THE CONCEPTS OF HEALTH AND SICKNESS IN NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

THE CONCEPTS OF HEALTH AND SICKNESS
IN NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHY

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The purpose of the present study is to assess the role of the concepts of health and sickness in Nietzsche's philosophy. While doing this, our basic presupposition will be that these concepts owe their special place to their being the new criteria for Nietzsche's project of revaluation of all existing values. Nietzsche was philosophizing in the face of the crisis of 19th century Europe, that is, nihilism. According to him, Western traditional thought is based on an otherworldly oriented conception of life the values of which are nothing but a negation of life. Although these values had served man's justification of living for a long time, they reached their expiration by the 'death of god' resulting from the materialistic tendency of the flourishing natural sciences of the 19th century. The 'death of god' paved the way for a devaluation of once most valuable values, of which the most notable are 'good' and 'bad'. Thus, Nietzsche's project of revaluation needs new evaluative criteria as well, which is 'health' and 'sickness'. In this study, I will argue that, Nietzsche situates a physiological understanding of these concepts at the very heart of his revaluation and their somehow metaphorical application to culture and modern society is based on a physiological conception of them as well.

Keywords: Nietzsche, affirmation of life, health, sickness, physiology.

ÖZ

NIETZSCHE FELSEFESİNDE SAĞLIK VE HASTALIK KAVRAMLARI

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, sağlık ve hastalık kavramlarının Nietzsche felsefesindeki rolünü ortaya koymaktır. Bunu yaparken temel varsayımımız bu kavramların öneminin onların Nietzsche'nin değerlerin yeniden bir değerlendirmesini yapma tasarısı için benimsediği ölçütler oluşlarında yatmaktadır. Nietzsche, 19. yy. Avrupa'sının krizi olan nihilism karşısında yapmaktadır. Ona gore, Batı felsefesi geleneği bir öte dünya anlayışında temellenmektedir ve benimsediği değerler bu hayatı yadsımaktadırlar. Bu değerler sistemi, geçmişte, insanın bu dünyadaki yaşantısını temellendirmesine hizmet etmiş olsalar da, 19. yy'da gelişen doğa bilimlerinin maddeci eğilimiyle ortaya çıkan 'tanrının ölümü' ile birlikte kullanımları sona ermiştir. 'Tanrının ölümü', bir zamanlar en değerli olan değerlerin değerden düşmesine neden olmuştur – ki bunların en dikkate değer olanlarları 'iyi' ve 'kötü' kavramlarıdır. Bu nedenle, Nietzsche'nin yeniden değerlendirme tasarısı yeni değerlendirme ölçütlerine de ihtiyaç duymaktadır; bunlar 'sağlık' ve 'hastalık' kavramlarıdır. Bu çalışmada, Nietzsche'nin değerlerin yeniden değerlendirilişi tasarısının merkezinde bu kavramların fizyolojik bir yorumunun yattığını ve 'sağlık' ve 'hastalık' kavramları, bir anlamda, mecazi olarak sosyal ve kültürel olanın alanına uygulandığında dahi bu uygulayışın aynı fizyolojik kavrayış temelinde olduğunu savunacağım.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nietzsche, hayatın olumlanması, sağlık, hastalık, fizyoloji.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to articulate the significance of Nietzsche's frequent application of the concepts of 'health' and 'sickness'. These concepts bear a crucial importance for Nietzsche's philosophy in that they serve as criteria for Nietzsche's project of offering a revaluation of all values. When explicating the role these concepts play in Nietzsche's texts, our basic presupposition will be that, in order to do justice to Nietzsche's philosophy these concepts should be understood with an appreciation of Nietzsche's conception of the body as living. In other words, 'health' and 'sickness' gain their peculiar place in the Nietzschean corpus to the extent that they are understood physiologically and their, somehow, metaphorical use, as well, stems from the conception of the realm of cultural as physiological - as will to power - by Nietzsche.

For our purposes, in the second chapter, Nietzsche's relation to the progress in natural sciences, especially in the life sciences, in 19th century Germany will be offered. Having this completed, it will be possible to articulate Nietzsche's conception of the body in the third chapter, which will bring us to the final and basic point of the current study, that is, an elucidation of the concepts of 'health' and 'sickness' in Nietzsche's philosophy.

Prior to all of this, in my opinion, the expression 'Nietzsche's philosophy' needs to be handled first. Although it is true that Nietzsche's philosophy lacks the systematicity almost all the philosophers hitherto aimed at, this does not necessarily lead to a lack of any purpose or project, which would be absurd indeed. Rather, as Bernard Reginster states in his book *The Affirmation of Life*

"Nietzsche's thought is systematic in the sense that it is organized […] and not a haphazard assemblage of brilliant but disconnected ideas."[1] Accordingly, prior to any further attempt at understanding the aforementioned particular aspects including a comprehensive exposition of the concepts of 'health' and 'sickness' in Nietzsche's philosophy, I will first try to draw the outlines of 'Nietzsche's philosophy'. In doing this, my aim is not merely to determine the ground on which we will lay out this exposition but rather, to offer an interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy as one that carries the characteristics of being a 'philosophy of life' at the very heart of it. In my opinion, giving an, albeit preliminary, exposition of Nietzsche's philosophy as a 'philosophy of life' on the basis of his teaching of the 'affirmation of life' and his views on pessimism/nihilism that trigger this project will enable us to gain an in-depth appreciation of the concepts of 'health' and 'sickness' in Nietzsche's philosophy.

1.1. Nietzsche's Philosophy As a 'Philosophy of Life:

The relation between the philosophy of a particular philosopher and the age s/he produced in and his/her personal life is a source for constant debate. It is most so maybe in the case of Nietzsche. Basically, the popular critiques or interpretations of Nietzsche that embark upon integrating the philosopher as well into his philosophy usually tend to concentrate on his infamous health conditions and his grand final in insanity. Although it may be possible to a certain extent to disregard the personal (psychological – physiological) conditions of a certain philosopher, it is not – or at least should not be – so when the issue comes to the characteristics of the era s/he lives in, since I believe not only that every era bears the kernel of all hitherto lived ones, but also that the philosopher carries this history in his/her flesh and bones. As Nietzsche states,

[1] Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life : Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 3.

> That individual philosophical concepts are not something arbitrary, something growing up autonomously, but on the contrary grow up connected and related to one another; that, however suddenly and arbitrarily they appear to emerge in the history of thought, they none the less belong just as much to a system as do the members of the fauna of a continent.[2]

In view of this position, to gain a proper understanding of any particular aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy and to appreciate how it could change the history of Western thought beyond recognition from his time onwards, one needs to read each Nietzschean tenet in its relation to both the wider picture of Nietzschean philosophy and its intellectual context.[3]

Nietzsche's philosophy as a philosophy of life, which finds its best expression in the idea of the affirmation of life, accordingly, should be understood within the context of 19th century nihilism. According to Reginster, the key antagonism Nietzsche frequently alludes to, that is, "Dionysus versus the crucified" is also an expression of this attitude.

> [T]he figure of Dionysus has fully assumed the role of symbol for an ideal Nietzsche calls the "affirmation of life," whereas "the Crucified," an expression that traditionally refers to the Paulinian conception of Christ, represents the opposite ideal of negation of life."[4]

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[2] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), pp. 20.

[3] As Ruth Abbey states in his Nietzsche's Middle Period (Oxford University Press, USA, 2000, p. xii.), "The classification of Nietzsche's work into three periods was coined by Lou Salomé although this schema has become such a commonplace in Nietzsche scholarship that she is rarely credited with it." Acknowledging the changes in the locus of interest in different periods of Nietzsche's philosophical life, the division of Nietzsche's philosophy into three phases will be adopted here as well, albeit mostly for the sake of brevity and practicality, without forgetting that the idea of 'affirmation of life' underpins and illuminates all these phases.

[4] Reginster, 2.

It is nihilism as an expression of the negation of life against which Nietzsche situates his philosophy. All of Nietzschean philosophy, indeed , from the very beginning of his philosophical writings until his mental collapse can be considered as an attempt to overcome the nihilism of his age. Thus, although positing 'affirmation of life' as the foundational concept of Nietzsche's philosophy would be a mistreatment that does not do justice to various aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy that have their legacy even when considered on their own, 'affirmation of life' should be acknowledged as the integrating theme of all of Nietzsche's philosophy. But before going into the details of the place nihilism occupies in the Nietzschean project of affirmation, we had better turn first to pessimism which Nietzsche sees "as a preliminary form of nihilism."[5]

It is well known that Nietzsche's early enthusiasm for Schopenhauer's philosophy and Wagnerian music shaped his early thought to a great extent. Thus Nietzsche's early period is usually misconceived as being not involved with Nietzsche's philosophy of life that is based on a total affirmation since he was heavily influenced by pessimism, which was one of the defining features of Schopenhauer's philosophy. Although the extent of the influence exercised by Schopenhauer's philosophy upon Nietzsche's thought is great beyond any doubt, upon a closer look we cannot but realize that Nietzsche subjected this pessimism to an essential transformation even at the time of *The Birth of Tragedy* (in the formation of which Schopenhauerean pessimism was one of the basic catalysts) in that, in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche "expressed a different sentiment of life and a different existential mood on the basis of Schopenhauer's metaphysics and had replaced passive pessimism with a tragic attitude overcoming the flight from the world with the transfiguration of art."[6] Then, the pessimism Nietzsche adopts is one that went through a transformation in the light of art that resulted in the former's being affirmative rather than life-denying. Thus construed, it is not

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York, Random House, 1967), p. 11.
[6] Eugen Fink, *Nietzsche's Philosophy* (London ; New York : Continuum, 2003), 34.

surprising to see that although Nietzsche finds a lot to criticize in *The Birth of Tragedy* in his retrospective Preface of 1886, he still views it as a part of a certain continuity that exists within his works, namely the task "*to look at science through the prism of the artist, but also to look at art through the prism of life.*" [7]

Pessimism, for Nietzsche, is not the final conclusion that living leads to. Rather, he was taking his inspiration from the Greeks, whom he considers "[t]he finest, most beautiful, most envied race of men ever known, the people who made life seem most seductive"[8] and their 'cheerfulness' that expresses itself best in Attic tragedy. Attic tragedy, according to Nietzsche, is the manifestation of Greeks' lust for life that results from their consideration of life artistically despite the suffering it essentially inherits. This, as Ullrich Haase states in *Starting with Nietzsche*, "does not mean […] that all Greeks were artists in our modern sense of the world, but that they saw the whole of life not as the opposition between free human beings and a world of facts, but itself as a work of art."[9] In this sense, life gains its meaning in its performance, that is, living. Greek tragedy as it is understood by Nietzsche, accordingly, was not a field of contemplation and judgment. Rather, it was an expression of the classical Greek attitude towards life, that is, the 'tragic world view'. "The tragic sentiment of life is rather a yes-saying to life, a joyous affirmation even of the terrible and horrible, of death and decay."[10] This tragic

[7] F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed.Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.5.

[8] ibid. p. 4.

As expressed in the second note to the mentioned section of *The Birth of Tragedy*, "Classicizing accounts in the ate eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Germany often emphasize the 'cheerfulness' of Grek culture in contrast, for instance with the weighty seriousness of the Middle Ages." (p.3) For a more detailed exposition of the conception of ancient Greek culture in the eyes of Nietzsche and his contemporaries in Germany see *Nietzsche on Tragedy* by M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern.

[9] Ullrich Haase, *Starting with Nietzsche* (London ; New York : Continuum, 2008), 22.

[10] Fink, p.10.

sentiment, in fact, is the key to understanding the affirmative function of pessimism in Nietzsche.

> Nietzsche describes the tragic age of the Greeks as a pessimism of strength. This encapsulates the idea that, accepting the limitations of life and its suffering, the Greeks could have affirmed just about any world, not just the best of all possible worlds.[11]

In line with this description, Nietzsche's conception of life is one in which suffering is not a bad aspect of it that should be overcome, but a necessary constituent that should be affirmed. This attitude towards life stands in firm contrast to the so-called positive attitudes towards life that are based on the hope for an alteration of the negative aspects of it. Affirmation, indeed, is the condition for 'health' that Nietzsche has in mind, which, being the main concern of the present study, will be articulated in the final chapter.

Surprisingly, albeit at first sight, in the second phase of Nietzsche's intellectual productivity, which coincides roughly with the publication of *Human, All Too Human* (lasting through *Dawn* and *The Gay Science*) and his rupture from Wagner, we are faced with a difference in attitude concerning various aspects of philosophical activity. Nietzsche describes the period of the production of *Human, All Too Human* as a time when he "pursued nothing more than physiology, medicine, and the natural sciences"[12] This turn to science is not surprising, especially when the scientism that prevails in 19th century Europe is taken into account. The details of this context will be offered in the next chapter; for now suffice it to say that the 19th century's hosting the great achievements, specifically in the field of life sciences, led to a complete change in paradigm especially with regards to human beings' place in the universe. This shift, naturally, paved the way for a corresponding shift concerning Nietzsche's focuses of attention;

[11] Haase, p.13.

[12] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p.118.

> very importantly, Nietzsche's enlightened stance focuses its attention and its questions on the human being. Nietzsche's thinking turns into anthropology. It is no longer primarily a contemplative expression of universal truth and the resulting human condition but it focuses on the human condition first and interprets being from this aspect. This human focus is accompanied by a change in the concept of life. Life is no longer understood metaphysically or mystically as universal life transcending the appearances but it is interpreted as the human life and furthermore as a biological concept.[13]

Following his contemporary climate, Nietzsche's main focus of concern was the life sciences, that is, physiology, biology (most basically evolutionary theory) and medical sciences. The dominant disposition in 19th century Germany concerning natural sciences was towards a materialistic worldview against the metaphysically oriented explanations that reigned until then. Nietzsche was well aware of this new attitude thanks, mainly, to Friedrich Lange's *History of Materialism* (1866), which he read numerous times in his life.[14] "From Lange, Nietzsche would have learned of the Materialist view that "[t]he nature of man is […] only a special case of universal physiology, as thought is only a special case in the chain of the physical processes of life.""[15]

In fact, the scientific atmosphere of 19th century Europe can be pointed as the true catalyst behind the nihilism of the same. It is the materialistic world view, unsurprisingly, that brought with it the 'death of god' as well, which resulted, at first sight, in a devaluation of all values, that hitherto had ruled over humanity including the consequence "that the human being is no longer the one who finds

[13] Fink, 36.

[14] For a comprehensive chronological exposition of Nietzsche's reading see Thomas Brobjer's *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context.*

[15] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak,* trans. R. J. Hollingdale, eds. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Introduction, p.xi.

its legitimation in being created in the image of God."[16] In other words, it was an earthquake that shook the fundamental justification of moral values.

Although Nietzsche's critique of morality customarily attracts the greatest attention among various aspects of his philosophy (probably due to the existence of three thematically oriented books – *Daybreak, Beyond Good and Evil, On the Genealogy of Morality* – within Nietzsche's apparently not so thematic corpus) it is not possible to comprehend it outside the context of Nietzsche's understanding of life either. In fact, one can see that Nietzsche's critique of morality is consistent with the unifying character of the concept of 'life' in Nietzsche's philosophy simply by looking at *The Birth of Tragedy,* especially under the illumination of Nietzsche's 1886 preface to the book. Nietzsche's views regarding the implications of the concern of *The Birth of Tragedy* are rendered manifest when it was reissued in 1886 with the subtitle *Hellenism and Pessimism* (instead of the previous one as *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music.*) In the preface to the new edition Nietzsche states that

> Morality itself – might it not be a 'will to negate life', a secret instinct for annihilation, a principle of decay, belittlement, calumny, the beginning of the end? And consequently the greatest danger of all? Thus my instinct turned *against* morality at the time I wrote this questionable book; as an advocate of life my instinct invented for itself a fundamentally opposed doctrine and counter-evaluation of life, a purely artistic one, an *anti-Christian* one.[17]

Although Christianity feeds the hatred towards life, it does so in the name of another life. Faced with the pains and sufferings of this world, Christianity points to another world for salvation. Thus, it could be said that, the ascetic ideal, in a sense, is Christianity's 'attempt' to find a relief from the inherent suffering that is present in life, in other words, its solution to pessimism. This negation of life as

[16] Haase, 100.

[17] Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p.9.

'ascetic ideal', indeed, is not peculiar to Christianity. Rather, it is in accordance with the Platonic conceptions Christianity inherited:

> In its Platonic version, asceticism assumes the form of a condemnation of the senses, and a quest for *enlightenment*. And in its Christian form, asceticism is a suppression of the passions and instincts characteristic of life in the natural world in an act of *atonement.* Finally in both proposals, if the idea of a world beyond this one were to prove an empty fantasy (nothingness), then nihilistic despair would be unavoidable.[18]

With the advance of the natural sciences, Christianity lost this apparent function of the 'reliever' as well since the materialistic worldview brought about with the advance of science left no space for the spiritual. In other words, it is the natural sciences that announced the 'death of god' and this situation is the proper reason for the nihilism of 19th century Europe.

