



From the Will to Truth to the Will to Interpretation: A Study in the Ontology of the Will

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Abstract:

This research examines the philosophical shift from a central focus on the will to truth to a horizon of the will to interpretation. This shift is not limited to the epistemological level but extends to the ontological structure of human existence in contemporary societies. While the will to truth, in the metaphysical tradition, was associated with stability, certainty, and the claim of ultimate correspondence, the will to interpretation expresses a historical awareness of the fluid nature of meaning and its role as a product of symbolic struggles defined within language and discourse.

The research begins with the premise that the shift from truth to interpretation reflects a change in the conditions of cultural hegemony. In complex societies, power is exercised not only through direct force but also through the production of meaning and the symbolic framing of reality. Consequently, interpretation becomes an active tool in shaping collective consciousness, redefining legitimacy, and formulating the narratives that constitute identity and history. In this sense, the will to interpretation can be understood as a mechanism for redistributing power within the symbolic field, reminiscent of Foucault's analyses of power and knowledge, and of deconstruction, which revealed the instability and perpetual openness of meaning.

The research proposes the concept of "will" as an intermediate ontological structure that expresses the structural tension in human existence between a tendency toward stability and an openness to possibility. Will does not represent a passive fragility, but rather an existential condition that makes interpretation both possible and necessary. Meaning is not given as a complete given, but is formed within an unending movement of understanding. Hence, the will to interpretation is understood not merely as an epistemological method, but as a strategy for cultural survival that transcends the logic of material conflict to the logic of symbolic hegemony.

The research concludes that the transition from the will to truth to the will to interpretation does not signify a fall into nihilism, but rather a redefinition of truth within a relative historical horizon, where it becomes a temporary possibility, not an absolute center. Thus, the world is understood as an open space for the production of



meaning, one that does not settle into a final form but is renewed through the continuous movement of interpretation.

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1. *Introduction*

The question of truth is no longer posed within the same framework that governed classical philosophy. After centuries of striving to fix meaning and guarantee certainty, contemporary thought has entered a phase where the centrality of truth as a fixed given is declining, in favor of a growing awareness of the historicity and interpretive nature of meaning. While metaphysics was founded on the search for absolute presence and permanence, modern intellectual shifts have revealed the fragility of this assumption and re-examined its very foundation.

This shift can be seen as a transition from the logic of "survival of the fittest" to something akin to a "symbolic Darwinism of meaning," where interpretation triumphs not because it conforms to a fixed essence, but because it is best able to adapt to the conditions of history and most readily disseminated within the general symbolic landscape. However, this does not mean reducing thought to a propaganda struggle, but rather acknowledging that meaning is not formed outside the conditions of power, language, and history. Here, the will to interpret transforms from a partial cognitive practice into a structural force that influences the shaping of the conditions of collective perception and reproduces prevailing modes of understanding. The question of truth has remained a central theme in philosophy since Plato and Aristotle, linked to presence, certainty, and permanence. However, Friedrich Nietzsche offered a radical critique of this conception, demonstrating that the will to truth is not epistemological innocence, but rather an expression of the will to power, seeking to establish a particular perspective as absolute.¹ From this turning point, it became impossible to conceive of truth in isolation from the conditions of its production, or of knowledge in isolation from its discursive structure.

In this context, modern hermeneutics—with Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Gadamer—shifted the focus from “What is truth?” to “How is meaning understood?” before deconstruction, with Derrida, and discourse analysis, with Foucault, went further,



dismantling the very centrality of meaning and highlighting its fluid and conditional nature. Thus, interpretation is no longer a technique for understanding specific texts, but rather an ontological horizon within which human existence is defined as a being that understands the world from within, not from without.

Within this transformation, this research proposes the concept of “will” as an ontological formulation of this human condition. Will does not signify a fleeting fragility, but rather expresses a structural tension between the desire to fix meaning and the openness to the possibility of transcending it. It is not a lack of certainty, but an awareness of its limitations; not a fall into nihilism, but an understanding of the potential nature of existence. Hence the importance of the shift from the will to truth to the will to interpretation emerges, not as a replacement of one concept with another, but as a redefinition of humanity’s relationship to time, identity, and meaning.

The central question of this research is thus: How can the will to interpretation replace the will to truth without slipping into absolute relativism or total nihilism? What is the place of will in this transformation? And can interpretation constitute an alternative ontological horizon that allows for the preservation of meaning without claiming to possess ultimate truth?

