

NIETZSCHE'S OVERCOMING OF HUMANISM:
THE DEANTHROPOMORPHIZATION OF NATURE AND
THE RENATURALIZATION OF HUMAN BEING

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

JANUARY 2014

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

NIETZSCHE'S OVERCOMING OF HUMANISM: THE DEANTHROPOMORPHIZATION OF NATURE AND THE RENATURALIZATION OF HUMAN BEING

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January 2014, 100 pages

In this MA thesis, I will investigate Nietzsche's overcoming of humanism, i.e., his critique of anthropocentric and anthropomorphic interpretations of existence in the context of his grand project of the transvaluation of all values. I will problematize humanism with respect to the Nietzschean notions of will to power, nihilism, and evaluative thinking in an attempt to show its shortcomings from a Nietzschean perspective. Then, I will attempt to offer a reading of Nietzsche's reinterpretation of nature in terms of the will to power as a radical multiplicity that exceeds humanistic interpretations and investigate Nietzsche's conception of the human being with respect to his physiological and genealogical analyses that emphasize the human being as a multiplicity of unconscious drives. Finally, I will discuss to what extent Nietzsche's critique of humanism, which consists in the deanthropomorphization of nature and the renaturalization of human being, constitutes an overcoming of humanism.

Keywords: Platonism, humanism, nihilism, will to power, overhuman.

ÖZ

HÜMANİZMİN NİETZSCHE TARAFINDAN AŞILMASI ÜZERİNE: DOĞANIN İNSAN-BENZERCİ BAKIŞ AÇISINDAN KURTARILMASI VE İNSANIN YENİDEN DOĞALLAŞTIRILMASI

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Ocak 2014, 100 sayfa

Bu Yüksek Lisans tezinde, Nietzsche'nin hümanizmi aşması, yani insan-merkezli ve insan-benzercî varoluş yorumlarına getirdiği eleştiri tüm değerlerin yeniden değerlendirilmesi projesi kapsamında incelenecektir. Hümanizm, Nietzscheci nosyonlar olan güç istenci, nihilizm ve değerlendiren düşünce kapsamında, sahip olduğu sınırlamaları göstermek amacıyla sorunsallaştırılacaktır. Ardından, Nietzsche'nin hümanist yorumları aşan radikal bir çoğulluk olarak gördüğü güç istenci düşüncesi açısından doğayı yeniden yorumlayışına dair bir okuma önerilmeye çalışılacak, insanı bilinçdışı itkilerden oluşan bir çoğulluk olarak gören fizyolojik ve soykütüksel analizleri çerçevesinde Nietzsche'nin insan anlayışı incelenecektir. Son olarak, Nietzsche'nin doğanın insan-benzercî bakış açısından kurtarılması ve insanın yeniden doğallaştırılmasından oluşan hümanizm eleştirilerinin hümanizmi ne ölçüde aştığı tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Platonizm, hümanizm, nihilizm, güç istenci, üstinsan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andrea Rehberg, without the support, attention, and efforts of whom this thesis would have been impossible. My gratitude to her exceeds any kind of expression. Also, I would like to thank Assist. Prof. Dr. Frank Chouraqui for his kindness, patience, and precious recommendations, along with Prof. Dr. Ahmet İnam, whose valuable comments are very much appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents who fully supported me throughout the entire process, and my friends, to be in the company of whom has always been and will always be a source of great joy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although all thinkers have their own weight with respect to their contributions to philosophy, very few have been able to change the course of the history of philosophy with such a ground-breaking thought as Nietzsche's. Once considered to be but a poet and a great prose stylist, his thought remained concealed until discovered and heeded firstly by Heidegger and then by a host of twentieth-century French thinkers¹. The posthumous fame attained by Nietzsche, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, aroused a popular interest in his empirical being, which he himself refers to as Herr Nietzsche². Before moving on, I would like to emphasize that this thesis will not deal with the biographical elements, i.e., the empirical aspects of his life that constitute Mr. Nietzsche. The reason for this is not only that such aspects fall outside the concerns of this study, but also that interpolations based on Nietzsche's empirical being result in the humanization of his thinking, as if what he thought simply and exclusively depended on what he had been through, presupposing that the individual is the source of thinking. However, as I hope to indicate more clearly in Chapter 2, this is not Nietzsche's mode of thinking, which instead emphasizes the self-happening process itself and denies the notion of agency both in general and particularly in the context of thinking. Therefore, remaining faithful to the essence of his thought, I will treat Nietzsche as an impersonal happening in the history of thought, with its own necessity and own terms, outside the all-too-human paradigm. So, as he suggests, "let us leave Mr. Nietzsche"³ and go on.

This thesis elaborates Nietzsche's critique of humanism, which, in this context, signifies a set of anthropocentric and anthropomorphic values that have established themselves throughout the history of Western metaphysics. Although anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism to a great extent overlap as perspectives

¹ Such as Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 'Preface to the Second Edition', §2.

³ *Ibid.*, §2.

that reduce existence to human terms, it is still useful to see what is meant by them. Throughout this thesis, anthropocentrism signifies the perspective which grants the highest value to human being, or, more precisely, what pertains to human being. In this sense, anthropocentrism rather operates on the level of values. Anthropomorphism, on the other hand, means conceiving existence in human terms, by way of projecting the human world on to the non-human world in such a way that the basis of interpretations concerning existence is derived from strictly human phenomena. In the second chapter, I will problematize humanism from a Nietzschean perspective. In this attempt, firstly, the conditions which have paved the way for the emergence of humanistic values will be investigated. In Nietzsche's thought, these conditions can be found in his complicated and interrelated analyses of nihilism (2.1) and the death of God (2.2). These discussions will enable us to see that humanism is rooted in nihilism in the sense that it shares the same life-denying perspective that has produced nihilistic values throughout the history of metaphysics. Then, I will elaborate humanism in the context of Nietzsche's notion of reactivity in order to enable us to see how humanism and nihilism reinforce each other, and will argue that it is possible to diagnose a latent humanism in nihilism (2.3). Next, I will investigate the series of replacements that have taken place on the level of values in the epoch of the death of God, replacements that lead to a transition from the God-instantiated version of the nihilistic paradigm to its human-instantiated version (2.4). In doing so, I will argue that the central organizing function of the idea of God in the nihilistic structure, and the ontological superiority granted to this idea, are assumed by a certain evaluation of human being, i.e., the subject. Nietzsche's critique of subjectivism and the associated notion of human agency will constitute the final discussion of my investigation of the problem of humanism. In this discussion, I will elaborate on the problems posed by the subject from a Nietzschean perspective and attempt to show that the notion of the subject is not only an intellectual issue but also poses serious ontological problems concerning the very existence of human being (2.5).

In the third chapter, I will examine the first step of Nietzsche's overcoming of humanism, which, in my view, consists in Nietzsche's deanthropomorphization of

nature with his thought of the will to power. Firstly, I will discuss the anthropomorphic (metaphysical) conceptions of nature which reinforce the false ontological superiority given to the human being vis-a-vis other natural beings (3.1). Secondly, I will present the significance of Nietzsche's Dionysian perspective and discuss his Dionysian worldview which shows itself as the will to power (3.2). This discussion will enable us to see that Nietzsche's thought operates outside both theological and anthropocentric instantiations of the nihilistic paradigm and provides us with an interpretation of nature which emphasizes the radical multiplicity of existence that is irreducible to human terms. Thirdly, I will investigate the perspectivism of the will to power and Nietzsche's emphasis on the impersonality of the phenomenon of interpretation, which, in my view, have significant implications concerning Nietzsche's dehumanization of the world through decentering the subject (3.3). Then, I will draw the conclusions of the Nietzschean notions of the will to power and perspectivism in an attempt to indicate how they destabilize traditional anthropocentric hierarchies to such an extent that these hierarchies show themselves to be unsustainable once their basic assumptions are dismantled (3.4).

In the fourth chapter, I will discuss the second step of Nietzsche's overcoming of humanism, which consists in a reinterpretation of the human being in terms of the will to power. This reinterpretation is in fact a renaturalization, because it reintegrates human being to the economy of the will to power with an emphasis on the body and opens up the possibility of thinking the human being outside humanistic reductionisms which seek the nature of the human being strictly in mental phenomena (4.1). Then, I will investigate Nietzsche's interpretation of the human being which affirms its animality, and which, in doing so, gets rid of the alleged ontological superiority given to the human being (4.2). In this investigation, we will see that Nietzsche understands the human being as a multiplicity of unconscious drives moved by the will to power. Next, I will elaborate on Nietzsche's genealogical analyses of culture and civilization whereby we will be able to see the transformations that have taken place in human being's libidinal economy throughout the process of civilization, as a result of which it has undermined and forgotten its animality (4.3). Finally, I will examine the riddle of the overhuman

posed by Nietzsche's thought in an attempt to uncover Nietzsche's insight that the human being is a bridge between the animal and the overhuman (4.4). I will approach the overhuman not as an ideal but as the possibility of great health, which will entail risking the incorporation of a Dionysian 'truth', namely, the eternal recurrence of the same.

In order to be able to discuss what the problematic aspects of humanism are from Nietzsche's perspective and to investigate his overcoming of humanism, some introductory remarks need to be made. In fact, this is a two-sided necessity. The first reason is that it is possible to see Nietzsche's thought as a whole that consists of a web of profound and vivid connections between elements that are only different aspects of the same thought. Such subtle and at the same time dynamic relationality of the thought sometimes makes it difficult to isolate any one aspect from others without losing sight of the entire web of thought. Thus it is necessary to set the background before actually being able to discuss specific elements of Nietzsche's thought. The second reason pertains to the necessity of preventing central Nietzschean notions such as Platonism, evaluative thinking, nihilism and will to power from being understood in merely traditional terms. For that reason, first I would like to discuss the Nietzschean notions of Platonism, Christian values, overturning of Platonism, transvaluation of all values and will to power, respectively.

1.1 Platonism

Regarding what Nietzsche calls Platonism, firstly we need to distinguish it from Plato's texts in order to avoid a possible confusion. Nietzsche often uses Platonism and metaphysics interchangeably, and, for him, both exceed the texts actually written by Plato. Plato's rich texts can be endlessly interpreted from a myriad of perspectives depending on the hermeneutic strategy adopted by the reader, and, through such a practice, different readers may open up different aspects of the same texts with respect to both how they work internally and how they interact with other texts externally. However, Nietzsche's understanding and critique of Platonism does not refer to a collection of the aforementioned texts, but rather to a paradigm constituted by a certain structure and a set of problematic evaluations concerning existence. That

is, for Nietzsche, Platonism is a structural and ontological issue that has not only found its expression but also has established itself in the history of Western philosophy through life-denying values. Thus, throughout this work, the expression “Platonism” will only signify this structure and associated values that will be discussed in the next paragraph.

From Nietzsche’s perspective, Platonism can be briefly defined as a mode of thinking in which values are distributed in a hierarchical manner according to the law of the excluded middle, i.e., according to an either/or logic. In distributing values, Platonism operates according to the principle of identity. It introduces a line between phenomena and separates them in terms of ontological superiority and inferiority. It needs to be said that this line operates in absolute terms and does not allow any transition or gradation. That is, the Platonist structure opposes phenomena to each other in an oppositional and hierarchical manner, generating dichotomies such as good and evil, spirit and matter, etc. In Platonism, one side is posited to be superior, absolute and meaningful whereas the other constituent of the dichotomy is seen as deficient in comparison to the former, is posited to exist in dependence of the former and to derive its entire meaning from the superior constituent. This structure constitutes the essence of the two-world theory, which for Nietzsche is interchangeable with Platonism. In the two-world theory, existence is divided into two realms – upper and lower ones – according to the aforementioned structure. The upper realm is the domain of absolute ontological superiority whereas the lower one is conceived to be in a state of absolute deficiency. This can become clearer if we briefly remind ourselves of the salient features of Plato’s theory of the Forms in order to see how this paradigm operates. The reason for doing so is that this paradigm announces itself in Plato’s ontology for the first time in the history of Western metaphysics.

In his theory of the Forms, Plato posits eternal, perfect and unchangeable Forms which are located in a ‘true world’ outside and beyond ‘this world’, which is said to consist of appearances, i.e., mere copies of the Forms, which alone possess the quality of ‘true being’. The Forms represent perfection, in contradistinction to the fundamental deficiency of appearances, and, consisting of these appearances, this

world is conceived to be deficient in itself. In other words, perceived existence is marked by its ontological inferiority with respect to the absolute superiority of the realm of the Forms. Being perfect, eternal, and unchangeable, Forms are exempt from becoming, for they remain outside temporality and materiality that pertain to appearances. Conceived in these terms, the Forms accrue all meaning and value to themselves, constituting a solid centre in this regard. As a result, appearances are evaluated as relatively meaningless, for they cannot have any meaning in themselves since they come into being and, after an interval, cease to be. They are also regarded as valueless, because they are essentially only bad copies of what *truly* is. In short, from such a perspective, ‘this’ world irretrievably remains devoid of meaning and value.

Behind this perspective, Nietzsche sees a driving force called will to truth. Will to truth can be described as an instinct that has developed throughout the history of humanity, an instinct which evaluates truthfulness as the highest value, granting it an authority above life itself. From the perspective of this drive, the value of life is assessed with respect to its being true or untrue, with a sense of truth that is associated with being absolute or unconditioned. Yet for Nietzsche, this sense of truth conceived in absolute terms is the product of a certain process closely related to language, and it is attained in this process unconsciously and through forgetfulness⁴. Briefly, what is forgotten is the metaphorical and customary character of language: language, according to Nietzsche, operates by transforming unequal experiences into metaphors which are later dissolved into concepts through customary usage, and in this process their metaphorical character is forgotten. With the introduction of concepts, for Nietzsche, a new possibility emerges:

... something is possible in the realm of these schemata which could never be achieved with the vivid first impressions: the construction of a pyramidal order according to castes and degrees, the creation of a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, and clearly marked boundaries – a new world, one which now confronts that other vivid world of impressions as more solid, more universal, better known, and more human than the immediately perceived world ...⁵

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense”, in David Wood and José Medina (eds.), *Truth*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Based on this quotation, I suggest that the possibility of conceiving 'another' world and of positing hierarchies is already contained in the very mechanism by which language operates. However, the distinctive characteristic of the will to truth as displayed by metaphysics is the sense given to such conceptions and hierarchies. Driven by the will to truth, metaphysics grants ontological superiority to abstractions, conceiving them in a sense superior to life. For Nietzsche, the will to truth is the basic instinct of metaphysics, which is never content with what is, searching for hidden principles behind the phenomena with the suspicion that reality may not be as it appears, because its instinct interprets what is abstract as what is primary. From Nietzsche's perspective, it is this instinct which had driven philosophers of the metaphysical tradition towards inventing a world of truth opposed to 'this' world, which is the only world for Nietzsche.

1.2 Christian Values

The inseparability of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity and of Platonism can be seen in his insight that "Christianity is Platonism for the 'people'"⁶. Such an insight suggests that the structure of Platonism finds its way into the unconscious of the 'people', which, in my view, is in fact a technical term used by Nietzsche in order to refer to the slaves. However, it needs to be said that the expression 'slaves' should not be read in substantial terms. It does not refer to actually enslaved human beings from a political point of view. In Nietzsche's thought, this expression rather stands for slavish tendencies in life, which constitute a certain mode of being, i.e., a way of interpreting existence. Thus, in order to be able to see Nietzsche's understanding of Christian values, first let us have a look at the slavish tendencies, which, for Nietzsche, lie at the heart of Christianity.

According to Nietzsche's typological analysis, slaves are characterized by their *ressentiment*⁷. *Ressentiment* is a characteristic of natures that are devoid of true action, of deeds, and they compensate for this with an imaginary revenge against the

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 'Preface'.

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, I, §10.

external stimuli which they cannot overcome through action⁸. *Ressentiment* is produced by what Nietzsche calls reactivity. Reactivity, in Nietzschean terms, can be understood as an inability to act out one's reactions, which results in a dramatic change in the topology of forces driving the body⁹. Slaves, being governed by reactive forces, which inhibit the capacity for acting out one's reactions, are denied action and thus their reactions turn back on themselves, in order to become something felt and enduring. This means that *ressentiment* pertains to a certain physiological condition, it needs reactivity to grow, and it grows by producing values. Being constantly irritated by external stimuli because of their impotence and inability to act, slaves gaze outwards and interpret existence based on a fundamental No¹⁰. All slavish values are derived from this fundamental negation, which constitute the essence of the slavish interpretation of existence. From Nietzsche's perspective, slavish values are essentially life-denying because of this No-saying, since the slavish mode of evaluation interprets certain aspects of existence such as suffering, domination, strife, and death as fundamental problems, and conceives them as the signs of the deficiency of existence.

In this regard, Christian values provide an entire machinery of interpretation and evaluation which operates for the establishment of reactivity based on the aforementioned two-world theory. For Nietzsche, Christianity ensures the victory of the values of *ressentiment*¹¹, because it provides impotence with a moral value and turns *ressentiment* into a universal principle¹². Christianity achieves this through inhabiting the two-world theory from a moral perspective, taking it one step further. As I have discussed in the previous section, the structure of the two-world theory had already prepared an interpretation of the world as devoid of meaning and value

⁸ *Ibid.*, I, §10.

⁹ In Nietzsche's thought, there is an important distinction between active and reactive forces. Active forces are those which command, act, shape, and organize phenomena. They turn against themselves when their ability to act is hindered, having encountered more powerful forces in a strife, becoming reactive. In other words, reactive forces are not utterly destroyed but forced by active forces to find subterranean paths to express themselves. For a more detailed discussion, see 4.3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, §10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I, §8.

¹² *Ibid.*, I, §13.

before the arrival of Christianity. Christianity adopts this structure into a moral stance and declares that ‘this’ world and everything in it is not only ‘false’ but also ‘evil’, in contradistinction to the ‘true’ life in the Kingdom of God, the only realm where ‘the good’ can be found. The Forms are transformed into the idea of a personal and unique God which functions as the centre of all meaning and value. Being conceived as exempt from materiality which is the characteristic of ‘this’ world, God is associated with spirituality, and consequently spirituality is given a higher value with respect to materiality.

Such an interpretation has two significant (and interrelated) consequences regarding the scope of this thesis: firstly, nature, which is seen as the deficient realm of materiality, is demonized. Christianity opposes nature to God in moral terms, thus, all interest in ‘this’ life is condemned as risking the ‘true’ life in which suffering will be eliminated once and for all. In this sense, it promotes the life-denying tendencies by serving as a seduction for the negation of and withdrawal from life. Secondly, Christianity introduces the concept of sin into the interpretation of human being with the idea of ‘original sin’. Being human is interpreted as being essentially sinful, and since nature is seen as the origin of all ‘evil’ in this world, Christianity wages a war against what in human being belongs to nature, i.e., its body, and particularly its animal instincts. For Nietzsche, Christianity is characterized by disgust at the body¹³. This can also be seen in the ‘seven deadly sins’¹⁴ preached against by Christianity, for they can be seen as an interpretation of bodily instincts demanding satisfaction. From a Nietzschean perspective, such a war against instincts under the banner of the ‘superiority of the soul over the body’ results in a process of becoming-reactive, forcing instincts to find subterranean paths, and serving the down-going of life. Moreover, it also paves the way for a reduced conception of human being due to an overvaluation of its ‘spiritual’ aspect vis-a-vis the physical or material aspect.

Based on the discussion above, it can be seen that Christianity relies on the structure of the two-world theory, and serves the establishment of life-denying values through

¹³ *Ibid.*, II, §7.

¹⁴ In the Catholic faith, these deadly sins (which are also known as ‘capital sins’) are wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy and gluttony.

new inventions like absolute sinfulness. For Nietzsche, such an interpretation of the world is deeply problematic, mainly because of its life-denying character, which constitutes the fundamental motivation for the attempt at its overcoming. This characteristic consists of a hostile stance towards the materiality of existence. What is material or physical stands lowest in the essentially hierarchical structure of the paradigm, for the origin of which the structure seeks and assigns an immaterial – therefore purer and higher – cause, being, or principle. Since materiality is seen as deficient, coming into being must have occurred through being separated from a locus of perfection (e.g., the world of Forms in Plato’s thought, the Garden of Eden in Christianity, etc.), which is always posited to be above life. Yet, for Nietzsche, there is no authority above life because there is no beyond of this world, which is not characterized by deficiency but by excess and abundance, in his view. Although he attacks both the content and the structure of Platonism, in my view, Nietzsche’s thought is not focused on refuting the argumentative aspect or the content of metaphysical doctrines, but rather on overcoming the paradigm itself by destroying both the line posited between two worlds and thereby also the distribution of values between them, in order to prevent the structure from further naturalizing itself by simply finding new content to perpetuate its essentially oppositional character.

1.3 Nietzsche’s Overturning of Platonism

Nietzsche’s strategy of overcoming Platonism is an overturning which consists of two elements, i.e., reversal and reinscription. He takes up a phenomenon that is traditionally conceived in terms of a metaphysical opposition, reverses the elements of the opposition and reinscribes them in such a way as to indicate that what is interpreted as inferior by the Platonistic tradition is more originary than what is posited as superior by the same tradition. By doing this, Nietzsche’s thought deprives the ‘superior’ element of its alleged authority over the ‘inferior’, so that the ‘superior’ becomes destabilized, abstract, and therefore empty, because such a process destroys the line that cuts what is originary into two and then fictionally separates them in absolute terms. In other words, when the line separating the two aspects of a phenomenon ceases to operate, the two elements are brought together in a more vivid relationality in which the physiological element or aspect shows itself

as the condition of possibility of the other one in contrast to the metaphysical understanding which suggests that what is material is conditioned by an immaterial principle. Having established this dynamic relationality between the two elements, Nietzsche begins the process of reinscription in which the elements (sometimes dichotomies themselves, as in the case of ‘good’ and ‘evil’) are gathered into and analyzed from the perspective of life, in which phenomena are investigated with respect to the wholly immanent forces in charge of them. This strategy of reinscription is essential for the Nietzschean critique, because it not only operates against the perpetuation of the Platonic-Christian paradigm through life-denying evaluations concerning phenomena, but also opens up the possibility of their appropriation by active forces in life.