Nihilism[19], for Nietzsche, means "*That the highest values devaluate themselves*. The aim is lacking; "why?" finds no answer."[20] The highest values Nietzsche is here talking about, of course, are the values of the existing system, that is, those of Christianity. As has been said, although Christianity brought with itself the ascetic ideal, it did so in the name of another life – a life which is in all respects better than the present one since there will be no place for either suffering or unhappiness in this other life. In this sense, Christianity's morality "was the great *antidote* against practical and theoretical *nihilism.*" [21] Christianity could enjoy an almost limitless freedom in exposing values due to its justification of them as the

[18] Reginster, 49.

[19] For an articulation of different, although somehow complementary, senses of 'nihilism' in Nietzsche's philosophy see Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*. Here however, I will confine myself to an understanding of nihilism consisting in the realization of both the devaluation of existing values and of their being unrealizable in this world, depending on Nietzsche's definition "A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist." (*The Will to Power*, 585 A)

[20] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 9.

[21] ibid. p. 10.

words of God and it is on the basis of this justification that man could enjoy a complete solace for almost two millennia. "Now that the shabby origins of these values is becoming clear," according to Nietzsche "the universe seems to have lost value, seems "meaningless"."[22]

What, then, are these values? This question, to a great extent, is the motive that shapes Nietzsche's third phase These values, stemming from "Briefly: the categories "aim," "unity," "being""[23] which Nietzsche considers as "*refer[ring] to a purely fictitious world*"[24] that had been erstwhile used in the interpretation of this world, were not dominant simply in the doctrines of Christianity, according to Nietzsche, but also throughout the whole of Western philosophical metaphysics, which Nietzsche does not consider to be essentially different from the former. Thanks to their integration into the doctrines of Christianity, these theoretical categories enjoyed a full sway over the way man understood and lived his life ever since the birth of Platonic philosophy. This conception of the world, together with the moral values it put forward, guaranteed man's justification of 'living', although they were based upon lies. Ironically, for Nietzsche, it is the destruction of these lies that resulted in the nihilism of the 19th century. Less ironically, this destruction emerged as the result of the 'death of God', in Nietzsche's words, although the coming of this death is obvious to an open mind which is capable of recognizing the 'nihilism' inherent in these values. For Nietzsche, although the values of Christianity/traditional metaphysics tied human beings to life by creating a beyond, this lie had to collapse since it had been against the basic instincts of life.

> At first, values are concealed and obscure in their direction. Only the historical realization develops their hidden aims. Thus a morality can appear for a long time to aim to realize the higher form of life such as a

[22] ibid. p. 10.

[23] ibid. p. 13.

[24] ibid. p. 13.

> life of modesty, brotherly love or purity. It thus saves many lives who would have perished under the tougher conditions of a warrior-like morality. However, this salvation of the weak, tender and gentle lives and this opposition of strong lives is in reality an attack on life itself. What appears to be supporting life becomes a denial of life through the dominance of the poverty of life. Nihilism is already present within Christianity, Nietzsche maintains. It does not only come into existence once Christianity and its values have lost their validity. Christianity, traditional morality and metaphysical philosophy are 'nihilistic tendencies'. They are directions of life towards 'non-being' even where they conceal this 'non-being' for a long time as the *summum ens* or as God.[25]

Christianity is the target of Nietzsche's severe combat since according to Nietzsche it is an embodiment of hatred towards life. The ascetic ideal of Christianity is the most profound expression of this hatred . "From the very outset Christianity was essentially and pervasively the feeling of disgust and weariness which life felt for life, a feeling which merely disguised, hid and decked itself out in its belief in 'another' or 'better' life."[26] Thus, according to Nietzsche, although Christianity seems to be a defender of a life that is devoid of the pain, suffering and dirt of this life we are actually living, all it yearns for is the "Sabbath of Sabbaths" which is a state of perfect rest and peace. Nietzsche, on the other hand, considers this longing as a 'desire for nothingness' since his understanding of life embraces all aspects of life as they are. Nietzsche's conception of 'affirmation of life', indeed, is unique in this sense, that is, in that it is more than simply a positive attitude towards life that embraces its beauties and carries hope to alter its bad sides. Nietzsche, more radically, defends a *total* affirmation. The reason for this situation is, in fact, Nietzsche's considering life as a totality. Rather than seeing 'life' as an attribute of some organisms, Nietzsche calls the totality 'life' as it is. Nietzsche's understanding of human beings is also based on such an idea of 'living'.

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[25] Fink, 138

[26] Nietzsche, *The Birth of* Tragedy, p.9.

Science, which, according to Nietzsche, is "the *most illustrious opposition* to the tragic view of the world"[27] and "optimistic to its deepest core"[28], on the other hand, although it uncrowns Christianity, cannot replace it with a healthy attitude towards life yet. In other words, the 'optimism' of science is more than, and maybe the opposite of, what it seemingly means. As has been said, affirmation of life is not an optimism towards an overcoming of the cruelties inherent in it. On the contrary, affirmation consists in the acknowledgement and total embracement of them as in the case of the Greek tragedy. As Nietzsche states in *Ecce Homo* in retrospection, the opposition of 'optimism *contra* pessimism' is misleading;

> I was the first to see the real opposition: - the *degenerate* instinct that turns against life with subterranean vindictiveness (— Christianity, Schopenhauer's philosophy, and in a certain sense even Plato's philosophy, the whole of idealism as typical forms) and a formula of the *highest affirmation* born out of fullness, out of overfullness, an unreserved yea-saying even to suffering, even to guilt, even to everything questionable and strange about existence…[29]

The scientific culture, on the other hand, means "an optimism which imagines itself to be limitless."[30] Science, according to Nietzsche, is a practice that follows the Socratic line of thought. Thus, it could be said that for Nietzsche science is the activity of rationality. According to Nietzsche, nihilism holds sway on the man of his contemporary Europe because "modern man is beginning to sense the limits of the Socratic lust for knowledge." [31]

Whereas science considers the universe as something that should be conquered and revealed, or, more apparently in the case of the biological sciences and

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[27] ibid. p.76.

[28] ibid.

[29] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* p.109.

[30] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p.86.

[31] ibid. p. 86.

evolutionary perspectives of the 19th century, as a challenge to the human existence that leads man to a constant battle towards it, Nietzsche sees the universe not as a means that human beings have to render accessible on the basis of their needs, but as a ground of self-realization and sublimation. Life, for Nietzsche, is not something that needs to be conceptualized, but something that is simply lived and enhanced. In this manner, as early as in 1873, in 'On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense' Nietzsche states

> Whereas the man who is guided by concepts and abstractions only succeeds thereby in warding off misfortune, is unable to compel the abstractions themselves to yield him happiness, and strives merely to be as free as possible of pain, the man of intuition, standing in the midst of a culture, reaps directly from his intuitions not just protection from harm but also a constant stream of brightness, a lightening of the spirit, redemption, and release.[32]

Life and living, then, is not something an appreciation of which is gained on the basis of reason, rather than instinct. It is something to be lived, rather than contemplated on. However, this should not lead one to the conclusion that Nietzsche's understanding of life is a reductionism to what is biological, to what is organic. Although organical aspect is an indispensable ingredient, even the basis, of Nietzsche's conception of life, Nietzsche is well aware of the distinctive character of being human. "Man has gradually become a fantastic animal that must fulfil one condition of existence more than any other animal: man *must* from time to time believe he knows *why* he exists; his race cannot thrive without a periodic trust in life – without faith in the *reason in life*"[33] We will return to the issue of Nietzsche's praising of the bodily against rational in the third chapter of the present study. For now, it suffices to say that Nietzsche acknowledges the

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[32] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense' in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed.Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 153.

[33] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science : With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauchkoff and Adrian Del Caro (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 1.

element of reason in man's existence, although he is against the paradigm of Western thinking that places reason at the very heart of human existence.

If we turn back to Nietzsche's conception of life, Nietzsche considers life to be more than a simple aggregation of what is organic on earth;

> Life […] does not mean the essence of organic life as in the plant, the animal and man. Life as organic life is merely a part of being. It cannot yield insights into essential characteristics of all things. Nietzsche's fundamental conception of life is not very developed conceptually…Nietzsche's central intuition does not succeed in becoming conceptualized. Life has to be conceived in a multi-dimensional context. The main relation is that between earth and life. Earth lives. Earth grants presence to all beings. And this life of the earth is – for Nietzsche – the will to power.[34]

Life is more than what is organic; thus, Nietzsche is more than a biological reductionist. As he defines it: "A multiplicity of forces, connected by a common mode of nutrition, we call "life." To this mode of nutrition, as a means of making it possible, belong all so-called feelings, ideas, thoughts…"[35]

Indeed, this brings us to the final most important elements that need mentioning before concluding this preliminary exposition of Nietzsche's philosophy as a philosophy of life; will to power and eternal recurrence. Both of them being severely controversial, an articulation of these teachings of Nietzsche in detail is beyond both the focus and the scope of the present study. Thus I will confine myself to giving merely some minimum characteristics of them - based on Nietzsche's own uttering -, since they are crucial aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy for an understanding of 'affirmation of life'. Considering the 'will to power', specifically, I will focus my attention on the aspects of 'will to power'

[34] Fink, 68

[35] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 341.

that are directly related to 'life', that is, as 'will to life'[36], omitting, for our purposes, the controversies, basically, as to its so-called metaphysical character.

It is important to state at the beginning that Nietzsche posits 'will to power' basically in contrast to Schopenhauer's 'will to live' and the the concept of the "struggle for existence" in the rapidly flourishing evolutionary theory of 19th century Europe[37]. As has been said, although we claim that Nietzsche's philosophy is a philosophy of life, he does not consider life as solely a matter of survival. Rather, he states

> I consider life itself to be an instinct for growth, for endurance, for the accumulation of force, for *power*: when there is no will to power, there is decline. My claim is that *none* of humanity's highest values have had this will, - that *nihilistic* values, values of decline, have taken control under the aegis of the holiest names.[38]

Elsewhere he says,

> Physiologists should think before putting down the instinct of self-preservation as the cardinal instinct of an organic being. A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength – life itself is *will to power;* self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results.*[39]

Keeping in mind Fink's words about the nature of life as well, 'will to power' could be said to be the name for this 'multi – dimensional' context of life, the organic dimension being one amongst the others. Accordingly, as embracing the cultural aspect as well, 'will to power' is the basis of the project of revaluation

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[36] Nietzsche uses the expression 'will to life' as a synonym of 'will to power', as opposed to Schopenhauer's 'will to live.' (See, *The Gay Science*, pp. 349)

[37] The 'scientifically' motivated character of Nietzsche offering an idea as 'will to power' will be solely mentioned here, to be furthered in the next chapter in Nietzsche's relation to his contemporary science.

[38] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ* in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 6.

[39] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* pp. 13.

too, since once it is acknowledged and appreciated as the fundamental aspect of life, it is not possible to imagine any devaluation or revaluation independent of this will. On the contrary, Nietzsche's revaluation of the basic existing values in *Anti-Christ* carries 'will to power' at the very heart it:

> What is good? – All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man.
> What is bad? – All that proceeds from weakness.
> What is happiness? – The feeling that power *increases* – that a resistance is overcome.
> *Not* contentment, but more power; *not* peace at all, but war, *not* virtue but proficiency [40]

Eternal recurrence, like 'will to power' has a peculiar place in appreciating Nietzsche's philosophy as a philosophy of life. Although, due to its standing as a controversial and complicated theory, it may not be possible to recognize its serious role at first sight, upon a closer look we can identify it as a key concept for the project of 'an affirmation of life'. It is due to this crucial role, indeed, that Nietzsche presents himself in relation to eternal recurrence' in *Twilight of the Idols* by saying "I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus – I, the teacher of the eternal recurrence"[41] and posits it in its crucial relation to the project of affirmation with his statement "*the thought of eternal return,* this highest formula of affirmation"[42]

This teaching that Nietzsche calls 'The heaviest weight' is as follows:

> What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and said to you: 'This life, as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live it once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought

[40] Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ,* pp. 2.

[41] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilght of the Idols* in *Twilight of the Idols in The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 229.

[42] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p. 123.

> and sigh, and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!'- Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth, and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine!' If that thought gained power over you as you are, it would transform and, and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, 'Do you want this again 'Do you want this again and innumerable times again' would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? [43]

Obviously, the idea of eternal recurrence is closely related to that of *amor fati*[44]. Eternal recurrence is posed as a challenge by the demon in order to incite one to think about one's attitude towards not only one's life but to also the whole world of becoming. *Amor fati,* on the other hand, can be counted as the proper answer Nietzsche gives to this challenge (and hopes us to give as well) since he considers it to be his "formula for human greatness"[45] With *amor fati,* together with 'eternal recurrence' what Nietzsche offers is an understanding and a way of living life that consists in a total affirmation that is "[n]ot just to tolerate necessity, still less to conceal it – but to *love* it…"[46]

This brings us to the conclusion of this chapter. To summarize what has been said; although Nietzsche situates himself against the totalizing/systematizing attitudes of traditional western philosophy, this does not mean that his philosophy is a random flight of thoughts. Rather, the idea of 'affirmation of life' as an integrating idea of his philosophical project renders many otherwise confusing

[43] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* pp. 341.

[44] Love of fate.

[45] Nietzsche, *Ecce* Homo, p. 99.

[46] Nietzsche, *Ecce* Homo, p. 99.

aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy apprehensible. This mentioned project of Nietzsche is the elimination of nihilism prevalent in 19th century Europe as a result of the 'death of god.' It is this project, indeed, that leads Nietzsche to a battle over all existing values and a revaluation of them since, once a proper comprehension of the implications of the 'death of god' is acquired, it is not possible to imagine values surviving intact this death. Accordingly, Nietzsche's conception of life is far from being spiritual. Although it is crucially tied to the physiological aspect of living, Nietzsche's understanding of life is not an example of biological reductionism either. Rather, for Nietzsche life is comprehensible with an appreciation of its multiple dimensions. Now, in the following chapter, I will try give an exposition of the scientific environment in 19th century Germany and Nietzsche's stance within this context in order basically to supply the background knowledge for a presentation of the concepts of 'health' and 'sickness' in Nietzsche's oeuvre.

CHAPTER II

NIETZSCHE'S UNDERSTANDING OF SCIENCE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE IMPACTS OF THE SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN 19th CENTURY GERMANY

In the introduction, we have given a general framework of Nietzsche's philosophy to show that it is better understood around the integrating idea of the affirmation of life and tried to articulate how Nietzsche understands life and living. In doing this, we have seen that Nietzsche sees life not in a metaphysical context; instead he conceives life in its being bodily, instinctive and irrational, rather than on the basis of what is rational in it. This type of a conception of life brings forward an important question with itself: in what kind of a relation does this conception of life and living place Nietzsche with regards to natural science? How intimate is Nietzsche's relation to the scientific practice of his age?

Even if one merely considers those achievements in the life sciences which led to the radical change in the conception of man and his place in the universe, this is sufficient to appreciate why Nietzsche developed a vivid interest in the natural sciences of his time. As Babette E. Babich quotes from Günter Abel, "it is undeniable that Nietzsche's physiological-chemical manner of thinking not merely in vocabulary but in many substantive questions indicates a clear connection to biology as well as the physical sciences of his day."[47] In this chapter, we will try to situate Nietzsche in the wider picture of 19th century Europe, specifically Germany, that hosts a great progress both in the field of

[47] Babette E. Babich, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science : Reflecting Science on the Ground of Art and Life* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1994), p.65.

natural sciences, and the newly emerging social sciences. To do this, we will lay out the extent of Nietzsche's understanding and knowledge of science in his time. At the end of the chapter, hopefully, it will be clear that Nietzsche, despite the first impression one may get from his writings, was neither hostile to nor ignorant of the scientific practice and achievements of his day and his criticism of science is deeply rooted in his affirmative attitude towards life. By doing this, I aim at manifesting the strong familiarity Nietzsche has with the contemporary scientific debates and interests of his time in order to show the indispensably physiological aspect of his conception of life and body, within which, I claim, his frequent use of health and sickness is situated and must be understood as well.

2.1. Nietzsche's Relation to Science within the Context of 19th Century Germany:

As Dampier states in *A History of Science and Its Relations with Philosophy & Religion*, 19th century has a just claim to be regarded as the beginning of the scientific age. Following his line of thought, although it must be borne in mind that 19th century was the cradle of many individual scientific achievements, the basic feature that allows for such an evaluation of this century is the fact that

> during the last hundred or hundred and fifty years, the whole conception of the natural Universe has been changed by the recognition that man, subject to the same physical laws and processes as the world around him, cannot be considered separately from the world, and that scientific methods of observation, induction, deduction and experiment are applicable, not only to the original subject-matter of pure science, but to nearly all the many and varied fields of human thought and activity.[48]

19th century saw that "'[t]he impressive 'rise of science' in the public regard in this period[…]ensured that the influence of authors like Comte, Darwin, Huxley,

[48] Sir William Cecil Dampier, *A History of Science and its Relations with Philosophy & Religion* (Cambridge : University Press, 1948), p.201.