2. The ontology of the Rida – from stability to possibility

The concept of “al-Rida” is proposed in this research as an attempt to name an ontological structure in which human existence is defined as a constant tension between a tendency toward stability and an openness to possibility. Al-Rida does not indicate psychological fragility or incidental hesitation, but rather expresses an authentic existential condition situated in the space between completion and openness, between the desire to fix meaning and the possibility of transcending it. In this perspective, the human being is not a completed essence, but an unfinished project, perpetually stretched between what exists and what could be.

In this sense, al-Rida does not signify ontological weakness, but rather reveals the potential nature of existence itself. Existence is not realized as a final given, but as an openness to inexhaustible possibilities. Here, we can draw upon Ibn Arabi's discussion of "bewilderment" (al-riḍāh), which he does not view as a deficiency in knowledge, but rather as a horizon of the mind's openness to the infinite, where the facets of truth multiply without being confined to a single image. (Friedrich Nietzsche, 2007, p. 45) In this sense, bewilderment is not an inability to grasp meaning, but rather an awareness of its abundance.



This conception finds a profound philosophical resonance in Martin Heidegger's analysis of human existence in *Being and Time*. Human beings, as *Dasein*, are not understood as a fixed essence, but as potentiality (*Sein-können*), that is, the capacity to be what has not yet been realized. (Ibn Arabi, 1985, p. 112) The structure of human existence is based on openness, on orientation toward the future, and on what Heidegger calls "disclosure," which makes meaning an event, not a ready-made given. In this sense, all understanding is a movement within a horizon of possibility, not a recovery of a complete truth.

Introducing the concept of bewilderment in this context allows us to transcend the traditional dichotomy between truth and nothingness. It is either a closed certainty that leads to dogmatism, or a nihilistic void that leads to the collapse of meaning. Interpretation, however, resides in the space between these two extremes, where meaning is neither negated nor deified. Here, interpretation becomes an ontological necessity, not a methodological choice. Meaning, being incomplete, remains open to rereading.

Paul Ricoeur pointed out that discourse is not closed in the author's intention, but rather opens itself to a "surplus of meaning" that makes the text amenable to multiple readings without losing its internal structure. (Martin Heidegger, 2012, p. 183) This surplus is what prevents meaning from becoming objectified and makes interpretation a renewed practice that never ends. However, this openness does not imply complete liberation, as Umberto Eco emphasizes that the text has a "semantic strategy" that regulates the limits of reading and prevents falling into excessive interpretation. (Paul Ricoeur, 2006, p. 64) In this sense, interpretation is not merely a descriptive concept, but an ontological condition for interpretation itself. Interpretation does not arise from closed certainty, but from an inner turmoil that stimulates questioning and prevents meaning from becoming absolute authority. This dynamism is what keeps thought in motion and what preserves existence from becoming fixed in a final form. It is not the fragility of existence, but its structural openness.

3. The will to truth and the establishment of certainty

The will to truth constitutes one of the structural pillars of Western philosophy, as it has been linked from its earliest beginnings to the project of establishing meaning and ensuring certainty in the face of the changing and turbulent world. Philosophy, in one of its fundamental aspects, arose as a resistance to time, an attempt to grasp the unchanging. Hence, since Plato, truth has been associated with the idea of perfect presence and absolute constancy.



In the Platonic conception, truth is embodied in the world of Forms, where knowledge is synonymous with the restoration of what is fixed and eternal. The “Allegory of the Cave” does not merely offer an educational image, but rather establishes an ontological conception of truth as a revelation of what is authentically existing, in contrast to the world of shadows and change. (Umberto Eco, 2007, p. 78) Thus, philosophical inquiry becomes a search for a presence that transcends the fluctuations of the senses, and for a certainty unaffected by the transformations of time.

For Aristotle, truth took on a more systematic form when it was defined as the correspondence of speech to reality. (Plato, 1973, Book VII) However, this definition, despite its logical nature, implicitly presupposes the existence of a self-contained reality, independent of the horizon of understanding and history, such that the function of reason is to reveal it, not to produce it. Hence, the idea that truth is an objective given that can be attained when sound methodological conditions are met is established.