Although Nietzsche’s overturning of Platonism characterizes his entire project, and much implicit and explicit textual evidence could be found on this matter, at this point it might be useful briefly to analyze an emblematic aspect of this thought. Nietzsche sketches both the history of Platonism and the steps of overcoming it through its reversal and reinscription in a section titled “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable”¹⁵. This note begins with a narrative of the evolution of the metaphysical notion of the “true world” which passes through a series of stages in which it is firstly attainable by the philosopher and by the virtuous in the case of Plato, secondly promised to the pious in the case of Christianity, wherein the idea gains a religious character, and thirdly it is considered to be unattainable, whereas the contemplation of it becomes a consolation, as in the case of Kant’s thought, as discussed by Nietzsche. The realization of the unattainable and unknowable character of the true world can be seen as a break in the development of the idea, and Nietzsche pushes it further to its conclusion with the suggestion that what is unattainable and unknowable cannot oblige in any sense, and this constitutes the first step of the process in which the true world is deprived of its authority. When it is no longer seen as above life, it loses its power and starts to dissolve, hence becoming a superfluous and obsolete idea. The greatest consequence of this dissolution, as Nietzsche states, is that not only the “true world” but also the “world of appearances”

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable”.

is lost through this process, that is, there is no longer a line dividing existence into two separate worlds, and what we are left with is existence itself. In other words, there is no longer an authority above life, and thus thinking is enabled to see life as the originary and self-happening process. For Nietzsche, this is the beginning of the gradual dissolution of the longest error, i.e., the two-world theory.

Yet the beginning of the gradual dissolution of the two-world theory does not imply that all the problematic aspects of Platonism, built into the very fabric of the occidental world for more than two millennia, will simply disappear¹⁶. Nietzsche is not content with showing that the ‘beyond’ has lost its absolute value; rather, he sees it as the beginning of a tremendous task, which he calls *die Umwertung aller Werte*: the transvaluation or revaluation of all values.

1.4 The Transvaluation of All Values

The transvaluation of all values constitutes the central project of *The Will to Power*, although it must be remembered that this text was not published by Nietzsche himself but consists of a selection of his posthumous notes, selected and edited from Nietzsche’s *Nachlass* by Peter Gast and Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. Such a transvaluation, as Nietzsche holds, imposes a new demand, namely, that the value of our values should first of all be put into question¹⁷. This can be understood as a call for questioning the value of values that are considered to be values in themselves, particularly moral values, such as ‘good’ or ‘true’. This means that by destabilizing their absolute power the possibility of discovering new evaluations outside the metaphysical paradigm is opened up. However, in my view, reading this destabilization as merely entailing the relativization of all values would be a problematic reading of Nietzsche on this matter, since relativization implies the equalization of the value of all available perspectives.

In the metaphysical tradition, values are conceived subjectively, that is, as the values held by a subject. Here the understanding is that the subject is in possession of

¹⁶ The end of the two-world theory is closely related with Nietzsche’s understanding of nihilism. For this, please see the discussion of nihilism, 2.1.

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ‘Preface’, §6.

values, according to the substance and accidents model which supposes that a thing consists of a substance and the accidents that are borne by it, which, in virtue of being borne by a substance, are secondary to it. Leaving the Nietzschean critique of substance and subjectivity to be elaborated in Chapter 2, at this point it might be useful to remember that Nietzsche does not conceive values according to the aforementioned traditional model but rather in totally impersonal terms. That is to say that in Nietzsche's thought values can be understood as the products of impersonal forces that are in endless strife for the possession of phenomena in order to perpetuate or enhance their existence. In this context it should be understood that human beings do not possess values. If anything, it is the other way around, i.e., human beings are possessed by values. However, this is not a simple reversal. Nietzsche's critique of values cannot be reduced to an attempt to replace one set of values with another one, which is, at any rate, impossible, because values alternately gain power or diminish of their own accord. Rather, by exposing the dynamic relationality of forces in the larger economy of life, Nietzsche's thought provides stimulation for other forces and values than those which have constituted and perpetuated the metaphysical paradigm for such a long time. In other words, the transvaluation of all values is a practice through which it becomes possible for phenomena to be claimed by new and different forces that are able to give a non-metaphysical sense to them, allowing them to become more vivid and dynamic vis-a-vis the deadening effect of Platonism.

1.5 Will to Power

Nietzsche's central thought – will to power – is very often and problematically conceived in terms of the traditional sense of a will striving for power. What is problematic in these traditional conceptions is the assumption that there is a subject that is capable of willing this or that, and that its will is directed towards the attainment of power in its narrow sense, such as political power. Nietzsche thinks that this is thoughtlessness¹⁸, and for him, will is nothing but an image which enables us to address the infinitely complex and unknown processes that are constantly going

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §127.

on in and around an organism. That is to say that conceiving the will in substantial terms is an error when trying to understand Nietzsche's thought of will to power. In this regard, raising the question 'what is will to power?' may not be a productive strategy in the attempt at uncovering this thought. In my view, this is so for the following reason: such a formulation would inevitably lead to the fixation of the thought, because a 'what is x?' type of question, which is characteristic of the metaphysical tradition, searches for clear-cut definitions. Rather, we will briefly look at the thought of will to power, yet in doing so we will aim to avoid reducing it to a dead concept demarcated and delineated from others within a framework of clear and fixed definitions.

It is possible to see the thought of will to power as encapsulating Nietzsche's ontology. In a note written in 1885, Nietzsche declares:

And do you know what 'the world' is to me? ... This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force [that] only transforms itself ... as a play of forces and waves of forces ... increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing ... with a flood of its forms striving toward the most complex out of the stillest forms ... and then again returning home to the simple out of this abundance, ... still affirming itself in this uniformity of its courses ... blessing itself ... as a becoming that knows no weariness: this, my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating – the eternally self-destroying ... Do you want a *name* for this world? *This world is the will to power – and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides!¹⁹

So, it can be seen that Nietzsche understands the world in terms of will to power, which, in particular, can be interpreted as a constant drive to become more in an existence that consists of forces in everlasting struggle, as if in an endless battle without any ultimate winners or losers. Forces encounter each other without any predetermined configuration, a situation that can be compared to a dice-game wherein dice throw themselves, for no governing principle or substance underlies this abyssal, i.e., groundless struggle of forces. In this sense, will to power signifies this eternally ongoing, self-happening process in which phenomena are constituted, destroyed and taken over by different forces which are further challenged by others that attempt to incorporate these forces or to overcome them just to assert themselves as dominant forces. Will to power can be understood as a tremendously dynamic

¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §1067.

multiplicity or plurality in which identities are constituted only to be destroyed by other forces and to be transformed into other configurations; that is, it can be interpreted as a constant transgressing of limits and delineations that provide us with phenomena in an existence which does not follow any determined course or order, i.e., neither a *telos* nor an underlying unity. Leaving a more elaborate discussion of Nietzsche's thought of will to power with respect to its different aspects and qualities to be carried out in Chapter 3, I will now move on to the second chapter in which I will begin my attempt to investigate the problem of humanism.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEM OF HUMANISM

It is one of the crucial features of Nietzsche's thought that while investigating phenomena, Nietzsche treats them as pluralities constituted by forces and shows the play of internal and external forces producing what is to be investigated, e.g., the climate and the soil in which they are made possible. Such an analysis, which, in my view, is essential for Nietzsche's way of thinking, enables us to discover the web of forces in the intersections of which phenomena are temporally constituted. Through this practice, the objects of Nietzschean critique are traced back to their process of emergence wherein they show themselves as symptoms of certain events, rather than mere notions to be investigated from a purely intellectual point of view. It is even possible to say that for Nietzsche nothing is merely an intellectual issue, for his thought is not interested in building an edifice of mere concepts but rather in investigating phenomena from the perspective of life and in opening up the possibility of life's enhancement.

In this regard, in order to be able to understand the problem of humanism, I think it is firstly necessary to investigate the conditions in which humanism emerged as a set of anthropocentric and anthropomorphic values (discussed in 2.3, below) valorising a certain evaluation of human being (discussed in 2.4, below). In my view, this is necessary because understanding Nietzsche's overcoming of humanism depends on a clear diagnosis of the events and forces producing and giving sense to this particular phenomenon. Having said this, let us begin our investigation with Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism and the death of God with respect to how they constitute the conditions of humanism to be able better to delineate its sense together with its problematic aspects.

2.1 Nihilism

As I have said in the Introduction (1.4), the augmentation or diminishment of values is seen by Nietzsche as a totally impersonal happening, i.e., as processes that are not

controlled by any agency whatsoever. One of these events, which is characterized by the auto-devaluation of the ‘highest values’, that is, the self-diminishment of values considered to be superior in Platonism, is particularly important for the purposes of this thesis. This event is called nihilism by Nietzsche, and for him, it has its own necessity:

For why has the advent of nihilism become *necessary*? Because the values we have had hitherto thus draw their final consequence; because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals – because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what values these ‘values’ really had.²⁰

Without doubt, no single quotation from Nietzsche’s works can sketch out the complexity of the event of nihilism, but I think the quotation above can encapsulate at least the way Nietzsche considers it as an event rather than a doctrine or a personal attitude. Conceiving nihilism in the traditional sense, that is, as a ‘personal’ denial of all values or as signifying doctrines which teach that everything lacks value and meaning would remain in the aforementioned subjectivist understanding. In Nietzsche’s thought, the roots of nihilism, which is a very complex, automatic process, very much exceed particular personal stances or actions towards values. More precisely, what makes it possible for human beings to declare the ultimate meaninglessness of existence and to deny all values is this very event of nihilism. In other words, judgments about values are conditioned by this impersonal event, and this event is rooted in Platonism, as I will clarify in the next paragraph.

As Deleuze explains in his analysis of Nietzsche’s notion of nihilism, nihilism proceeds through three stages, taking on a different sense in each stage²¹. In its first sense, nihilism is the product of a life-denying will to power, which negates life by positing values superior to it, subjugating life under life-denying ideals. At this stage, the will to truth (see 1.1) interprets existence and arrives at the conclusion that there must be a world of truth beyond the world of appearances. In this regard, the invention of the Forms can be seen as the first nihilistic act in the history of philosophy, because in this case life is negated for the sake of truth, which is

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ‘Preface’, §4.

²¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 147-8.

represented by the Forms. Plato's description of the body as the prison of the soul²², the body as something from which the soul has to break free to attain truth, is a typical symptom of such a nihilistic evaluation which puts life at the service of something higher to be attained, or life as a sacrifice for truth. Later, in Christianity, the superiority of truthfulness is preserved, but this time it is endowed with a religious character. That is, God is equated with truthfulness, or, in other words, the Christian God emerges as the 'truthful God'. In this case, everything that is 'this-worldly' is interpreted as evil and an obstacle for the attainment of the 'true life' or salvation under the authority of the 'truthful God', i.e., in the Kingdom of God. This Platonic-Christian interpretation of existence constitutes the first stage of nihilism.

In its second stage, nihilism assumes a different sense, which is, for Nietzsche, a necessary consequence of the notion of truthfulness forged by the Platonic-Christian paradigm²³. Let us first elaborate how truthfulness paves the way for the emergence of a different type of nihilism. According to Nietzsche, the cultivation of truthfulness as the superior value throughout the history of Western metaphysics finally reveals the artificial character of the ideals produced by the Platonic-Christian paradigm, rendering the 'beyond' implausible. The suspicious attitude towards reality, the instinctive conviction that things must be different than they *appear* to be which is produced by the will to truth, turns against the 'higher' values of the paradigm. As Deleuze says, "the supersensible world and 'higher' values are reacted against, their existence is denied"²⁴. This reactivity constitutes the essence of the second sense of nihilism, or "reactive nihilism"²⁵. Reactive nihilism no longer posits any higher value in the sense of its previous form, but rather signifies a turning against the values made possible by it.

The gradual degradation of the supersensible world leads nihilism to its penultimate form, i.e., passive nihilism, which is characterized by an extreme weariness and disappointment with the meaning and value of existence, that is, by a pessimism of

²² See Plato, *Phaedo*, tr. David Gallop. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 83 a6-b4.

²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 'European Nihilism', §3.

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 148.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

weakness, which declares all values to be false and all meaning to be absent. As Nietzsche says, “nihilism, then, is the recognition of the long *waste* of strength, the agony of the ‘in vain’, insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and to regain composure, being ashamed in front of oneself, as if one had *deceived* oneself all too long”²⁶. Yet, according to Nietzsche, another possibility is also opened up by the degradation of the supersensible world: an active nihilism, which is able to affirm the absence of the metaphysical ideals and to produce values which affirm and promote life in all of its aspects. In Nietzsche’s thought, both possibilities are fundamentally related to his understanding of the death of God, which signifies the dissolution of the ‘beyond’, and which has important implications concerning the role of human being, as I will explain in the next section.

2.2 Nietzsche’s Understanding of the Death of God

In Nietzsche’s view, the death of God is a tremendous event, a turning point in history, in which the theocentric instantiation of metaphysics begins to dissolve. Yet this is a self-happening event, one that happens in life itself, and is by no means a human doing. According to Nietzsche, for many of us this event is “far too great, distant, and out of the way even for its tidings to be thought of as having arrived yet”²⁷. This implies that this event is still happening, as a process into which we are now being gathered unawares, a process yet discernible by thinking insofar as it is able to attune itself to the forces within will to power.

Before investigating the characteristics of the event of the death of God, it is useful to remind ourselves of what the Christian God means to Nietzsche. Firstly, for Nietzsche, the concept of God in the Christian sense is a “counter-concept to life”²⁸. That is, from Nietzsche's perspective, the Christian God can be understood as a concept in which life-denying values (see 1.2) produced by reactive forces are given supreme authority over life. As Nietzsche says, under the influence of such reactivity, the idea of God has “degenerated into a contradiction of life instead of its

²⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ‘European Nihilism’, §12 (A).

²⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §343.

²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, §8.

transfiguration”²⁹. This means that the Christian God is not the product of an affirmative religious instinct which transfigures the forces in life into deities in the image of which life is celebrated in both its creative and destructive aspects. By contrast, for Nietzsche, ancient Greek religion (particularly, the Olympian gods) is the product of such an affirmative religious instinct. However, in contrast to the Olympian gods, the Christian God indicates a fundamental shift of emphasis in this regard. Nietzsche says, “When the emphasis of life is put on the ‘beyond’ rather than on life itself – when it is put *on nothingness* –, then the emphasis has been completely removed from life”³⁰. Based on this, the Christian God can be seen as the deification of nothingness, or more precisely, of the values associated with nothingness, which is posited above life as an authority. The deity is conceived as omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, which means that it is imagined as exempt from temporality – i.e., exempt from coming into being, change and dissolution – and is endowed with absolute power and knowledge. With these characteristics, the Christian God functions as the absolute organizing principle of the universe and the ground of all that is, gathering all meaning and value to itself as the absolute point of reference for the religiously-based interpretations of existence.

At this point, it is useful to see Nietzsche’s announcement of the death of God, as declared by a figure he calls the madman:

‘Whither is God?’ he cried; ‘I will tell you. *We have killed him* – you and I ... What were we doing when we unchained the earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? ... Is there still any up or down? ... Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him³¹.

Here, the first thing that requires interpretation is who the “we” is. I would like to suggest that this “we” does not refer to any agency or any aggregation of agencies whatsoever. The human being’s share in this event is nothing but following a necessity that is rooted in life itself, for, according to Nietzsche, life uses human beings to evaluate itself and we are able to utter only the values produced by the

²⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, §18.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, §43.

³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §125.

forces within will to power³². That is, God dies through the values that had given birth to it in the first place, i.e., through the higher values of nihilism – particularly, truthfulness – as I have discussed in the previous section.

Secondly, it can be seen that the world seems to have lost its centre through the death of God. There is no longer any absolute to give the world a course to follow, no centre to revolve around, no authority over life. As Christoph Cox puts it, “the death of God leads to a devaluation of all super- or extra-natural posits and explanatory principles”³³. This means that all metaphysical assumptions and principles that used to guide interpretations of the world (interpretations provided above all by the Platonic-Christian paradigm) can now begin their dissolution, so that metaphysical phenomena can begin to be evaluated and interpreted in terms of their immanence to life and as mere artificial positings, or fictions, as Nietzsche calls them. Yet, for Nietzsche, this is not a simple transition at all. This is a painful process for the human species, because with the death of God, the certainty and comfort provided by metaphysical explanations disappear as well. When the power of the authority placed above life begins to diminish, or when the ‘ground’ of existence crumbles, the world shows itself as an abyss, and in its groundlessness. As Nietzsche says in a note titled ‘In the Horizon of the Infinite’:

We have left the land and [we went on board]. We have [broken off] our bridges behind us, indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more [terrible and terrifying] than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more *freedom*, and there is no longer any ‘land’.³⁴

For Nietzsche, the realization of this groundlessness, as the ‘beyond’ dissolves, drives nihilistic tendencies to a series of replacements through which the previous paradigm, namely the Platonic-Christian paradigm, can maintain itself through new values. As he puts it in one of his most famous formulations of this issue:

³² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, ‘Morality as Anti-Nature’, §5.

³³ Christoph Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation*, p. 7.

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §124, trans. modified.

New struggles. – After Buddha was dead, they still showed his shadow in a cave for centuries – a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still for millennia be caves in which they show his shadow. – And we – we must still defeat his shadow as well!³⁵

Nietzsche's words imply both a substitution and a continuation at the same time. That is, although an irretrievable loss has occurred, this loss fails for now to produce anything new and of another kind, but rather, what has been lost is being substituted by shadows of it. This substitution ensures the continuation of the former paradigm with some modifications. If we ask what the shadows of God are, the reading I would like to propose throughout this chapter is that in the wake of its death, God is replaced by 'man', or, in other words, the theocentric instantiation of the nihilistic paradigm is replaced by its anthropocentric instantiation. That is, the shadows of God can be understood as the values of humanism which perpetuate nihilism through a series of substitutions and valorisations (see 2.3, below). Secondly, as can be seen in the second quotation above, in the final sentence Nietzsche declares a demand: the shadows of God must be defeated, a struggle is needed against these shadows, they must be overcome, not overlooked. This may raise questions regarding its necessity, such as 'why should we fight against the establishment of human values which seem to overthrow the divine authority that has exercised its power over human being for millennia?' or 'why should we not embrace the beginning of the reign of human being after the death of God?'. At first sight, or on the surface, the death of God seems to herald a quick liberation, and Nietzsche does not deny the possibility of liberation. However, such a possibility depends on a change of the element from which values are derived, i.e., will to power, because from a Nietzschean perspective, liberation from the constraints of life-denying values is made possible by a fundamental shift of perspective (as I will explain in Chapter 3, below). Next, I will attempt to show how this replacement of God with a human shadow takes place from Nietzsche's perspective.

2.3 Humanism and Reactivity

Firstly, in order better to see this transition, we need to remind ourselves of some features regarding how reactivity operates. For Nietzsche, being elevated to the level

³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §108.

of highest values, the instinct of preservation, which has been operative for a long time through the Platonic-Christian paradigm, has perpetually produced new idols, which in turn fell, only to be replaced by new ones throughout the course of the history of Western thought. In Nietzsche's thought, these idols refer to the 'higher values' of metaphysics. This process has been driven by a will to power dominated by reactive forces. For Nietzsche, such a No-saying will to power is rooted in an affectivity that is irritated by existence, as is the case with the emergence of Christian values (see 1.2). That the No-saying will to power brings about such substitutions can, in my view, be attributed to one of its fundamental traits: in its drive to grow, it always needs a reference point based on which life is negated on an unconscious level. Therefore, reactive forces, which display this type of will to power preserve themselves and establish their reactivity under the banner of life-denying ideals. No matter how new and radical those ideals may appear, the unconscious tendency of preserving by substituting remains the same in their fabrication.

This attempt is carried out by endowing phenomena with artificial qualities. Throughout nihilism, history becomes a fable in which participants are endowed with powers and capacities they do not actually have, and from Nietzsche's perspective, throughout nihilism, history has had only two central 'actors': God and human being. As Nietzsche says, what humankind has so far considered seriously have not been realities but mere imaginings produced by life-denying natures, and the greatness of human being was sought in them³⁶. This hints at an essential relationship between humanism and metaphysics, and, on this matter, it may be fruitful briefly to refer to Heidegger's thoughts on the matter. Heidegger holds that "[e]very humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one"³⁷. Without engaging in a discussion of the continuities and discrepancies between Nietzsche and Heidegger regarding their understanding of metaphysics, the quotation from Heidegger can be interpreted in such a way that metaphysics and humanism reinforce each other and in fact are also inseparable for the following reason. In the first case, where humanism is grounded in metaphysics, the corresponding

³⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I Am So Clever', §10.

³⁷ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism'", p. 245.

conception of human being is derived from a metaphysical interpretation of the world. For instance, human being is conceived as a spiritual being consisting of a body and a soul in the Platonic interpretation of the world which distinguishes a 'true' world and an 'apparent' world. In accordance with this interpretation, the value of human being as the being which has access to truth through its reason, as well as the consequent valorisation of human being are derived from that interpretation. On the other hand, in the second case, e.g. Cartesian dualism, which starts from human being's cognitive capacities and posits it as a separate substance, as the 'thinking thing' (*res cogitans*) or 'thinking substance' in contradistinction to what is called 'extended substance' (*res extensa*), we can say that in this case a certain evaluation of human being as the thinking substance functions as the ground of a substance dualism which divides existence into two mutually exclusive finite substances, and it is this operation which can be understood as characteristic of metaphysical thought.

From this vantage point, the history of metaphysics reveals its all-too-human character. Metaphysical values, which have been posited as representing the 'true' nature of things, show themselves as mere symptoms of human being's search for certainty and security in the world, a search driven by a will to power that evaluates existence from the perspective of self-preservation. The history of metaphysics begins with human being's becoming-reactive, which, from Nietzsche's perspective, is marked by the ascent of nihilism. Based on this, it is possible to diagnose a latent humanism throughout the history of nihilism. By this I mean that what has always been at the centre since the emergence of nihilism has been a certain type of human affectivity – an existential irritation, as it were, which is characteristic of reactive being. By this I mean that the reactive being, which is unable to affirm the aspects of existence which result in suffering, such as death and destruction, feels constantly irritated by existence. Thus the history of nihilism can be understood as a series of interpretations in which the aspects of existence related to human suffering have been constantly reinterpreted into metaphysical idols. In this sense, it is possible to say that nihilism has always had an anthropocentric, i.e., humanistic aspect even when it declared war against everything that is, because what has always guided nihilistic interpretations was the search for a ground of security and certainty

exclusively for human beings, a ground into which such an irritation could be interpreted and anchored so that it could become bearable.