Mach, and Spencer was very widespread, filtering through to moral, political, and economic attitudes to life itself."[49] Built on the acquisitions of the natural sciences, the conception of philosophy was going through a radical change, especially in Germany, in the 19th century. "As Hermann von Helmholtz later remembered, natural scientists, frustrated with both the vapid speculations of *Naturphilosophie* and Hegelianism's illegitimate pretensions to subordinate to itself all other disciplines, eventually felt compelled to reject philosophy as at best useless, at worst 'mischievous dreaming'".[50] At the dawn of the 19th century, the dominant view concerning philosophy was that of German Idealism. In fact, "[t]he story of nineteenth century German philosophy is often told in terms of the rise and fall of the German Idealists' hopes for a philosophical system." [51]

The longing for an all-embracing system that will cover whole aspects of the universe, from morality to physical sciences, was not a characteristic peculiar to German Idealism indeed; rather, it had been the very project of the philosophical enterprise since almost the very beginnings of the history of philosophy. German philosophy, specifically, at its very basis, was a system philosophy that aimed at a unified explanation of whole phenomena under one systematic understanding of the universe. In this sense, philosophy's claim was to be the authority concerning not merely the realm of what is social, theoretical or metaphysical but also what is natural and empirical. In fact, it must be stated that, it is not until the 19th century that the study of these two realms were separated properly but rather were considered to be the very same reality. However, the important point was that this same reality was considered basically to be comprehensible to mere speculations of mind alone. Then, it is not surprising to see a change in mentality with the

[49] Rom Harré, 'Positivist Thought in the 19th Century' in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1870-1945*, ed. Baldwin, T. (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 26.

[50] Gregory Moore, Preface to *Nietzsche and Science*, ed. Gregory Moore and Thomas H. Brobjer, p. 7 (Aldershot, Hampshire, England ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate, 2004).

[51] Andrew Bowie, *Introduction to German philosophy : from Kant to Habermas* (Cambridge, UK : Polity Press ; Malden, MA : Distributed in the USA by Blackwell Pub., 2007), p. 94.

advance of the natural sciences, since the new conception of scientific practice was based on empirical investigation, more or less in the contemporary sense, rather than on mere theoretical and mathematical labor, and thus, posited itself against the then dominant view of German Idealism. Thus, "[o]ne of the decisive elements in the demise of the hopes of Idealist philosophy is the success of the empirically based natural sciences."[52] This was the crisis of German philosophy at the beginning of the 19th century. As the natural sciences were ascending, they were expanding their fields of studies to the detriment of philosophy.

The differentiation of attitude regarding philosophy can be traced back to Enlightenment in fact. According to Johann Heilbron, it is with Enlightenment that we see the increase in the vitalist tendencies in the life sciences, which is then biology basically, that led to a great extent "to the demise of a unitary conception of natural philosophy"[53] and "[o]nce biology had been conceived as a general science of life, distinct from physics, the underlying argument could be transferred to the field of social science."[54] Obviously, the most important aspect of the 19th century concerning the meaning and scope of science is that it is the cradle of the individualization within the scientific practice, including the social sciences, although this individualization was at the expense of philosophy.

As has been said, 19th century had its special place in the history of thought to a great extent due to the fact that it marks the emergence of the social sciences in the more or less contemporary use of the term. Although the distinction of the individual areas of study started to appear mostly in the Enlightenment period, the impact of their emergence was felt more decisively during the 19th century. Thus philosophy, once the heading that subsumed all these practices under itself, went

[52] ibid.

[53] Johann Heilbron, 'Social Thought and Natural Science' in *The Cambridge History of Science, Volume 7: The Modern Social Sciences* (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 42.

[54] ibid.

through a significant change not only in the sense of content but also of method of study and authority. Psychology, for instance, which was considered to be a part of philosophical inquiry up to that time, gained its independence from philosophy and its institutional character in the 19th century as well. Within this wider context of its history, Germany occupies a special place since "Germany is generally regarded as the homeland of scientific psychology."[55] The most basic, and the most effective characteristics of this newly institutional field of study in its liberation from philosophy was its method of investigation, that is, empirical research to the extent that it was possible. Thus, institutionalization of psychology cannot be thought apart from the endeavor towards "separating the philosophical past from the scientific present"[56] which relied basically on "the field's self-conscious identification with natural science."[57] Psychology, in fact, together with physiology, was amongst the fields over which the effect of the advances of the natural sciences was felt most strongly.

The importance of the Enlightenment period concerning the issue at stake was mostly due to the huge space that the concept of 'human nature' started to occupy in the intellectual interests in this period. This interest lasted throughout the 19th century as well. According to Porter, "[b]iology, not physics, was the crucial point of reference for the nascent social sciences in the 19th century."[58] Especially concerning the issues related to 'human nature', the increasing relevance of biology found its most manifest expression in the case of the theory of evolution. Regarding the theory of evolution in the 19th century the most popular figure is Darwin with his theory of evolution by natural selection, - which was an attempt

[55] Mitchell G. Ash, 'Psychology' in *The Cambridge History of Science, Volume 7: The Modern Social Sciences* (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 255.

[56] ibid. p. 259.

[57] ibid. p. 260.

[58] Theodore M. Porter, 'Genres and Objects of Social Inquiry, from the Enlightenment to 1890' in *The Cambridge History of Science, Volume 7: The Modern Social Sciences,* ed. Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 34.

to give non-teleological explanations concerning the realm of living - at the expense of other theorists of the field , although Porter states that "[t]he paradigmatic social evolutionist of the late nineteenth century was Herbert Spencer, who regarded biological and social progress as parallel instances of a more general law, a tendency for homogeneous matter to become increasingly complex and differentiated."[59] Either way, it is undeniable that the theory of evolution exerted a great impact on the social sphere, both in scientific and philosophical manner and in the popular sense. Before going any further with the influence of the theory of evolution on the 19th century thinking, let us turn a little to the scope of Nietzsche's interest in the science of his day.

The 19th century was an age in which the particular achievements of scientific practice were in contact with common man – people from the middle or upper middle ranks of society in the case of more elaborate and technical achievements. In fact, what is distinctive about the 19th century in the history of science is that by exerting this great influence on the philosophical context of the era, these achievements paved the way for an increase in people's curiosity and interest concerning scientific debates – albeit mostly in a non-technical level. "For if the nineteenth century was the age of science, it was also the era of popular science."[60] It is this interest, in a sense, that, in turn, served the application of the then recently attained results to the realm of social sciences, which were, indeed, just gaining their independence from philosophy. According to Moore, "Nietzsche's thought may not have the rigorously scientific qualities […] but this does not mean, of course, that it was not shaped by contemporary scientific debates." [61] It is true that Nietzsche's education was hardly scientific; thus he was deprived of a scientifically oriented point of view with regards to events taking place in his age. However, it must be added that, his relation to the contemporary

[59] ibid. p. 36

[60] Moore, Preface to *Nietzsche and Science,* p. 2.

[61] ibid. p. 1.

scientific debates was not limited to the level of almost every other member of the society's relation to the same. As has been stated, 19th century was the era of popular science. What needs to be added, on the other hand, is that Nietzsche had an interest in science both as a part of that society, who, additionally had embarked upon finding a treatment for his chronic health problems, and as a philosopher occupying himself with offering a critique of the current crisis in European culture. Most importantly, he himself was dealing with life sciences due to his physiological conception of life.

Nietzsche's acquaintance with the natural sciences owes a great deal to his discovery of Friedrich Lange's *History of Materialism* (1866). His interest in materialism and atomic theory mostly relied on his critical – albeit yet immature - views on Christianity. According to Brobjer, "[i]t seems that it was Nietzsche's growing fascination with philosophy […] as well as his reading of Lange in 1866 and 1867, which led him to take a more wide-ranging interest in the natural sciences."[62] As Brobjer states elsewhere; "Lange's magnum opus, *Geschicte des Materialismus*, is both a detailed history of materialism (and in part a history of philosophy) and a critique of its metaphysical side."[63] Thus, even the earliest efforts of Nietzsche's regarding natural sciences were determined, to a great extent, by his philosophical curiosity. Accordingly, Nietzsche showed an interest in the Atomic Theory. Theory of atoms had its roots in the doctrines of Democritus and the The Atomic School in the ancient Greece. 19th century was the resurrection of the Atomic Theory and enjoyed a great rule over many sciences as well due to its materialistic connotations that challenged the then dominant idealist or spiritual views. Although there are many different theories of atomism taking root from ancient Greece, the main characteristic of atomism that renders it important for the 19th century scientific debates is its contribution to the

[62] Thomas H. Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Reading and Knowledge of Natural Science: An Overview' in *Nietzsche and Science*, p. 26

[63] Thomas H. Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 2008), p. 34.

materialist and non-teleological explanations regarding natural phenomena. In its striving to explain the universe in terms of natural entities, atomism was considered as the means to provide a natural account of the universe and living in non-religious terms by many intellectuals of the 19th century, including Nietzsche.

Another of the most important scientific movements in the 19th century scientific environment in Europe was in the field of thermodynamics. Although it went through the elaborations of many other scientists, thermodynamics emerged as a modern scientific enterprise in the year 1824 when Sadi Carnot published 'Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire'. The need for the progress of the theory lies basically in the need to improve the workings of the steam engine, which played a crucial role –*the* crucial role according to some historians - in the history of Europe. However, apart from the consequences of its practical application, "it aided materially the progress of modern physics and chemistry in many other directions."[64] Its impact on the social sciences, on the other hand, was most apparently felt with the application of the first law of thermodynamics to them. The first law, which is on the conservation of energy, states that the energy in the universe, although it can change form, does not change in amount. In other words, the amount of the energy in the universe neither diminishes nor increases. Although it seems to be related to the field of natural sciences at first sight, the extent to which it influenced the social realm was great and this was basically due to its impact on the way the body is perceived in the 19th century. As Moore tells us,

> Ever since Hermann von Helmholtz had formulated the law of the conservation of energy in 1847 – according to which the forces of nature (mechanical, electrical, chemical and so on) are forms of a single universal energy, or *Kraft*, that cannot be created or destroyed – hygienists and physiologists had enlisted the new language of thermodynamics to describe bodily processes.[65]

[64] Dampier, p. 234.

[65] Gregory Moore, "Nietzsche, Medicine and Meteorology" in *Nietzsche and Science,* p.73.

Then, the Christian paradigm in which the human body is treated on the axis of its possession of a soul was altering towards a conception that perceives the human body in its continuity with the rest of the matter in the universe. In other words, it was an extension of Descartes' conception of animal body to the realm of human beings as well. This was bringing a new conception of the soul as energy or 'nerve force' indeed. As Moore states, the concept of 'nerve force', which was an old one that goes back to the Enlightenment at least, was consisting of an "invisible, subtle fluid channeled through the nerve fibres"[66] In the 19th century, this concept was getting integrated within the framework of the physical sciences, which brought about an understanding of 'nerve force' that is articulated in physical and chemical terms. Based on this new conception and the general health conditions in society, which Moore states quoting Bruce Haley that "'[n]o topic more occupied the Victorian mind than a conception of Health' – neither religion, nor Empire, nor progress, nor Darwinism."[67], a new conception of health in terms of an equilibrium of the nerve force a person possesses - created in the light of the first law of thermodynamics - was emerging. This conception of health as a balance brought forth issues of diet as well. This change in the conception of mental as well as physical processes in light of the flourishing natural sciences added a great deal to the improvements in the life sciences, specifically physiology.

If we turn back to biology and the theory of evolution; among many fields of study of natural sciences that enjoyed an efflorescence both with regards to novelties in the field and with regard to the implications it carried for society, Darwinian theory of evolution (which is not the first but the most advanced form of the idea of evolution formulated up to that time) is the theory that revolutionized the century and the subsequent ones on every issue man is interested in or a subject to. Like the Copernican theory, it revolutionized the

[66] ibid.

[67] Moore, 'Nietzsche, Medicine and Meteorology', p.71.

history of humanity by leading to a shift of center as to the meaning of the universe. Man, once the standard or measure of every kind of value, lost its primacy in the ladder of existence. This 'loss', however, paved the way for man's taking the first place among the concerns of the natural sciences in the 19th century. As Safranski states, "The ape replaced God as an object of inquiry"[68] However, even prior to the cultivation of Darwinian theory, the achievements in biology were already paving the way for a change in the current conceptualizations of the phenomena. This was basically due to the differentiation that started to emerge between animate and inanimate bodies, (the former of which included animals and plants as well) at the expense of Cartesian conceptualizations. As early as the end of 18th century, "As the general science of life, biology served to unify previously distinct domains, such as botany, zoology, and medicine. These fields were now more clearly separated from "physics," a term that also received a new, narrower meaning."[69] Then, not only physics was declaring its independence from natural philosophy in its being more and more based on experimental method rather than laws of reason, biology was also gaining its independent status at the expense of both physics and philosophy and leading to the flourishing of physiology. Consequently, "Encompassing terms such as "nature" and "reason" lost some of their appeal."[70]

Biology was probably the field that both attracted Nietzsche's attention most and exerted the greatest impact upon his thinking. It is even possible to see interpretations of Nietzsche that consider biology to be the unifying framework of many aspects of his philosophy.[71] In the 19th century, biology was mostly

[68] Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche : A Philosophical Biography* (London : Granta, 2003), p.307.

[69] Johan Heilbron, 'Social Thought and Natural Science' in *The Cambridge History of Science, Volume 7: The Modern Social Sciences* (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 52.

[70] ibid.

[71] See Gregory Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor* (Cambridge, UK ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2002).

understood and studied in terms of evolutionary biology. Moore informs us that "like the majority of educated Germans of his time, Nietzsche appears never to have read a single work by Darwin himself." [72] Nevertheless, this should lead us merely to the conclusion that he was not well informed about the field rather than ignoring the influence exerted upon his thought and style by the recent studies about the issue. However, it is probably the groundbreaking effect of Darwinism that changed the place of man in the universe beyond recognition that played the crucial role on Nietzsche's philosophy as well as on the rest of the intellectual life in the 19th century.

As has been said above, Darwin's naturalization of man made a great impact on the way valuation is conceived altogether. In this sense, it could be thought of as on a par with Nietzsche's project of devaluation. However, Nietzsche still considers Darwinian theory of evolution by natural selection on a par with the old values. Although he lacked the technical or first-hand knowledge, Nietzsche knew a great deal on Darwinian theory, that would suffice for his criticism of it. As Brobjer states, "Nietzsche's antagonism towards Darwinism proper – that is, Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection – is perfectly compatible with a commitment to evolutionism in general"[73] indeed. Not being on the side of religious explanations of the origin of man and universe, Nietzsche was unsurprisingly a default supporter of the evolutionary explanations concerning life. However, although Darwin was a fervent opponent of teleological explanations in the field of natural sciences, Nietzsche found the components of his theory, such as mechanism of 'natural selection' and the idea of 'adaptation', teleological. In this sense, both Nietzsche' reception and the critique of the theory of evolution was based on philosophical propensities. This, indeed brings us to the second part of Nietzsche's relation to science, that is, his critique of science.

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[72] Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor.*

[73] Thomas H. Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Reading of Natural Science: An Overtview" in *Nietzsche and Science,* ed. Gregory Moore and Thomas H. Brobjer, p. 24 (Aldershot, Hampshire, England ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate, 2004).

2.2. The Extent of Nietzsche's Critique of Science:

Until now, I have tried to show that it would be misleading to try to understand Nietzsche's philosophy independently from the scientific environment of 19th century Germany and that Nietzsche neither ignored nor despised the progress in the natural sciences of the era. On the contrary, his philosophy was strictly tied to this progress, specifically regarding the biological sciences. This brings us to the question of the extent and meaning of Nietzsche's critique of science, on which some preliminary remarks will be provided here. By means of this brief exposition, I hope, it will be possible to see that his critique should not be equated to a denial.

The relation of Nietzsche to science is a rather complex one indeed. It is, for sure, not possible to see a complete and comprehensive philosophy of science in Nietzsche's philosophy. Neither is it possible to claim that Nietzsche was well informed enough to understand every aspect of the progress in the natural sciences. This, however, definitely should not lead one to the conclusion that Nietzsche's philosophy of science could be dismissed to a great extent. Rather, what Nietzsche does is an inquiry into the very ideology and possibility of science as an indispensable component of his 'affirmation of life' and project of devaluation/revaluation of the existing values as offered in the first chapter. In other words, Nietzsche treats science 'as a symptom of life.'

Babich states in her *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science* that "[a]lthough defined by its reference to science, traditional and contemporary philosophy of science lacks a *critically* reflexive orientation to science.[…]Lacking such reflexivity, what the philosophy of science lacks is exactly a philosophic disposition."[74] What Nietzsche is striving for should be understood in the context of this philosophic disposition. What Nietzsche's critique of science consists in is the point of view of a philosophical attitude that does not start with concepts like 'truth' that are

[74] Babich, p. 1.

embraced by the scientific enterprise without an adequate critical reflection. Since science seems to act free from the spiritually-oriented way of thinking of Christian theology and base its theories on observation of natural phenomena alone, the claims of science are considered as all objective. This confidence in the objectivity of scientific inquiry blocks any road to a questioning of the foundations of scientific practice and thinking. What Nietzsche does, on the other hand, is to subject the seemingly objective basis and attitude of science to the same revaluation he exposes all aspects of living to. In other words,

> Where Kant, the inaugurator of modern critique, thought to inquire into the foundations of the possibility of a future metaphysics able to come forth as a science, Nietzsche's critique articulates the foundations for any philosophy of science able to come forth (and able to remain) as philosophy.[75]

'Philosophy' here, on the other hand, should not be understood as the traditional western attitude that bases itself on the same ideological presuppositions with science. Rather, what Nietzsche offers by means of a philosophic critique of science is an attempt "*…to look at science through the prism of the artist, but also to look at art through the prism of life.*" [76] since "the problem of science cannot be recognized in the context of science."[77] In this sense, his attitude towards science is not different from, but rather is essential to the rest of Nietzschean philosophy.

