way. It may not be the case that individual human beings always give their wilfulness free rein, Nietzsche concluded, since 'laziness' is often 'at the bottom of the active person's soul'; nevertheless, it is within the natural capacity of everyone to exercise the 'toughness, endurance and energy' that maintains an individual life-project and affords humanity its character of 'genius' (1994:161,172).

A number of terms thus offer themselves for our analytical attention, at least in English. 'Will', 'willing', 'wilfulness', and 'will-power'. And a number of cognate terms call for differentiation: 'agency', 'intention', 'motivation', also 'desire'. 'Will' specifies a particular aspect of existential power: assertion or determination. To 'will' is to want and to move towards satisfying that want; so that 'willing' describes an act of assertion or projection, the life that is projected onward, the individual as projectile. 'Wilfulness' then points to questions of individual character: of the ways and extents to which exercises of will can be said to characterise an individual's ongoing being; it suggests that some might exercise their will – upon themselves and upon the world – with more frequency, alacrity, firmness, and force than others. 'Will-power' is then a measure of the will: how much leverage can a particular will exert on self and world at a particular time to effect an outcome. And the cognate terms? 'Agency' I understand as a broader term than 'will' or 'willing', referring to human capacity to act in general: to have an effect on the world, to effect outcomes, and also to react to the world. An individual may be an agent and effect the world in kinds of ways that might not be precisely willed; alternatively, I retain the capacity to act even if I am not willing to act; or again, if I react to violence against me it is not necessarily to will another specific effect upon my assailant. But it is by virtue of being agents, having agency, that things have will. 'Intention' focuses on the precise aim of an act of willing: to intend is to wish or hope or anticipate something particular coming to pass. But willing is broader: not everything I will is what I intend; willing can have unintended consequences. 'Desire' refers to the wish for something;

but it need not be attached to an act: it need not be something one either wills or intends to happen. 'Motivation', lastly, describes the reason behind a particular act of willing: I act in order to effect or achieve such and such.

These terms (albeit briefly outlined) provide us, I suggest, with an important set of concepts, under the rubric of 'existential power'. The concepts are unabashedly concerned with individual human embodiment, with the will as cognitive, affective and conative component of an organic metabolism, and so distinct from approaches that would relativise will according to sociocultural context (Murphy and Throop 2010). The concepts admit the universality of our humanity and our individuality; so that we might do justice to the universal complexity of a conscious human life, and also the dignity of that complex.

A Case-study of Willing and Self-fashioning

'Criminals by instinct' was the phrase that Edmund Leach used (1977:19) to describe a human proclivity to be conscious authors of their own identities and life-projects, and often in contravention of their ascribed statuses and roles. This accords with Michael Jackson's more recent existential emphasis on human self awareness as often having the character of protest against conventional norms. He depicts it as 'the ordeal of a second birth' (Jackson 2015:26). Such (Nietzschean) imagery of individual human beings coming to know themselves as self-conscious, self-authored actors through contravention and contradiction resonates too with the call from the editors of this special issue, Mark Friis Hau and Thomas Randrup Pedersen, to consider the human will especially in regard to phenomena such as personal 'development', 'success' and 'disaster', and 'soldiering on'. Will, Hau and Pedersen suggest, becomes especially manifest in relation to the movement and risk, the pain and healing of a life, in relation to rehabilitation and renaissance. All of these themes pertain to the life-history of the individual to whom I would now turn: Rickey Hirsch.

When Primo Levi wrote that the totalitarian state can exert a frightful pressure over the individual, 'nevertheless, it is not permissible to admit that this pressure is irresistible' since even under Hitler or under Stalin 'some form of reaction, a corrective of the total tyranny has never been lacking' (1996:16,31), he is describing, in part, the life of Rickey Hirsch. I have dealt at length with Rickey's story in earlier publications (Rapport 2012, 2015b, 2015c) but my particular focus here is upon a period in his life subsequent to his escape from the Holocaust.