Such grounds have reinforced the historical overvaluation of human being³⁸, which, in my view, is implicit even in the theocentric instantiation of the Platonic-Christian paradigm. Despite a belief in an all-powerful God, and despite the belief in the eternal sinfulness of human being, human being has always kept its special place with respect to other corporeal beings, based on metaphysical conceptions such as the idea of having been created in the image of God, or the idea of human being as the only being to whom the divine truth may be revealed. With this the apparently special position of human being with respect to other beings has been grounded in the providence of an absolute being, i.e., of God. With the death of God, the authority ascribed to an absolute being begins to diminish, but such a downfall does not immediately bring about a wholly new and different structure, because what really empowered the monotheistic God, i.e., the will to find an absolute ground of certainty and security that would guarantee the value of human existence and would do away with the ‘problematic’ aspects of existence in general, which will is the force behind the anthropocentric interpretation of the world, only slowly and gradually begins to show itself more clearly. This gradual self-revealing of the hidden anthropocentrism as what it really was all along paves the way for a transition from the God-instantiated version of metaphysics to its secular, human-instantiated version.

For Nietzsche, now (i.e., in the era of the death of God) one is compelled to admit that “a humanitarian God”, as he puts it, cannot be demonstrated from the world we know³⁹. The reason for this can be found in Nietzsche’s analysis of the will to truth turning against the higher values of Christianity, as I explained above (see 2.1). However, for Nietzsche, forces of the same paradigm hold fast to the metaphysical interpretation of the world and respond to the death of God by inventing a ‘human’ world out of the world we experience, that is, an anthropomorphic one. The Christian God is replaced by its shadow, human being, which has indeed long been available

³⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §30.

³⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §1036.

for this substitution because of the underlying anthropocentrism of metaphysics, as I explained above. This transition takes place on the level of values and is achieved through the secularization of the old religious values. This is a mere continuation of the nihilistic paradigm, because the structure from which these ‘new’ values (which will be discussed in the next section) are derived, i.e., the two-world theory, is preserved. Now let us see, from Nietzsche’s perspective, how humanism perpetuates the two-world theory in the aftermath of the death of God.

2.4 Platonic-Christian Values and the Values of Secular Humanism

In this section, I will discuss the transition from Platonic-Christian values to the values of secular humanism and attempt to show how these values, from a Nietzschean perspective, constitute another instantiation of the nihilistic paradigm. However, in order to be able to see this transition more clearly, first I will elaborate on the hierarchical structure of the worldview underlying the first stage of nihilism (see 2.1). In doing so, the idea on which I will focus is that of the great chain of being, which provides a comprehensive, detailed and strictly hierarchical classification of beings from a Christian perspective, the basic understanding being derived from Plato’s theory of the Forms (see 1.1) and Aristotle’s classification of beings according to their degrees of perfection.

The basic idea behind the great chain of being can be understood in such a way that every being can be fitted into a fixed level on the strict hierarchy that starts from God as the most perfect being at the top and ends with earth or dust, which does not have any other capacity than existing. As Arthur Lovejoy says about the medieval attempts to establish the principles governing the universe:

The result was the conception of the plan and structure of the world which, through the Middle Ages and down to the late eighteenth century, many philosophers, most [people] of science, and, indeed, most educated [people], were to accept without question—the conception of the universe as a ‘Great Chain of Being,’ composed of an immense, ... infinite, number of links ranging in hierarchical order from the [most] meagre kind of existence, which barely escapes nonexistence, through ‘every possible’ grade up to the *ens perfectissimum* ...⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 59.

Between these two extremes, there are fixed subdivisions from top to bottom, based on two main levels: the first, namely the spiritual level, consists of God, i.e., the most perfect being that organizes the hierarchy itself with absolute power, and below God there are angels, which are considered to be exempt from the constraints of materiality as well as its temptation to sinfulness (except spiritual sins like pride, committed by the devil), existing purely in the spirit form. The second level, i.e., that of the physical creation, consists of human being, animals, plants, and minerals, which are further subdivided into their respective levels. From a rather secular point of view, the human level is divided again in a hierarchical manner into kings, aristocratic lords, and then peasants. However, these minor sub-divisions on the human level may vary, reflecting the statuses of different groups approached from different viewpoints. For example, in more religiously-based interpretations of the hierarchy, the human level is divided into three estates; clergy being at the top, knights in the middle, and peasants at the bottom.

In my view, regardless of the varying subdivisions on the human level, what really matters for our present concerns is the value given to the human being in this hierarchy of beings, as well as God's organizing function in this structure. Concerning the former, the human being occupies a unique place compared to the beings classified on other levels. The human being stands at the top of the physical creation, and its special position consists in its conception as the only being which has both spiritual and material qualities unlike others, which are constituted either solely and exclusively by spirituality or by materiality. To be more precise, in this evaluation, from the viewpoint of spirituality, the human being is considered to be a spiritual being with divine powers such as reason or imagination, but unlike angels its soul is contained in a vessel – the body – during its earthly existence, and thus the human being is subject to material constraints. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of materiality, human being is considered to be the crown of creation and raised above other material beings due to its 'divine' qualities granted by God. Concerning the role and the function of the Christian God in this structure, God functions as the absolute organizing agency, all the levels on the hierarchy being decreed by 'his' will. In my view, the idea of God as the absolute power can be found in other

monotheistic religions as well, but the notion of such a detailed and fixed hierarchy of beings developed from a religious perspective is attained for the first time by Christianity. Just as an example, the Judaic God is a deity with absolute power as well, but the Judaic worldview does not have such clear-cut, fixed and detailed classifications as the Christian great chain of being, in which, in principle, there is no mobility even between the closest sub-divisions such as kings and aristocratic lords. Although a discussion of to what extent Medieval Christian and Islamic thoughts influenced each other and the overlaps between the two fall beyond the parameters of this thesis, the same strictly hierarchical worldview accompanied by a notion of God as a personal agency with absolute power can also be found in the mainstream interpretations of Islam as well, in which, generally, beings are categorized under different and exclusive spheres such as the sphere of God, angels, human beings, animals, plants, etc, among which the human being is granted a central position as the most dignified of all beings, which is very similar to the Christian worldview.

From a Nietzschean perspective, I suggest that a significant aspect of the Christian worldview discussed above is the emphasis given to a central organizing agency, although it is not ascribed to the human being at this stage. In the great chain of being, human being is part of a larger hierarchical order, a link in an unbreakable chain. In this regard, it is possible to trace certain affective effects of such a hierarchical interpretation of existence on human being: on the one hand, it provides human being with security and certainty concerning its role and position in the universe from the perspective of self-preservation, and, on the other hand, it grants human being a certain feeling of dignity. This feeling of dignity is rooted in the allegedly ‘supernatural’ qualities of human being, like reason and consciousness, bestowed on it by God, according to the Christian interpretation of existence.

In my view, with the gradual auto-devaluation of the Christian God, both the provenance assigned to the apparently unique features of human being and those features themselves undergo some modifications. That is, in more secular interpretations of existence, these qualities are not sought solely in strictly theological grounds, and at this stage we encounter the beginning of the modern attempts to establish a secure ground for human being apart from its faith in God,

concomitant to the beginning of the self-devaluation of the Christian worldview. Cartesian dualism, which maintains the *res cogitans*, i.e., the thinking substance as the ground of certainty, can be given as an example in this regard, since following the method of doubt, Descartes arrives at the conclusion that the *cogito* is the secure ground on which knowledge can be built. Leaving a more elaborate discussion of the Cartesian *cogito* in the context of subjectivity to be provided in the next section, at this point I would like to focus on the elements that transmigrate from the God-instantiated to the human-instantiated version of the Platonic-Christian paradigm, which are related to the shift of ground explained above.

To be able better to see what the aforementioned transmigrating elements are, firstly I will briefly emphasize an aspect of Nietzsche's thought which is especially noteworthy. What is to my mind one of the most striking insights provided by Nietzsche is that it is possible to keep the theological character of a thought even when its strictly religious aspect is removed. This can be interpreted in such a way that the underlying structure remains and keeps operating even as its articulations change. This is, to my mind, a very radical move, which can also, for instance, be seen in Nietzsche's critique of scientism, on the grounds that science shares to a great extent a common ground with metaphysics and rests on a moral basis despite its claims of providing 'objective' knowledge: for Nietzsche, science displays the same will to truth behind the metaphysical interpretations of the world in its fundamental rejection of deception⁴¹. This radical insight of Nietzsche enables us to trace theologically-based values persisting in other contexts, by exposing the common elements by which they are produced.

Based on this insight into the structural continuity of metaphysics despite its material changes, I will now focus on an aspect of Christian teleology – the idea of salvation – in the context of which I will investigate the affective continuity and associated transmigrations that take place between the theocentric and secular-anthropocentric instantiations of the two-world theory. It may be said that salvation constitutes the aim of Christian life, meaning human being's return to the spiritual world as a

⁴¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §344.

spiritual being, to the Kingdom of God, having been redeemed of its sins by God's mercy. The Kingdom of God is considered to be the world of truth personally governed by God, a world that promises 'true' life, i.e., the eternal life exempt from the constraints of materiality and change. According to the Christian faith, there will no longer be any suffering for the souls to whom God will show grace; redeemed souls will live in peace, which is conceived as eternal restfulness. As I explained above (1.2), Nietzsche thinks that such a conception, in which the negation of life is posited as the aim of life, is the product of a will irritated by certain aspects of existence or, more precisely, of physicality, such as transitoriness and disintegration. For Nietzsche, the power of Christianity lies in its power of interpretation, in the extent to which the most irritating aspects of existence are interpretatively integrated into a certain teleology, into a promise of eternal life and rest in God. In doing so, the Christian mode of evaluation seeks the *telos* of human life in an authority and a realm outside life.

In this sense, it may be said that this teleology constitutes another 'highest' value of the Christian interpretation of existence (see 1.2) together with the will to truthfulness that turns against the 'highest' values of Christianity in the stage of reactive nihilism (see 2.1). Concomitant to the death of God, i.e., the process in which the belief in the Christian God degrades gradually, the unconscious drive for self-preservation which is the real force behind the Christian interpretation of the world fosters another ground to which the aforementioned *telos* gets anchored. This subsequent ground is reason, which is substantialized and raised to a level on which it attains constitutive value as a substance (e.g., Cartesian dualist substance metaphysics, see 2.3). If we ask what enables such a substitution from the Christian God to human reason, in my view, this substitution can be traced to the transmigration of the function of a central ordering agency from God to human being as a result of the will to truth turning against the theological articulations of the Platonic-Christian paradigm. According to Nietzsche, finally the will to truth discovers that God is "far too extreme a hypothesis"⁴² and this discovery raises the value given to human reason, which is henceforth associated with access to truth in

⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §114.

nihilism. The Platonic-Christian idea of the indestructibility of the soul and the conception of human being as a spiritual being with quasi-divine qualities had already prepared a certain overvaluation of the qualities which are alleged to be 'unique' to human being. Yet we need to remember that in the theological instantiation of nihilism, the value given to reason is to a certain extent overshadowed by the value given to faith due to the *telos* of salvation. However, in the epoch of the death of God, the diminishing authority of the Christian God as a central authority in command of a hierarchically constituted universe also results in the transposition of Christian teleology into a more secular conception. Yet, to see this more clearly, we need to look at the modifications that take place in the hierarchy of beings after the death of God.

Above I said that with the death of God, the function of a central agency that orders beings is assumed by human being. To be more precise, this function is granted to an evaluation of human being understood to a great extent in rationalistic terms. The transmigration of this function from God to human being raises the value of human being to a degree in which it is conceived as above other beings due to this ordering power. That is, an evaluation of human being begins to occupy the seat vacated by God without a fundamental change in the structure. In Nietzsche's terminology, God is replaced by its shadow, i.e., the rationalistic, more precisely, the subjectivistic (see 2.5, below) conception of human being. With this, human being's search for security in the world from the perspective of self-preservation undergoes a modification. The previous ideal of spiritual salvation turns into a scientific-rationalistic conception of salvation, although the underlying tendencies and their unconscious desire for the overcoming of suffering remain operative. With respect to these tendencies, Nietzsche says:

What they would like to strive for with all their powers is the universal, green, pasture-happiness of the herd, with security, absence of danger, comfort, an easing of life for everyone. The two songs and doctrines they sing most frequently are called 'Equality of Rights' and 'pity for all things that suffer' – and they assume that suffering itself is something we must *do away with*.⁴³

⁴³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §44.

For Nietzsche, the happiness conceived by such tendencies comes out essentially as a narcotic, an anaesthetic, quiet peace, a “Sabbath”, a yearning for the end of suffering, something entirely passive⁴⁴. From this perspective, such tendencies conceive their ideal as that which would end all suffering, because suffering is considered to be a problematic condition in life, something that should not be allowed to persist and should be fought against by all means. Nietzsche, by contrast, thinks that adversities are necessary; they are valuable, because “one remains *young* only on condition that the soul does not relax, does not long for peace”⁴⁵. Here, remaining young can be interpreted from a Nietzschean perspective as remaining active, non-stagnant, being rich in life, in contra-distinction to degeneration. Furthermore, he suggests that one renounces “*great* life when one renounces war”⁴⁶. It goes without saying that ‘war’ in this context does not signify Nietzsche supporting any particular armed conflicts in the empirical sense, but, in my view, it calls for a warlike, i.e., active stance instead of reactivity, which makes sly attempts to explain away unfavourable conditions, as does, for instance, the Socratic response, which invents the soul to get rid of the ‘problematic’ aspect of life, namely death. In Nietzsche’s view, adversities, and their necessary outcome, suffering, are not to be renounced, because they are in fact necessary conditions for life to grow, and Nietzsche’s expression “*great* life” can be understood as this great economy of will to power, which includes destructivity as a necessary condition to be affirmed. Leaving the discussion of Nietzsche’s understanding of the economy of will to power to the next chapter, I would like to say that the humanist ideal of eradicating suffering from the face of the earth through the rational application of science and technology, and the associated idealization of rationality, are, in terms of their motives, merely a modified continuation of the Christian ideal of salvation, which promises that at the end there will no longer be any adversities for human souls.

In Nietzsche’s thought, the emergence of another humanist idea, i.e., that of progress, can be traced to the replacements and modifications which take place on the level of

⁴⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, I, §10.

⁴⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, ‘Morality as Anti-Nature’, §3.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, §3.

values explained above. In the third stage of nihilism, according to Nietzsche, the value of existence is sought in the “progressive development of ideas or of humankind or of the people or beyond humankind; but with that one had arrived at a *progressus in infinitum* of purposes: one was at last constrained to make a place for oneself in the ‘world process’”⁴⁷. That is, in this case, the fundamental Platonic-Christian teleology persists, but it devolves to ‘humankind’, which is conceived as a progressing species. Nietzsche formulates this conception in French: “*L’animal ne fait jamais de progrès comme espèce; l’homme seul fait de progrès comme espèce.*”⁴⁸ which can be translated as ‘The animal never progresses as a species. Only human being progresses as species.’ Such an interpretation seeks the ground for the apparently special status of human being in the idea of progress and grants human being its alleged supremacy over animals and other natural beings as the being that progresses. Nietzsche denies this by emphasizing typology over this oversimplified notion of species understood as a homogeneous unity: in Nietzsche’s thought, there are fundamental differences between human types; these differences are constituted by forces within the will to power and directed by the will to power. In this regard, if it is legitimate to say so, there are always different types of human beings under the influence of different forces, rather than *the* human being, to the singular standard of which every individual human being must conform. This can be interpreted in such a way that we do not have a fixed measure which may serve as a standard to evaluate the ‘humanness’ of human beings. In that sense, in the absence of such a measure, all attempts at levelling out differences to arrive at a homogeneous concept (of human being) result in the imposition of one perspective on others in the attempt to dominate their constitution, dictating how they should be constituted instead of affirming differences. In that sense, Nietzsche does not think that ‘humankind’ progresses as a species. For him, although higher types are indeed attained, this does not raise the level of the species, because the higher types do not last⁴⁹. That is, although higher types – which means for Nietzsche more complex and stronger types – are produced in the course of life, they are not preserved to a degree

⁴⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §666.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, §683.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, §684.

which would mean an overall enhancement for the species itself. Higher types appear rarely and their richness usually becomes their vulnerability because a greater sum of coordinated elements means an increased probability of disintegration. As Nietzsche says, the genius [as a higher type] is the most sublime machine there is, and thus the most fragile⁵⁰. Also, being at the extremes, the higher types lack the organized instinct of preservation enjoyed by the mediocre, as is the case with herds. So, at this point, the phenomenon of civilization (which will be elaborated in Chapter 4), which traditionally serves as another ground for the alleged supremacy of the human being over animals, can be thought of as a machinery of preservation which does not enhance the human being as a species but rather serves for the sustaining of the mediocre types.

Above I attempted to show, from a Nietzschean perspective, the transmigrations and replacements that occur on the level of values concomitant to the death of God and the emergence of associated humanistic values as well as the effects of such transmigrations and replacements on the evaluations concerning human being in its relationship to the world and other beings. However, we still need to investigate their most significant outcome within the scope of this thesis, namely, the emergence of subjectivism. Nietzsche's critique of subjectivity constitutes one of the fundamental aspects of his overcoming of humanism; thus, in the following section, I will discuss the salient aspects of his critique of this matter which will enable us more clearly to see the problematic aspects of humanism from Nietzsche's perspective.

2.5 The 'Human' of Humanism: The Subject

In this section, from a Nietzschean perspective, I will investigate the idea of subjectivism and problematize its relation to humanism in an attempt to show how humanism rests on subjectivism. In doing so, firstly, I will discuss the logic of Cartesian thought, focusing on how it inhabits the two-world theory, paving the way for the emergence of the modern subject as the image that guides the humanist interpretation of the human being. Then, I will discuss the problems associated with such an evaluation of human being in the context of Nietzsche's critique of the

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, §684.

metaphysics of the subject as well as the possibilities offered by Nietzsche's thought for the dissolution of the subject which entail rethinking the body as a multiplicity of drives.

The image of the modern subject which is conceived as an "autonomous, rational, fully self-conscious" agent is rooted in Cartesian thought⁵¹. The reason for this attribution can be found in Cartesian dualistic substance metaphysics which can briefly be explained as follows. In his *Meditations*, following his sceptical method, Descartes searches for a secure and certain, i.e., indubitable ground on which knowledge of the world can be founded. Doubting all aspects of his particular existence, Descartes finally arrives at the conclusion that he cannot doubt the *cogito*, i.e., the 'I think', the indubitable character of which is taken as an indicator of its transcendence of material conditions. As a result, Descartes maintains that existence is divided into two mutually exclusive substances: *res cogitans* (thinking substance), which signifies reason as a transcendent substance, endowed with the capacity of functioning autonomously from *res extensa* (corporeal substance), namely physical existence, which is reduced to spatial extension. From a Nietzschean perspective, this Cartesian logic is another instance of the two-world theory, in its conception of existence as divided into two mutually exclusive substances, namely 'I' or ego which transcends existence with its self-consciousness or, to be more precise, with its capacity of self-reflection, and the extending substance, i.e., physical existence, which is reduced to an object of reflection for the ego. According to this logic, human being is conceived in terms of two oppositional substances: mind, or ego, which is understood as the essential, superior element, and the body, which is taken to be mere extension, and therefore an inferior element. Here, in my view, the key issue is that the 'thinking I' is considered to have solidity beyond the body, which establishes a fixed hierarchy between mind and body. An implication of this understanding is that the solidity given to the 'I' endows it with an ontological priority that transcends its own life, since it is understood as functioning independently from the body, i.e., the living component of the subject. It can be

⁵¹ Margus Vihalem, "How to Get Rid of the Subject? On Some Aspects of Nietzsche's Critique of Subjectivity", *Problemos*, Issue 80, 2011, p. 160.

interpreted in such a way that in terms of the distribution of values, this mode of thinking raises the *ego cogito* – understood as a rational, fully self-conscious and autonomous subject – above becoming, since its solidity is conceived as not depending on processes in becoming. As Margus Vihalem says:

What counts for René Descartes are not the modalities of the human being as an active living being prone to incessant biological or even sexual impulses and drives, but an abstract rational being universally capable of transcending [its] concrete significant circumstances, making it necessary to disentangle its thinking of all references to any particular circumstances.⁵²

The Cartesian model explained here provides the basis for the humanistic interpretation of existence by granting the subjective interpretation of the human being a superior value vis-a-vis the non-human world as well as, apparently itself *qua* biological entity. In my view, this constitutes the core of the anthropocentric core of humanism. Granting the rational and conscious aspects of the human being highest value, humanism allows for an interpretation of the non-conscious and non-rational world as of secondary value. At this point it needs to be said that this is not a mere abstract, intellectual issue, but one that has concrete effects in the world. This logic paves the way for the alleged human supremacy over the rest of existence, because the superiority given to the rational and conscious aspects of the human being reduces non-human existence and, apparently, human existence as well insofar as it is non-rational, to an operational field on which the operational power of the human being seems to be boundless. That is, the non-human world and non-rational human existence are left open for totalizing domination. The second problematic aspect of the subjective interpretation of human being is, in my view, related to the ostracization of human beings if they display irrational tendencies. The normative line drawn between rational and non-rational beings results in the evaluation of human beings according to their rational capacities. Consequently, those who display irrationality are ostracised or left open for every kind of ‘treatment’ so as to bring them back into the realm of the rational, which can be seen in the traditional clinical practices used in the treatment of ‘madness’ in mental institutions, where non-rational human beings are sequestered from society until they are ‘normalized’.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

From a Nietzschean perspective, based on the ontological problems associated with the subjectivist model explained above, I suggest that such a mode of thinking is a continuation of the nihilistic mode of evaluation since it operates according to the aforementioned metaphysical line (see 1.1) which is the fundamental characteristic of the two-world theory. The subjectivist model displays the same hierarchical logic as the two-world theory in its distribution of values. For instance, the Platonic-Christian soul/body dichotomy (see 1.2) can be seen as the model for the mind/body dichotomy introduced by the Cartesian subjectivist schema, in which the mind is given superiority with respect to the body. Another salient aspect of the subjective model is that it considers the subject as a source or origin in its relation to the world. In this regard, the subject is seen as the source of thinking, values, and judgments along with all sorts of human productivity in general.