In the Middle Ages, this conception was reinforced within the theological structure, where God became the ultimate guarantor of truth. Truth was no longer merely a cognitive correspondence, but rather an expression of a transcendent divine order, and reason the instrument for discovering the order of this order. Thus, metaphysics was enshrined as a search for a fixed, supreme authority that grants legitimacy to knowledge and authority to power. Here, truth became synonymous with the absolute, and all knowledge became conditioned by its reference to a transcendent source that guarantees its veracity.

However, this metaphysical edifice was radically deconstructed by Friedrich Nietzsche. In his text “On Truth and Lies in an Immoral Sense,” Nietzsche demonstrates that what we call “truth” is merely a network of metaphors and analogies entrenched by habit and forgetfulness. (Aristotle, 1980, p. 56) According to Nietzsche, concepts are produced by generalizing differences and neglecting individual distinctions, then, through social stability, they transform into rigid standards that are mistakenly believed to reflect the essence of things. Thus, truth is not a revelation of a fixed essence, but rather the result of a process of symbolic fixation.

This critique reaches its climax when Nietzsche links the will to truth with the will to power. (Friedrich Nietzsche, 2007, p. 45) The pursuit of truth is not a neutral endeavor, but rather an expression of a desire to impose a particular perspective as universal. Whoever possesses the definition of truth simultaneously possesses the power to shape others' perception of the world. In this way, the will to truth is revealed as a will to domination disguised behind the discourse of objectivity.



Although Nietzsche deconstructs truth as a mask for the will to power, he also subjects the will to power itself to a kind of problematization; It cannot be understood as a new metaphysical principle replacing the old truth, but rather as a dynamic description of the movement of evaluation and re-evaluation. If the will to power becomes a fixed foundation, it reproduces the metaphysics that Nietzsche sought to dismantle. Hence, the will to power should be read not as an alternative essence, but as an analysis of the mechanisms of value and meaning production.

Michel Foucault continues this critical path through his archaeological and genealogical analysis of discourses. In his book *Knowledge and Power*, he demonstrates that what is called truth does not exist outside the systems of its production, but is formed within the networks of power that determine what is acceptable and legitimate. (Friedrich Nietzsche, 2008, para. 481) “Systems of truth” are not a reflection of objective reality, but rather discursive structures that organize fields of knowledge and define the boundaries of the possible and the forbidden. Thus, truth becomes a consequence of institutional practices, not a transcendent essence.

From this perspective, the will to truth is no longer read as a neutral pursuit of revelation, but as a historical mechanism for establishing a particular epistemological system and imbuing it with a binding character. However, this deconstruction does not mean the complete abolition of truth, but rather its repositioning within a historical and interpretive framework, such that it becomes the product of a struggle of readings, with no final given existing outside of it.

Therefore, it can be said that the will to truth in its classical origins was based on the assumption of stability and certainty, and rested on a rational and theological structure that granted it metaphysical support. But with Nietzschean critique and Foucault's analysis of power and knowledge, truth is no longer understood as an absolute reference point, but as a historical construct subject to revision. Here, the field opens up for a shift to the will to interpretation, not as relative chaos, but as a redefinition of the conditions for the production of meaning within an open historical horizon.

4. The will to interpret and the collapse of fixed meaning

The shift from a will to truth to a will to interpretation represents a profound transformation in the structure of philosophical thought. While truth in the classical framework was associated with stability, correspondence, and certainty, interpretation expresses a recognition of the historicity of meaning and its openness to multiple possibilities. The world is no longer understood as a silent object awaiting revelation, but rather as a semantic space that is only revealed within the horizon of understanding—that is, within an interpretive relationship that cannot be transcended.



This transformation began with modern hermeneutics, when Friedrich Schleiermacher sought to move beyond the scholastic understanding of texts, asserting that understanding is not a mechanical reproduction of the author's intention, but a reproduction of meaning within the reader's horizon. (Michel Foucault, 1988, p. 131) The text is not exhausted in its initial context, but enters into a dialogical relationship with a reader inhabiting a different time, which makes understanding always an interpretive act, not a neutral recollection. With Wilhelm Dilthey, hermeneutics expanded to become a general method for understanding the humanities, where human phenomena cannot be treated like natural facts. (Friedrich Schleiermacher, 2002, p. 37) Understanding here is conditioned by history, and the interpreting subject is not outside its object but rather engaged within it. All understanding is historical understanding, and all meaning is the product of a specific context. Thus, the conception of truth as a formal correspondence recedes in favor of its conception as an act of understanding.