I met Rickey Hirsch in Montreal in 2007. Rickey was then 84 years old. Born in 1924 in Bucharest, his life-course had intercepted with a number of the defining events of the century: the Depression of the 1930s, the rise of Nazism, the Second-World War, the Holocaust, the founding of the State of Israel, extensive post-war migration of the homeless to the New World. Rickey had been a Romanian, a Jew, a Displaced Person and an Israeli, before becoming a Canadian. At fifteen, Rickey had been sentenced by Romanian fascists to a life of hard labour (due to his being classified a Jew), then escaped and lived rough, then met up with the advancing Russian army, then joined up with the American army of occupation in Austria, then enlisted with the French Foreign Legion, then smuggled people and contraband out of a displaced persons' camp in Italy, then fought in the Israeli War of Independence, then emigrated to Canada with a young family via a displaced persons' camp in Germany, then worked his way up from waitering in Montreal in a Jewish café and then a Chinese restaurant (wearing a makeshift tuxedo and bow tie sown by his wife), to borrowing money to buy a car and set up a driving school, to heading an association of all the driving schools in Quebec, then retirement and widowerhood and extra-mural courses in Psychology at Concordia University. Learning of this helter-skelter of danger, risk and renaissance was dizzying to me, as was Rickey's capacity always to secure for himself a life and to move forward. 'You're poor not in your pocket but in your mind', Rickey explained to me more than once:

> Only if you're poor in your mind can you not provide yourself with the opportunity to survive. So when somebody comes to me and says he's poor, I say "What do you mean?": I'm questioning it.

Figure 1. Rickey and Nigel outside Ruby Foos's Chinese restaurant, Montreal, 2007 (photograph by Andrew Irving).

I do not go into detail here, but I want to extract from my transcription of his life-story one moment when Rickey's will is especially apparent to me – and, it seems, is to Rickey himself as well. At this particular point, Rickey breaks the flow of narrating the details of his life in order to comment on his own wilfulness – or, as he terms it, his 'guts' and his 'chutzpah'. (Rickey had a flair for languages – part of his skill at surviving the war – but English was mastered only late in his life; I therefore amend some of his exposition, below, for the sake of grammatical clarity.) Having begun the interview in Rickey's apartment, high above downtown Montreal, we took to driving around the city (in his old Mercedes Benz saloon) so that he could show the locations that had meant something special to him during the different stages of his inhabiting the city. Fresh details came back to him as we drove Figure 1.

The extract below concerns Rickey's life and work in Montreal once he has stopped being a waiter and has set himself up as a driving instructor. It begins with me having asked Rickey when it was that he felt he had finally 'arrived': no longer a new immigrant in North America and Montreal, having to live hand to mouth, moment to moment and day to day. Rickey corrected me:

I never counted this as a moment for me to remember: I'm just going along. And like the greed: the more you have the more you want … . You can't say 'Oh, now I have enough'. (…) I did a lot of foolish things before I set up the Montreal City Motor League. But I had guts: I never had an education. But I never thought I was going to fail: I always thought I was going to win. And by trying, you find out whether you fail or not, eh? And if you don't try how can you know? Life is about trying: if you don't try something, you'll never know. 'Don't say you've been unlucky in life if you've not played the Lotto!' [Ha ha ha] But it was fun. It was a free country, a free city in those days, everybody laughing and enjoying themselves. And warm: it was an open city, gambling all over the place. (…)

The first driving school was called, 'Rickey's Driving School'. I was the only School working 11 o'clock at night. At the end I operated 40 cars: 40 instructors. I sold it at the end to two of the instructors who wanted to become partners, with my son also having a third share: my wife wanted it for him, as a legacy. (…)

But the guts I had! … I'll show to you now here. Here I open Montreal City Motor League. And the hallway had a cement floor, I bought some tables from a school, and I create a classroom. So here I had my office. So, what guts I had … I asked—at the time the Mayor was Monsieur Drapeau. I asked Mayor Drapeau to become honorary member of my club! Do you understand this magnitude of chutzpah somebody had to ask the Mayor! But I was so into the traffic safety: I was sick! And nobody could contradict me. They said 'You could sell ice-cream to the Eskimos! You … '.