As a response to the problems posed by the subjectivistic model, Nietzsche's thought primarily engages with the fundamental assumptions underlying the subject. In doing so, from a physiological perspective, Nietzsche applies his method of transvaluation to the values associated with the notion of the subject so as to be able to overcome the Cartesian model, which provides the foundation of the humanistic interpretation of the human being and of existence. It may be surmised that Nietzsche's motivation for this critique lies in his insight that the notion of the subject forged according to the Cartesian model is a product of the metaphysical paradigm, as can be seen in the previous paragraphs. In my view, throughout his works, Nietzsche's critique of subjectivism presents us with two main analyses, namely his analysis of the body and genealogical analysis, which, in my view, constitute the two significant aspects of his fundamental physiological approach to the problem. Below, the analysis of the body will enable us to see the physiological conditions paving the way for the emergence of the notion of the subject whereas the genealogical analysis will show the conditions in which subjectivism has become the dominant interpretation of the human being and how such an interpretation perpetuates nihilism. I will begin with the former.

Nietzsche's analysis of the body deals with the metaphysical assumptions and evaluations contained in the notion of the subject, by rethinking the body as a

multiplicity of drives and intensities. In this analysis, Nietzsche engages with Cartesian dualism, which reduces the body to mere extension and elevates the ego, understood in unitary terms, to a superior position in its distribution of values. In the following, I will attempt to show how Nietzsche reverses this distribution of values and then reinscribes the body as a condition of possibility for the phenomena traditionally ascribed to the *ego*. As Nathan Widder argues, “for Nietzsche”, the conscious subject “is merely an effect of unconscious and impersonal drives which engender a synthetic complex that is irreducible to unity; the ego, which seems to be a governing centre, is a semblance or an illusion”⁵³. Unlike Cartesian thought, Nietzsche does not see the body as an extension in spatial terms but instead emphasizes ascending and descending life processes occurring in the body, which highlights its vitality over and above its mere spatiality. Nietzsche thinks of life “as an enduring form of processes ... in which the different contenders grow unequally”⁵⁴. That is, for Nietzsche, conceiving the body in stable, static and transparent terms is a misconception due to its essential multiplicity constituted by incessant processes driven by unconscious forces with unequal power. This means that Nietzsche interprets the body in terms of its becoming without substantializing it in the metaphysical sense as is the case with Cartesian dualism. By this I mean that, according to Nietzsche, the body displays an incessant becoming; physiological processes are driven by forces which strive to dominate the entire organism in their pursuit of self-growth. In these processes, consciousness does not have an essential role:

It is essential that one should not make a mistake over the role of ‘consciousness’: it is our relation with the ‘outer world’ that evolved it. On the other hand, the direction or protection and care in respect of the co-ordination of the bodily functions do *not* enter our consciousness⁵⁵.

This can be interpreted in such a way that Nietzsche’s thought depreciates the substantial value given to consciousness by Cartesianism and approaches this phenomenon from a physiological perspective. Such a move contains the elements of

⁵³ Nathan Widder, “A Semblance of Identity: Nietzsche on the Agency of Drives and Their Relation to the Ego”, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 38(8), pp. 821-42, (2012).

⁵⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §642.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, §524.

the Nietzschean transvaluation of the value given to consciousness. Nietzsche attacks the metaphysical line that separates consciousness (and associated phenomena such as reason and thinking) from the body by maintaining that consciousness is a function of the body and entirely depends on physiological processes that are happening by themselves, driven by unconscious forces. In doing so, Nietzsche's analysis of the body redistributes the values in the metaphysical mind/body distinction from the perspective of physiology. In reinscribing the body as a multiplicity of drives or forces over which consciousness has essentially no control, Nietzsche's analysis reveals the body as the condition of possibility of consciousness in contrast to the metaphysical interpretations which see the body as a vessel of the soul or as an instrument in the service of consciousness.

If consciousness entirely depends on physiological processes as a function of the body, then how can we understand the motivation behind its elevation to a substantial level by metaphysical thinking? For Nietzsche, this is rooted in an illusion generated by the physiological mechanism which withholds the operation of drives:

That which becomes conscious is involved in ... relations which are entirely withheld from us – the sequence of thoughts, feelings, ideas in consciousness does not signify that this sequence is a causal sequence; but apparently it is so, to the highest degree. Upon this *appearance* we have founded our whole idea of spirit, reason, logic, etc. (–none of these exist: they are fictitious syntheses and unities), and projected these *into* things and *behind* things!⁵⁶

I take this to mean that the opacity of the way the body functions generates an illusion of causality in which consciousness appears to be the 'cause' of what enters into consciousness. However, for Nietzsche, what enters into consciousness only implies that a particular drive has taken control of the organism and asserted its power over others, transitorily suppressing or directing other drives towards its own growth. That they penetrate consciousness in a sequential and similar manner is what generates the illusion of a 'subject' understood in terms of agency. As Nietzsche says:

The subject: this is the term for our belief in a unity underlying all the different impulses of the highest feeling of reality: we understand this belief as the *effect* of one cause – we believe so firmly in our belief that for its sake we imagine 'truth', 'reality', [and]

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, §524.

‘substantiality’ in general. – ‘The subject’ is the fiction that many similar states in us are the effect of one substratum: but it is we who first created the ‘similarity’ of these states...⁵⁷

This quotation encapsulates Nietzsche’s understanding of the physiological conditions that generate the illusion of the subject as a substance. For Nietzsche, the process in which different experiences are equated and simplified for the preservation of the organism in its relation to the world is what paves the way for the error of interpreting human being in subjectivistic terms and the world as its object. However, in order to understand the overvaluation of this notion of the subject as *the* interpretation of human being, we still need to see Nietzsche’s genealogical analysis of this idea.

In the genealogical analysis, Nietzsche traces the value given to the subject back to the fundamental difference between the slavish and the noble modes of evaluation⁵⁸. The noble mode of evaluation is the product of an active will to power, under the influence of which nobility displays an affirmative stance towards existence, an abundant physicality and the love of overcoming resistances, exercising its strength as action and acting out its reactions. The noble mode of evaluation does not operate in terms of absolute oppositions; it evaluates and affirms itself as the ‘good’, and interprets slaves as ‘bad’ – understood as a lesser degree on a scale – without bearing ill-will towards slaves. The slavish mode of evaluation, on the other hand, is characterized by a reactive will to power which is marked by *ressentiment* (see 1.2). Governed by reactive forces, the slavish mode of evaluation evaluates itself based on a fundamental negation of nobility in terms of an absolute opposition. That is, the slavish tendencies firstly posit nobility as ‘evil’ and only then posit themselves as the ‘good’. Slaves are unable to act out their reactions and they produce an imaginary revenge against nobility, which takes place on the level of values. Such tendencies interpret their weakness and impotence as goodness, and demand of nobility to be as ‘good’ as themselves, by not expressing their strength. At this point, the notion of the subject attains a moral value:

To demand of strength that it should *not* express itself as strength, that it should *not* be a desire to overcome, ... a desire to become master, a thirst for enemies and resistances and

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, §485.

⁵⁸ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, I.

triumphs, is just as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength. A quantum of force is equivalent to a quantum of drive, will, effect – more, it is nothing other than precisely this very driving, willing, effecting, and only owing to the seduction of language (and of the fundamental errors of reason that are petrified in it) which conceives and misconceives all effects as conditioned by something that causes effects, by a ‘subject’, can it appear otherwise. For just as the popular mind separates the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for an *action*, for the operation of a subject called lightning, so popular morality also separates strength from expressions of strength, as if there were a neutral substratum behind the strong [human being], which was *free* to express strength or not to do so. But there is no such substratum; there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything ... no wonder if the submerged, darkly glowering emotions of vengefulness and hatred ... maintain no belief more ardently than the belief that *the strong man is free* to be weak and the bird of prey to be a lamb – for thus they gain the right to make the bird of prey *accountable* for being a bird of prey.⁵⁹

In this quotation, it can be seen that Nietzsche attacks both the fundamental assumption of subjectivism, which consists of assigning a ‘doer’ to self-happening processes, and the value granted to the subject by the slavish tendencies, which seek to avenge themselves on the noble tendencies by making them responsible for their actions. For Nietzsche, a force is nothing but what it can do and separating it from what it can do results in its becoming-reactive, turning against itself. In my view, this is precisely the effect of the subject as understood in terms of agency by humanism. Conceiving the subject as a rational and self-conscious agent according to the Cartesian model, humanism interprets the human being as an agent endowed with free will, which means that it is responsible for all of its actions, being free to act in the way it chooses in accordance with its rational capacity. However, for Nietzsche, this understanding of responsibility is a mere construct produced by slavish tendencies, which are characterized by an inability to affirm life as it is, and thus desire that a force that is an irritant to them must become *otherwise* than what it is.

Based on this discussion, from a Nietzschean perspective, subjectivism can be seen as contributing to the overall becoming-reactive of the human species. In my view, the construction of ‘man’ according to the model provided by the various instances of the two-world theory (such as Christianity and Cartesianism) results in the breeding of a species of subjects who fail to understand themselves as living beings subject to life and who assume a false and ahistorical ontological superiority vis-a-vis the non-human world. In this regard, it might be useful to hear Foucault, who is

⁵⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, I, §13.

one of the most prominent proponents of anti-humanist thought in the 20th century.

Foucault asks:

Does man really exist? To imagine, for instance, what the world and thought and truth might be if man did not exist, is considered to be merely indulging in paradox. This is because we are so blinded by the recent manifestation of man that we can no longer remember a time – and it is not so long ago – when the world, its order, and human beings existed, but man did not.⁶⁰

Here, it can be seen that ‘man’ and the human being are not identical, that they do not represent the same thing, but that the former can be understood as a fictional layer covering over the latter. Foucault thinks that ‘man’ is quite a recent entity, fabricated by the “demiurge of knowledge” less than two hundred years ago; “but he has grown old so quickly that it has been only too easy to imagine that he had been waiting for thousands of years in the darkness for that moment of illumination in which he would finally be known”⁶¹. This suggests that a certain conception of human being, which I have discussed above, had for a long time been prepared by the reactive forces that have dominated throughout the history of the Platonic-Christian paradigm, producing idols that would serve their triumph. Yet the fact that we have begun to see ‘man’ as a construct and no longer take it for granted might be interpreted as a sign of the already happening dissolution of the subject, a possibility suggested by Nietzsche’s thought. According to Foucault, the Nietzschean insight that “‘man’ would soon be no more” means that our modern conception of human being, our concern for it and our humanism “were all sleeping serenely over the threatening rumble of [its] non-existence”⁶².

This quotation from Foucault also implies that our interpretation of the world is not necessarily constrained to a humanist interpretation, that is, other interpretations have been and still are possible; because, as he says, the world, human beings, and the order of things do not necessitate the positing of a subject, a construction forged according to the two-world theory. Based on this, the following words by Nietzsche take on an added significance: “Why does human being not see things? It is itself

⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 322.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 322.

standing in the way; it conceals things.’⁶³. This can be interpreted in such a way that throughout nihilism human attempts to penetrate into the ‘true’ nature of things have always brought about human interpolations of existence, that is, human phenomena have been projected into the world, and these interpolations have then been taken as reference points in the interpretations of existence as a whole. In this sense, from Nietzsche’s perspective, what is needed is a revaluation of the world from a non-anthropocentric perspective so as to get rid of the residues of the two-world theory covering over the world and the human being. Now let us move on to the next chapter in order to be able to see what humanism has concealed throughout nihilism.

⁶³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §418.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEANTHROPOMORPHIZATION OF NATURE

In the previous chapter I discussed the problematic aspects of humanism in the contexts of nihilism and the death of God. Such a discussion enabled us to see how humanism perpetuates nihilism with new references constructed around a certain evaluation of human being. However, Nietzsche's philosophy, which has provided us with a perspective from which humanism can be understood, also offers us a productive way of thinking which shows a way out of humanism through a transvaluation of nature. In this chapter, I will investigate how this transvaluation, i.e., Nietzsche's deanthropomorphization of nature, which refers to his revaluation of the world based on his central thought of the will to power, operates.

In Nietzsche's thought, the necessity of a deanthropomorphization of nature can above all be found in *The Gay Science*. With respect to the anthropomorphisms produced by Platonism, Nietzsche asks: "When will all these shadows of God no longer darken us? When will we have completely de-deified nature? When may we begin to *naturalize* humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?"⁶⁴ This can be interpreted in such a way that in order to be able to naturalize humanity, what is necessary is to discover a new sense for nature without the burdens imposed on it by nihilism. This is so because throughout the Platonic-Christian paradigm, 'nature' has been conceived in purely metaphysical terms and, from Nietzsche's perspective, it is not possible to overcome humanism without overcoming this conception of nature, since, as we saw in the second Chapter, metaphysics and humanism constantly reinforce each other. At this point, by way of further investigation of the aforementioned quotation from *The Gay Science*, let us briefly see the way nature is conceived within the Platonic-Christian paradigm according to Nietzsche.

⁶⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §109.

3.1 Anthropomorphic Conceptions of Nature

Firstly, Nietzsche warns us not to conceive the universe as a living organism⁶⁵. For Nietzsche, “life is merely a special case of the will to power;—it is quite arbitrary to assert that everything strives to enter into this form of the will to power”⁶⁶. In this regard, Nietzsche holds that conceiving the world in terms of a living organism would mean to take what is secondary and derivative for what is essential. Also, such a conception, in Nietzsche’s view, is problematic because it overlooks the fundamental phenomenon of nutrition essential for every organism. Every organism depends on others, assimilates what is outside of itself in order to grow, and discharges its power in this pursuit. However, in Nietzsche’s thought, there is nothing outside the world, which means, such a conception cannot be maintained because the world does not have an outside, a beyond, in the assimilation of which it can maintain its existence. Secondly, in connection with the conceiving of the world as an organism, Nietzsche warns us not to conceive of the universe even as a machine, because the term machine has the connotations of a design for a certain purpose and, for Nietzsche, it is impossible to observe either purposiveness or design in the universe, rather, these are all-too-human conceptions projected on to the universe. This is due to the fact that the concept 'design' immediately brings about the question of a designer and Nietzsche rejects this understanding as a product of the Platonic-Christian paradigm, because it is the fundamental characteristic of this paradigm to attribute processes to an origin which is responsible for their emerging and functioning.

Thirdly, Nietzsche also thinks that the idea of natural laws, i.e., that nature follows certain laws, primarily the law of causality, which has been among the fundamental principles of the modern understanding of physics, is another anthropomorphism which we must get rid of. Nietzsche, getting closer to a Humean line, thinks that a causal relationship cannot be attributed to the observation of a necessary sequence of states, because it is essentially merely a human habit to do so⁶⁷. In this habit,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, §109.

⁶⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §692.

⁶⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §551.

Nietzsche detects a certain drive, namely the drive for self-preservation. He maintains that what moves human beings to establish causal relationships between events or phenomena is what leads us to find security in the world; it is only the attempt to discover something familiar in a world which is not familiar as such. In addition, calculation is another aspect of this process of making familiar what is essentially unfamiliar. On this matter, following the same course, Nietzsche suggests that the calculability of an event cannot be attributed to the belief that a rule is being adhered to, or that a law of causality has been projected into events. For Nietzsche, the apparent observation that there are identical cases, which is the principle on which calculability rests, is in fact only the product of a practice of the levelling off of differences, which makes equal what is not equal, as I explained in the previous chapter in another context. That is, human being wants everything to be calculable and thus projects its estimations into existence. As we will see more clearly in the next section, Nietzsche does not think that identities are pre-given: his thought rather investigates how identities are generated through self-happening processes, emphasizing their temporary nature. For Nietzsche, the concept of identity is a product of our belief in the subject, and causality is another implication of this belief⁶⁸. Traditionally, natural processes have been conceived as obeying certain laws which are imposed on them from outside. According to Nietzsche, this conception implies a doer that is outside the process. As he says:

Only because we have introduced subjects, 'doers' into things does it appear that all events are the consequences of compulsion exerted upon subjects – exerted by whom? Again by a doer.⁶⁹

However, Nietzsche is not content to show that the notion of the subject is artificial. He takes his critique one step further so as to derive the radical consequence of the artificiality of the subject. This consequence is radical because it consists in the dissolution of the idea of the world as we, inhabitants of the event of the death of God, have known it in the Platonic-Christian paradigm. In this regard, Nietzsche provides us with an inventory of the concepts (which guide the traditional conception of the world) that begin to dissolve once their basis – the subject – is shown to be an

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, §552.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, §552.

anthropocentric projection into existence⁷⁰. Now, let us take a closer look at Nietzsche's critique of these concepts in order better to see how Nietzsche carries out his project of the deanthropomorphization of nature.

Firstly, for Nietzsche, the idea of determinism, which signifies the understanding that in a given context, events are causally bound in such a way that the prior event strictly determines the following event, is one of these conceptions. The idea of determinism rests on the concept of necessity or, more precisely, the mechanistic understanding of necessity which has traditionally been justified with reference to the calculability and regularity of events⁷¹. The fact that events appear as calculable and as occurring in a regular manner, which gives them their formulatable character, is interpreted by the tradition as the consequence of a necessity that holds sway over events. Yet, for Nietzsche, such calculability and predictability do not entail that events happen according to a necessity in the sense of a law that is imposed on them from outside. Nietzsche thinks that the idea of compulsion implied in the notion of law cannot be demonstrated in events: it is a projection of the notion of the subject into events, assuming an external agency to which the origin of this 'law' can be attributed.

Secondly, according to Nietzsche, if we admit that the notion of the subject is an artificial projection into phenomena, and give up relying on this idea in our interpretations of the world, the traditional concept of substance employed by the metaphysical interpretations of the world becomes untenable⁷². Traditionally, the idea of substance has been understood in various conceptions which display a fundamental common characteristic. For instance, Plato's theory of the Forms understands these in terms of a ground which exists in a separate world and stands for the 'real' aspect of things, being immutable, constant, and existing independently of appearances. In Cartesian thought, substance is understood in terms of a mode of being which does not need any other phenomena to exist, as is found in the mind/body distinction explained above (2.5). Their common characteristic can be

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, §552.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, §552.

⁷² *Ibid.*, §552.

understood as that, in principle, things have an aspect which can be separated from its mutable qualities, which, for Nietzsche, rests on the same model in which the ego is understood as an identical and constant phenomenon, which is more apparent in the Cartesian model (2.5). As we will see more clearly in the next section, from Nietzsche's perspective, things show themselves as complexes of events which are apparently durable only temporarily, with respect to other complexes of events being produced in a differential manner.

Thirdly, emphasizing that the notion of substance is artificial and untenable, Nietzsche moves on to draw another fundamental conclusion: opposites do not exist in themselves⁷³. According to Nietzsche, the absolute oppositions posited in the Platonic-Christian paradigm rest on a belief that a phenomenon must have originated from an intransitory ground or substance that exists independently of what it produces, and this independence is the basis, relying on which absolute oppositions are posited⁷⁴. For Nietzsche, there are no absolute opposites, phenomena express only variations in degree which appear as opposites from a certain perspective, i.e., from the perspective of metaphysics. The metaphysical line posited between phenomena (1.1), introduces absolute dichotomies into existence such as Form/appearances, mind/body, etc. In this model, values are distributed in such a hierarchical manner that the non-physical element in the dichotomy is granted the absolute value whereas the physical element remains devoid of value. This understanding rests on a mode of evaluation which elevates intransitoriness and constancy to the highest level in contrast to what is transitory and mutable. However, for Nietzsche, this is an illegitimate projection into existence which depreciates the value of life for the sake of "the faith in opposite values"⁷⁵. According to Nietzsche, as we will see in more detail in the next section, all phenomena are produced by forces that are immanent to will to power, and, in this sense, there are no oppositions but differences of degree since all forces exist in tremendously complex and differential relations with others which cannot be reduced to oppositionality. With

⁷³ *Ibid.*, §552.

⁷⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §2.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, §2.

this thought, Nietzsche disrupts the notion of oppositionality and makes possible the destabilization of all oppositions, which, as we will see in the next section, makes a non-metaphysical interpretation of the world possible.

Given Nietzsche's critique of the anthropomorphic projections into existence provided above, at this point, one may ask: what is left? For nihilist tendencies, this is the point of ultimate despair, because apparently what used to guide interpretations of the world throughout the history of nihilism, i.e., the concepts of necessity, ground, substance and oppositionality, evaporates when their fictional character is revealed through the Nietzschean critique. However, for Nietzsche, this is a new beginning, and the discussions provided above constitute only the first step of his project of overcoming humanism. For Nietzsche, what dissolves is only one interpretation, despite the fact that it has been considered as *the* interpretation under the influence of nihilism. A myriad of interpretations are still possible and can be experimented with, provided that one allows a change of perspective, from the perspective of identity as ground and grounding to that of an ineluctable multiplicity. The latter, in Nietzsche's thought, is the Dionysian perspective. Now let us move on to discuss the relevant aspects of it and how the world shows itself from such a perspective.