As we have seen in the first chapter, in *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche sees the source of the crisis in which 19th century European culture stands, that is, nihilism in the form of pessimism, in the rational attitude that prevails since Socrates. I will not go into the details of Nietzsche's position at this phase of his philosophical life since it has already been stated in the first chapter. Just to remember, Nietzsche's basic concern – albeit implicitly - even at this phase was an

[75] Babich, p. 2.

[76] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* p. 5.

[77] ibid.

affirmation of life by providing a means for overcoming the pessimism of his age. What he offers as the solution on the face of this crisis is a return to the tragic culture, that is, an appreciation of an aesthetic world view as opposed to a scientific one since the very crisis, in fact, is stemming from the gradually increasing scientific culture of the century. As the cure, "Nietzsche cherished the colossal power of music and yearned for the return of a tragic outlook on life that would value Dionysian wisdom over science."[78] The contemporary age, for Nietzsche, on the other hand, once having lost its ties to what is sublime as a result of materialistic tendencies, is doomed to pessimism.

Through the period that could be called Nietzsche's second phase, which starts with *Human, All Too Human*, we observe a change – at least in the sense of expression - in Nietzsche's views concerning science. Roughly, Nietzsche sounds more like a defender of science on the conflict he implied to exist between art and science in *The Birth of Tragedy* and to this extent this period is perceived as Nietzsche's positivistic phase in the customary division of his philosophy into phases. According to Brobjer, during this period, Nietzsche "exchanged his earlier enthusiasm for metaphysics, idealism, pessimism, art and aesthetics for a position that was skeptical and free-spirited, placed science above art, and praised the Enlightenment."[79] Babich, on the other hand, states that she "must affirm that Nietzsche had a great and ever-increasing fondness for, sensitivity to, and affinity with science and its process of discovery and description" and she avers "just to this extent – Nietzsche may be aligned with the positivists."[80] As has been said, Nietzsche always felt quite incompetent about natural sciences and was eager to learn more and more of the scientific practices of his day[81]. *Human, All Too*

[78] Safranski, p. 108.

[79] Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context*, p. 61.

[80] Babich, p. 64.

[81] See Thomas H. Brobjer, 'Nietzsche's Reading and Knowledge of Natural Science: An Overview'.

Human could be said to be the summit of his interaction with the scientific practice of his age. As has been quoted from Fink in the previous chapter, it is with this work that Nietzsche turns all his attention to the human condition and this expresses itself best in his interest in medicine, physiology and natural sciences. He considers science as a solid means "to examine and judge the claims of religion, metaphysics and art."[82] Thus, even at this period, Nietzsche can be seen on the same side with the positivists only to the extent that he sees science as a methodology or maybe an attitude in offering a critique of his targets. As Moore states quoting Nietzsche;

> 'It is not the victory of science that distinguishes our nineteenth century, but the victory of scientific method over science' (*KSA* 13, 15[51]). It is this skepticism – its means, not its ends or results; its interrogation of all truths, even of those which underpin it – that presents the greatest legacy of science. But science thus understood is still unable to fulfill a creative, positive function.[83]

Definitely, Nietzsche's understanding of science changes during the course of his intellectual life. However, in all phases of his philosophical life Nietzsche's attitude towards science was shaped on the basis of his giving the primacy to an affirmation of life. In this sense, this period cannot be seen as an inversion of Nietzsche's position in *The Birth of Tragedy* – a claim Fink finds superficial indeed. Rather, this change of attitude should be interpreted as the ripening of his critique. In fact, according to Fink,

> The vagueness of Nietzsche's continuous reference to science is remarkable. Strictly speaking he does not refer to any of the positive sciences but to a general, approximate type of inquiry and critical examination. Science is essentially critical for Nietzsche.[84]

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[82] Fink, p. 37.

[83] Moore, Preface to *Nietzsche and Science*, p. 6.

[84] Fink, p. 38.

Then, in this period, Nietzsche embraces science as a critical attitude, a type of inquiry. What is inquired, on the other hand, is what is humanly, as could be understood from the title of the work itself. What Nietzsche is trying to comprehend was still the human beings and the origin of their values and he sees this origin in biology, physiology, medicine and psychology. As has been shown previously when explaining Nietzsche's relation to the sciences of his day, Nietzsche begins to trace what is cultural to what is organic and see the kernel of what is 'human, all too human' in there.

As Nietzsche's philosophy matures, in the sense that it gains its independent and distinctive character, we begin to see Nietzsche's critique of science in a more systematic way – systematic as it is part of Nietzsche's broader critique. It can be said that Nietzsche's last phase (covering his works starting from *The Gay Science*) is centered around the idea of devaluation/ revaluation and, in this sense, it is the period in which we can observe Nietzsche's war on nihilism most clearly. His attitude towards science should be understood within the context of his transvaluation of all values.

"[T]he culture of science is, in Nietzsche's eyes, the culture of nihilism."[85], so serves the negation of life in the sense that "[d]espite the necessity of scientific knowledge for the preservation of life in our culture, its inspirational drive is fundamentally nihilistic."[86] Thus, it is possible, and necessary at the same time, for Nietzsche to be in a position both to acknowledge the necessity of science for the enhancement of life and to provide a severe criticism of it for the same reason. An appreciation of the achievements of science is indispensable for someone living in 19th century Europe, like it is, actually, for everyone living in the modern society. The progress of the natural sciences, not only led to the 'death of God' but also offered an optimism to fill the gap that might have been born from this

[85] Babich, p. 137.

[86] ibid.

death. This optimism, however, is the very target of Nietzsche's criticism since, as has been shown in the first chapter, it is against the yea-saying attitude to life in its totality which Nietzsche defends. This is so because "on the level of abstract ideas we might be thinking that science arises from its contradiction to Christianity, whereas seen in concretion, science appears as the shadow of the dead God"[87] since, for Nietzsche, although science served for the elimination of God, it replaced God with another category: truth. It is in this respect that Nietzsche considers science to be still serving the ascetic ideal: due to its being end-oriented, that end being the 'truth'. In other words, it still works with the distinction of the true and the apparent world and, for Nietzsche, in this sense, is the inheritor of the same metaphysical / Christian inclination that governed our thinking for more than two millennia. Thus, Nietzsche thinks that 'we, too, are still pious':

> We see that science, too, rests on a faith; there is simply no 'presuppositionless' science. The question whether *truth* is necessary must get an answer in advance, the answer 'yes', and moreover this answer must be so firm that it takes the form of the statement, the belief, the conviction: '*Nothing* is more necessary than truth; and in relation to it, everything else has only secondary value.' This unconditional will to truth – what is it? [88]

It is still the belief in God. It is, also, the basis of Nietzsche's critique of science since the whole of Nietzsche's transvaluation of all values goes back to God due to the fact that the values of Christian morality have been enjoying an unprecedented rule over living and all conceptualizations related to life. In other words, science still shares the same values with Christianity. According to Nietzsche, "Christian theology and the modern sciences belong together like mountain and valley, or rather, like the true world and the world of appearance,

[87] Haase, p. 103.

[88] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* pp. 344.

and in this sense they are both to be understood as 'Platonism for the people'."[89] In short, Nietzsche's critique of science is not independent from the rest of his critique since the values of science are not different from the rest of the values he is waging war against. It is in this sense that "for Nietzsche, science must be construed as a *moral* phenomenon, indeed, as the latest manifestation of the ascetic ideal."[90] In other words, it must be assessed from the vantage point of life.

[89] Haase, p. 117.

[90] Babich, p. 271.

CHAPTER 3

BODY: NIETZSCHE vs. WESTERN TRADITION

> Our own wild nature is the best place to recover from our un-nature, from our spirituality…
>
> — Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* p. 156.

In the previous chapter we have offered an account of Nietzsche's relation to the scientific practice and achievements of the 19th century, keeping in mind the idea presented in the first chapter, that is, Nietzsche's understanding of philosophy as the affirmation of life. In this sense, although, considered on its own, the aim of the previous chapter was to identify Nietzsche's relation to and attitude towards the scientific practices in his age, the general idea lying behind this endeavor was to tie this relation to his more specific concern for the body and what is bodily.

Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is to lay out Nietzsche's conception of the 'body', which will enable us to move to the place and importance of the concepts of health and sickness in Nietzsche's writings in a way that captures the wider picture to which this importance belongs. In order to do so, first a brief exposition of the way the body generally is treated in the western tradition will be given since a fair appreciation of Nietzsche's philosophical project is possible only on the condition that an accurate identification of the tradition against which Nietzsche positions himself is made in the first place. However, this exposition will consist in a quick foray rather than a detailed examination of the influential philosophical arguments concerning the issue at stake here since my basic concern is to present a general portrait in order to emphasize the difference of manner in

Nietzsche's philosophy. After providing the philosophical underpinnings of the prevalent conceptions of body prior, and in some senses contemporary, to Nietzsche by means of this exposition, we will proceed with Nietzsche's own understanding of 'body' as being a living and dynamic one as opposed to corporeal conceptions of it that are to be presented right away. In doing this, I will first concentrate on the long standing body-soul distinction part of the issue in the first section, and then proceed to Nietzsche's relation and application to physiology in giving an account of the body as 'living body'.

3.1. The 'Body' as It Is Perceived in the History of Western Philosophy

3.1.1. Ancient Greek Conceptions of Body

Throughout the history of philosophy, there is a certain poverty regarding a consciousness of the body as a part of the intellect, apart from its holding a merely negative presence in the face of its so called antithesis - whether this antithesis is called soul, spirit, intellect or idea. Starting from Plato, who, in a sense, constructed the very terminology of philosophy for centuries, the body and physicality in general are considered as the indispensable but unwelcome part of existence in that they lead to a perverted conception of reality by limiting, distorting or adulterating the powers of the intellect. In the so called dualism of the body versus the soul, the body is depicted as a prison for the soul that hinders the soul's full application and realization. Body, as being susceptible to suffrage, imperfection, decay and death in the final place, is not the proper candidate as a locus of the essence of existence. This disdain, ignorance, discontent and even hatred for everything bodily at times attained even a form of abhorrence towards life as well while death could be seen as the emancipation of the soul from its imprisonment in the body.

Ironically, the first proper comprehensive undertaking of the concept of the body in the ancient world finds expression in the Platonic dialogue *Phaedo*, which depicts the death of Socrates. The conception of the body in the dialogue is based on the body-soul dualism with regards to which Socrates declares: "such a man [philosopher] would not devote himself to the body, but would, so far as he was able, turn away from the body and concern himself with the soul."[91] This type of a depiction of the body, although not genuine even for ancient times, is important since it served an originative function, like most other Platonic dialogues, by determining the subsequent terminology to a great extent. The body is excluded from the search for truth since it cannot be of any help in this search. Also, when mind "tries to consider anything in company with the body, it is evidently deceived by it."[92] In other words, the body misleads the mind in the search for truth by supplying it with a distorted view of reality by means of perception. On the other hand,

> it [mind] thinks best when none of these things troubles it, neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor any pleasure, but it is, so far as possible, alone by itself, and takes leave of the body, and avoiding, so far as it can, all association or contact with the body, reaches out toward the reality.[93]

One other crucial end Platonic philosophy served was one related to the immortality of the soul, which not only contributed to the privileged status of the soul but also did this by displaying the finite and incapable nature of the body. By providing arguments, as to the immortality of the soul, the details of which will not be held here, Socrates paves the way for consolidating the status of the soul as the only point of reference in the search for truth. This elimination of the body from the endeavor to understand reality marks a certain point in the history of thought since, as being the all comprehensive name for all the intellectual

[91] Plato, *Phaedo* 64.

[92] ibid. 65b.

[93] ibid. 65c.

interests within the scope of philosophy, this elimination brought along a complete elimination of the body from all kinds of intellectual pursuit leaving the arena to 'pure, absolute reason'[94]

Apart from this common attitude, it is not altogether impossible to find traces of a different treatment of the body within the Socratic context. Xenophon, who was a Greek historian and contemporary of Socrates, for example, was occupied with issues related to the body and health to a great extent. According to Robin Waterfield, the editor of Xenophon's collected works as well, "he is a staunch advocate of the quest for 'a healthy mind in a healthy body'"[95]. In Xenophon's *Memoirs of Socrates*, it is even also possible to find passages in which Socrates states the importance of the body:

> The body is valuable for all human activities, and in all its uses it is very important that it should be as fit as possible. Even in the act of thinking, which is supposed to require least assistance from the body, everyone knows that serious mistakes often happen through physical ill-health. Many people's minds are often so invaded by forgetfulness, despondency, irritability and insanity because of their poor physical condition that their knowledge is actually driven out of them. On the other hand, those who are in good physical condition have ample cause for confidence and run no risk of any such misfortune through debility. Their physical fitness is likely to contribute towards results that are contrary to those of unfitness.[96]

Then apparently, conceptions of the body are not all the time based on the idea that it is something that should be ignored or even eliminated. However, it is apparent from the paragraph that this kind of an evaluation of the body is still established upon a somehow dualistic understanding of existence and, in fact, still treats the body as a 'mere' tool. It is not an entity that is directly involved in

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[94] ibid. 66a.

[95] Robin Waterfield, Preface in *Conversations of Socrates* by Xenophon,, trans. Hugh Tredennick and Robin Waterfield ,ed. Robin Waterfield (London ; New York : Penguin, 1990), p. 1.

[96] Xenophon, *Conversations of Socrates*, trans. Hugh Tredennick and Robin Waterfield ,ed. Robin Waterfield (London ; New York : Penguin, 1990), p. 172.

the act of thinking but rather contributes to intellectual practice by merely securing a comfortable home to the soul, in accordance with ‘ the body as the place in which soul dwells’ analogy. According to Socrates, “[b]esides, it is a shame to let yourself grow old through neglect before seeing how you can develop the maximum beauty and strength of body; and you can’t have this experience if you are negligent, because these things don’t normally happen themselves.”[97] Then, apparently, even when the body is not considered as a tool, it is still viewed by means of objectification. It is something that should be taken care of, whether for practical or for aesthetic purposes, but it is not an essential part of the intelligible existence of the subject yet.

As opposed to the dialogue *Phaedo*, in *Timaeus,* in which Socrates states his views as to the nature of the physical world, it is possible to see more moderate views as to the status of the body. Nevertheless, it is not possible to state that with this dialogue, which is a sample of the late dialogues of Plato, there is a rupture from the earlier conceptions of the body in Platonic philosophy. As to the creation of the universe, for example, it is stated in *Timaeus* that “when he [the creator] was framing the universe, he put intelligence in soul, and soul in body” [98], indicating the essentially distinct natures of body and soul by repeating the same analogy of the body as the home (or prison) of the soul. In this creation process, “he made the soul in origin and excellence prior to and older than the body, to be the ruler and mistress, of whom the body was to be the subject.”[99] However, unlike *Phaedo* in which contempt for the body reaches its peak expressing itself in a longing for death, in *Timaeus* the body is at least presented as a part of the ‘composite animal’ and it should be ‘trained’ in order to enable the soul to fulfill itself.

[97] ibid.

[98] Plato, *Timaeus* 30b.

[99] ibid. 34c.

3.1.2. Christian Conception of Body[100]:

The basic reason for the absolute reign of the Platonist line of thinking even on contemporary culture is its being inherited by Christianity almost in the same way it is held in the ancient times; as Nietzsche states "Christianity is Platonism for 'the people.'"[101] Neo-Platonism, by serving as a bridge, enabled the transmission and infusion of this line of thinking to the doctrines of Christianity. The condemnation of the body, which finds its basis in the body-soul distinction, gained its full expression by means of its integration into the doctrines of Christianity. In Christianity the body could be pointed out as the locus of sin and going astray from the way of God. In this sense, it is something that must be educated and suppressed in order to guarantee its full obedience to the soul. By means of tracing the dualism to the realm of the divine and, with the help of this justification, by advancing practices in which contempt for body found its most marginal expressions, Christianity could be said to be the cultivator of the body-mind dualism in its role as the agent that led to its embracement by masses.

Although, there are many possible ways to interpret Christianity's doctrines, it is important to do so with a certain historical consciousness. In this manner, there are two important facets to giving a proper exposition of its tenets; first, the philosophical vessels that fed Christianity of its ideology, which enables us to apprehend the philosophical continuity that underpins it, and second, the practical attitude of Christianity as an institution towards certain issues concerned with life – the implications of the aforementioned ideology, in other words. Since the basic

[100] Writing under the heading 'Christianity', a phenomena which has been reigning over the conceptual framework of western world for more than two thousand years, has to bring in its weaknesses with itself since it is not as easy as it seems at first sight to be able to talk about a unified 'Christianity' that existed in tact over centuries and geographies. In this sense, since it is beyond both the interest and the scope of this study to give a detailed account of different interpretations of Christianity's conception of body or embodiment, I will confine myself to giving a depiction of the body in Christianity as it is understood and criticized by Nietzsche. However, it must be borne in mind that this kind of an interpretation is neither unhistorical nor unrealistic; rather it is based on a tenable understanding of Christianity by a philosopher that possesses a certain level of historical consciousness.