My son was seven years old; I took him to Washington. There was the American Automobile Association. I ask American Automobile Association to give me the rights in Montreal! Ha! They saw they meet a crazy fanatic guy, come all the way from Montreal to ask that they receive me … because I don't know! [Ha!] I leave my son in the motel, swimming, and I went there to talk to them. But they told me 'We already have representatives in Montreal'. I say 'I never saw American Automobile Association in Montreal', and they tell me: 'No: they go under Royal Automobile Club'. So then I went to the Centre Office of the Royal Automobile Club in Montreal, and I said 'I was sent from Washington to sell you a programme: all members of your association have to pass a test with me in order to become member to you: that's a safety rule'. So they look at me like crazy and say we'd better make a meeting. There was supposed to be Mayor Drapeau there, the Minister of Transport, the President of the Royal Automobile Club, and Mr Molson, from the brewery (he had some kind of potential position there). They say 'Friday at 4 o'clock'. I came there Friday 4 o'clock; nobody show up. There was only me! Only the for-nothing, the crazy guy! [Ha!] The meeting never happen … But I open up doors. I push. I push. I push. I think you're the best salesman when you believe in your product. And nobody else can take it away from you … So, I was an inventor, a creator.

I used to go to the government and I'd say: 'How can you send an inspector, to inspect me, when the guy does not have half of my intelligence and my capacity to understand traffic safety?'. So we ended up creating courses for government employees so that they could have the authority to go and control driving schools and how they practised, and give them certification. But you have to have imagination: I was the only Jew they ever had as President of the Quebec Driving Schools' Association. With access to the Legislature, and to open doors in Quebec City. Never! But when I came here in the 'fifties, it was like that. You had your freedom. You could have done anything. Nobody said anything to you: you just keep on going.

But except for the freedom it was offering, I did not identify with … the so-called 'democracy' of the French Canadians that you could see when they came to church each Sunday! In their furs and jewels. Interested only in who was looking at them and how they looked. (…)

But what I believe is that nobody can protect you but yourself. (…) The story is created by the individual: you create. Some people give up. They didn't try it. So if it ends to be good or bad it's because of their decision. I took my chances and my decision. I try. If I succeed it's good for me.

At this point we finish our car ride and return to Rickey's apartment for tea and further exposition. But let me go back to the beginning of the above extract: me asking Rickey what his ambitions were during those early years in North America and whether there was a moment when he felt he had now 'arrived' in Montreal. His response was that he had never felt this; once he had procured some measure of security he greedily held out for more. At another point in the interview, Rickey elaborated on this early state of mind of his: his desire, his goal, to make enough money for the family to survive and not to worry – for the children in particular.

With four dollars in my pocket, and not really a profession, I had to make my way by myself. All the way through. I had no choice. I was cut off: no mother, no father, no home or family to protect me. I had no time to think: I had to survive. I could not go back to school, I had to bring up the family. We were hungry to have everything, and they had an abundance here: furniture, television. And we had nothing. (…)

I knew I was capable of doing it. In my mind, anyway, is just how to make money. Work, make money, work. In order to have security. Because I had learned that you lived in a world where if you do not have money, you do not live. With money you can buy life. Or whatever. You can buy land, gold. (If you plan on moving around, don't buy land, buy gold.) But you know, it's uppermost in your mind: security. How are you going to handle yourself? You have no family, you have nobody who's going to give you any advice. Your neighbour is going to take the blanket for himself, not you. In the war, you walk over dead bodies. You watch pilots parachuting from planes: sometimes they reach the ground safely; sometimes they die before they reach the ground. You're seeing them but you're doing nothing about it. What is more important for the individual is himself, I think: taking care of his survival … Maybe the first time you get a bit emotional about death, but after that — I worried for nobody but myself. Not my sister, even.