3.2 Nietzsche's Dionysian Worldview

The figure of Dionysus constitutes one of the central elements in Nietzsche's thought, appearing as early as *The Birth of Tragedy* and influencing Nietzsche until his very last notes found in the *Nachlass*. But what is the element that draws Nietzsche to Dionysus? In order to be able to understand this connection and the Dionysian perspective, firstly let us hear from Nietzsche what Dionysian means to him:

The word '*Dionysian*' means: an urge to unity, a reaching out beyond personality, the everyday, the society, reality, across the abyss of transitoriness: a passionate-painful overflowing into darker, fuller, more floating states; an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life as that which remains the same, just as powerful, just as blissful, through all change; the great pantheistic sharing of joy and sorrow that sanctifies and calls good

even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life; the eternal will to procreation, to fruitfulness, to recurrence; the feeling of the necessary unity of creation and destruction.⁷⁶

Based on this quotation, the concept of the Dionysian can be seen to have two significant aspects which need to be emphasized for the purposes of this thesis. The first aspect is that the Dionysian signifies a rupture, an ecstatic breaking-off from the constraints imposed by the self and all that is associated with the self, a breaking-off from all that is human, all-too-human. With this rupture, the Dionysian opens up the possibility of experiencing the ‘unity’ of everything that is, in its transitoriness. The second aspect of the Dionysian is the aspect of affirmation, and it is very closely related to the first aspect, for the following reason: affirmation is possible only holistically, only by affirming everything, it is a comprehensive phenomenon. Affirmation is the immediate affect of experiencing all that is in its necessity, without bearing ill-will against any aspect of existence. The Dionysian is a unifying or holistic perspective in which the ‘undesired’ aspects of existence, which have been used by nihilism as an argument against existence and as a ground for the depreciation of life through its condemnation, such as destruction, change, and death, are not only accepted but also affirmed and celebrated as conditions of life. That is, the Dionysian rupture, in which the self is abandoned in the overwhelming experience of the unity of the whole, entails rapture. The ‘negative’ aspects of existence, which used to irritate the slavish tendencies so that they invented a redeemer as a cure for their irritation, no longer produce any negative affect under the influence of the Dionysian rupture because there is no longer a self to be irritated, the holistic Dionysian experience shows itself as joy, play, dance, and immediate affirmation of one’s own and everything’s transitory character.

Having seen what Dionysian influence means to Nietzsche, the question of the element connecting Nietzsche and Dionysus can now be discussed. The reason why I am using the word connection is that, in my view, the relationship between Nietzsche and Dionysus is not merely the former’s reaching out for the ‘wisdom’ of the latter in the hope of a revelation understood in the Christian sense. Rather, what I am suggesting is a bilateral and active reinforcement: for Nietzsche, the Dionysian

⁷⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §1050.

signifies a counter-force, an affirmative will to power, through which the Nietzschean revaluation can take place. In turn, Nietzsche's thought provides an openness which brings about the possibility of the return of the Dionysian affirmation that has been forgotten throughout nihilism. Having said this, let us elaborate how the world shows itself from the Dionysian perspective.

As Nietzsche argues, from the Dionysian perspective, the world as a whole shows its character as "a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back ..." ⁷⁷. For Nietzsche, the world is will to power. From his perspective, the world is an abyss, a groundless and agonistic play of forces which he calls will to power. The world is agonistic because it is not governed by an underlying principle that imposes itself externally on all of existence, as suggested by the anthropomorphic conceptions of nature discussed in the previous section. For Nietzsche, the world is essentially groundless; it is a realm of contest in which forces, directed by their will to power, challenge each other in their pursuit of growth. However, Nietzsche's declaration of the world as will to power may appear as a metaphysical declaration, and in order to be able to understand Nietzsche's position and to rule out the possibility of a metaphysical interpretation, we need to clarify why the Nietzschean notion of the will to power does not serve as a metaphysical ground as well as how it operates vis-a-vis metaphysics.

Firstly, Nietzsche maintains that there is no such thing as will ⁷⁸. This may sound strange because it seems contradictory to suggest both that there is no such thing as a will and assert that the world is will to power and nothing besides. In my view, Nietzsche's claim that there is no such thing as will is made for strategic reasons. Nietzsche takes the metaphysically loaded concept of the will, destabilizes it and reinscribes it in such a way that it no longer functions in substantial terms but becomes an image that is used by Nietzsche to express a multiplicity. As Michel Haar says, Nietzsche's declaration that there is no such thing as will means that "there exists no unique and universal will constituting what things are in themselves,

⁷⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §1067.

⁷⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §46, and §715.

that behind the phenomena there is no substantiality of the will.”⁷⁹ The other aspect of Nietzsche’s destabilization of the will again pertains to the traditional understanding of will as individual will. In this conception, will is conceived in constant and identical terms, and is posited as a mysterious source from which all individual actions could flow. Nietzsche does not conceive of the will in substantial terms in the sense of a metaphysical ground, rather, for him, will is an image that signifies the level of coordination among impersonal and unconscious forces⁸⁰. That is, what can be called ‘will’ is in fact only the outcrop of what is actually a radical plurality and multiplicity. In other words, as Haar suggests, in the Nietzschean conception of the traditional notion of the will it is a primary term that signifies plurality and multiplicity⁸¹. This means that Nietzsche does not posit any separate faculty whatsoever when he speaks of will, rather, he refers to a radical multiplicity or conglomeration of forces which – albeit only on the surface – appear to be unified. The Nietzschean notion of will refers to a plurality of instincts and impulses operating, e.g., in a body, in their constant struggle and strife in order to gain the upper hand and command other forces for their own growth:

The will ... is the distant echo of a battle that has already been fought out, the aftermath coming to the surface, or the ‘code language’ of a subterranean struggle of impulses. To will is to feel the triumph of a force that has cleared a way for itself quite apart from our knowing anything about it, and the supreme illusion consists in taking this feeling, this sentiment, for a free causality.⁸²

This understanding enables us to see the second reason regarding the non-metaphysical characteristic of the Nietzschean notion of the will to power. As can be seen in the quotation, willing is a symptom of the underlying struggle of forces, which essentially remain unconscious and become sensible only when this process is made discernible when a force suppresses others and asserts its own will to power upon them. This becoming-discernible reveals Nietzsche’s understanding that the will to power is not an essence but a name for a primary drive. As Alphonso Lingis states, “will to power can function neither as the reason that accounts for the order of

⁷⁹ Michel Haar, ‘Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language’, in *The New Nietzsche*, p. 9.

⁸⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §46.

⁸¹ Michel Haar, ‘Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language’ in *The New Nietzsche*, p. 9.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

essences, nor as the foundation that sustains them in being”⁸³. In life Nietzsche observes will to power: every force struggles for more power, i.e., for its own growth. With respect to life, not-willing is not an option, it is impossible, because not-willing would be a symptom of zero force, of death. Everything that exists at the same time wills, and even in the most extreme cases in which life is denied in the most radical manner, e.g., the acute negativity of the ascetic priest who denies life as such, Nietzsche thinks that the human being will rather “will nothingness than *not* will”⁸⁴. This implies that the will always remains a will, as an instance of an orientation towards self-growth in an agonistic existence characterized by an essential multiplicity. As Nietzsche says, “whatever is real, whatever is true, is neither one nor even reducible to one”⁸⁵. This can be interpreted in such a way that whatever is real, i.e., all phenomena, is essentially multiplicity that exists as relationality of forces.

Thirdly, we need to see the external aspect of the will to power in order better to see its non-metaphysical character. In its external aspect, will to power can be understood as ceaseless production of differences. All forces are in external relation with each other, and in their struggle, this constant relationality brings about both creation and destruction. In this sense, will to power, as understood by Nietzsche, is a constant process that happens by itself, and all phenomena are transitorily produced and destroyed in the endless strife of forces with each other. It is a process of differentiation because of the essential multiplicity I discussed above. Because of this character, existence is pregnant with endless possibilities only bound by the will to power that directs forces within. This means that will to power does not function as a *hypokeimenon* in the Aristotelian sense. Although the will to power produces phenomena, it is not an underlying essence that guarantees their identity but a constant production and shattering of all identity, and a ceaseless differentiation. This differentiation is the result of this external aspect of the will to power, which brings

⁸³ Alphonso Lingis, ‘The Will to Power’, in *The New Nietzsche*, p. 38.

⁸⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, III, §1.

⁸⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §536.

about creation (new multiplicities) so long as it destroys (challenges other multiplicities), and vice versa.

Based on such an understanding, Nietzsche provides us with a non-anthropomorphic interpretation of nature: “Imagine a being like nature, wasteful beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, without purposes and consideration, without mercy and justice, fertile and desolate and uncertain at the same time; imagine indifference itself as a power ...”⁸⁶. In this context, nature can be understood in terms of the will to power, since Nietzsche presents it as a non-purposive, unconscious (indifferent), productive and simultaneously destructive phenomenon, similar to his understanding of the will to power explained above. Nature is not governed by any authority or substance. It is also indifferent not only towards what it produces but also towards what it destroys, for it is not a conscious unity but a conglomeration of forces, an unconscious and self-happening process of differentiation which is an aspect of multiplicity. From this perspective, nature exceeds the humanist interpretations projected into it as is also the case with other metaphysical interpretations discussed in the first section. Unlike these interpretations, Nietzsche’s agonistic understanding of nature is characterized by immanence: phenomena are produced at the intersection of forces, and they are durable insofar as their relationality is maintained, i.e., phenomena are transitory. Not only phenomena, but meaning and value are also produced and are also transitory in this economy, for nothing is exempt from the will to power. That is, there is no longer any transcendent authority from which meaning and values are derived, rather, according to Nietzsche’s understanding, meaning and value are determined by the will to power in the agonistic play of forces. This takes us to the Nietzschean notions of perspectivism and interpretation, which, in my view, work against anthropocentrism and thus constitute a part of Nietzsche’s deanthropomorphization of nature. In the next section, I will discuss how perspectivism and interpretation are a part of this attempt, i.e., of the dehumanization of the world.

⁸⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, ‘On the Prejudices of the Philosophers’, §9.

3.3 The Perspectivism of the Will to Power

Perspectivism and interpretation constitute an essential aspect of Nietzsche's thought of the will to power. For Nietzsche, these are intrinsic to will to power and conditions of life. To see this, let us begin with a quotation from Nietzsche:

The will to power *interprets* ... it defines limits, determines degrees, variations of power. Mere variations of power could not feel themselves to be such: there must be present something that wants to grow and interprets the value of whatever else wants to grow ... interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something.⁸⁷

This can be interpreted in such a way that will to power operates by interpreting and, conversely, that interpretation is the primary activity of everything that exists. If we remind ourselves of Nietzsche's insight that forces are in a constant struggle for their own growth, it can be seen that this process of interpretation constitutes an inseparable aspect of their existence, so much so that existing means interpreting for Nietzsche. Interpretation is intrinsic to will to power, because growth requires interpretation. On the other hand, for Nietzsche, interpretation is always already done from a particular perspective. That is, forces, driven by their own will to power, interpret existence in accordance with their own perspective. Each force has its own perspective, and it is will to power that produces its own evaluations concerning the world from this perspective, so as to expand its area of influence. It is in this sense that interpretation is itself a means of becoming master over something. As John Richardson states, the drive acts and reacts towards other phenomena according to its aim to grow, with respect to whether they help or hinder its own growth, the drive senses, and differentially responds to different phenomena in its environment⁸⁸. For instance, to the artistic drive, the world appears from an aesthetic perspective, i.e., as something which arouses an aesthetic response, and it extends its area of force by transfiguring the world, for transfiguration can be understood as the basic activity of the aesthetic drive. In other words, the artistic drive interprets the world aesthetically, and this process of interpretation produces its own values in its attempt to grow.

⁸⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §643.

⁸⁸ John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, p. 36.

It can be seen that such an understanding is not humanistic since, for Nietzsche, interpretation and perspectives are not unique to human beings but are an intrinsic feature of the will to power. However, we still need to clarify this matter of interpretation and perspectivism so as to rule out the possibility of conceiving it in cognitivist, i.e., anthropomorphic terms. On this matter I will follow Richardson's argument. Firstly, according to Richardson, Nietzsche denies that perspectives are necessarily conscious⁸⁹, yet, in my view, this can be extended to say that they are never conscious, for will to power is essentially unconscious. Nietzsche states that "that which we call our 'consciousness' is innocent of any of the essential processes of our preservation and our growth"⁹⁰. Also, on another occasion, Nietzsche writes "... we could think, feel, will, remember, and also 'act' in every sense of the term, and yet none of all this would have to 'enter our consciousness'"⁹¹. As we saw above (2.5), consciousness is only a secondary and surface phenomenon which is not a necessary precondition for will to power but instead produced within and by will to power. Drives or forces do not need consciousness to carry on their activity. That is, following Richardson, to say that a force interprets in accordance with its perspective driven by its own will to power does not mean that forces do this consciously⁹². Secondly, this perspective is not something prior to the activity or even something separate that accompanies it. Perspective is not pre-given to a force by any external agency; the force develops its own perspective in the agonistic play of forces. That is, perspective is in unity with the doing, the activity, i.e., perspective is an aspect of the activity. More radically, for Nietzsche, there is only the activity because a force is nothing except what it does, even when it is incorporated by a more powerful force, driving the former to reactivity. Thirdly, the perspective is entirely evaluative. This means that, as Richardson puts it, "Values are not a secondary estimation of beings previously met and picked out in some neutral or objective way"⁹³. To the will to power, phenomena already appear as potentials, potentials for its own growth. That

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §646.

⁹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §354.

⁹² John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, p. 37.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

is, the perspective is decisive with respect to the character of phenomena. The character of a phenomenon is determined again by the will to power, since every centre of force adopts a perspective towards the entire remainder⁹⁴. In other words, “every centre of force – not only human being – construes all the rest of the world from its own viewpoint, i.e., measures, feels, forms, according to its own force”⁹⁵, and these activities can be understood as constituting its mode of being.

It is even a difficult thing for [the human being] to admit to [itself] that the insect or the bird perceives an entirely different world from the one that [human being] does, and that the question of which of these perceptions of the world is the more correct one is quite meaningless, for this would have to have been decided previously in accordance with the criterion of the *correct perception*, which means, in accordance with a criterion which is *not available*.⁹⁶

Objectivity is an illusion, because according to Nietzsche, the world would not remain after one deducted the perspective⁹⁷ and all sense perceptions are wholly permeated with value judgments such as ‘useful’, ‘harmful’, and consequently ‘agreeable’, and ‘disagreeable’⁹⁸. That is, perception is not neutral, it is a product of our drives which are constantly engaged in an activity of interpretation. This can be interpreted in such a way that what is experienced as reality is always the product of a multiplicity of perspectives through which the will to power extends its influence. That the perception is not separable from values reveals the affective character of existence. As James Urpeth argues, from a Nietzschean perspective, the world is most profoundly disclosed in a non-cognitive, affective manner⁹⁹. This implies that reality is primarily felt, not known: the cognitive aspect of reality is secondary. Affectivity can be understood as the receptivity of the will to power. Depending on its perspective, the will to power affirms (accepts and incorporates) or negates (resists) other phenomena¹⁰⁰. This means that interpretations of reality always display a certain degree of affirmation or negation concerning existence, they cannot claim to

⁹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §567.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, §636.

⁹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, p. 19.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, §567.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, §505.

⁹⁹ James Urpeth, “‘Health’ and ‘Sickness’ in Religious Affectivity: Nietzsche, Otto, Bataille” in *Nietzsche and the Divine*, p. 231.

¹⁰⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §655.

provide the ‘true’ nature of things for there is no such ‘true’ nature. An implication of this understanding is that for Nietzsche, reality is neither ‘out there’, standing over against the subject, as suggested by realism, and nor is it constituted by human consciousness, as maintained by idealism. In Nietzsche’s thought, this insight entails the understanding that there are no facts but only interpretations¹⁰¹. This means that what we experience as reality is not a collection of facts. The notion of fact as conceived by realism has the connotations of fixation and stability, and for Nietzsche, this is already the product of a certain perspective which is projected into existence. Nietzsche also criticizes the opposite understanding, i.e., idealism, which maintains that the categories of human reason are in perfect correspondence with reality itself. However, as I explained above (3.1), for Nietzsche, no legitimate grounds can be found so as to maintain that the world is constructed in accordance with our rational categories, nor does the world follow the course of our rational categories, which only serve the self-preservation of the human species.

3.4 The Dissolution of Anthropocentrism

In the previous sections, I have discussed the significant aspects of Nietzsche’s critique of anthropomorphic conceptions of nature along with the Nietzschean notions of will to power and perspectivism with respect to how they operate in relation to the basic assumptions of Platonism. In the following, I will attempt to draw out the implications of these points and to state the conclusions that may be drawn from the aforementioned notions with respect to the decentering of the human being.

Firstly, in my view, Nietzsche’s idea that perspectivism and interpretation are intrinsic to the will to power has important implications with respect to the alleged ontological superiority of the human being granted to it based on some of its features. As I said above, for Nietzsche, *everything* is will to power, and there is nothing outside the will to power. If we remind ourselves of Nietzsche’s two insights that all phenomena are produced by the forces within will to power, and that the metaphysical line which used to guarantee the absolute distinctions between

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, §481.

phenomena and their allegedly extra-phenomenal origins is gradually beginning to show its illegitimacy with the death of God, we can conclude that any anthropocentric hierarchy is no longer sustainable. This is due to the fact that anthropocentric hierarchies rest on the fundamental assumption that human being has ‘extra-natural’ features based on which it is granted ontological superiority. However, the thought of the will to power gathers human being back into the world of becoming from a world of fixed hierarchies. This suggests that all ‘extra-natural’ features of human being are the products of certain drives within will to power. As an example, I would briefly like to discuss Nietzsche’s position on thinking as a physiological phenomenon¹⁰². For Nietzsche, life, as a plurality of forces, can be thought as linked together by the phenomenon of nutrition that is common to these forces¹⁰³, and, “in order to accomplish nutrition, beings must be capable of sensibility, evaluation, assimilation, elimination, and hence, be capable of thinking”¹⁰⁴. For Nietzsche, from the perspective of life, thinking is a relation between forces, and he traces it back even into the inorganic world, in its primitive form. Based on this, it can be concluded that thinking, which has traditionally been conceived as the unique capacity of human beings, and which has guided the establishment of anthropocentric (thus, fixed) hierarchies (e.g., the monotheistic model: God-‘Man’-Nature, or, Cartesian metaphysics: *res cogitans* vs. *res extensa*), is not unique to human being, but human being displays a rarer and more complex form of it in comparison to other beings due to its general conditions as a species¹⁰⁵.

At this point, it needs to be said that this does not mean that Nietzsche’s thought entails latent biological reductionism. Rather, his thought shows us the degrees on what can be called the scale of becoming. From Nietzsche’s perspective, there are no absolute hierarchies but only degrees of power, i.e., ascending and descending movements, simpler and more complex forms which are not diametrically opposed to each other, as in the case of a Platonistic distribution of values. With the thought of

¹⁰² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §36.

¹⁰³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §641.

¹⁰⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Volonté de Puissance*, 1:259, quoted in Michel Haar, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §§498-9.

the will to power and perspectivism, Nietzsche's understanding checkmates humanism by destroying its basic source, i.e., the Platonistic mode of evaluation which operates through artificial and life-denying hierarchies. When anthropomorphic projections are withdrawn by exposing their basic assumptions and artificial character, we are left with a radical plurality characterized by the will to power, as I have tried to explain above. But, from Nietzsche's perspective, it is not sufficient to show the agonistic character of existence. We still need to see the position of human being in this radical plurality so as to prevent a possible return of humanism based on a fictional understanding of human being. In other words, we still need to see human being from a multiplicity of perspectives and as a multiplicity of perspectives, i.e., as a piece of nature. For Nietzsche, this is necessary because:

When one speaks about humanity, there lies behind it the idea that humanism is that which separates and distinguishes humankind from nature. But in reality, there is no such separation: the 'natural' qualities and those called specifically 'human' are inextricably entwined together. Human being, in its highest and noblest powers is entirely nature ...¹⁰⁶

Based on the discussions above, in the next chapter, I will investigate the final step of Nietzsche's overcoming of humanism, which consists in human being's renaturalization according to this new understanding of nature as will to power. In other words, so far, we have seen certain aspects of Nietzsche's dehumanization of the world, but, although it may sound strange, we still need to see the dehumanization of the human being. This will require both genealogical and physiological analyses of human being from Nietzsche's perspective. In carrying these out, I will also attempt to investigate the connections between animality, human being, and the promise of the overhuman.

¹⁰⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Homer's Contest*, quoted in: R.J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and his Philosophy*, p.74.

CHAPTER 4

THE RENATURALIZATION OF HUMAN BEING

In this chapter, I will investigate the final aspect of Nietzsche's overcoming of humanism, which, broadly speaking, consists of his interpretation of the human being without the presumptions and values associated with the two-world theory. In the previous chapters, we have seen how Nietzsche's thought provides a possibility of getting rid of the anthropocentric (thus metaphysical) interpretations of existence with his physiological and genealogical analyses directed at their basic assumptions. Associated discussions, i.e., Nietzsche's critique of subjectivity (see 2.5) and the thought of perspectivism (see 3.3) have already established that Nietzsche sees human being as a multiplicity of unconscious drives or impulses, driven by the will to power. These discussions helped us to understand that Nietzsche's thought does not interpret human existence as part of a fixed – and anthropocentric – ontological hierarchy but of ongoing impersonal and dynamic processes within will to power. However, we still need to see what is meant by seeing human being in terms of will to power. In the following sections, I will elaborate Nietzsche's renaturalization of human being which, in my view, not only gets rid of the humanistic interpretation of human being but also opens up the possibility of overcoming human being itself towards a stronger and more affirmative species, a possibility found in the promise of Nietzsche's overhuman.

4.1 The Sense of Renaturalization

Firstly, it needs to be said that *renaturalization*, as a term, is not found in Nietzsche's terminology. Instead, Nietzsche uses the expression 'naturalization' when he asks: "When may we begin to *naturalize* us humans with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?"¹⁰⁷ If we consider Nietzsche's insight that every phenomenon is a product of the play of forces within will to power (3.2), which is to say that every phenomenon is immanent to will to power, then it has to be admitted that it is

¹⁰⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §109, translation modified.

impossible for anything to be unnatural in the strict sense of the word. That is, from a Nietzschean perspective, everything is always already natural; since there is no authority above life and there is no beyond to life, there is no supernatural authority over the natural processes happening by themselves. However, the sense of the term ‘natural’ changes according to the perspective from which nature is evaluated. As I explained above (3.1), ‘nature’ has been conceived in mostly anthropocentric and anthropomorphic, i.e., in metaphysical terms in nihilism. In this regard, Nietzsche, while deanthropomorphizing nature, also ‘naturalizes’ nature itself, which means that he uncovers and removes the metaphysical prejudices associated with it. Thus, Nietzsche’s naturalization of the human being is carried out over a ‘naturalized’ understanding of nature, this is why I think that the term ‘renaturalization’ better encapsulates this aspect of the thought in the context of Nietzsche’s renaturalization of the human being.