However, this shift reaches its culmination with Hans-Georg Gadamer, who asserts in *Truth and Method* that understanding is not a technical procedure that can be systematically controlled, but rather a fusion of horizons between the past and the present. (Wilhelm Dilthey, 2008, p. 91) The reader does not suspend their preconceptions entirely, but rather engages them in a dialogue with the text, and truth is formed within this interaction. Hence, truth is no longer something existing independently outside of history, but rather an event occurring within the horizon of understanding.

However, deconstruction with Jacques Derrida pushed this horizon to its extreme limits. In his grammatical analysis, Derrida demonstrates that meaning does not settle into a complete presence, but is constantly deferred through what he calls "différance," the movement that postpones the completion of meaning and distributes it across a network of signs. (Hans-Georg Gadamer, 2004, p. 305) In this sense, the text does not contain a fixed semantic center, but rather opens itself to a multiplicity of readings that cannot be confined to a single, definitive interpretation. Thus, the collapse of fixed meaning becomes a consequence of the very structure of language, not merely a methodological choice.

This analysis intersects with what Michel Foucault offers in his archaeological and genealogical studies, where he shows that what is called "meaning" or "truth" is a product of a discursive system that determines what can be said and what is excluded. (Jacques Derrida, 1976, p. 158) Meaning is not produced in a vacuum, but within a network of power relations. Interpretation here does not reveal a hidden essence, but rather deconstructs the structure that makes some interpretations possible and others



impossible. In this way, interpretation becomes a critical tool for dismantling the epistemological centrism that have claimed to possess the truth.

In light of this trajectory, the will to interpret transforms from a mere practice of understanding into an active symbolic strategy in complex societies. The question is no longer who possesses objective truth, but rather who can impose their interpretation as the most convincing and widespread. This is where the so-called “post-truth society” emerges, where the authority of facts recedes before the power of narratives, and the ability to frame meaning becomes a condition for symbolic hegemony.

However, the collapse of fixed meaning does not imply a fall into absolute relativism or total nihilism. Umberto Eco warned against falling into “excessive interpretation,” emphasizing that a text has a structure that resists some readings and limits others. (Michel Foucault, 1980, p. 131) Recognizing the historicity of meaning does not negate the possibility of rational control, but rather redefines it within an interpretive horizon. From this perspective, the will to interpret can be understood not as semantic chaos, but as an awareness that meaning is historically constructed and remains open to revision.

Therefore, the will to interpret does not represent a denial of truth, but rather a reformulation of its conditions. Truth is no longer outside of history, but rather the result of dialogue, interpretation, and the clash of readings. Interpretation becomes an existential condition for understanding and adapting to the world, and a tool for rewriting the past and shaping the future, without becoming a final claim to the closure of meaning.

5. From truth to meaning – the world as an endless drive towards interpretation

If the question of truth has been central to philosophy from Plato to modernity, contemporary thought has undergone a qualitative shift, moving from the search for a fixed truth to the production of meaning. The world is no longer understood as a complete essence awaiting revelation, but rather as a semantic horizon that takes shape within the very process of understanding. Meaning is no longer derived from correspondence with a transcendent reality, but is constructed within an interpretive relationship inseparable from history, language, and context. However, this shift raises a crucial question: Is it possible to transcend truth without falling into nihilism?

Nietzsche was the first to pose this question radically. When he deconstructed the idea of truth as a metaphysical illusion, he did not intend to abolish meaning, but rather to liberate it from the claim of absoluteness. In *The Will to Power*, he demonstrates that values and meanings are not fixed givens, but rather expressions of living forces that



constantly re-evaluate the world. (Umberto Eco, 2007, p. 78) Transcending truth, therefore, does not mean denying meaning, but rather acknowledging its creative and historical character.

Jacques Derrida takes a similar approach, asserting that the absence of a fixed center of meaning does not lead to its collapse, but rather reveals its differential structure. In *Margins of Philosophy*, he points out that all meaning is formed through a continuous process of deferral, such that it is never completed in a final, definitive form. (Jacques Derrida, 1982, p. 15) Meaning does not disappear, but remains open to reinterpretation. Thus, the absence of absolute truth becomes a condition for the possibility of interpretation, not its negation.