[101] Nietzsche, Preface in *Beyond Good and Evil,* p. 2.

supposition of this chapter is that there exists a certain continuity regarding the conceptions of the body in the western history of thought the understanding of which is a precondition to grasping Nietzsche's attitude to the matter, I will first try to lay bare the continuity of the line of thought from ancient Greece to Christianity.

It was not very recently that a certain 're-apprehension' of the weight post-Aristotelian Greek philosophy and medieval philosophy carry in the history of western philosophy has started to emerge. Now it is acknowledged and appreciated that while medieval philosophy was shaped to a great extent by the faith in Christianity, the basic conceptual foundation in the establishment of the ideology of an institutional Christianity was Platonism. This, in turn, served to pave the way for the absolute reign of the Platonic worldview in the Western world. This being the case, however, it is not possible to say this situation relied on a direct relation to Plato's writings; rather, this knowledge and use of Platonic ideas was mediated by Neo-Platonism, which functioned as the bridge between Platonic thought and Christianity, and this bridging was heavily exerted by Neo-Platonist Plotinus, who gained an incomparable significance in Christianity's achievement of its theoretical systematicity through the embracement and implementation of his ideas by St. Augustine. Plotinus, as applying Platonic concepts, was on the side with a "turn from the contemplation of the body to the contemplation of the soul"[102] in order to achieve the access to the intelligible world – following the Platonic distinction of two worlds. In this conception Plotinus adopts, the body and the soul are completely different in nature and the relation of the soul to the body is merely a relation of governance:

> the perfections of body are perfections of rational order, which body cannot grant itself; the only thing that can grant this order is a soul,

[102] Stephen Philip Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 106.

> separate from body, unitary and rational in its essence, and yet capable of applying itself to extended body and managing its irrational powers.[103]

As opposed to the irrationality of the body;

> All soul is originally rational, and becomes irrational, to the extent that it does, only on its descent into the body. Plotinus is apparently the earliest philosopher to make rationality essential to soul[104]

This division of the rationality-irrationality between the soul and the body in a way that determines their spheres is a crucial step in that it has unique connotations as to the dualism of the body and the soul. Granting rationality, which is associated with the divine, to soul and furnishing it with the governance of the irrational body serves as the basis of the superiority of the soul over the body. After this kind of a conception, it is not surprising to see the emergence of a perception of the soul imprisoned in the body, which is, indeed, an application of the Platonic tenets. In this sense, Plotinus' being "ashamed of being in the body" is no different than Socrates' longing for death in *Phaedo*.

If we move from the philosophical roots of the doctrines of Christianity and situate it within the context of contemporary culture, we see that the contemporary – or relatively contemporary- practices of institutional Christianity are in an accordance with the basis that has been laid out. Christianity, like the other monotheistic religions, is basically characterized by its embracement of the thought of an afterlife. According to Douglas J. Davies, the wide place the concepts of heaven and hell occupy in Christianity owes it consolidation basically to its adoption as the state religion by the Roman Empire and asserts that "[w]herever Christianity becomes established as the dominant religion, it

[103] ibid. p. 111.

[104] ibid. p. 112.

tends to emphasize obedience and judgment"[105]. It is this institutionalized nature of Christianity that matters for the contemporary debates – including Nietzsche's critique of Christianity. In this sense, we need to say, this conception of the immortality of the soul, as it has been shown in the preceding section, which is the proper reason behind its being accredited with a privileged status compared to the body, reached the masses thanks to this authority Christianity gained by means of its institutionalization. If we turn back to the theoretical aspect of the issue; it has already been shown how, in ancient Greece, the body came to be conceptualized as the prison of the soul in line of the idea of the immortality ascribed to it. Christianity, in this sense, can be said to be going one step further than this conception by embellishing this idea with that of punishment and reward. Although there are debates over their nature and content, following the most common and less theoretical interpretations as to the issue, it could be said that the conceptions of reward and punishment in Christianity served to reception of an idea of body as the locus these mechanisms exerted on. Besides, the body is usually the cause that paves the way for the subject's being punished or rewarded since it is considered to be more vulnerable to sin due to the Christian conception of sin's being based on an understanding of the body which stems from what is instinctive. In this sense, the human being, as possessing a body, is face to face with the trap of going astray and the mind's duty is to prevent this obliquity of body, which is itself a handicap on the way to mind's full unification with the divine. Among these traps, the most powerful one is that of sexuality, which, in turn, leads to a powerful reaction to sexuality on behalf of Christianity. As Richard H. Roberts states, "[t]he "angelic way" of living beyond the body and sexuality had implications for those, who like Origen, took the extreme practical step of self-castration, a practice valued in some Encratite third- and fourth-century Christian circles."[106] At this point, it is needed to state that, the Christian

[105] Douglas J. Davies, "Death and Afterlife" in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. A. R. Segal, p. 233 (Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub., 2009)

[106] Richard H. Roberts, "Body" in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. A. R. Segal, p. 233 (Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub., 2009)

conception of the body as flesh stands closer to that of ancient Greek rather than of the Cartesian paradigm which posits the body as a mere automat (which will be handled in the next part). Body, as flesh, stands for nothing but survival desires like sexuality or nutrition accompanied by a feeling of lust. As Peter Brown states in *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, "[f]or Jerome, the human body remained a darkened forest, filled with the roaring of wild beasts, that could be controlled only by rigid codes of diet and by strict avoidance of occasions for sexual attraction"[107]

As has been shown, Christianity is not only strictly tied to the existing conceptualizations of the body, but also bears a certain reinterpretation and practice of those concepts. Moreover, it had the power it gained from its institutionalization to assimilate its views to all other aspects of life. The next step for the installation of this view of body and soul falls to Cartesian philosophy, which will guarantee this conception to be the dominant point of view in western philosophy from 17th century onwards.

3.1.3. 'Body' in Cartesian Philosophy:

Cartesian Philosophy could be said to be the agent that cultivated the philosophical roots of the Christian doctrines. As has been said, the basic tenets of Christianity owed a great deal to the Platonic tradition as it is discussed by theologians and bore a certain despise, at best, or a hatred, at worst, towards what is bodily. Then, although the basic characterization of Cartesian philosophy is its commitment to science rather than the then-dominant scholastic Aristotelian worldview that dominated philosophy for centuries, in its treatment of the body and the soul as two strictly distinct substances, it furthered the philosophical

[107] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society : Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York : Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 376.

aspect of the hitherto existing conception of the body and soul by furnishing the distinction with the terminology it lacked.

This continuity of Descartes' thought is most apparent when the resemblance of Cartesian philosophy to the Augustinian tradition is acknowledged. Since both Cartesian and the Augustinian philosophy take the "cogito" as the basis of their metaphysics, "[t]he human soul will be known primarily as a thing that thinks: not as an act of an organic body, but as something only extrinsically related to a body."[108] This essential distinction of the body from the soul which marginalizes the body in its relation to the so-called 'human-being' results in a conception of it that is almost indifferent to the conditions in which it exists by characterizing it as "the human mind too, made in God's image, has a freedom that makes it superior to the law-governed natural order, even while it is limited by the constraints of its natural environment."[109]

More distinctive to Cartesian philosophy than to the Augustinian one, on the other hand, is its being a rupture from medieval philosophy or Christian ideology by its claim to being a systematic inquiry into the nature of all hitherto applied concepts that is free from the prejudices and hindrances of the prevalent ideology of his time. This claim to originality, in fact, is the idiosyncrasy of Cartesian thought by means of which it characterized the posterior approaches to body-mind distinction to the extent that it determined the meaning and range of these concepts that will be adopted by philosophy from that time onwards.

Although Descartes' philosophy, in which his name is usually accompanied with the title 'the father of modern philosophy', in that his philosophy broke away from the traditional views prevalent in his time, is characterized as being a search for truth the justifications of which lies outside the realm of religion, it is not possible

[108] Menn, p. 5.

[109] Ibid.

to say it is a total rupture from the tenets of Christianity. In this sense, his account of the body-mind problem is of utmost importance since it is Descartes who defined the problem in its modern sense.

In Cartesian philosophy, there is a certain dualist hierarchy between mind and body according to which the former has an indubitable superiority over the latter. Human being, as the owner of body and mind, is the manifestation of this hierarchy as well.

> Next I examined attentively what I was. I saw that while I could pretend that I had no body and that there was no world and no place for me to be in, I could not for all that pretend that I did not exist. I saw on the contrary that from the mere fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed quite evidently and certainly that I existed; whereas if I had merely ceased thinking, even if everything else I had ever imagined had been true, I should have had no reason to believe that I existed. From this I knew I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is simply to think, and which does not require any place, or depend on any material thing, in order to exist.[110]

Descartes, in his search for the indubitable truth, sets out with denying the existence of the things of which he had been so sure. Thus, he does not deny only the existence of the outer world as part of his methodological doubt, but his very own existence as well. However, no matter how determinedly he denies himself, he concludes that it is not possible to deny his existence except for its material aspect. By means of this line of thinking he arrives at the conclusion 'Cogito, ergo sum' or 'I think, therefore I am.' In other words, the very idea of doubting or being involved with any kind of contemplation justifies the existence of the thinking thing although it is not capable of proving the material aspect of the same. In this sense, Descartes' conclusion is that the essence of the thinking thing is 'simply to think' and body is merely a secondary feature. Therefore, a thinking thing is "[a]

[110] René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume I*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (New York : Cambridge University Press 1985), p. 127.

thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sense perceptions"[111] whereas all of these acts are acts of the mind alone in need of no justification coming from what is bodily.

By cultivating the dualism that had been held regarding the body and mind for centuries into a substance dualism, Descartes paved the way for debates that will engage philosophers' minds for centuries again. This essential divorce of body from mind did not only cause metaphysical problems such as the problem of the interaction of an un-extended but thinking mind and an extended but non-thinking body. More importantly, it symbolized the peak point of the binary mode of thinking in the body-mind debate. Although substance dualism is not a widespread attitude among philosophers, it, nevertheless, manifests itself in the tendency to defend a conception of intellect independent of what is bodily.

Besides the leveling of body below soul in this hierarchical dualism, Cartesian philosophy's conception of body bears a great importance in the contemporary perception of the body, too. 'Body' in the Cartesian philosophy is not a living one – unlike in the Nietzschean philosophy, the details of which will be elucidated later- but rather a mere automat. In other words, the body, in the first hand, is presented as simply a machine that is nothing but extension. Its performance, on the other hand, is attributed to the 'soul'. In this sense, Cartesian philosophy is the climax of the privilege that is given to reason. Moreover, as has been said, by offering mind and body as two strictly distinct substances Cartesian philosophy has to face the problem of the interaction between such substances. In other words, once body is rendered deprived of any kind of interference with the so called rational endeavor, then it is not possible to explain the performance of the 'willings' and 'unwillings' of the soul either. Although this kind of a problem is not one that does not bother Nietzsche in this kind of a formulation due to its owing

[111] René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume II*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (New York : Cambridge University Press 1985), p. 19.

its very existence to the same soil, that of the metaphysics, that gives rise to the problem as well, the so called problematic nature of this interaction is a problem to be considered for Nietzsche nevertheless. However with one basic difference in attitude: Nietzsche gets rid of this kind of a problem by rejecting the claim to the different natures of mind and body in the first place. According to Nietzsche, body and mind, let alone being substantially different, are not even conceptually different once they are understood without the shadow of the western philosophical/ metaphysical tradition, the elucidation of which will be the task of the following section.

3.2. Combat Against Western Traditional Thought:

Although the body was mostly considered within this framework, when assessed within the practice of life, the ends and goals of human beings are shaped by their physiology rather than under the hegemony of an isolated conception of mind. In Nietzschean philosophy the body constitutes the primary locus of our interaction with the world since it is what gives shape to and even (determines at the unconscious level) the organism's choices on the basis of its needs and tendencies. Then, without implying a difference at the ontological level, it is the physiology of the organism that even determines the mental orientation of the same. In this sense, a human being, as being a dynamic part of the 'living', enjoys an existence governed by the rules of its physiology. However, it is important to note that this is not a simple reduction of the mental capacities to physical ones, not a reverse application of the very same body-mind dichotomy. In contrast to the very idea of the so called dichotomy, the treatment of the components separately serves just a linguistic function rather than an essential one in Nietzschean philosophy. Accordingly, in this section the way Nietzsche perceives the body and the bodily will be presented within the context of the crucial importance physiology carries in Nietzsche's philosophical project.

3.2.1. Nietzsche's Conception of Body:

> The concept of 'soul', 'spirit', finally even 'immortal soul' invented in order to make the body despised, to make it sick – 'holy' -, to treat as frivolous all the things about life that deserve to be taken very seriously…(Ecce Homo, Why I am a Destiny, pp. 8.)

In the previous section, we have offered a brief sketch of the conception of the body in the western philosophical tradition and Christianity in general, according to which the body is considered within the context of the hierarchical duality of mind and body. By doing so, we were trying to illuminate the path that leads to Nietzsche's own conception of the same since one of the founding features of his philosophy could be said to be his conception of the body and its opposition to hitherto existing ones. In *The Gay Science,* Nietzsche even says that he thought "often enough whether, on a grand scale, philosophy has been no more than an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body."* [112] To offer a general sketch of this crucial aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy, it is important to note that Nietzsche's relation to body depends on two basic points which are not independent of each other; first, as mentioned, his understanding of the body outside the context of body-mind dualism and second, his unique perception of the body as 'living body'. During the course of this section a combined account of these features will be offered and they are going to be treated in their own expense when further detail is needed. By doing this, it will be possible to better understand Nietzsche's relation to physiology, which is indispensable for a full-length examination of the place and nature of the concepts of health and sickness in his philosophy.

The basic point that has to be borne in mind for a full appreciation of Nietzsche's understanding of the body and what is bodily is that it is characterized by its being

[112] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* p. 5.

a complete challenge to the dualistic paradigm that lasted for centuries. In 'On the Despisers of the Body' of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche positions his Zarathustra against what he calls 'The Despisers of the Body' in that their – almost the whole mainstream western philosophical tradition – thoughts are based on a certain distinction of body and soul, which consists in a certain despise, contempt and hatred towards body, depending on how fervent a defender of the soul they are. According to Nietzsche, this long-lasting distinction is related essentially to these tradition's being against life.

As has already been elucidated in the first chapter, Nietzschean philosophy is based on the idea of the affirmation of life. His understanding of life does not need its opposite, 'death', in order for itself to be posited; rather, it is an all-embracing conception in which everything that belongs to it is in a relational state of existence to each other, rather than negating or denying the other. The life-denying character of Western philosophy, according to Nietzsche, manifests itself in the contempt for the body inherent in it. Nietzsche, being well aware of the connotations of 'body', such as mortality, imperfection, irrationality, praises it at the expense of its so called counterpart, soul. In doing this, Nietzsche's main point is his acknowledging those features as indispensable elements of life and the livings. Consequently, all the aforementioned pejorative uses in the western philosophy gain a different implication in Nietzschean philosophy.

As we have seen, in the western tradition the body is depicted as being essentially external to soul. Even when the two are tried to be related, this relation is nothing but a relation of containment. Depending on how harshly one despises the body, it is seen as the home or prison of the soul. Although when the body is depicted as the home of the soul the hatred may not be that apparent, it is, none the less, considered as external to the soul obviously. In this kind of a conception, although one does not hate body, s/he despises it nevertheless due to its being perceived as a mere means to facilitate the soul's relation to the outer world by actualizing its wishes and providing its needs. However, the soul is always face to face with the

traps that appear in front of it due to its being embodied. Body, due to its unconscious and irrational inclinations, always carries the danger of leading to what is 'immoral' and 'irrational', in more philosophical contexts, or to sinful, in religious contexts. In this line of thinking, the transition from the despise to hatred is only one step ahead and, as has been shown, there are even instances of a longing for death that stems from this hatred towards body and what is bodily. Against these views of the 'despisers of the body' the first moment in transcending the existing duality is the moment of the child, the case of whom Zarathustra states as "'Body am I, and soul" — thus speaks the child. And why should one not speak like children?"[113] At this moment, the opposition is to the aforementioned dominant view concerning the body and the soul, of which the basic characteristics is that of duality. However, this moment does not say much concerning the hierarchy at stake and, to this extent, the child is still in a state of sleep and the real decisive step is that of body's overcoming of the soul. As uttered from Zarathustra's mouth,

> But the awakened one and knowing say: body am I entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body.
>
> The body is a great reason, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a shepherd. An instrument of your body is also your little reason, my brother, which you call "spirit" — a little instrument and toy of your great reason.
>
> "I," you say, and are proud of the word. But greater is that in which you do not wish to have faith — your body and its great reason: that does not say "I," but does "I.".[114]

Here, Nietzsche makes use of the widespread allusion to the analogy of being asleep or awaken to a state of mind concerning philosophical consciousness and reverses it into a new use in which acknowledging the primacy of the body is called a sagacity – a quality attributed to what is rational in the traditional

[113] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche,* edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York : Penguin Books, 1976), p.146.

[114] ibid.

western understanding. Following the same reverse application of attributes, Nietzsche calls the spirit an instrument of body. More strikingly, Nietzsche combats the mainstream understanding of 'self' that is characterized by spirituality and reason and declares the body as the true self.