Secondly, it needs to be clarified that Nietzsche’s renaturalization is not a return to nature as is the case with romantic interpretations which call for such a return based on a metaphysical conception of nature associated with a better, simpler, healthier life. As Nietzsche says: “I talk about a ‘return to nature’ too, although it is not really a going-back as much as a *coming-towards*—towards a high, free, even terrible nature and naturalness, the sort of nature that plays, that *can* play, with great tasks ...”¹⁰⁸. Based on this quotation, it may be said that what distinguishes Nietzsche’s thought and gives sense to his naturalization is found in this movement of ‘coming-towards’. The call for a ‘return to nature’ implies that there is a break between nature and human being, which is considered to a great extent to be caused by the phenomenon of civilization, and that the problems associated with this break can be undone with a return to nature. Fundamentally differing from this understanding, Nietzsche’s ‘coming-towards’ does not imply a return to an ‘original’ state of affairs, but an affirmative attuning to what will to power produces in both the human and the non-human world, emphasizing the inseparability of nature and human being.

¹⁰⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, §48.

In this sense, Nietzsche's renaturalization is the practice of active nihilism (2.1) which, instead of producing life-denying idols, as is the case in reactive nihilism, affirms that becoming brings forth and is oriented towards the enhancement of possibilities contained in becoming. In the context of human being, this practice entails an investigation of human being from the perspective of life, with respect to its immanence to will to power. Understanding human being as immanent to will to power, which would mean seeing it in physiological terms and reintroducing human being into the contest of forces, values, and interpretations dictated by different qualities of will to power, not only constitutes one of the most important elements in the overcoming of the humanist interpretation of the world but also opens up a new promise, that of the overhuman (see 4.4, below), which has remained unknown in the reductionism of the anthropocentric and anthropomorphic interpretations. Nietzsche thinks that "[human being] is a rope, tied between beast and overhuman—a rope over an abyss"¹⁰⁹. In order to decipher this enigmatic insight, let us move on to the first stage of Nietzsche's renaturalization of the human being, which, in my view, can be addressed via the question of animality.

4.2 The Question of Animality

The question of animality, which refers to the relationship between humanity and animality, is one of the central questions guiding Nietzsche's interpretation of the human being and associated phenomena, such as the emergence of morality and civilization. Nietzsche approaches this question with the actual seriousness it deserves, providing a detailed analysis of the continuity between the human being and the animal. In nihilism, the animal is approached with a certain degree of contempt, since animals are associated with a lack of control of their bodily desires and, perhaps most importantly, with a certain lack of those capacities seen as defining human being, such as soul, reason and consciousness. In Christianity, we can see an instance of the culmination of this contempt for animals in the interpretation of the serpent as the being which initiated the chain of events that resulted in human being's fall. Another instance can be found in the medieval

¹⁰⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 'Prologue', §4.

depictions of the devil as a beast, seducing human being to sinfulness. Even in non-religious, evolutionist interpretations of existence, those in which human being is interpreted in biological terms, the animal is characterised by its allegedly clear-cut distinction from human being, such as the idea of progress (see 2.4).

Humanism, as an interpretation of existence perpetuating the nihilistic paradigm in the epoch of the death of God (see 2.4), is not separable from the previous instances of nihilism with respect to its approach to the question of the animal. Granting the human being an ontological superiority over other living beings, humanism considers animals to be inferior to human being since they lack the capacities of rationality and self-consciousness based on which the human being is positioned at the centre of existence. In my view, humanism to a great extent remains silent about the animal origins of the human being, and puts emphasis on the human mode of being with the underlying assumption that the continuity between human and animal existences is not worth considering. On this matter, Nietzsche maintains that it is a fundamental error that human being placed itself in a “false order of rank in relation to animals and nature”¹¹⁰. In this regard, Nietzsche’s thought provides us with a detailed understanding of the continuity between the human being and the animal, dissolving the artificial distinction introduced between the two by nihilism:

We have become more modest in every way. We no longer derive human being from ‘the spirit’ or the ‘deity’; we have placed it back among the animals. We consider it the strongest animal because it is the most cunning: its spirituality is a consequence of this. On the other hand, we oppose the vanity that would raise its head again here too—as if human being had been the great hidden purpose of the evolution of the animals. Human being is by no means the crown of creation: every living being stands beside it on the same level of perfection. And even this is saying too much: relatively speaking, human being is the most bungled of all the animals, the sickliest, and not [any other] one has strayed more dangerously from its instincts. But for all that, it is of course the more *interesting* ... As regards the animals, Descartes was the first to have dared, with admirable boldness, to understand the animal as *machina*: the whole of our physiology endeavors to prove this claim. And we are consistent enough not to except human being, as Descartes still did: our knowledge of human being today goes just as far as we understand it mechanistically.¹¹¹

In this quotation, in my view, the first thing that needs to be discussed is Nietzsche’s emphasis on modesty while distinguishing human beings from animals. Nietzsche’s active nihilism does not seek the origin of a phenomenon in any transcendent

¹¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §115.

¹¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, §14.

authority whatsoever, and thus, for Nietzsche, interpreting human being with reference to a transcendent point of reference is not only illegitimate but also a symptom of nihilism. This is due to the fact that traditional distinctions between animals and human beings depend on certain idealizations of human phenomena such as consciousness and reason in such a way that they are granted constitutive power. That is, in the anthropocentric tradition, the humanness of human beings is derived from idealizations of human capacities which are in fact merely bodily functions, according to Nietzsche. In this regard, Nietzsche makes a radical move and sets a task for philosophy, which is “to translate human being back into nature”, in contrast to the metaphysicians who tell human being “you are more, you are higher, you are of different origin”¹¹². In my view, this task necessitates that we understand human being’s animality.

As can be seen in the quotation from *The Anti-Christ* above, it is clear that for Nietzsche, human being is an animal among others. Zarathustra says “He who has knowledge walks among human beings *as* animals”¹¹³. However, in order better to see in what sense the human being belongs to animality, I think we first need to understand Nietzsche’s evaluation of the animal. Nietzsche associates the animal with perfection and innocence¹¹⁴. Yet this perfection should not be understood as an idealized state; rather, in my view, Nietzsche’s praise of animals has to do with the level of coordination their will to power displays. Animals display more harmony in their relations with their environment, and for Nietzsche, this can be seen in the fact that they do not need to develop consciousness: consciousness is “the symptom of a relative imperfection of the organism, it means trying, groping, blundering—an exertion which uses up an unnecessary amount of nervous energy. We deny that anything can be done perfectly as long as it is still done consciously”¹¹⁵. This is a very radical move if we take into account the overvaluation of consciousness by both religiously-based and secular anthropocentric instantiations of nihilism.

¹¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §230.

¹¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part II, ‘On the Pitying’, p. 200.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Part I, ‘On Chastity’, p. 166.

¹¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, §14.

For Nietzsche, the higher level of coordination displayed by animals can be attributed to the phenomenon he calls “active forgetfulness”¹¹⁶. Nietzsche does not think that forgetfulness is a lack or deficiency; rather, for him, it is more essential than memory, and an actual power. As he says:

Forgetting is no mere *vis inertiae* as the superficial imagine; it is rather an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression, that is responsible for the fact that what we experience and absorb enters our consciousness as little while we are digesting it ... as does the thousandfold process, involved in physical nourishment.¹¹⁷

This active forgetfulness constitutes a significant aspect of animal life. Due to their powerful forgetfulness, animal organisms can operate smoothly; the forces by which they are constituted are not interrupted by any memory, and their will to power can discharge its energy or incorporate what is useful for them without any of these operations entering into consciousness. That is, the mechanism of active forgetfulness allows an organism to function without internal disruptions, caused either by the functioning of inner and smaller-scale processes such as those of organs or by any memory that is able to disrupt the coordination of physiological forces. In my view, animal forgetfulness has to do with Nietzsche’s other emphasis concerning animal life, which is the animal’s innocence. Since their forgetfulness allows them to discharge their energy as an immediate reaction to external forces, animals display a lesser degree of reactivity in contrast to human beings. In other words, animal anger is not transformed into hatred, which is not a true reaction but the enduring image of a reaction, of a vengeance deferred for an indefinite time, as is the case with slaves (see 1.1 and 2.5). In animals, the absence of this reactive deferral allows them to act as they are, as beings innocent in their wildness.

In this sense, Nietzsche’s project of renaturalization aims to restore this animal innocence for the human being and to rediscover human being as an animal among others. Nietzsche’s crucial insight on this matter is that all apparently human phenomena, even those of civilization, which has been considered by the anthropocentric tradition as a justification for human being’s absolute difference in contrast to the animal world, ultimately refer to human being’s animality. To show

¹¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, I, §1.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I, §1.

this, as I will elaborate in the next section, Nietzsche employs a genealogical analysis which reveals the processes in which the human animal is humanized, losing its animal innocence to become a beast of guilt and burden. That is, instead of approaching human phenomena from a human perspective, Nietzsche evaluates them from the perspective of life, and, in doing so, emphasizes a self-happening and a very complex process of humanization, throughout which the human animal is humanized. In the next section, I will investigate this process of humanization with respect to Nietzsche's critique of civilization in order to show how, from Nietzsche's perspective, human being has remained an ambiguous animal throughout history, oscillating between docility and brutality.

4.3 The Question of the Human Animal: Civilization vs. Culture

Nietzsche's understanding of the human being as an ambiguous animal can be seen in his formulation "human being is the as yet undetermined animal"¹¹⁸. Such a formulation is important in the sense that it does not impose a definition on the human being in contrast to the metaphysical tradition which has sought to anchor human being to fixed definitions. Nietzsche does not think that humankind represents a homogeneous whole, for him, "it is an inextricable multiplicity of ascending and descending life processes"¹¹⁹. In this sense, the question of the human animal is an open-ended question, and that Nietzsche evades providing a definition for human being can be seen as a deliberate emphasis on human being's essential ambiguity as an animal. The reason for this ambiguity can be found in Nietzsche's insight that humanization is an ongoing process which has been produced by multiple tendencies that discharge themselves in different ways, a process in which human beings have become "the most interesting animals"¹²⁰.

In his genealogical analysis of the emergence of this process, Nietzsche draws our attention to a turning point in human prehistory, which is the emergence of the first

¹¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §62.

¹¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §339.

¹²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, §14.

social formations. This was a drastic change for the human animal, because for the first time its animal instincts encountered constant inhibition:

The situation that faced sea animals when they were compelled to become land animals or perish was the same as that which faced these semi-animals, well adapted to the wilderness, to war, to prowling, to adventure: suddenly all their instincts were disvalued and 'suspended'... They felt unable to cope with simplest undertakings; in this new world they no longer possessed their former guides, their regulating, unconscious and infallible drives: they were reduced to thinking, inferring, and reckoning, ... to their 'consciousness', their weakest and most fallible organ!¹²¹

As can be seen in this quotation, these new conditions in which human beings found themselves resulted in a change in their physiological economy. Before the emergence of society, human being's animal instincts remained uninhibited, that is, their unconscious drives were less constrained to discharge their energy in comparison to life within the limits of social formations. These social formations emerged as structures of domination where powerful individuals, packs of "blonde beasts of prey", those who display tremendous physical strength, an ability to command, shape and organize dominated the rest of the population which displayed herd-like tendencies¹²². For Nietzsche, these blond beasts, who did not know any consideration except for discharging their strength, can be compared to artists in their recklessness towards their material¹²³. That is, their terribleness is a form-giving power which gives shape to herd-like tendencies that would remain formless if unchallenged by external forces more powerful than themselves.

In Nietzsche's thought, what enables the establishment of such a structure of domination can be understood with reference to an aspect of Nietzsche's ontology of will to power. According to Nietzsche, forces, when they encounter each other, engage in a strife in which they discharge their energy to overcome each other. The stronger force overpowers the weaker one, and they become involved in a temporary structure of domination. In this structure, the weaker force is not utterly destroyed; that is, it keeps a certain element of resistance but becomes incorporated by the stronger one and serves the new structure as a function of the stronger force. In other

¹²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, II, §16.

¹²² *Ibid.*, II, §17.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, II, §17.

words, they are engaged in a relationship of commandment and obedience. Being inhibited, the weaker force is unable to discharge its energy towards the stronger, and, as a result, this force turns against itself, discharging its energy on to itself, since, for Nietzsche it is impossible for a force not to express itself, if we understand force as driving, willing, and effecting¹²⁴.

From the perspective of commandment and obedience explained above, dominated by the tremendous power expressed by the blond beast, the animal drives of the weak undergo a process of “internalization”¹²⁵. This internalization can be understood as a result of forces turning inwards, against themselves. In such a condition, they become internalized, finding subterranean paths to express themselves, and discharging their energy within the organism. Nietzsche traces the emergence of human being’s interiority back to this phenomenon of internalization, saying that “human being first developed what was later called its ‘soul’” associating it with human animal’s becoming an interesting animal¹²⁶. In this sense, what is later elevated to the most valued aspect of human being in Christianity, the soul, can be understood as a product of this new configuration attained by the physiology of the weak, a configuration which signifies the human animal’s becoming-reactive.

Due to the fundamental difference of constitution between the blond beasts and the herd, they develop completely different sets of values. In their relations of commandment and obedience, the blond beast signifies the noble type whereas the herd stands for the slavish type. These two types produce fundamentally different sets of values due to the qualitative difference in their will to power. The noble value judgments, according to Nietzsche, “presupposed a powerful physicality, a flourishing, abundant, even overflowing health, together with that which serves to preserve it: war, adventure, hunting, dancing, war games, and in general all that involves vigorous, free, joyful activity”¹²⁷. They display an active will to power, and find joy in overcoming resistances, they act out their reactions and are characterized

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, §13.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, II, §16.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, II, §16.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, I, §7.

by a powerful animal forgetfulness which enables them to act without an enduring hatred towards others. The noble establish a firm order of rank between themselves and the weak, affirming themselves and all that is associated with physicality as the good. In this strict order of rank, they see the weak from a certain distance and value them as lowly, bad, unfortunate, unhappy, i.e., with value judgments that do not reflect any hatred but a certain contempt¹²⁸. On the other hand, the slaves, as I explained above (1.2, 2.5), are characterized by their reactivity and produce value judgments out of their condition of *ressentiment*. They firstly posit the noble as evil and only then see themselves – and whoever is not like the noble – as the good, interpreting their weakness as goodness. Slaves desire that their masters, who are like beasts of prey in their wildness and cruelty, be tamed, they want their masters like themselves, harmless, therefore ‘good’.

In Nietzsche’s thought, it is in this distinction of the noble and the slavish modes of evaluation where we find the roots of two opposing processes that have given sense to human history. These two processes are civilization and culture. To begin with, regarding this distinction, Vanessa Lemm suggests that “the antagonism between human and animal life forces is reflected in the antagonism between culture and civilization”¹²⁹. However, in my view, making an exclusive distinction between human and animal life forces as if they are fundamentally different is somewhat problematic, because such a distinction subtly overlooks the fundamental continuity between the animal and the human being, as suggested by Nietzsche’s thought. I would suggest that the distinction between civilization and culture does not rest on a distinction between human and animal life forces, as suggested by Lemm, but on qualitative and quantitative differences between active and reactive forces, which characterize noble and slavish tendencies. With respect to their quantitative difference, according to Nietzsche, weakness is a symptom of descending life whereas strength is a characteristic of ascending life. This quantitative difference between weakness and strength produces a qualitative difference, because their relations of commandment and obedience affect their interpretation and evaluation of

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, I, §2.

¹²⁹ Vanessa Lemm, *Nietzsche’s Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*, p. 10.

their environment, that is, active will to power and reactive will to power produce fundamentally different values, giving different senses to the process of humanization.

According to Nietzsche, culture and civilization are two phenomena that represent two fundamentally different tasks. As he says:

The highpoints of culture and civilization lie far apart: one should not be misled by the abysmal antagonism between culture and civilization. The great moments of culture and civilization have always been, morally speaking, times of corruption; and conversely the epochs of willed and forced animal taming ('civilization') of the human being have been times of intolerance of the spiritual and most bold natures. What civilization wants is something different what culture wants: maybe the opposite.¹³⁰

In this quotation, we can see that Nietzsche associates the phenomenon of civilization with animal taming. Civilization is a process in which the healthy animal forgetfulness of the human animal is interrupted by the imposition of a memory on it, since this type of forgetfulness as displayed by the nobility is harmful for the task of civilization. At this point, it needs to be said that civilization is not a human project in the strict sense, that is, it is not calculated and carried out by any agency. Rather, it can be understood as an event that happens in life itself, produced by unconscious forces within will to power.

Civilization operates for the extirpation of animal instincts which constitute the human animal, and its effects are the weakening of human being's animal instincts. This process emerged concomitant to the establishment of the first social formations, which I explained in the previous paragraphs, and has had its own high-points and low-points depending on the intensification of ascending and descending life processes. Under the influence of civilization, human being's animal instincts and animal forgetfulness are weakened through the mechanisms of humanization. These mechanisms, in my view, operate on two levels. "Mnemotechnics"¹³¹, the technique of breeding a memory, is the exertion of physical force upon the human animal to extricate its animal recklessness, and as a result of this mechanism the human animal develops a memory, through which its instincts are forced to find subterranean paths

¹³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, 13:16 [10]. Quoted in Vanessa Lemm, *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*, p. 11.

¹³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, II, §3.

and become weakened. For Nietzsche, inflicting pain has been the most efficient technique to create a memory in an essentially forgetful animal, because “only that which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory”¹³². On the other hand, the war against animal instincts has another, more subtle mechanism which operates on the level of values: moralization. Moralization has operated along with physical punishment, resulting in the depreciation of noble values which are affirmative of human being’s animal instincts, i.e., its physical nature.

In order better to see how this mechanism operates, I think it is useful to look at Nietzsche’s critique of the Christian way of ‘improvement of humankind’:

People have always wanted to ‘improve’ human beings; for the most part, this has been called morality. But this one term [improvement] has stood for vastly different things. The project of *domesticating* the human beast as well as the project of *breeding* a certain species of human have both been called ‘improvements’: only by using these zoological terms can we begin to express realities here ... To call the domestication of an animal an ‘improvement’ almost sounds like a joke to us. Anyone who knows what goes on in a zoo will have doubts whether beasts are ‘improved’ there. They become weak, they become less harmful, they are *made ill* through the use of pain, injury, hunger, and the depressive affect of fear. – The same thing happens with domesticated people who have been ‘improved’ by priests. In the early Middle Ages, when the church basically a zoo, the choicest specimens of the ‘blond beast’ were hunted down everywhere ... [such a being] had turned into a ‘sinner’ ... [it] lay sick, miserable, full of malice against [itself], hating the drive for life, suspicious for everything that was still strong and happy.¹³³

As can be seen in this quotation, the human animal began to see itself as a moral being, a ‘sinner’, only after very long and painful processes of physical and psychological exposure to suffering. Under the influence of civilization, the human animal became sickly and full of guilt for its own animality through the dreadful mnemotechnics employed in this process. In this regard, Christianity can be seen as the ‘high-point’ of civilization, which can also account for Nietzsche’s fierce attacks against Christianity. The process of civilization, which culminates in Christianity, shows itself as a twofold process: on the one hand, it tames and domesticates the blond beast, the reckless human animal, and, on the other hand, out of this human animal, it breeds a herd-like species which feels guilty for what it is, distancing itself from its animal nature.

¹³² *Ibid.*, II, §3.

¹³³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, ‘Improving’ Humanity’, §2.

In this regard, the breeding aspect of civilization operates on the level of values. Moralization cultivates those values which emphasize the allegedly non-animal features of the human being attained throughout the same process as a result of domestication, which can be seen in the Christian values (1.2). In my view, the values which emerged as a result of the replacements that occur in the epoch of the death of God (2.4), i.e., the values of humanism, overlap with the breeding aspect of civilization. Overvaluing phenomena such as self-consciousness, rationality, and emphasizing human being's moral responsibility according to the subjectivistic model (2.5), humanism belongs to the breeding aspect of civilization which produces human beings that are forgetful of their animality. As a result of the cultivation of these values, the concept 'humanity' has attained a sense that excludes animality: "‘Humanity’.—We do not regard the animals as moral beings. But do you suppose the animals regard us as moral beings?—An animal which could speak said: ‘Humanity is a prejudice of which we animals at least are free.’"¹³⁴

However, Nietzsche's thought provides us with a counter-process, i.e., culture, which signifies an affirmation of human being's animal nature. As Lemm puts it:

The task of culture is to free the human animal from the prejudices of civilization—that is, to lead the human animal beyond a moral and rational conception of its becoming toward the affirmation of life as inherently amoral, a-rational, and innocent.¹³⁵

In this sense, if we understand civilization as an attempt to overcome human being's animality, culture signifies an attempt to overcome human being's all-too-human character, towards the affirmation and enhancement of life. Culture is beyond life-denying morality, because its task is neither the domestication nor the breeding of a species that negates its animality in contrast to the moralizing effect of civilization. Yet, we should remind ourselves that the task of culture is not a hasty 'return' to nature. In my view, culture signifies a process in which animal instincts are intensified and strengthened, an affirmative stance towards existence which is

¹³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §333.

¹³⁵ Vanessa Lemm, *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*, p. 13.

characterized by active forces, which seek to discharge their energy outwardly, towards expenditure. The values cultivated by culture are, to use Nietzschean terminology, noble values, which emphasize the affirmation of life as a contest, as will to power, as becoming (3.2). In this sense, culture offers more possibilities for restoring life's innocence in its creation and destruction; and, in turn, for affirming human being as a product of will to power in all its transitoriness, without imposing any definite form on it.