I have suggested that Rickey's behaviour bespeaks wilfulness, and that this is something he himself recognises, in emphasising his 'guts' and his 'chutzpah'. But what is the nature of the wilfulness (will-power and willing) displayed here? Nietzsche's phrases come to mind, from this article's epigraph: how he sees his will as something indomitable and unchanging that 'gallops over rocks'. What I hear from Rickey, above all, as I believe the above extracts confirm, is him being possessed of a force that drives him on and through; he is persevering, resilient and resourceful, always trying to succeed in the face of what he finds to be obstacles. Survival is the objective: a determination to be and to have. But there is no more of a goal or plan or end-point than this. I think Rickey might say he did not have the luxury, the time or opportunity, to formulate a plan. Similarly he did not have the time to be too introspective: to ask himself *why* he wished to survive, and why to have a family that also had to be made to survive – but that also made such survival harder to achieve. Rickey's wilfulness, in other words, expresses itself as a life-force – a force towards physical survival – that

has an indomitable character, but is also something of a blind force lacking a reasoned appraisal of survival as a value. Rickey reacts to obstacles and will not stop trying to overcome, but for much of Rickey's story that overcoming appears an end in itself: survival for its own sake.

This is also why the Montreal episodes are interesting, because they chart those moments – after the Second World War and the Israeli War of Independence and being a Displaced Person – when basic physical survival gave way to survival of different sorts: social, reputational, financial. But Rickey barely seems to recognise the change. His personal habitus is to 'gallop over rocks' strewn in his way, whether these would stop him physically or socially or reputationally or financially. And yet there *is* a change that occurs. Rickey calls it 'greed'. Money, he has learnt, is a currency that can buy security in any sphere: it secures social position and reputation just as it does life itself – an escape from Nazi Europe, a bribing of officials, a supply of meat. But Rickey finds he never reaches a point where he has 'enough' money, even after he has secured his family's physical survival, because of his and his family's 'hunger' to share in the 'abundance' of Montreal life. Many have more than him; many are also 'gambling' – and thieving and racketeering – to get on and the city seems to welcome this 'free' use by individuals of any and all resources they have at their disposal. Rickey knows he can succeed in selling his schemes to others: he has never failed as a salesman; he set himself the challenge of selling a car franchise to the Americans, and selling a car-safety programme to the Royal Automobile Club of Canada. And then there is Mayor Drapeau, the figurehead of French-Canadian, Catholic, Quebecois society. How about if the Mayor was offered an honorary membership of Rickey's club, the Montreal City Motor League and had his status thus co-opted? How about Rickey as the first and only Jew to be President of the Quebec Driving Schools' Association – acquainted to the Quebec government, interviewed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, responsible for accrediting Canadian government officials?

Rickey's life is one of continual self-fashioning, so that he might accommodate himself to different powers that be: in Nazi-held and post-war Europe, in Israel, in Canada. His aim is survival. When he *has* the luxury of physical survival, the personal habit of self-fashioning does not wither and he turns his energies in the same quantities towards social (reputational) and financial survival, for which there is no natural limit. Rickey's will to survive becomes a greed for wealth and social acceptance and name but the willing does not cease and the wilfulness does not change in firmness or force.

Willing as a Universal Human Story

Saul Bellow, the novelist, was born to Russian Jewish immigrants in Montreal in 1915 – nine years prior to Rickey Hirsch's birth. When Bellow was himself nine he was smuggled over the border into the USA – an undocumented alien – and grew up in Chicago, a city he came to remember for its 'openness': an invitation to 'freestyle' expansion and ambition. Only when the Second World War broke out did Bellow take steps to become naturalised as a US citizen – some years *after* a decision on his part to dedicate himself to the career of writer (and to dematriculate from a degree programme in anthropology at the University of Wisconsin). A recent review of Bellow's life entitles itself 'American freestyle', stressing Bellow's story to be one of 'sheer perversity, force of will, and hard work' (Begley 2015:3). What resonances offer themselves here between Rickey Hirsch's story and a broader human story of willing – including Saul Bellow's? How might one incorporate resonances in the quality of the will, for example, its forcefulness in the face of social circumstances? There is, Bellow wrote, a 'queer hunger of immigrants and their immediate descendants' (cited in Begley 2015:4), but is this anything more than a conventional and journalistic trope?