> What the sense feels, what the spirit knows, never has its end in itself. But sense and spirit would persuade you that they are the end of all things: that is how vain they are. Instruments and toys are sense and spirit: behind them still lies the self. The self also seeks with the eyes of the senses, it also listens with the ears of the spirit. Always the self listens and seeks: it compares, overpowers, conquers, and destroys. It controls, and it is in control of the ego too.
>
> Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage — whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body.
>
> There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom. And who knows why your body needs precisely your best wisdom?
>
> Your self laughs at your ego, and at its bold leaps. "What are these leaps and flights of thought to me?" it says to itself. "A detour to my end. I am the leading strings of the ego and the prompter of its concepts."[115]

Self, in fact, is one of the most overloaded categories in the history of thought and within the context of the dominant rational conceptions of it, specifically the German philosophical tradition, it is more or less characterized as a sovereign mind that gives order to the data supplied by the external world as well. Indeed, this concept of 'external' promises a great deal in an understanding of self since the peculiarity of this type of a conception of self is that, as being mind, it is foreign to the world that surrounds it. Based on this conception, self is something above its body and it is in charge of its governance. Nietzsche, on the other hand, posits the body as the true self and, by doing so, reflects all the positive attributes that so far belonged to the mind to the body; it is not the soul or mind that embraces the sagacity anymore, but the body. This assertion of Nietzsche's necessitates a certain caution in order to prevent the accusation of biological reductionism that seems to fit at first sight. However, it needs to be stated that what Nietzsche claims for is a

[115] ibid.

conception of self based on a unity of the soul and body – albeit an instrumental rather than an ontological unity[116] - rather than a simple reverse treatment of the predominant conceptions.

For a full understanding of Nietzsche's war against the body-soul dualism an appreciation of his reference to instincts and the irrational occupy a highly significant place.

Nietzsche's understanding of the instinctive and irrational is based on their indispensability for the affirmation of life. According to Nietzsche, the history of western thought is nothing but an overestimation of what is rational and conceptual over what is irrational and natural. In the light of the strict connection we have seen to exist between the ideology of Christianity and that of western thought it is easy to recognize that the 'spiritual' in Christianity is simply a different manifestation of the same line of thought that exists in ancient Greek which praises what is rational at the expense of irrational and instinctive. Against this dogmatic rationality, "[o]ur own wild nature is the best place to recover from our un-nature, from our spirituality"[117] What is meant by our own wild nature is, in other words, our animality. This idea of animality, as we have seen, is not foreign to 19th century line of thought due to the achievements in life sciences, basically the cultivation of the theory of evolution by means of Darwinian theory of evolution by natural selection. Thus, whether one agrees with the Darwinian theory or not, it is not possible to stand aside the paradigm shift concerning man's place in the ladder of life taking place in the 19th century. In this context should Nietzsche's frequent use of the word 'instinct' be understood. Nietzsche combines

[116] When alluded to the concept of 'unity', it must be borne in mind that Nietzsche's understanding of self is instrumental in that it is not an essential sovereign entity; rather the idea of 'self' is a mere fiction that serves a regulative function in every kind of operation in life. In this sense it can be understood in its activity rather than essentially. However, this issue will not be examined in more detail since it is beyond the scope of this study.

[117] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* p. 156.

the word instinct with many different phenomena as in the case of 'artistic instinct', 'political instinct', 'slave instinct', 'social instinct', 'instinct for revenge', 'instinct for war', 'instinct of decadence' and so on. It would not be a mistake to say that Nietzsche uses the word 'instinct' in a similar fashion to 'tendency'. The important point to make, however, is that this tendency is not to be understood in a rational context; rather, it implies a natural tendency. Here, what Nietzsche does is waging war against the rationalistic reductionism that had reigned over every kind of conception of life and human-being. Nietzsche's war is on the Platonic equation of 'Reason = virtue = happiness' which, according to Nietzsche, is based on the idea of "daylight against all dark desires – the daylight of reason. You have to be clever, clear, and bright at any cost: any concession to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads *downward.*"[118] This despise for what is instinctive in man is, in fact, the idiosyncrasy of the western way of thinking. Nietzsche, on the other hand, thinks that "[t]o *have* to fight the instincts – that is the formula for decadence: as long as life is *ascending*, happiness is equal to instinct.-"[119] What Nietzsche is trying to emphasize here is the need "to translate man back into nature.'[120] Acknowledging that almost the entire history of thought is governed by the absolute primacy of reason over the animal part of the existence, what Nietzsche does is doing justice to the instinctive part of human existence and life in order to pursue happiness and fulfill the affirmation of life since "[h]e believes that human life is inseparable from the whole organic and inorganic world." [121]

This 'inseparability of human life from the whole organic and inorganic world' is the reason for the strict connection Nietzsche's conception of body has with

[118] ibid. p. 166.

[119] ibid.

[120] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* pp. 230.

[121] Vanessa Lemm, *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy : Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being* (New York : Fordham University Press, 2009), p. 3.

physiology in that the body for Nietzsche is not a machine as it is depicted in the Cartesian paradigm, but a living body that demands a special treatment. This special treatment is offered by physiology which performs an investigation of the living organisms.

3.2.2. Physiology:

> It is crucial for the fate of individuals as well as peoples that culture begin in the *right* place – *not* in the 'soul' (which was the disastrous superstition of priests and half priests): the right place is the body, gestures, diet, physiology, *everything else* follows from this… This is why the Greeks are the *first cultural event* in history – they knew, they *did*, what needed to be done; Christianity, which despised the body, has been the greatest disaster for humanity so far.- (Twilight of the Idols, p. 221.)

Having stated the first aspect of Nietzsche's conception of body, namely, its being on a par with soul, now it is time to turn to the second, which is of great importance for an elucidation of 'health' and 'sickness' as well; Nietzsche's understanding of body as living body.

Even a cursory account of the then dominant Platonic/Christian/Cartesian accounts of body can, and hopefully did, reveal that they are based on an understanding of body as more like a machine. As mentioned in the previous part, Platonic worldview perceived body merely in its being a means that soul needs and it is in need of good care only to this extent. Christian conception, which is a cultivation of the Platonic understanding of the same, named body as mere 'flesh'. Cartesian conception of body, finally brought the previous views to their peak by reducing body to the mere status of an automat. In this sense, although Cartesian view sees a complete difference of level between animal and man, this difference is merely thanks to man's having a soul without which he would be on a par with

animals. Actually, Nietzsche, too, appreciates this acknowledgement of the body as understood mechanically. In *Anti-Christ* he states

> As far as animals are concerned, it was Descartes who, with admirable boldness, first ventured the idea that they could be seen as *machine*: the whole of physiology has been working to prove this claim. We are even logically consistent enough not to exclude humans, as Descartes did: to the extent that human beings are understood at all these days, they are understood as machines.[122]

Apparently, as Nietzsche states as well, although the Cartesian view implies a certain connection between man and animal to the modern mind, it does not do so within its own context since it is based on the divine fate of human kind to be so. In other words, it is still based on a distinct entity as the soul or mind, which, necessarily furnishes the otherwise a mere automat human body with the distinctive nature it owns contrary to animals.

However, in the late eighteenth century there started to emerge an apparent change of mentality concerning man's place and importance on earth, which brought human being to another context of argument that not only contemplates but also empirically investigates into the very notions of the organic and inorganic. This paradigm shift finds its best expression in the field of physiology, of which the efflorescence coincides with mid 19th century as well. Leading to a conception of a living body, physiological vantage point is also the key to understanding Nietzsche's conception of the body.

Nietzsche was an eager follower of the debates centered around the newly flourishing science of physiology. More important than this general interest, he saw physiology as the key element for a full manifestation of his philosophy. Before going any further into the details of physiology's importance in Nietzschean philosophy, it is convenient to give some historical evidence as to his

[122] Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ,* pp. 14.

interest in the topic in order to supply the objective ground for any claim as to the relation of Nietzsche and physiology.

According to Thomas H. Brobjer, Nietzsche's interest in physiology "began in 1880-81 and intensified until his mental collapse. After 1883 Nietzsche continued to read about physiology, but his reading was not concentrated in any particular year."[123] Nietzsche's texts bear certain direct references to physiology as well as more frequent implications of it as a basis for giving meaning to various philosophical debates and problems. In order to emphasize the significance of physiology throughout Nietzsche's writings Richard S. G. Brown gives 'a brief accounting' as follows:

> There is but a single reference to 'physiology' (or to one of its strict cognates – for example, 'physiological', 'physiologist' and so on) in *The Birth of Tragedy* and an additional ten references in the notebooks between 1870 and 1872 inclusive, when Nietzsche was at work on such unpublished material as *On Truth and Lie in a Extra-Moral Sense* (1872) – material which has a decidedly different flavour than *The Birth of Tragedy*. Similarly, there is only a single reference to physiology in the four *Untimely Meditations*. There is one reference to physiology in the notebooks of 1873; none in 1874; three in 1875; and none in 1876 to 1879. There is but a single reference to physiology in *Human, All Too Human, Assorted Opinions and Maxims, and The Wanderer and His Shadow* (1878-1880) and none in the notebooks from 1877 to 1879. After this, physiology begins to make an increasingly steady appearance. It crops up a dozen times in 1880 as Nietzsche started to work on *Daybreak* (1881), in which there are some eight references to physiology and 13 more in the notebooks of the same period (1881). *The Gay Science* (1882) makes six references; the corresponding notebooks three. The four parts of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85), as might be expected, make no reference, although in the notebooks of the same period, there are 26. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), there are 16 references, with 17 in the 1886 notebooks. Then follows Nietzsche's published work which has the greatest number of references to physiology, namely: *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) has 33 references with another 23 in the 1887 notebooks. Then, last, but certainly not least, there are the works of 1888: *Twilight of the Idols* (26); *The Antichrist* (3); Ecce Homo (17); and *The Case of*

[123] Brobjer, 'Nietzsche's Reading and Knowledge of Natural Science: An Overview' p. 21.

> *Wagner* (9). In the 1888 notebooks, there are 104 references to physiology in Nietzsche's published writings (excluding *Nietzsche Contra Wagner,* a compilation of earlier material) of which 114 (a full 85 per cent) are to be found in the texts starting with *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886). There are 212 references to physiology in notebooks as a whole, with 144 (68 per cent) falling in the same timeframe. However, the notebooks of 1888 alone account for almost 50 per cent of those 212 references.[124]

Although this documentation seems to reduce the 'philosophical' to the mere quantity, bearing the data gathered from this list in mind when embarking upon an assessment of the 'physiological' in Nietzsche's philosophy is crucial to apprehending it in its full meaning. Actually, this helps us understand that the application of and reference to this realm is more than a methodological tool that serves Nietzsche's rhetoric, but rather a philosophical attitude that permeates Nietzsche's thinking from the very beginning onwards. Thus, it gives, at least, a more objective ground to start with in order to justify a physiological interpretation of Nietzsche.

The line of movement and importance of physiology in Nietzsche's texts could be summarized as follows: Nietzsche, as someone trained in the field of classics, was not involved with the natural sciences in general at the beginnings of his philosophically oriented writings, as explained in the second chapter. Rather, his thought was shaped by the impact of art and aesthetics apart from the classics. However, as it is explained in a more detailed fashion in the same chapter, it was far from being possible for an especially late 19th century intellectual to follow

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[124] Richard S. G. Brown , 'Nietzsche: 'That Profound Physiologist' in *Nietzsche and Science,* ed. Moore, G. and Brobjer, T., p. 24 (Aldershot, Hampshire, England ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate, 2004), p. 63.

Apart from these direct mentions of the term physiology, there is a wide range of other strongly physiology related concepts that should not be overlooked, a selection of which Brown offers in the notes section of the same article as anaemia, cretinism, depression, dyspepsia, epilepsy, erotic precocity, *folie circulaire,* hemiplegia, hypersensibility, hypochondria, *idée fixe, induction psycho-motrice,* inherited melancholy, monomania, neurosis, neurasthenia, rhachitis, syphilis and tuberculosis.

his/her path by staying indifferent to his/her contemporary scientific achievements. This was the case for Nietzsche as well. His main interests were physics, physiology and biology – covering the fields of medical sciences and evolutionary achievements in specific. Besides, it is not surprising for a man that had suffered from various medical symptoms for almost all of his life to be specifically interested in recent scientific achievements as to the well-being or nature of human physiology. As Nietzsche's philosophy ripens, we see more and more reference to physiology in Nietzsche's texts. Especially in his writings from his late period, Nietzsche gives a more compact elucidation of his views with regards to all the philosophical problems he covered, such as rationality, morality, aesthetics, and traces the origin of these problems to the distorted perception and, to put it plainly, the hatred towards physiology (covering life and cheerfulness) ever since the ancient times. Thus, "[w]hilst he is not perhaps exactly a 'profound' physiologist, especially from our temporal vantage-point, […] there is little question that Nietzsche must be understood in light of what he had to say about the physiological question."[125]

Indeed, in his relation to physiology, Nietzsche is not independent from the era he was writing. As has been said, materialist worldview was in great upturn against the Hegelian Idealism in the 19th century. The advance in physics, however, was far from being explanatory on its own concerning the field of the living since it was basically working according to over determined laws of mechanics which were not useful in explaining advanced features peculiar to the living organisms. It is in this context of the mid-nineteenth century that we see the efflorescence of physiology with its intensive use of empirical research.

> As a discourse able to reach beyond the walls of lecture halls and laboratories, physiology produced one of its most crucial effects in offering a far-reaching redefinition of the body as both an organic entity and as a cultural object: reason and the moral law, which in the late

[125] ibid. p. 68.

> eighteenth century had defined what it means to be human, were dissolved into an arrangement of stimuli, nerves, sensory centers, brain regions, transmissions, waves, and molecules.[126]

Occupying itself with the area where natural sciences and the social sciences overlap, physiology revolutionized the conception of human being. It could be said to serve as a bridge between the biological sciences of the 19th century with their unprecedented achievements as to the organic nature of human beings and philosophy and social sciences. In this sense, it is not surprising to see that "[t]he three disciplines in which he [Nietzsche] demonstrated the most interest were physics, physiology and Darwinism."[127] since they were the constitutive disciplines in providing an understanding of man in all his/her aspects.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the advances of biology in the 19th century revolutionized the classical western conception of man based on the idea of a sovereign rational capacity by introducing his animal aspect. This shift in the content, accordingly, altered the way man is investigated in a way it will be dominated by the language of science rather than purely speculative concepts of philosophy. This shift in the form and presentation of the ideas showed its impact not only in the field of physical or biological sciences but in the social sciences as well. "As a consequence, much anthropological thought from this time relies on the notions of drive (*Trieb),* self-generation (*Bildung)*, and life force (*Lebenskraft)* to reassess the relationship between natural and cultural existence."[128] and Nietzsche was no different in this respect. Regarding his interest in science, it would not be a mistake to say that his interest in scientific worldview dominant in his time was stemming from his interest in and critic of his contemporary culture, rather than the other way around. In the core idea, method, achievements of

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[126] Christian Emden, *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness, and the Body* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 34.

[127] Brobjer, 'Nietzsche's Reading and Knowledge of Natural Science: An Overview', p. 21.

[128] Emden, p. 133.

physiology Nietzsche saw the way to give a better account of the contemporary culture, its critique and the means to its healing. Thus, it must be noted that Nietzsche's application to concepts from the field of physiology was more than solely the result of a conformity to his contemporary tendency to do so but, more importantly, the result of a way of seeing life and doing philosophy.

As Brown cites from Alistair Kee, medical materialism during Nietzsche's life span in Germany had a great importance and "Nietzsche attempted to trace such phenomena as morality and religion back not to anthropology but *physiology*."[129] In fact, it is due to this reason that we find references to physiology in Nietzsche's text in many differing contexts since Nietzsche puts physiology at the very heart of his understanding of not only the heavily biological aspect of human beings but also the whole phenomena of 'living'. In this sense, physiology is synonymous to 'will to power' and 'life' in Nietzsche. As Andrea Rehberg states "it does not simply denote a biological body or the study thereof, nor does absolutely rule this out. Instead physio-logy, the thinking *of* nature (*physis)* or matter (in both of its genitival senses) projects an active science of material becomings by asking how forces vie with each other and how some become formative of a body."[130]

Although Nietzsche could not find the chance to realize his project of writing the work he had in mind, named *On the Physiology of Art,* in a chapter of which he was planning to express the degeneration he sees in art as "an expression of physiological degeneration (a form of hysteria, to be precise)"[131], as the result of Nietzsche's growing interest in physiology throughout his intellectual life, we see more and more allusions to physiology in his late writings. Acknowledgement of the place physiology occupies in Nietzsche's philosophy, indeed, is the final point

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[129] Brown, 'That Profound Physiologist', p. 60.

[130] Andrea Rehberg,"The Overcoming of Physiology" in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 23, 2002.

[131] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 7.

that brings us to the main concern of this study, that is, the use of the concepts health and sickness in Nietzsche's philosophy, which will be offered in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONCEPTS OF HEALTH AND SICKNESS IN NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHY

Sickness was what restored me to reason.
— Friedrich Nietzsche, "Why I am so Clever"

In this chapter, an exposition of the place and the importance of the concepts 'health' and 'sickness' in Nietzsche's texts will be offered. For this purpose, Nietzsche's basic texts will be examined in accordance with the somehow rough division of his philosophy into three phases, consisting of early, middle and late. At the end of the chapter, I hope to have succeeded in clarifying the crucial place of these concepts with their various implications in Nietzschean philosophy.