From a Nietzschean perspective, I suggest that any imposition on human life that is based on a negation of life instead of its affirmation turns human being into a beast of burden. Under the influence of life-denying ideals, subject to the process of animal-taming, human animals have mostly become interesting beings to whom their own nature has seemed unbearable. In this sense, Nietzsche's thought, particularly his active nihilism, which entails the transvaluation of all values (1.4), promotes the process of culture in the sense that it cultivates affirmative values, enabling us to see human being without the prejudices of nihilism. Furthermore, Nietzsche provides us with the possibility of liberation in this regard:

What is the only teaching *we* can have? – That no one *gives* people their qualities, not God or society, parents or ancestors, not even *people themselves* ... *Nobody* is responsible for existing in the first place, or for the state or circumstances or environment they are in. The fatality of human existence cannot be extricated from the fatality of everything that was and will be. People are *not* the products of some special design, will, or purpose, they do *not* represent an attempt to achieve an 'ideal of humanity', 'ideal of happiness', or 'ideal of morality', – it is absurd to want to *devolve* human existence onto some purpose or another. We have invented the concept of 'purpose': there *are* no purposes in reality ... A person is necessary, a person is a piece of fate, a person belongs to the whole, a person only *is* in the context of the whole, – there is nothing that can judge, measure, compare, or condemn our being, because that would mean judging, measuring, comparing, and condemning the whole ... *But there is nothing outside the whole!*—The fact that nobody is held responsible anymore, that being is not the sort of thing that can be traced back to a *causa prima*, that the world is not unified as either a *sensorium* or a 'spirit', *only this can constitute the great liberation*, – only this begins to restore the *innocence* of becoming ...¹³⁶

This quotation can be interpreted in such a way that human existence and existence in general cannot be separated from each other, and affirming this belonging-together constitutes a significant aspect of Nietzsche's overcoming of anthropocentrism. For Nietzsche, affirmation makes sense only if it is an affirmation of the whole, and this entails affirming the transitoriness of all phenomena. In this regard, human being is

¹³⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 'The Four Great Errors', §8.

not the centre of existence but a part of it, subject to life's own internal dynamics. From a Nietzschean perspective, recognizing and affirming this truth does not make existence meaningless, rather, it opens up the possibility of discovering new meanings, values, and new modes of being for the human animal. Affirming the animal nature of human being is a necessary step in discovering what is promising about the human being, for, as Nietzsche holds, it can be "an episode, a bridge, a great promise"¹³⁷. In the final section of this chapter, I will investigate this promise in the context of Nietzsche's thought of the overhuman in relation to human being's self-overcoming.

4.4 The Riddle of the Overhuman

The thought of the overhuman, without doubt constitutes one of the most enigmatic aspects of Nietzsche's thought. A significant reason for this lies in the fact that the overhuman resists conceptualization, which is, from a Nietzschean perspective, another all-too-human way of making familiar what is – and perhaps must remain – unfamiliar. This unfamiliarity of the overhuman finds expression in Zarathustra, who teaches the overhuman, and of whom Nietzsche says: "Zarathustra feels himself to be the *highest type of everything that exists*; and when you hear how he [describes] this, you will stop looking for any similes or similarities to him"¹³⁸. It seems to be in vain to attempt to understand the overhuman by any sort of comparison between what is human and what belongs to the overhuman, since *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* separates the two by a tremendous distance: "At every moment here, humanity has been overcome, the idea of 'overhuman' has become the highest reality,—everything that was considered great about people lies infinitely far *beneath*..."¹³⁹

Firstly, this distance, or more precisely, the difference of altitude between the human and the overhuman raises the question of how to approach the latter. As Jill Marsden suggests, thinking the overhuman from a human perspective "is to employ the very kind of evaluative thinking that reduces otherness to familiar and predictable

¹³⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, II, §16.

¹³⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I Write Such Good Books', §6.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, §6.

patterns”¹⁴⁰. That is, such an attempt is bound to remain within the limitations of anthropomorphism, for it will necessarily reduce the overhuman to all-too-human terms. Perhaps this is why Zarathustra anticipates that the overhuman will be called devil even by the great human beings:

Verily, you who are good and just, there is much about you that is laughable, and especially your fear of that which has hitherto been called devil. What is great is so alien to your souls that the overhuman would be awesome to you in its kindness ... You highest human beings whom my eyes have seen, this is my doubt concerning you and my secret laughter: I guess that you would call my overhuman—devil.¹⁴¹

Then, how is it possible to conceive a phenomenon that is apparently inaccessible for human perspectives? In this regard, Marsden argues that the question is not how to approach the overhuman, but “how we could be approached *by* it”, since, in the context of Nietzsche’s thought, experience matters more than conceptualization¹⁴². This is due to Nietzsche’s emphasis on affectivity in contrast to conceptualization, because thinking, for Nietzsche, is a phenomenon essentially produced by the unconscious drives that operate affectively (see 3.3). Considering this, as Marsden explains, experiencing the overhuman does not mean taking up “an intellectual position”, rather, it has to do with forgetfulness¹⁴³. Forgetfulness, especially self-forgetfulness, contains the possibility of being approached and affected by what evades the self, since affects do not necessarily enter into consciousness (2.5). I will return to the matter of forgetfulness after discussing an aspect of the Nietzschean notion of incorporation which is important for us to be able to appreciate the thought of the overhuman.

As we saw before (3.3), for Nietzsche, it is unconscious drives which interpret external forces, and the phenomenon of incorporation is a vital process in which other phenomena are incorporated into the organism so that they become a part of it. In the context of knowing, incorporation can be understood as the internalization of thoughts and values which are taken up by the body and are able to affect and

¹⁴⁰ Jill Marsden, “Sensing the Overhuman”, *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 30, Autumn 2005, p. 104.

¹⁴¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part: II, ‘On Human Prudence’, p. 256.

¹⁴² Jill Marsden, “Sensing the Overhuman”, p. 106.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

transform the course of physiological processes. In this regard, Nietzsche associates health and strength with the capability of enduring the truth: “How much truth can a spirit *tolerate*, how much truth is it willing to *risk*? This increasingly became the real measure of value for me. Error (– the belief in the ideal –) is not blindness, error is *cowardice ...*”¹⁴⁴. This quotation can be interpreted in such a way that health and strength are characterized by a capacity of incorporating truths that can be terrible, since, for Nietzsche, the incorporation of truth is a matter of enduring, risking possible transformation of the configuration of forces constituting the body, a matter of expenditure. As Nietzsche says:

The seriousness of our striving, though, is to understand everything as becoming, to deny ourselves as individuals, to look into the world through as *many* eyes as possible, to *live in* drives and activities *so as* to create eyes for ourselves, *temporarily* abandoning ourselves to life so as to rest our eye on it temporarily afterwards: to *maintain* the drives as the foundation of all knowing, but to know at what point they become the enemies of knowing: in sum, to *wait and see* how far *knowledge* and *truth* can be *incorporated*—and to what extent a transformation of [human being] occurs...¹⁴⁵

In this quotation, it can be seen that the thought of becoming entails self-abandoning. Abandoning the self might be interpreted as letting the body incorporate truth, to wait and see the consequent transformations which can pave the way for the body’s self-overcoming. That is, to return to the previous quotation, the incorporation of non-idealized truths (in contrast to metaphysical ones), such as the Dionysian truth (3.2), entails self-overcoming (which can possibly be achieved by self-abandoning), through which one is transformed, as the unconscious drives establish new relations among themselves.

For Nietzsche, the truth of eternal recurrence, which he considers as “the highest possible formula of affirmation”¹⁴⁶ and at the same time as “the most abysmal thought”¹⁴⁷, is one of such truths. The thought of eternal recurrence constitutes one of Nietzsche’s most complex insights, having implications far beyond the parameters of

¹⁴⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, ‘Preface’, §3.

¹⁴⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Notebook M III, I*, quoted in Keith Ansell-Pearson, “The Eternal Return of the Overhuman: The Weightiest Knowledge and the Abyss of Light”, *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 30, Autumn 2005, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, ‘Thus Spoke Zarathustra’, §1.

¹⁴⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part: III, ‘The Convalescent’, §1.

this thesis. Thus, in the following, I will address it only briefly and only in its relation to the promise of the overhuman. Zarathustra formulates this thought as follows:

‘Behold’, I continued, ‘this moment! From this gateway, Moment, a long, eternal lane leads backward: behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever can walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever can happen have happened, have been done, have passed by before? And if everything has been there before--what do you think, dwarf, of this moment? Must not this gateway too have been there before? And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it all that is to come? Therefore—itsself too? For whatever can walk—in this long lane out there too, it must walk once more. And this slow spider, which crawls in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway, whispering together, whispering of eternal things—must not all of us have been there before? And return and walk in that other lane, out there, before us, in this long dreadful lane—must we not eternally return?’¹⁴⁸

It can be seen that the thought of the eternal return signifies a very different temporality in contrast to the traditional conceptions of time in linear terms, that is, as a line consisting of subsequent moments. The eternal return, on the other hand, signifies an insight that since becoming has neither a beginning nor an end, and since it does not proceed towards the achievement of an ideal in the sense of a *telos* (3.2), the conditions (intersections of forces) which have given way to a phenomenon will recur and produce the *same* phenomenon infinitely many times.

Its implication for the human being is that one will live the same life, in exactly the same manner, for infinitely many times, as told by Nietzsche’s demon:

This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything immeasurably 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 and over, and you with it, a dust grain of dust ... If this thought were to gain possession of you, it would change you, as you are, or perhaps crush you.¹⁴⁹

For Nietzsche, when encountered by such a radical thought, one can either affirm it as the most divine thought or curse the demon and deny it. Its affirmation demands one to be very well disposed towards life, because it promises the return not only of one’s own life, but of all of life *as it is*. In this sense, as Paul Loeb explains, the thought of the eternal recurrence cannot be affirmed by “mere animals”, for they

¹⁴⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part: III, ‘On the Vision and the Riddle’, §2.

¹⁴⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §341.

have no memory, they live in the present¹⁵⁰. Affirmation of the eternal recurrence entails a backward affirmation, and it requires a memory of the past, which animals do not have. This thought can only be affirmed in the full sense if one has a memory and at the same time the power to suspend this memory so that one can still live in a future-oriented manner. In this regard, according to Loeb, this thought cannot be affirmed by some human animals either, since their No-saying towards life and their own lives prevents them from “suspending their forgetting of this experience [of eternal recurrence]”¹⁵¹.

At this point, it is useful to remind ourselves of Nietzsche’s understanding that memory, instilled through pain, is an illness in the same way “as pregnancy is an illness”¹⁵². This suggests that human memory bears a promise for the future, as in the case of a mother and child. Having attained a memory, the human animal has also attained the temporality of the past, through which the possibility of backwards affirmation is opened up. Affirming-backwards means unburdening the past, getting rid of the responsibility of guilt, affirming the necessity of the ‘having-been’, letting go of the millennia of sickness and the spirit of vengefulness, seeing oneself as a piece of fate in the eternal course of things that exceeds the human animal. Although it is not as easy as it sounds, to see oneself in the middle of the eternal past and eternal future and as a part of their eternal recurrence is to experience the beginning of Zarathustra’s “great noon”, where “shadows of God cease to darken” the world¹⁵³. It is the beginning of the human animal’s liberation from all-too-human values, since for Nietzsche the shadows of God signify such values (2.2).

The affirmation of eternal recurrence can also open up the possibility of a new health and strength if the human animal risks incorporating such a thought, which means its willing self-overcoming by risking the destructive transformations it entails, as explained above. It is in this possibility that we encounter the thought of the

¹⁵⁰ Paul S. Loeb, “Finding the *Übermensch* in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morality*”, *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 30, Autumn 2005, p. 89.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁵² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, II, §19.

¹⁵³ Paul S. Loeb, “Finding the *Übermensch* in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morality*”, *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 30, Autumn 2005, p. 89

overhuman as a promise. Affirming backwards means to affirm one's animal past and therefore one's animality, which enables the return of animal forgetfulness. An animal forgetfulness that is able to forget human memory, to abandon the self, to be guided by one's drives and senses would mean to attain a new health, a second and more powerful health. This abandoning of the self implies a constant self-overcoming, letting oneself be transformed. As Nietzsche says, when encountered by such a thought "at every moment ... humanity has been overcome"¹⁵⁴. In relation to this idea, Marsden comments that "the reference to the overcoming of the human in every moment serves to underline the thought that it is only through the experience of the *eternal return* that a non-anthropomorphic, non-moral, non-humanist reality is encountered"¹⁵⁵. In such a reality, the overhuman does not appear as an ideal "but a name for constant overcoming of what is human"¹⁵⁶. That is, the overhuman does not represent an ideal to be attained in the future similar to the ideals of life-denying interpretations:

[The overhuman] is not an identity that the human may one day achieve. To view the overhuman as an ideal that will be realized at some point in the future is to attempt to position it within the value economy of the human, which means to accept time as 'given' and to conceive becoming in terms of being. It is only through the *experience* of overcoming that the 'concept' of the overhuman is realized.¹⁵⁷

What I said at the beginning of this chapter concerning the distance between the human and the overhuman now seems to contradict the points I made in the previous paragraphs concerning the relationship between the two when, based on Marsden's analysis, I suggested that the overhuman stands for the constant overcoming and abandoning of what is human. However, this apparent contradiction may disappear if we consider Nietzsche's description of the overhuman:

Verily, a polluted stream is human being. One must be a sea to be able to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean. Behold, I teach you the overhuman: it is this sea; in it your great contempt can go under.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra', §6.

¹⁵⁵ Jill Marsden, "Sensing the Overhuman", *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 30, Autumn 2005, p. 112.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁵⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 'Prologue', §3.

In my view, it is possible to interpret this pollution that characterizes the human being, according to Nietzsche, as its sickness contracted throughout the millennia of sickness under the influence of life-denying ideals. Only a tremendous health, a great well-being that remains beyond the reach of the human animal insofar as it fails to abandon its all-too-human character, and affirm itself as another stream within the flux of becoming, instead of a fixed entity in a universe of identities can renaturalize it. Yet, for this to happen, the human animal, as a stream, needs a new direction towards the flux of becoming in which its self-contempt can be redeemed. In this regard, the human and the overhuman are separated by a tremendous distance. However, Nietzsche implies the possibility that the human stream may be received by the sea of becoming. To abandon its alleged identity and to risk seeing itself in its transitoriness, as part of a flux, constitute the first and perhaps the most important step in its achievement of the great promise, i.e., the great health.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Discussions in the previous chapters have enabled us to see the salient aspects of Nietzsche's anti-humanist thought which emphasizes impersonal events and processes in contrast to the metaphysical, subjectivistic mode of thinking that is constituted by a set of anthropocentric and anthropomorphic values forged under the influence of nihilism. In the following, reminding ourselves of the outcomes of the investigations carried out in this thesis, I will discuss to what extent Nietzsche's critique of these values constitutes an overcoming of humanism.

In my view, Nietzsche's attempt at overcoming humanism cannot be separated from his later insight that "human being is something that must be overcome"¹⁵⁹. In this regard, Nietzsche's comprehensive critique of humanist values can be understood as an aspect of this broader insight into the necessity of the overcoming of human being. However, this insight should not be understood in misanthropic terms, since Nietzsche is not resentful against what is human. In fact, Zarathustra says that he loves human being¹⁶⁰. Nietzsche's opposing feelings for the human being, that is, his contempt for what is all-too-human and his love for the human being, seem to be paradoxical. Yet, if we remind ourselves of Nietzsche's insight that human being presents a promise for the future (4.4) if it can overcome its all-too-human character, it no longer seems to be a paradox. For Nietzsche, the value of humanity lies in its capacity of overcoming itself, towards a stronger and healthier mode of being in which life will no longer be condemned but celebrated. In this new mode of being, as suggested by the promise of the overhuman, both life and human being can be unburdened of the two and a half millennia of decadence. This is not an easy task, and Nietzsche acknowledges the possibility that in this attempt humanity might perish if it fails to incorporate the Dionysian truth (3.2, 4.4). Yet, from a Nietzschean

¹⁵⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part: I, 'On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions', p. 149.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Part: 1, 'Zarathustra's Prologue', §2, p. 123.

perspective, this risk is worth taking: it provides the human being with a challenging resistance in the overcoming of which it can prove its value to itself, and perhaps can begin to liberate itself from its nihilistic self-loathing.

In this regard, Nietzsche's critique of humanism constitutes a significant first step in human being's self-overcoming. According to Nietzsche, this challenge will necessitate new values for the breeding of types through which this self-overcoming can enable itself. His affirmative iconoclastic stance (the hammer), which can be seen in his transvaluation of all values (1.4), can be seen as a genuine attempt to enable the conditions for the return of active forces which have been pushed to find subterranean paths throughout the process in which human being has forgotten its animality (4.3).

In my view, Nietzsche's critique of nihilism (2.1) and the death of God (2.2) are very important because these analyses enable us to see that what have been considered to be rather intellectual issues throughout the history of philosophy, such as the value granted to human being and to existence, are in fact much more serious ontological problems which have much deeper roots in life itself. Through these analyses, we have seen that subjectivism, which constitutes the core of humanism, grants the human being a false and perhaps dangerous ontological superiority with respect to both other life forms and human beings who do not display the capacities through which the subject is defined (2.5). These discussions showed that nihilism and anthropocentrism reinforce each other and perpetuate the paradigm constituted by life-denying values.

In Chapter 3, we saw how Nietzsche's thought of the will to power (or the Dionysian worldview, 3.2) provides a non-metaphysical interpretation of existence in contrast to the anthropomorphic conceptions of nature (2.1) which reinforce nihilism. With his thought of the will to power, Nietzsche not only overcomes these conceptions by attacking their common assumption of identity, but also provides a much more dynamic and productive interpretation of existence by emphasizing that life is a multiplicity that exceeds all-too-human interpretations of it. Nietzsche's thought of the will to power implies that the human being is neither the centre of existence nor

the crown of evolution, as anthropocentric and anthropomorphic interpretations suggest. Becoming has no *telos*, it does not have a beginning, nor does it have an end, but it consists of self-happening processes constituted by unconscious forces driven by will to power, towards self-growth (3.2, 3.3).

In this regard, Nietzsche's thought provides us with a genuine non-humanistic interpretation of the human being outside the nihilistic paradigm. Nietzsche affirms human being's animality (4.2) and sees it in terms of will to power, as a multiplicity of unconscious drives, in contrast to its metaphysical conceptions which conceive the human being solely in terms of its rational and cognitive capacities. Also, with genealogical analyses, Nietzsche traces the values which paved the way for such an interpretation to the transformations which have taken place in human being's libidinal economy throughout the process of civilization in which the human animal has developed a memory and simultaneously become forgetful of its animality (4.3).

Based on the discussions above, in my view, through the deanthropomorphization of nature and the renaturalization of human being from the perspective of life, Nietzsche's thought not only overcomes the humanistic interpretations of existence but also opens up new possibilities concerning the future of human being with the promise of the overhuman. However, as I said before, this depends on the human animal's capacity for risking the incorporation of the Dionysian truth. In this sense, Nietzsche's thought can be considered as Zarathustra's "great noon" in the history of thinking, and deserves more extensive attention.

Finally, leaving all strictly textual work behind, I would briefly like to take a closer look at our contemporary mode of being to remind ourselves in more general terms of what we, inhabitants of the epoch of the death of God, have forgotten throughout the two and a half millennia of nihilism, and to get a sense of why Nietzsche still matters after more than two hundred years. In my view, one of the most important things which human being has forgotten in nihilism is what it really means to *become* more. Under the influence of the idols of self-preservation, this has come to mean merely to *have* more, which can be seen in the present dominion of the capitalist model that dictates consumption for the sake of more consumption, acquisition of

capital for the sake of more capital, etc. In the contemporary humanistic paradigm, many human beings feel themselves to be liberated from the ‘old’ dogmas, feeling themselves too dignified to be under any sort of religious authority. Yet, do not the ideals of the common good, the national will, order, rule of law, security, economic growth – the list can be extended – constitute our new Pantheon? Are contemporary state mechanisms less abusive and less arbitrary than the old gods with their bolts of lightning and fire? In terms of the value given to them, do not global stock markets resemble temples, in which economists, like priests, declare the sacrifices to be made in order to appease the gods of the free market?

At the moment, it is true that human beings know many things. But what is the value of our knowledge with respect to our mode of being? It may improve the living conditions of many human beings, but does it provide us with a more meaningful and enhanced mode of being? Thanks to robotics, we are now able to produce machines that can dance, but I am afraid we still do not know what it means to dance. We are able to travel with lightning speed, yet, we have forgotten what it means to be on a journey, with light feet. We are yet far from Zarathustra’s laughter, and perhaps, in order to be able to hear it, we need to develop new ears. To *become* more, that is, to grow, perhaps what is required as a first step is to discover a new sense of richness by measuring it qualitatively rather than quantitatively. To see existence as an excess, as a tremendous richness in all its creativity and destructivity instead of a source of resources for human appropriation, to enhance the possibilities in life, to conceive human existence as a part of the flux and to expend oneself in the flux—these are no easy tasks that can be achieved in the blink of an eye since life operates according to its own internal necessities and dynamics. Yet, perhaps, something is still possible for us to do, and it can constitute a significant step towards a more meaningful human existence – to risk our comfort and celebrate our insignificance in an ever expanding cosmos.

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TURKISH SUMMARY

Genel olarak, Nietzsche'nin hümanizm anlayışı insan-merkezcilik ve insan-benzercilik nosyonlarına atıfta bulunmaktadır. Bu nosyonlar Nietzsche'nin pek-insanca dediği paradigmayı besleyen ve büyük ölçüde örtüşen iki temel perspektif olarak görülebilir. İnsan-merkezcilikten kasıt, insan ve insana ait olana en yüksek değerin verildiği perspektiftir. Diğer taraftan, insan-benzercilik, varoluşun insana ait terimlerle anlaşıldığı, insan dünyasının insan olmayan dünyaya yansıtıldığı perspektif anlamına gelmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, insan-merkezcilik daha çok değerler seviyesinde işlev görmektedir ve belli bir insan üstünlüğü nosyonu ile karakterizedir; insan-benzercilikte ise varoluş yorumlarının temeli katı bir biçimde insana ait olan görüngülerden türetilmektedir.