Bellow elaborated upon the hunger of North America's immigrants to say that it was as if each one refined particular aspects of human behaviour to their essence: 'I *labor*, I *spend*, I *strive*, I *design*, I *love*, I *cling*, I *uphold*, I *give away*, I *envy*, I *long*, I *die*, I *hide*, I *want*' (1956:115). Moreover, while characterised alike by hunger and drive, the focus of these and their expression were nonetheless in

each case distinct: each immigrant retained his or her motivational individuality. This provides me with a point of analytical entry. The *expression* of willing is individual and diverse, while the *capacity* for willing might be seen to be a shared human trait, and the *measure* of wilfulness exhibited might find overlaps between individuals who regard themselves as similarly situated. Formulating the analytical claim in this way enables me to anticipate species-wide commonalities together with individual specificities, mediated by similarities brought on by particular sociocultural situations (as interpreted by the actors concerned). Human willing is universally the same and it is completely individual and it is comparable. Rickey Hirsch and Saul Bellow share a human capacity for willing, are distinguished by the individual ways in which they substantiate that capacity – what they will for – and are comparable in the way that migration and displacement affected their will to fashion lives, to overcome and succeed.

Rickey's story also leads me to claim that the overt form that willing takes, the way it expresses itself, can be expected to change *within* a life as well as between individual lives. To return to Bellow's quotation, I *labour*, I *spend*, I *strive*, I *design*, I *love*, I *cling*, I *uphold*, I *give away*, I *envy*, I *long*, I *die*, I *hide*, I *want* will likely describe the potential diversity of *one* individual's efforts not only those of different individuals. The intensity of Rickey's willing, for instance, expressed itself in ways other than physical survival once he had reached Montreal (becoming reputational, social), as we have seen. Even before reaching North America – in Europe and the Middle East (in parts of his story I have not been able to recount here) – Rickey can be seen to have refined to its essence a number of different kinds of human drive besides simply wishing for physical survival: he *learned*, he *pleased*, he *insinuated himself*, he *made do* and he *moved on* with remarkable measures of wilfulness.

A final insight I glean from Rickey's account concerns the relation between the will and intentionality. Willing is broader than intending, I have suggested, and not everything an individual wills is what was intended. Elaborating on this distinction a little, in the light of Rickey, is to say that there can be a blindness to willing: it need not share the directionality of intending or the focus. Rickey can appear driven by will, even in the absence of a clear goal, even against what might otherwise appear to be his best interests. Will appears in Rickey's story as a force that sometimes takes him in directions that he only properly understands – or understands very differently – in retrospect. Only later in life, for instance, does he see how his hunger or greed for material security drove him to miss a rounded participation in and experience of his children's childhood. We return to the divided path that I described phenomenology as having taken since Husserl, and that I named 'Sartrean' as against 'Levinasian'. Is subjectivity self-controlled or is it impassioned? Doing justice to the complexity of Rickey Hirsch's life-story would be to want to say that subjectivity may be both at once. Rickey is contrarietous, self-contradictory: his will gallops, at moments under his direction and at others its own passion (Rapport 1997, 2014).

The individual human body was, Nietzsche suggested (1968), best considered a complex of forces all proceeding contemporaneously, sometimes in alignment with one another, sometimes in opposition, sometimes completely apart. His singular name ('Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche') notwithstanding, Nietzsche appeared to himself more as a community or field of struggling forces, struggling with one another as well as with the world beyond his body. It was the contingency of balance and opposition among this struggling complex that all the time gave rise to the individual life that his body lived as it reached out from itself towards the world and ingested, grew, developed, moved, succeeded, became diseased and died. 'The will' I have understood as a name for that energy, inhering in the living individual organism, in the metabolism and also the interpretive intelligence of the individual human being, that is responsible for moving consciousness forward from moment to moment. To tell the human story of willing is also to say that this energy responsible for fashioning individual identities, environments and lives can manifest itself in lives as if possessed of a 'will', a force, of its own. The life-stories of Friedrich Nietzsche, Saul Bellow and Rickey Hirsch one might posit as portraying alike a relentless willed self-fashioning that exists as an internal struggle as well as a struggle with a world of otherness beyond.

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