As has been shown in the second chapter, the 19th century is the century of the natural sciences which also found an expression in the sense of popular interest in science. Among the sciences of the 19th century, biology and specifically medical sciences were the ones that attracted the greatest public attention. In this sense, the use of scientific and, specifically medical terms were quite prevalent in the 19th century. Together with knowledge of the place Nietzsche's chronic illnesses occupied in his life this may lead someone to conclude that Nietzsche's frequent application of the notions of health and sickness/illness is merely instrumental in the sense that they functioned as simply metaphorical devices in Nietzsche's critique of his contemporary culture. Although this is a part of the truth, not the whole of it. Rather, this application should be seen from the prism of Nietzsche's affirmation of life with an acknowledgement of 'life' in the sense Nietzsche sees it, which tried to be clarified in the first chapter. With this regard, Nietzsche sees

life as will to power, which brings forward an appreciation of the organic basis and the cultural superstructure in it. The defeat of nihilism and the presentation of an affirmation of life, which is the project of the transvaluation of all values, accordingly, is a physiological process that takes its basis from the body. The concepts of health and sickness, in this respect, appear as constitutive of Nietzsche's transvaluation as being fundamental qualifications of the body. Moreover, their metaphorical use, as well, stems from the conception of the realm of cultural as physiological - as will to power - by Nietzsche. Thus the division of Nietzsche's philosophy into phases, does not solely worth for the sake of practical and organizational issues, but also enables us to comprehend in retrospect the continuity in Nietzsche's thinking by manifesting the implicit forms of the same thinking in the phases that is not characterized by a physiological outlook and an explicit appreciation of what is bodily, rather dominated by cultural and aesthetic statements. In this sense, it needs to be stated that our main concern is not Nietzsche's critique of modern culture, his proclamation of it as sick. Rather, this critique is related for our purposes, to the extent that it is shaped by Nietzsche's views of health and sickness.

4.1. 'Health' and 'Sickness' Throughout Nietzsche's Writings:

4.1.1. The Early Period:

In their article 'Nietzsche's Conception of Health: The Idealization of Struggle', Scott H. Podolsky and Alfred I. Tauber offer an interpretation of Nietzschean understanding of health as opposed to the pre-Darwinian conceptions, "[s]pecifically, what Bernard had championed as the "normal," a stable interior milieu (or what Walter Cannon would later call "homeostasis")" [132] According to them, with Darwin a new paradigm emerged in the biological sciences which is

[132] Scott H. Podolsky and Alfred I. Tauber, 'Nietzsche's Conception of Health: The Idealization of Struggle' in *Nietzsche, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Science* ed. Babette Babich and Robert S. Cohen (Dordrecht ; Boston : Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), p. 299.

based on becoming rather than depending on the hitherto prevalent metaphysics of being. Thus, 'health' in the post-Darwinian world, should be – and, for Nietzsche, is - a flux or a struggle, rather than an entity.

Depicted as a struggle, 'health' in Nietzschean philosophy is not only medical but also ethical in the sense that it is used as a way to evaluate our present values. By means of 'health's embracement of these qualities together, indeed, the concept of 'sickness' in the form of 'decadence' can become crucial for a critique of culture. Thus, it would be a mistake to search for exact medical uses of these terms to catch their application in Nietzsche's early writings, in which the terminology of physical and physiological is rather dominant. Nevertheless, a careful reading may enable one to hear what is implied in the light of Nietzsche's final works, without falling prey to anachronism.

Although the early phase of Nietzsche's philosophy covers *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and the short essays Nietzsche wrote, roughly, until 1876, it will not be misleading to take *The Birth* as representative of this period since it covers all characteristics of Nietzsche's philosophical concerns in this period. The book is a reply to the crisis Europe was suffering from, the problem of the modern culture in other words, in the 19th century. This modern culture, according to Nietzsche, is characterized by its being a Socratic one, as opposed to the tragic age of the Greeks which was a type of harmony in the struggle of the two forces; Apollo and Dionysus. The Greek cheerfulness, however, gets lost with the arrival of Socratic thinking, which is associated with theoretical thinking, in other words, Socratic rationality. Socratic rationality, as explained in the first chapter, is a certain type of optimistic attitude towards life. Life is full of chaos and mystery, it is true, but human beings, as being endowed with reason, are capable of working out its mysteries, bringing harmony to the chaos, shortly, of rendering the world theirs. As Nietzsche states in *Twilight of the Idols*, Socratism is based on the equation

"reason = virtue = happiness" [133] Although Nietzsche does not use the term 'decadent' in *The Birth of Tragedy* itself, as he re-assesses it in *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche sees *The Birth of Tragedy* as the work in which Socrates is identified in a particular and important manner, "recognized for the first time as the instrument of Greek disintegration, as a typical decadent." [134] But what does decadence mean?

Although decadence gains its full expression in Nietzsche's later writings, it is possible to find traces of it, albeit implicit most of the time, throughout. Decadence, as an indispensable element of Nietzsche's critique of culture, points the sickness of the modern European society. As has been presented in the first chapter, the sickness of 19th century Europe manifests itself as nihilism, which, according to Nietzsche, stems mostly from the rationalism of the age – a rationalism Nietzsche understand as the opposition to what is instinctive, that is, bodily. What *The Birth of Tragedy* offers, indeed, is a treatment of this sickness as decadence, which Nietzsche sees in a return to the tragic age of the Greeks. In contrast to the scientific outlook of modern society, in this book 'health' is articulated as an aesthetic phenomenon. Art, in Nietzsche's eyes, is seen as the expression of the affirmative attitude of Greeks, that is, Greek cheerfulness. Remember, however, for Nietzsche, this cheerfulness is not the optimism Nietzsche sees in the otherworldly Christianity and the scientific attitude of rationalism; rather it is the pessimism of strength that affirms life in its totality and, in this manner, is the treatment of decadence.

Although what Nietzsche posits is the struggle of the Apollonian and the Dionysiac elements as necessary for harmony, it can be inferred from the text that Dionysus is seen by Nietzsche as the proper source of being healthy, as it is the expression of the intimate relation with nature. Thus, referring to the despisers of

[133] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 163.

[134] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p. 108.

the Dionysiac fests, Nietzsche says, "these poor creatures have not the slightest inkling of how spectral and deathly pale their 'health' seems when the glowing life of Dionysiac enthusiasts storms past them." [135] As Nietzsche tells, it is actually Euripides' – whom Nietzsche sees as merely a mask for the Socratic ideology – tendency to an elimination of the "Dionysiac element from tragedy and to re-build tragedy in a new and pure form on the foundations of a non-Dionysiac art, morality, and view of the world"[136] that paved the way for the cultural crisis as decadence. It is indeed due to the crucial importance Nietzsche attributes to this crisis in his own time that he concludes *The Birth of Tragedy* with its third part that is reserved to an articulation of nature of this crisis, which appears to be, Nietzsche claims stemming from the "*most illustrious opposition* to the tragic view of the world, by which I mean science, optimistic to its deepest core, with its ancestor Socrates at the head of it."[137]. Here, Nietzsche offers the treatment of this crisis as well. For Nietzsche, the cure to the sickness of the modern culture is a return to the tragic age in which "the man of intuition […]wields his weapons more mightily and victoriously than his contrary [man of reason]"[138] Then, *The Birth of Tragedy* should be read as a contemplation on the then current situation of culture, which shows itself as decay, for which the treatment lies in the instincts and intuition. The suitability of the word 'treatment' gets more apparent when the text is read in the light of the Preface of 1886 which is Nietzsche's later re-evaluation of the text. It is mostly this preface, indeed, that facilitates the construction of the certain connection the text bears to the last period.

The problem of pessimism in *The Birth of Tragedy* and its relation to the nihilism of the age will not be further mentioned here since it was already offered in the

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[135] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* p. 18.

[136] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 59.

[137] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 76.

[138] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense' in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed.Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 153.

first chapter. What needs to be stated once more is that for Nietzsche asserts, referring to "decline in strength, of approaching old age, of physiological exhaustion"[139], "that pessimism is precisely *not* symptom of these things[.]"[140] and offers an understanding of pessimism as 'pessimism of strength' that is adorned with an affirmative attitude. Thus, regardless of whether 'the birth of tragedy' is considered in its relation to music, or to pessimism as Nietzsche proposes retrospectively, the text is to be understood as a critique of modern culture that suffers from certain symptoms like the lack of the feeling of unity and content, let alone 'cheerfulness' towards life, for which the cure is shown to be in a life-affirming attitude that is based on instinct rather than on reason.

4.1.2. Middle Period:

Customarily, Nietzsche's middle period is considered distinct from the first one in that Nietzsche turns his face to science in contrast to its depiction as subordinate to art in the first period. *Human, All Too Human*, specifically, marks a turn to the problem of human, a complete rupture from the metaphysics; as Nietzsche says "'where *you* see ideal things, *I* see – human, oh, only all too human!.'"[141] In the pursuit of the all too human nature of the existing concepts, Nietzsche already shows the, albeit immature, implications of a non-stable, non-conceptual understanding of health – with regards to medical, as well as cultural health. As will be articulated deeply in the final part of the present chapter, which corresponds to Nietzsche's final phase where the mature expressions of Nietzsche's conception of health is found , Nietzsche does not see either health or sickness in terms of 'normality' which brings forth certain connotations as to a

[139] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,*p. 8.

[140] ibid.

[141] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* p. 115.

stable and determined nature of these concepts. On the contrary, Nietzsche asserts,

> Freedom of opinion is like health: both are individual, from neither can a universally valid concept be set up. That which one individual needs for his health is to another a cause of sickness, and many ways and means to freedom of spirit may to more highly developed natures count as ways and means to freedom.[142]

Although here Nietzsche does not say anything to us as to how to achieve health yet, he already is against a sense of 'health' that relies on a "static norm of health"[143] Rather, 'health' and 'sickness' are presented as fluid 'concepts', which, accordingly, hinders an essential opposition of them. "Nietzsche does not ask: 'What is health?' but rather: 'How do we acquire health?'"[144] Health is associated to *becoming* rather than *being* and not the end result of the struggle but rather the struggle itself. Thus, as we will later see when we meet Nietzsche's introduction of the concept 'great health', which is not present in *Human, All Too Human* yet, sickness is an essential component and determinant of 'Health'. At this phase, however, 'sickness' is basically seen as inhering a certain degree of bad implications, which, nevertheless, is seen as necessary for the attainment of 'health'. It is within this context that we see the advantages of being sick medically as expressed in the following passage from *Human, All Too Human*.

> *Usefulness of sickliness.* – He who is often sick does not only have a much greater enjoyment of health on account of the frequency with which he gets well: he also has a greatly enhanced sense of what is healthy and what sick in works and actions, his own and those of others: so that it is precisely the sickliest writers, for example – and almost all the great writers are, unfortunately, among them – who usually evidence in their

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[142] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human,* trans. R. J. Hollingdale, intro. Richard Schacht (Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 133.

[143] Scott H. Podolsky and Alfred I. Tauber, p. 302.

[144] Friedrich Balke, "Nietzsche's Philosophy of Crime" in *Cardozo Law Review* , Vol. 24:2., p. 714

> writings a much steadier and more certain tone of health, because they understand the philosophy of physical health and recovery better and are better acquainted with its teachers – morning, sunshine, forests and springs – than the physically robust.[145]

In this context is also present an understanding of sickness as a constituent of higher culture:

> *Ennoblement through degeneration.*[…]Every progress of the whole must be preceded by a partial weakening. The strongest natures *retain* the type, the weaker ones help to *advance* it.[…]If a people starts to crumble and grow weak at some one place, but is still strong and healthy in general, it can accept being infected with something new, and can incorporate it to its advantage.[146]

Thus construed, then, although 'sickness' did not gain its affirmative meaning fully in *Human, All Too Human* yet, it is already acknowledged as a fluid state, just like 'health', for the attainment of which it bears certain positive implications.

As Nietzsche's philosophy matures, we see a more frequent application of themes 'health' and 'sickness'. "The *Gay Science* (1882, 1887)", actually, "moves the theme of health to a central position in Nietzsche's thinking." [147] As Nietzsche states in the Preface to the second edition, the book is shaped by 'the unconscious disguise of physiological needs' which lies behind every aspect of life. With this central placement of these concepts in *The Gay Science*, their aforementioned characterization in Nietzsche's philosophy as being in constant struggle (and, in this sense, not static) vividly manifests itself .

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[145] Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human,* p. 293.

[146] Nietzsche, *Human, All tooHuman,* p. 107.

[147] Scott H. Podolsky and Alfred I. Tauber, p. 304.

For Nietzsche, there is not a non-personal, transcendent definition of health; rather, bodily health as well as the *'health of the soul'* is contextual and individual;

> Deciding what is health even for your *body* depends on your goal, your horizon, your powers, your impulses, your mistakes and above all on the ideals and phantasms of your soul. Thus there are innumerable healths of the body; and the more one allows the particular and incomparable to rear its head again, the more one unlearns the dogma of the 'equality of men', the more the concept of a normal health, along with those of a normal diet and normal course of an illness, must be abandoned by our medical men. Only then would it be timely to reflect on the health and illness of the *soul* and to locate the virtue peculiar to each man in its health – which of course could look in one person like the opposite of health in another. [148]

What Nietzsche offers is a complete overcoming of the idea of normal health not only concerning the soul, which is obviously more susceptible to the recognition of difference in its being unique, but, more strikingly, the bodily health. This rejection of normality, as leaning on the rejection of the 'equality of men', is an overcoming of the Enlightenment conception of man that enjoys an equality to the rest of humanity in that they share a common feature, rationality. Nietzsche, on the contrary, thinks physiologically. According to Podolsky and Tauber, the previous passage from Nietzsche "is the fulcrum by which we argue the Nietzschean biological concept concerning the unique, individually contingent histories of physiological and psychological selves."[149] This physiological vantage point not only brings forth a questioning of the concept of 'normal' by naturalizing health, but also guarantees an affirmative understanding of sickness.

It is actually Nietzsche's critique of the dualistic metaphysics of the western thinking that underpins Nietzsche's conception of 'health' and 'sickness'. As we have seen in the third chapter, "[t]he fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is

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[148] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* pp. 120.

[149] Scott H. Podolsky and Alfred I. Tauber, p. 305.

the faith in opposite values."[150] For Nietzsche, on the other hand, the dualities are either superficial, as in the case of body and soul, or interdependent for their existence, as in the case of pain and joy; "if you want to decrease and diminish people's susceptibility to pain, you also have to decrease and diminish their *capacity for joy*."[151] Then, do we – should we - really strive for the greatest amount of health - that increases to the expense of sickness?

> The great question would still remain whether we can *do without* illness, even for the development of our virtue; and whether especially our thirst for knowledge and self-knowledge do not need the sick soul as much as the healthy; in brief, whether the will to health alone is not a prejudice, a cowardice and a piece of most refined barbarism and backwardness. [152]

Does this mean that, being a mere prejudice, health does not have any sense for Nietzsche? Or, is there place for a new conception of health that embraces sickness as well?, "a new health that is stronger, craftier, tougher, bolder, and more cheerful than any previous health"[153], that has connotations not only for soul and body, but also for culture. This new health Nietzsche presents is "*the great health*, a health that one doesn't only have, but also acquires continually and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up!.." [154] This new sense is not a safe harbor that is reached at the end of a undesired voyage; rather it means being 'dangerously healthy'[155]. Although this new understanding of health is not related to the will to power explicitly yet, as will be expressed later in Nietzsche's writings, the great health is an expression of will to power, as he states in the Preface, "what was at stake in all philosophizing hitherto was not

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[150] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 2.

[151] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* pp. 12.

[152] ibid. pp. 120.

[153] ibid, pp. 382.

[154] ibid.

[155] ibid.

at all 'truth' but rather something else – let us say health, future, growth, power, life." [156] In this respect, two of the most important themes of Nietzsche's philosophy – the Death of God and Eternal Recurrence – bear implications of the 'great health' as a part of the transvaluation of values, although they do not directly allude to it. The details of the implications of the former will not be restated here. In the light of its presentation in the first chapter, it is not a difficult to reach the conclusion that the great health Nietzsche has in mind is the proper cure for the 19th century sickness, nihilism, as the result of the death of god. Eternal recurrence , on the other hand, "functions as a measure for judging someone's overall psychological strength and mental health, since Nietzsche believed that the doctrine of eternal recurrence was the hardest world-view to affirm."[157] In other words, the demon's question can be read as 'Despite the inescapable sicknesses of your life, do you possess the *great health* to live it again and again?' Thus, although the concept great health both understood as bodily and cultural, is not cultivated much here in *The Gay Science*, it is, nevertheless, presented as the herald of the revaluation, which will be manifest in *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

4.1.3. Late Period:

Among Nietzsche's writings from the late period, *On the Genealogy of the Morality* has a peculiar place with regards to Nietzsche's conception of health and sickness, specifically due to their central placement in the third essay on 'the ascetic ideal'. At the outset it needs to be stated that *On the Genealogy of Morality* is a complicated text that needs a delicate reading on its own merits. Here, on the other hand, I will be interested only in the parts – the third essay specifically - of it that bears a direct or a close relevance to the issue at stake in the present study.