In this context, interpretation transforms from a methodological tool into an ontological and ethical horizon. From an ethical standpoint, acknowledging the historicity of meaning leads to abandoning the logic of exclusion based on possessing absolute truth (Friedrich Nietzsche, 2008, para. 481). Recognizing that all understanding is conditional opens the door to a dialogue not based on claims of certainty, but on the possibility of revision. Paul Ricoeur noted that the “conflict of interpretations” does not signify chaos, but rather the possibility of coexistence among multiple readings within a rational and critical horizon. (Paul Ricoeur, 2005, p. 64) From an aesthetic perspective, interpretation transforms the world into a space of creative possibility. Meaning is not consumed in a single reading, but is renewed with each reinterpretation. This makes culture itself a continuous interpretive process, where texts are not preserved as static relics, but as ever-renewing sources of meaning.

However, the will to interpret, like the will to truth, is not without its risks. If it transforms into an institutional monopoly or a discursive tool for imposing a particular narrative, it reproduces the very hegemony it sought to dismantle. Foucault demonstrated that all discourse, however much it claims to be liberated, remains entangled in power relations that define its potential and its limitations. (Hans-Georg Gadamer, 2004, p. 305) Hence, interpretation should be viewed as an arena of symbolic struggle, not a neutral space devoid of tension.

The transition from truth to meaning does not mean replacing one certainty with another, but rather redefining humanity's place in the world. Existence is not presented in a complete form, but unfolds through the act of understanding. Here, this section intersects with the concept of “interpretation” established at the outset: interpretation, with its inherent tension between stability and openness, expresses the existential condition that makes interpretation a constant necessity (Paul Ricoeur, 2005, p. 64).



Interpretation is not a fragility, but rather the awareness that meaning is never complete, and that every fixation upon it remains temporary.

Therefore, it can be said, in conclusion, that all interpretation is, in its essence, a will to interpret. Meaning does not settle into a final form, but is renewed through the movement of re-understanding and reformulation. The world does not conclude with an absolute truth, but remains an open project, completed only to the extent that it is reinterpreted. Thus, existence itself becomes an unending striving toward meaning.

6. CONCLUSION

The analytical path we have followed reveals that the shift from the will to truth to the will to interpretation is not merely a transformation in the tools or methods of knowledge, but rather a transformation that touches the very ontological structure of human existence. The will to truth, in its classical form, was based on the assumption of permanence, presence, and certainty, and on the pursuit of a transcendental reference point that grants meaning the quality of absoluteness. However, modern philosophical critique, from Nietzsche to contemporary hermeneutics, has shown that this claim was not devoid of an authoritarian dimension, as it presupposed the possibility of establishing a system of knowledge as the ultimate criterion, excluding all others in the name of objectivity.

In contrast, the will to interpretation does not represent a negative break with truth, but rather a redefinition of the conditions of its possibility. Meaning is no longer understood as a complete essence awaiting revelation, but as the product of a historical interaction that takes shape within the horizons of understanding, language, and symbolic conflict. Thus, interpretation becomes not a chaotic alternative to truth, but a horizon that acknowledges the historicity of every claim to certainty and keeps meaning open to revision.

In this context, the concept of "al-Rida" (the continuity) emerges as the ontological expression of this open human condition. Al-Rida reveals that existence is not realized in a complete form, but is defined as a constant tension between a tendency toward stability and an openness to possibility. It is not a fragility that ends in nihilism, nor a certainty that hardens into dogmatism, but an intermediate structure that preserves the dynamism of meaning and the capacity for renewal of thought. Hence, interpretation becomes both possible and necessary: possible because meaning is not closed, and necessary because existence itself is only given in the form of renewed revelation.

The collapse of absolute truth, in the metaphysical sense, does not lead to a value vacuum, but rather opens a new ethical and aesthetic horizon. When the historicity of



meaning is acknowledged, the logic of exclusion based on possessing ultimate truth recedes, replaced by a dialogical horizon grounded in revision and the acceptance of difference. Thus, interpretation becomes not merely a cognitive activity, but an existential condition that guarantees the continuity of culture and the vitality of thought. Accordingly, the transition from truth to interpretation does not imply the abolition of the former, but rather its placement within a relative and historical framework, rendering it perpetually provisional, open to critique and reformulation. Within this framework, interpretation remains a symbol of a human condition that does not settle into final certainty, but rather exists in a creative tension that bestows upon existence its ever-renewing meaning. The world is not a complete given, but an open-ended project, existing only to the extent that it is reinterpreted.

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