[156] ibid. p. 6.

[157] Robert Wicks, "Friedrich Nietzsche", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Available from http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche/ (accessed October 30, 2009).

Despite the third essay's being the specific locus of attention, it should be stated, nevertheless, that the vantage point of health and sickness is implicit throughout the other two essays as well. As Podolsky and Tauber states, "the first essay, with its juxtaposition of the good/evil and good/bad dichotomies, may just as well have juxtaposed good/evil with healthy/sick"[158] in that, with its active and affirmative nature the noble morality is a healthy attitude while the slave attitude, being all reactive, is the sickly. The second essay, which is on bad conscience, on the other hand, presents bad conscience as a sickness, which, nevertheless, "stimulates the strong to overcome future sickness and attain greater health"[159] and thus alludes to the issue of sickness' affirmative function. With the third essay, on the other hand, we face with the cultivation of these alludings. The ascetic ideal, for Nietzsche, is the expression of the will to negate life. As has already been expressed in the first chapter, the ascetic ideal serves the longing for an otherworld in which suffering does not exist, to the expense of this life. Ascetic ideal, remember, was a shield against the pessimism stemming from the suffering in life – a suffering which Nietzsche sees as essential to living indeed. This ideal, which seems to be against the nihilism that may – and does- result from these agonies of life, nevertheless, for Nietzsche, was rooted in the very ideology of Christianity itself:

> He [the priest] brings ointments and balms with him, of course; but first he has to wound so that he can be the doctor; and whilst he soothes the pain caused by the wound, *he poisons the wound at the same time* – for that is what he is best trained to do, this magician and tamer of predators, whose mere presence necessarily makes everything healthy, sick, and everything sick, tame. [160]

This sickness, for Nietzsche, is the life descending attitude whether in the form of pessimism or a total nihilism and the ascetic priest, is the cause of the sickness

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[158] Scott H. Podolsky and Alfred I. Tauber, p. 305.

[159] ibid.

[160] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 98.

that he is claiming to be the cure of at the same time. For Nietzsche this supposed cure is practiced by means of changing the target of *ressentiment* the sick has towards the cause of his/her suffering to himself/herself as the proper cause by means of concepts like 'sin' and 'guilt'. However, for Nietzsche "[i]t goes without saying that 'medication' of this sort […] cannot possibly yield a real *cure* in the physiological sense;" and adds "we do not even have the right to claim that in this instance, the instinct of life in any way expects or intends a cure."[161] Nietzsche does not consider the suffering itself as the sickness; rather, 'suffering' from the suffering in the world, is the symptom of the real sickness, that is, nihilism. Thus, supposing there needs to be a cure for this situation, it has to be physiological, that is, it has to trace both the sickness and the symptoms to the very physiology of the man on earth. It is with this respect that *On the Genealogy of Morality* is a key text in understanding Nietzsche's conception of health and sickness since it, most apparently, gives the clues of a unified understanding of the realms of physiological and the cultural. More appropriately, it traces the cultural critique, taking its basis from that of Christianity and the ascetic ideal, to its physiological origins. Thus Nietzsche states;

> with all great religions, the main concern is the fight against a certain weariness and heaviness which has become epidemic. We can regard it as inherently probable that from time to time, at certain places on earth, almost from necessity, a *physiological feeling of obstruction* will rule amongst large masses of people which, however, is not consciously perceived as such, through lack of physiological knowledge, so that its 'cause' and its cure can be sought and tested only on the psychological-moral level (- actually, this is my most general formula for what is usually called a 'religion'). [162]

This relation we see better in *The Anti-Christ*, as the first step of Nietzsche's transvaluation[163]. Corruption, decadence, nihilism and – albeit at a preliminary

[161] ibid. p. 16.

[162] ibid. p. 17.

[163] Nietzsche announces it as the first book of the *Revaluation of All Values* in fact, although he could – possibly would - never realize this project.

phase – will to power are the key terms to this transvaluation. Health and sickness, in this context, are offered as crucial evaluative terms, as it has already been implied in the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Before going any further, a few key 'definitions' will be of great help with regards to these key themes of the transvaluation.

As Nietzsche states, "my claim is that all the values in which humanity has collected its highest desiderata are *values of decadence*" after saying that "I understand corruption in the sense of decadence"[164] With regards to being corrupt he states, "I call an animal, a species, an individual corrupt when it loses its instincts, when it chooses, when it *prefers* things that will harm it."[165] Then corruption should be understood physiologically as a violation of the instinctive in the man. Nietzsche "consider[s] life itself to be an instinct for growth, for endurance, for the accumulation of force, for *power*: when there is no will to power, there is decline[…] – *nihilistic* values, values of decline, have taken control under the aegis of the holiest names."[166] Then, life itself is the will to power and the rejection of it – or the values that lead to its invigoration – is nihilism which means decline and corruption, that is decadence. Then the values of decadence cover the values of all attitudes mentioned up to now that are based on the negation of life in its totality – Christianity, ascetic ideal, morality, pessimism, nihilism, rationalism and science - and thus implies a sickness, whether spiritual or bodily; both indeed viewed from the vantage point of 'great health'. Morality, in this respect, Nietzsche defines as "the idiosyncrasy of decadents with the ulterior motive of taking revenge *on life – and* successfully." [167] Nietzsche views morality decadent. For him, it is 'vampirism' since it "*suck*[s]

[164] Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ,* p. 6.

[165] ibid.

[166] ibid..

[167] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p. 149.

the blood out of life itself, to make it anaemic." [168] To generalize this case to all the aforementioned realms – which are, indeed, various facets of the same attitude towards life - it is in this sense, from the point of view of life, that the dominant values are decadent:

> The concept 'soul', 'spirit', finally even 'immortal soul' invented in order to make the body despised, to make it sick – 'holy' -, to treat as frivolous all the things about life that deserve to be taken very seriously – questions of nutrition, residence, spiritual diet, treatment of the sick, cleanliness, weather! 'Salvation of the soul' instead of health.[169]

The modern society, then, is sick, that is, a society of decadence. The lack of life affirming values means the absence of will to power; thus, the current society is decadent since "[w]henever the will to power falls off in any way, there will also be physiological decline, decadence."[170] This decadence, in fact, Nietzsche traces back to Socratic worldview. Socratic attitude was sickly, for Nietzsche, to the extent that it favored the equation 'reason = virtue = happiness' which contaminated – even eliminated - the bodily basis of living. This equation Nietzsche sees as 'pathologic';

> The most glaring daylight, rationality at any cost, a cold, bright, cautious, conscious life without instinct opposed to instinct, was itself just a sickness, another sickness – and in no way a return to 'virtue', to 'health', to happiness…To have to fight the instincts – that is the formula for decadence: as long as life is *ascending*, happiness is equal to instinct. [171]

Contrary to this rational attitude, on the other hand, Nietzsche's attitude to life, in its manifesting itself both in the bodily and the cultural, is physiological. Whereas the equation of the Socratic attitude is 'reason = virtue = happiness', Nietzsche's direction is not towards happiness but *amor fati*. Thus, if Nietzsche was ever to

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[168] ibid. p. 150.

[169] ibid.

[170] Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ,* pp. 17.

[171] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 166.

offer an equation, it would possibly have been as bodily / physiological = will to power = affirmation;

> It is crucial for the fate of individuals as well as peoples that culture begin in the *right* place – *not* in the 'soul' (which was the disastrous superstition of priests and half-priests): the right place is the body, gestures, diet, physiology, *everything else* follows from this…[172]

The 'everything else' that is to follow is the great health of both the individual and the society. With *Ecce Homo*, we get the chance of seeing the various connotations of health and sickness in Nietzsche's philosophy. Being a retrospective assessment Nietzsche does regarding both his personal life and his philosophy, *Ecce Homo* enables us to see the directly medical sense of these themes by manifesting the way Nietzsche sees his own medical conditions. Moreover, as Nietzsche contemplates on a critique of modern culture, the full sense of health and sickness unfolds as well. In this manner Nietzsche presents the great health and decadence with reference to each other, which manifests their dynamic - that is, not 'mummified' – character. It is sickness, to a great extent, that determines health since to be healthy, for Nietzsche, can be read as to be able to recover. He asserts, "[s]omething with a typically morbid nature [both at the level of individual (a hypothetical antithesis of Nietzsche, for example) and morality / culture (like Christian morality)] cannot become healthy[…];on the other hand, for something that is typically healthy, sickness can actually be an energetic *stimulus* to life, to being more alive."[173] This 'stimulus' to life is the 'stimulus' behind Nietzsche's intellectual inclination as well. As Nietzsche states,

> To be able to look out from the optic of sickness towards *healthier* concepts and values, and again the other way around, to look down from the fullness and self-assurance of the *rich* life into the secret work of the instinct of decadence – that was longest training, my genuine experience, if I became the master of anything, it was this. I have a hand for switching

[172] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* p. 221.

[173] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* p. 76.

> *perspectives*: the first reason why a 'revaluation of values' is even possible, perhaps for me alone. – [174]

Sickness, then for Nietzsche, enables someone to recognize the perspectival nature of life, which is the basis for a revaluation of values. We must not forget that Nietzsche embarks upon not solely a devaluation of values but also a revaluation in succession. In other words, what he is trying to do is not a negation of valuation altogether. On the contrary, "[h]e regards values and evaluating as the ultimate nature of man[…]Nietzsche's demand of the philosophers of the future is not that they should destroy values but that they create new values."[175] For Nietzsche, the creation of new values, like all types of valuation is a type of interpretation. If we take the case of morality, for example, Nietzsche states "[t]here are no moral phenomena at all, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena-"[176] However, this does not mean that any interpretation goes. As Nietzsche adds later in the *Twilight of the Idols*, morality is "(more accurately) a *mis*interpretation."[177] Then there has to be some criterion that will favor certain interpretations of the phenomena to the expense of some others. "The criteria for making such a decision[…]are of a 'physiological' nature"[178] Bearing in mind that the death of God left no place for a consolation in the otherworldly oriented ascetic ideal, "[s]trength and weakness, health and sickness are the only criteria that Nietzsche has left after unmasking metaphysics"[179] which enables Nietzsche to speak as "[e]very naturalism in morality – which is to say: every *healthy* morality – is governed by an instinct of life, - some rule of life is served by a determinate canon of 'should' and 'should not', some inhibition and hostility on

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[174] ibid.

[175] Thomas H. Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Affirmative Morality: An Ethics of Virtue" in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 26, p. 66.

[176] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* pp. 108.

[177] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* p. 183.

[178] Gianni Vattimo, *Nietzsche; An Introduction* (London : Athlone, 2002), p. 127.

[179] ibid.

the path of life is removed this way."[180] By means of health and sickness understood in the physiological sense, Nietzsche is capable of the revaluation of values without any need to a 'higher' court of appeal either in the form of metaphysics or religion. Thus, 'healthy' and 'sick' are different from the hitherto existing value judgments 'essentially' in that they do not take their justification from a type of static essence, as good and bad do, but are expression of a certain constant struggle. If we return to where we had started, then, health and sickness, taking their root in the physiological, serve as criteria with regards both to medical and ethical realms by means of functioning as evaluative terms that are governed by life.

4.2. Conclusion:

The concepts of health and sickness occupy a crucial place in understanding Nietzsche's philosophy. Although an appreciation of this situation necessitates an acknowledgement of the ascension of natural sciences which resulted in an increase in the frequency of the use of scientific terminology in the 19th century, it is not limited to that. More specifically, Nietzsche's thought was shaped to a great extent by the physiological attitude that was on the ascent in the same era. Together with his war against nihilism as the sickness of modernity, this attitude brought Nietzsche's philosophy its peculiar characteristics, that is, the affirmation of life.

Life, according to Nietzsche, is a dynamic totality that is shaped by the constant struggle inherent in all its spheres. It is in this sense that life is will to power, that is, a ubiquitous striving. This will to power is physiological since life itself is shaped by what is bodily. Contrary to the traditional western philosophy's rationalistic attitude that places knowledge and truth above everything else, Nietzsche sees the bodily as the very heart both of existence and all kinds of contemplation on it. In this sense, Nietzsche's philosophy is a philosophy of life

[180] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* p. 174.

in that it posits the idea of the affirmation of life as it is lived, that is, as physiology, at the very center. This is so, because for Nietzsche the problem of the modern age is nihilism with its life negating values. Nihilism of 19th century Europe, for Nietzsche, stems from the death of god and the abyss it created with regards to the meaning of life. In the absence of the god, it is not possible to give justification for our existence in this world. What Nietzsche's philosophy aims at, indeed, is a revaluation of these values in order to provide an affirmation of life. Thus, what Nietzsche offers is not a type of relativism or a complete neglect of any type of valuation. On the contrary, giving values is an indispensable part of living. The significance of 'health' and 'sickness' derives from this task, indeed, since they are the new criteria for any kind of revaluation which work under the aegis of physiology that denies any kind of static characteristics to them. Rather, physiologically understood, 'health' and 'sickness' owe their 'being' to a constant struggle for power between each other, that is, to a constant 'becoming'.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

It this thesis I tried to provide an exposition of the concepts of ‘health’ and ‘sickness’ in the Nietzschean corpus. By doing this I aimed at substantiating the idea that the frequent application of these concepts in Nietzsche’s rhetoric relies heavily on their medical implications. In other words, I tried to show that, the use of the concepts of ‘health’ and ‘sickness’ as explanatory themes in Nietzsche’s philosophy is based on a literal, that is, physiological understanding of them, rather than a conception of ‘health’ and ‘sickness’ as mere metaphorical instruments.

To do this, we began by giving a preliminary account of Nietzsche’s philosophy as a whole in which Nietzsche’s fundamental project of giving an affirmation of life is appreciated. We have seen that this project can be read as synonymous to an overcoming of nihilism as well. According to Nietzsche, 19th century Europe, was suffering from the crisis of nihilism which resulted from the devaluation of the highest values by the ‘death of god.’ Accordingly, ‘life’ was devalued and seen as meaningless. In order to get rid of this crisis, Nietzsche thought, an alteration concerning the conception of life which consists in a total affirmation of it is needed. This type of an affirmation, for Nietzsche, embraces the happiness as well as the suffering that inheres in life as essential aspects of it since Nietzsche sees life as will to power, that is, a constant struggle of different perspectives and interpretations.

Since the concepts of 'health and 'sickness' are perceived by Nietzsche literally, in the second chapter we have tried to give the main framework of the state of scientific practice in 19th century Europe in order to do away with the possibility that Nietzsche is not endowed with the sufficient knowledge of and concern for the natural sciences of his day. By referring to Nietzsche's reading of works of natural science and his alludings to scientific concepts of his day we have shown that Nietzsche's position was neither ignorant nor consists in a complete denial of science. Rather, Nietzsche's critique of science is based on his affirmative project. Thinking that although natural science led to the death of god, it nevertheless kept the same attitude to life by its commitment to the concept of 'Truth', he criticizes the science of his age based on its adoption of the ascetic ideal of Christianity by holding fast to the idea of a beyond. Nevertheless, as Babich states "Nietzsche affirms not that human beliefs are "lies" opposed to a unique possibility of truth but rather that reality can only be known from our organic perspective."[181] This organic perspective is the element that brought us to Nietzsche's understanding of the body physiologically.

Accordingly, we have given a detailed account of Nietzsche's conception of the body in its opposition to the same in the western thinking in order to show that Nietzsche's understanding of body is based on a physiological conception of it in contrast to the rationality based explanations of the human beings and their environment imposed on our understanding by western traditional thinking. Having seen Nietzsche's interest in natural sciences, specifically life sciences of his day, it was easy to conclude that his understanding of the body is based on its being a biological organism. "Physiology, like will to power, stages a continual contest of forces rather than describe and discuss a stable, unitary phenomenon. For this reason, the thinking of will to power most readily takes the body as its

[181] Babich, p. 78.

"methodological" starting point."[182] Thus, an understanding of will to power as the representation of Nietzsche's seeing the life physiological is presented.

Based on this background discussion of Nietzsche's philosophical project of the 'affirmation of life' which flourishes around a physiological understanding of life, that is, life as will to power, and body as living body, we have presented an exposition of Nietzsche's use of the concepts of 'health' and 'sickness'. At the end we have concluded that, Nietzsche's understanding of 'health' and 'sickness is based on a denial of them as opposites. Rather, what Nietzsche claims is that they are in a constant struggle, which is the condition for their relative determination. 'Sickness' is a condition for 'health' and it is in this context that Nietzsche offers a new understanding of 'health' as 'great health' which embraces the sickness as well since 'great health' could be defined as the power to recuperate from sickness.

Nietzsche's devaluation of the hitherto conceptions of 'health' and 'sickness' that relied on an essential opposition of them, indeed, is what makes this discussion important even for the modern man of 21st century. We are in an age where this opposition stands secure at the basis of both the medical and the popular conceptions of health. 'Sickness', presented as a static concept, hinders any possibility of being healthy since in the total flux of living it is not conceivable to reach an imaginary ideal as 'health' that endures more than an instance at best. In my opinion, what we, the modern man, need, in the face of modern science's obsession with being healthy, is an embracement of Nietzschean idea as "*the great health*, a health that one doesn't only have, but also acquires continually and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up!.." [183]

[182] Andrea Rehberg, "The Overcoming of Physiology" in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 23, 2002.

[183] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* pp. 382.

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