Kanımca, Nietzsche'nin hümanizmi aşma girişimini anlamak için Nietzsche'nin hümanizmi oluşturan kuvvetler ve olaylara getirdiği tanıyı anlamak gerekir. Nietzsche'nin eleştiri getirdiği hiçbir görüngüyü salt entelektüel bir mesele olarak görmediğini söylemek yanlış olmaz. Nietzscheci eleştirinin yöneldiği hedefler temeli köklü ontolojik sorunlarda yatan problemlerdir. Bu bakımdan, Nietzsche hümanizmi asla yalnızca entelektüel bir konu olarak ele almamakta, nihilizm ve Tanrı'nın ölümü olayları ile yakından ilgili olan çok daha köklü ontolojik sorunların bir semptomu olarak görmektedir. Nietzsche'ye göre, Batı metafizik tarihi boyunca nihilizm reaktif kuvvetlerin etkisi altında üç aşamadan geçmiş, her aşamada başka bir anlam kazanmıştır. İlk aşamada, hakikate yaşamdan daha yüksek bir değer atfeden ve gerçekliğin görünen haliyle yetinmeyen hakikat istenci, görüngülerin ardında bir hakikat dünyası olduğu şüphesine kapılır. Bu ilk aşamada, söz konusu istenç olanı olduğu gibi olumlamaktan ziyade varlıkların kaynağının ya da zemininin o varlıkların ötesinde bir ilkede bulunması gerektiği şeklinde özetlenebilecek bir perspektife sahiptir. Nietzsche'ye göre bu tür bir değerlendirme kipi özünde yaşamı inkâr eden bir kiptir; çünkü yaşama ait olan geçicilik, fiziksellik, değişim, bozulma, sonluluk vb. gibi olguları 'gerçek olmadıkları' yönünde yorumlar. İlk aşamadaki hakikat istenci değişen, yok olan, geçici şeylerin gerçek olanı temsil edemeyeceğini,

çünkü gerçek olanın bozulmaz ve değiştirilemez olması, geçicilik gibi kusur olarak görülen niteliklerden muaf olması gerektiği şeklinde bir değerlendirmede bulunur.

Nietzsche için bu ilk aşama, değerlerin mantığın temel kurallarından biri olan üçüncünün olmazlığı yasasına göre hiyerarşik bir biçimde dağıtıldığı Platonizm ile karakterizedir. Ancak Nietzsche için Platonizmin Platon tarafından kaleme alınan metinleri aştığı belirtilmelidir. Platon'un zengin metinleri okur tarafından benimsenen hermenötik stratejiye bağlı olarak çok farklı şekillerde anlaşılabilir. Bu okumalar Platon'a ait metinlerin hem iç dinamiklerini hem de diğer metinlerle olan dışsal ilişkilerini detaylandırabilir. Fakat, Nietzsche'nin Platonizm kavramından kastı belli bir değerlendirme kipidir ve Platon'un metinlerini koşullandıran bir fenomen olarak görülebilir. Bir değerlendirme kipi olarak Platonizm, bir unsurun gerçek, ontolojik olarak üstün ve bu dünyanın 'ötesinde' bulunan bir gerçekler dünyasında var olduğu, diğer unsurun ise yalnızca bir görüngü, ontolojik olarak kusurlu ve bu yüzden bayağı olarak görüldüğü ikilikler koyutlayarak işlemektedir. Bu değerlendirme kipinin bir örneği Platon'un İdealar kuramında görülebilir. Bu kuramda, gerçek varlığı temsil eden İdealar yaşamın üzerine yerleştirilmiş olup görüngüler dünyasından bağımsız olarak var olmaktadır. İdealar gerçek varlık statüsünde oldukları için değiştirilemezler ve zaman ile mekânın dışındadırlar. Yani 'bu' dünyaya ait hiçbir görüngü tarafından koşullanmamışlardır ve koşullanamazlar. 'Bu' dünyada var olan görüngüler ise gerçek varlığı temsil eden İdeaların yalnızca kötü birer kopyasıdır, duyumsanabilen ve deneyimlenen tüm varoluş ontolojik olarak kusurludur ve bu yüzden bayağıdır. Yine, Nietzsche'ye göre, böyle bir perspektif yaşamı inkar eden bir perspektiftir, çünkü yaşamın odağını yaşamı tüm anlam ve değerden yoksun bırakacak şekilde yaşamın dışına yerleştirmektedir. İkiliklerle çalışan böylesi bir değerlendirme kipi insanı da birbirinden bağımsız olarak faaliyet gösteren ruh ve beden kavramları ile ikiye ayırmaktadır. İnsan ölçeğinde, beden ruhun hapisanesi olarak görülmüş, akıl ya da ruh ise İdeaların bilgisine erişebilme ihtimalini taşıdığı ve beden kısıtlamalarından kurtulduktan sonra tekrar ait olduğu yere, İdealar dünyasına geri döneceği için yüceltilmektedir. Nietzsche'ye göre, bu değerlendirme kipi daha sonra Hıristiyanlık tarafından miras alınmıştır. Hıristiyanlıkta Platonik İdealar tüm anlam ve değeri kendinde toplayan bir otorite

şeklinde anlaşılan bir Tanrı fikrine dönüşmüştür. Bu dönüşüm Platonizmin mantığını devam ettirerek kusursuz bir Tanrı karşısında kusurlu bir varoluş ikiliğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Nietzsche'nin halk için Platonizm olarak gördüğü Hıristiyanlıkta söz konusu değerlendirme kipi dinsel ve ahlaksal bir anlam kazanmıştır. Bu anlayışta, yaşama ait olan geçicilik, fiziksellik, acı çekme, bozulma vb. olgular yalnızca 'zahiri' olarak değil, aynı zamanda ortadan kaldırılması ya da örtbas edilmesi gereken 'şer' olgular olarak görülmektedir. Nietzsche'ye göre Hıristiyanlıkta insan bedeni de bu şeytanlaştırmadan nasibini almıştır. İnsan yaşamına içkin olan bedensel dürtüler 'günahkarlığa' davet eden ve bu yüzden yok edilmesi ya da yorumsal bir çözüm bulunması gereken dürtüler olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bu anlayışa göre bedensel dürtüler ruh ile özdeşleştirilen insanı hakikatten uzaklaştırmaktadır. Nietzsche için, böylesi bir perspektif yaşamın acıyı zorunlu kılan yıkıcı yönlerinden sürekli bir biçimde irrite olan reaktif bir güç istencinin ürünüdür. Bu güç istenci, acının ancak Platonik-Hıristiyan paradigmada yaşamın üzerine bir otorite olarak yerleştirilen ve katı bir şekilde hiyerarşik olarak düzenlendiği düşünülen bir evrenin merkezi düzenleyici ilkesi olarak işlev gören Hıristiyan Tanrı düşüncesinin otoritesi altında kurtuluş umuduyla katlanılabilir hale geldiği oldukça karmaşık bir yorumlama mekanizması üretmiştir. Bu durum, ikinci bölümde incelenen ve Ortaçağa ait bir kavram olan büyük varlık zinciri kavramında görülebilir.

Nihilizmin bu ilk aşamasında üretilen değerler Platonik-Hıristiyan paradigmayı oluşturmaktadır. İkinci aşamada, geliştirilen ve kendisine en yüksek değer atfedilen hakikat istenci, Platonik-Hıristiyan paradigma boyunca üretilen ideallerin yapaylığını açığa çıkarır. Duyuüstü dünya ve onunla bağlantılı değerler bu değerleri ilk aşamada üreten hakikat istenci tarafından inanılmaz kılınmıştır. Diğer bir deyişle, hakikat istenci birinci aşamanın aksine yeni değerler koyutmak yerine paradigmanın yüksek değerlerine tepki gösterir ve değerlerini aşındırır. Bu olayın gayri şahsi olarak anlaşılması önemlidir. Hakikat istencinin eriştiği bu yeni nitelik Nietzsche'nin düşüncesinde bizi nihilizmin üçüncü aşamasına götürmektedir. Nietzsche'ye göre nihilizmin üçüncü aşaması varoluşun anlamı ve değeri ile ilgili büyük bir hayal kırıklığı ve yorgunluk ile karakterizedir. Bu aşamada, görüngülere anlam ve değer kazandıran zemin çatlamaya başladıkça, hakikat istenci tüm değerlerin yanlış olduğu

ve anlam diye bir şeyin olmadığı yorumuna ulaşır. Platonik-Hıristiyan yorum varoluşa getirilen bir yorum olsa da, Batı metafizik tarihi boyunca *tek* yorum olarak görüldüğü için bu yorumun çözülmeye başlaması tüm varoluşun anlamsız ve değersiz olduğu ilüzyonunu ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Nietzsche'nin düşüncesinde, metafizik dünya yorumlarının merkezinin daha fazla sürdürülemez hale geldikçe zeminlerini kaybetmeye başladıkları bu olay Tanrı'nın ölümü olayıdır. Ancak, Nietzsche için Tanrı'nın ölümü hala devam etmekte olan ve anlamı henüz belirlenmemiş bir olaydır. Gayri şahsi bir olay olduğu için anlamı da gayri şahsi süreçler tarafından belirlenecektir. Bu olay hemen yeni bir değerlendirme ve yorumlama kipini beraberinde getirmez. Bunun yerine, nihilist eğilimleri Platonik-Hıristiyan paradigmanın merkezi bir örgütleyici prensip altında hiyerarşik bir yapı olarak kendisini sürdürebileceği bir dizi ikameye yönlendirir. Yeni ortaya çıkmaya başlayan bu merkez Nietzsche tarafından Tanrı'nın gölgesi olarak adlandırılır. Bunun anlamı, kanımca, Tanrı'nın ölümü evresinde ortaya çıkan öznel insan yorumu ve bağlantılı değerlerde bulunabilir. Bu evrede Platonik-Hıristiyan paradigmanın insan-merkezli enstantanesi Tanrı-merkezli enstantanesinin yerini almaktadır. Bu sav varlıkların nizamını düzenleyen merkezi aktörlük işlevinin belli bir insan yorumu (öznel insan yorumu) tarafından devralındığını öne sürer. Söz konusu ikame, öz-bilinç ve akıl gibi insanın sözde doğa-dışı özelliklerine en yüksek değer atfedilip, bu özelliklere dayanarak (Kartezyen bir düşünce modeline göre) insana diğer varlıklar karşısında ontolojik üstünlük bahşedilmesi şeklinde gerçekleşir. Böylesi bir anlayış hem insan dışındaki varoluşu hem de rasyonel olmadığı ölçüde insan varoluşunu öznenin operasyonel gücünün sınırsız olduğu bir operasyon alanına indirgemektedir. Rasyonalitenin en yüce değere yükseltilmesi insanların rasyonel kapasitelerine göre değerlendirilmelerine neden olmakta, irrasyonel eğilimler gösterenlerin ötekileştirilmelerine yol açmaktadır. İnsanın insanlığı bilişsel fenomenlerde aranmaktadır ve insan rasyonalite ve öz-bilinç nosyonları ile özdeşleştirilmiştir. Bu anlamda, Nietzsche'nin perspektifinden bakarak, hümanizm problemi şu şekilde özetlenebilir: Hümanizm varoluşu insan terimlerine indirgeyip insan ve insan dışındaki varoluş arasında yapay bir hiyerarşi

oluşturarak hem nihilist yapıyı hem de bu yapıyla bağlantılı değerleri devam ettirmektedir.

Nietzsche'nin bu problemi aşma girişiminin ilk adımı doğanın insan-benzercî bakış açısından kurtarılmasıdır. İnsan-benzercîlik insan-merkezciliği beslemektedir. Biraz daha açacak olursak, insan-benzercî varoluş yorumları insan-benzercîliğin sürdürülebileceği kavramsal çerçeveler sunar. Aynı zamanda, insan-merkezcî bakış da bu çerçeveye dayanarak insan-benzercîliği daha ileri taşır. Dolayısıyla her iki perspektif de metafiziği sürdüren perspektiflerdir. Bu karşılıklı beslemeyi engelleme, varoluşu nihilizmin metafizik yüklerinden kurtarma girişiminde Nietzsche dünyanın insan terimleri dışında yeniden değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini önermektedir. Doğanın yeniden değerlendirilmesi olarak adlandırılabilir bu girişimde, Nietzscheci eleştiri, insan-benzercî yani metafizik doğa anlayışlarının hem temel varsayımları ile hem de bu anlayışların mümkün kıldığı değerler ile angaje olmaktadır. Bu anlamda, Nietzsche'nin temel pozisyonu metafizik doğa anlayışlarının önceden verili özdeşlikleri varsaydıkları ve görüngülerin üretildiği muazzam derecede karmaşık, gayri şahsi ve kendiliğinden gerçekleşen süreçleri göz ardı ettikleri şeklinde formüle edilebilir. Nietzsche için dünya insan terimlerine indirgenemeyecek radikal bir çoğulluktur. Nietzsche'nin terminolojisinde bu çoğulluğu karşılayan kavram güç istencidir ve güç istenci düşüncesi Nietzsche'nin Diyonisosçu dünya görüşünün de özünü oluşturmaktadır. Güç istenci öz-gelişim itkisine atıfta bulunur ve bilinçsiz kuvvetlerin kendi öz-gelişimleri için mücadele ettikleri agonistik bir varoluşa işaret eder. Görüngüler böylesi bir varoluşta, kuvvetlerin kesişim noktalarında geçici olarak üretilmektedir. Nietzsche'ye göre güç istenci metafizik bir zemin olarak işlev görmemektedir, bundan ziyade tüm görüngülerin sonsuz bir şekilde oluşturuldukları ve yok edildikleri sürekli bir farklılaşmayı ima eder. Bu anlamda, Nietzsche'nin düşüncesinde, varoluş bir oluştur, başı ve sonu olmayan, farklılığın sürekli olarak üretildiği bir süreçtir. Güç istenci yaşamın üzerinde bir otorite değil, yaşama içkin bir kavramdır ve yaşamın üzerinde onu kontrol eden herhangi bir otorite yoktur. Nietzsche doğa yasaları kavramını da bu perspektiften reddeder; çünkü doğanın doğa yasalarını takip ettiği düşüncesi bu yasaların aşkın bir otorite tarafından

belirlendiğini ima etmektedir ve Nietzsche'ye göre bu anlayış insan-benzercisi olup nihilizmin bir uzantısıdır.

Nietzsche'nin felsefesinde perspektivizm ve yorumlama kavramları güç istencinin özsel bir yönünü oluşturur ve Nietzsche'nin hümanizmi aşma girişimi ile ilgili olarak önemli içerimlere sahiptir. Nietzsche'ye göre perspektivizm ve yorumlama yaşama içkin fenomenlerdir. Yaşam içerisinde, güç istenci tarafından hareket ettirilen kuvvetler gelişmek için verdikleri mücadelede varoluşu kendi perspektiflerine göre yorumlarlar. Nietzsche için gelişme perspektif ve yorumlamayı gerektirir, çünkü her bir kuvvet kendi nüfuz alanını genişletme mücadelesinde kendi çevresini yorumlayarak diğer kuvvetleri kendine katarak bir işlevi haline getirir ya da onlara direnir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında algı asla nötr değildir. Algı, sürekli yorumlama faaliyeti içerisinde bulunan bilinçsiz itkilerin bir ürünüdür. Bu anlamda, Nietzsche'nin perspektifinden, yani güç istenci perspektifinden baktığımızda, hümanist varoluş yorumları kendilerini kendini-koruma (*self-preservation*) içgüdüsünün bir ürünü olarak gösterirler. Nietzsche'ye göre dünyanın rasyonel kategorilerimize göre inşa edilmiş olduğunu ya da rasyonel kategorilerimizin işleyişini takip ettiğini öne sürmeye imkan verecek hiçbir meşru zemin yoktur. Rasyonel kategorilerimiz yalnızca insan türünün kendini korumasına yaramaktadır ve bunun ötesinde herhangi bir değeri yoktur. Kendini-koruma perspektifi yaşamdaki binlerce mevcut perspektiften yalnızca biridir.

Bu düşünce nihilizm dönemi boyunca koyutlanan insan-merkezci hiyerarşileri istikrarsızlaştırmaktadır. İlk olarak, hümanist yorumların zeminini oluşturan insanın sözde doğa-dışı özelliklerinin hem insana mahsus olmadığını hem de bu özelliklerin kurucu nitelik taşımadığını gösterir. Örneğin, Nietzsche, kuvvetlere ait bir ilişkisellik olarak düşünme sürecinin izini formların kristalleşmesi, güç istencinin sınır ve şekil belirleme faaliyeti olarak inorganik dünyada da sürer. Bu düşünce insana ait rasyonel özelliklerin diğer varlıklarda da bulunabilen özelliklerin yalnızca daha nadir ve daha karmaşık bir formu olduğunu ima eder. Yani, insan ve diğer varlıklar arasındaki ayrım mutlak bir ayırmadan ziyade bir yelpaze üzerindeki farklı dereceler arasında bulunan türden bir ayırmadır. Bilinç ile ilgili olarak, Nietzsche yaşam açısından bilincin temel veya kurucu bir rolü olmadığını savunur. Yaşam için temel olan şey

güç istencidir ve güç istenci bilinçsizdir. Bilinç ikincil bir fenomendir ve bedenin bir işlevidir; güç istencine hizmet eder. Bedensel kuvvetlerin dahil olduğu temel yaşamsal süreçler büyük ölçüde bilinç yüzeyine çıkmadan gerçekleşirler. Nietzsche'ye göre, bir durumun bilinç yüzeyine çıkması itkiler arasında durmaksızın gerçekleşen bedensel çekişmede yalnızca bir itkinin diğerleri üzerinde geçici olarak galip geldiğini, diğer kuvvetleri kendi gelişimi için yönlendirmekte veya baskılamakta olduğunu gösterir. Bu penetrasyonların art arda, birbirini takip eder bir şekilde gerçekleşmesi, bilinç veya egonun Kartezyen modelin ima ettiği gibi ayrı bir töz olduğu anlamına gelmez. Daha önce belirtildiği gibi, Nietzsche için bilinç insanın kendini devam ettirme mücadelesinin bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan ikincil bir işlevidir. Diğer bir deyişle, bilinç yaşamın bir ürünüdür ve herhangi bir doğa-dışı orijini ya da özelliği yoktur.

Nietzsche'nin hümanizmi aşmasının ikinci adımı insanın insan-benzercî bakış açısından kurtarılmış bir doğa anlayışı ile yeniden doğallaştırılmasıdır. Bu yeni doğa kavramı güç istencidir. Nietzsche insanı güç istenci olarak görür. Bu anlayış insanın fizyolojik terimlerle anlaşılmasını ve güç istencinin farklı nitelikleri tarafından dikte edilen kuvvetler, değerler, yorumlar çekişmesine tekrar tanıtılmasını gerektirmektedir. Nietzsche, ilginç bir hayvan olsa da, insanın bir hayvan olduğunu savunur. Metafizik insan yorumlarının aksine, Nietzsche için insan önceden verili bir özdeşliği temsil etmez. Bundan ziyade, Nietzsche'ye göre, insan-hayvan insanlaştırma olarak adlandırılabilir oldukça karmaşık bir süreçten geçip kendisini hayvanlıktan ayırıştırarak 'insan' haline gelmiştir. İnsan, yalnızca bu insanlaştırma sürecinden geçerek insanlaşmış bir hayvandır. Soykütüksel ve fizyolojik analizleriyle Nietzsche bu süreci açığa çıkarır ve yaşama içkin bir görüngü olan insan-hayvanın gelecekte iyileştirilmesine yönelik yeni imkânlar açar.

Nihilist değerlendirme kipi hayvanlık kavramına her zaman belli bir küçümseme ile yaklaşmıştır. Bu bakımdan, bazı hayvanların ahlaki gerekçelerle lanetlenmesi ve murdarlık ile ahlaka aykırılığın hayvanlık ile ilişkilendirilmesine dair bazı örnekler verilebilir. Lüzumsuz tekrar oluşturmamak üzere, dördüncü bölümde irdelenen bu örneklerden burada tekrar bahsedilmeyecektir. Nihilist değerlendirme kipinden ayrılamaz olan hümanizm de hayvanları kusurları açısından değerlendirmektedir. Bu

sözde kusurlar bilişsel kapasitelerin eksikliği ve ilerleme kabiliyetsizliği olarak görülebilir ve insanın hayvanlar nezdinde ontolojik üstünlüğünün temellendirilmesinde dile getirilirler. Nietzsche'nin düşüncesine göre insanlar ve hayvanlar arasında yapay bir hiyerarşi kurmak çok büyük bir hatadır. Bu bakımdan, Nietzsche'ye göre, insan ve hayvan devamlı görüngülerdir; yani fizyolojik kuruluşları açısından insan ve hayvan arasında özsel bir fark yoktur.

Nietzsche'nin düşüncesinde, insanlar ve hayvanlar arasındaki devamlılık sorusu unutkanlık sorusu ile yakından ilgilidir. Nietzsche, metafizik yorumların aksine unutkanlığı bir kusurdan ziyade yaşamsallığın bir gereği, sağlığın bir göstergesi olarak görmektedir. Nietzsche'ye göre, hayvanlar aktif unutkanlıkları ile karakterizedir. İtkiler hayvanlarda daha büyük bir uyum içerisindedir, hayvanların güç istenci herhangi bir anı tarafından rahatsız edilmeden enerjisini boşaltabilir ve bu işlemlerin hiçbiri bilinç yüzeyine çıkmadan kendisi için gerekli olan şeyi bünyesine katabilir. Aktif unutkanlık mekanizması bir organizmanın iç kesintilere uğramadan işlev görmesine izin verir; fizyolojik kuvvetlerin koordinasyonunu bozabilecek herhangi bir anı yoktur. İnsanların aksine hayvanların tepkileri kalıcı bir nefrete dönüşmez, çünkü derhal eyleme dönüşerek dışa vurulur. Nietzsche bu yüzden hayvanlığı masumiyet ile ilişkilendirir, çünkü hayvanlar kendi hayvansal vahşiliklerinde masum bir şekilde eylemde bulunabilirler. İnsanlarla karşılaştırıldıklarında hayvanlar daha düşük bir reaktivite sergiler, çünkü reaktivite koşulları altında insandaki öfke nefrete dönüşür. Nefret gerçek bir tepki değil, silinmeyen bir tepki imgesidir, Nietzsche tarafından analiz edilen kölelik eğilimlerinde olduğu gibi belirsiz bir süre boyunca ertelenen bir intikamcılık duygusudur.

Bu bakımdan, Nietzsche'nin düşüncesi uygarlık süreci boyunca kaybolmuş olan bu hayvan masumiyetini yeniden kazanmanın yollarını arar. Uygarlık süreci fiziksel acı yoluyla insan-hayvana bir hafızanın dayatıldığı dönemdir. İlk toplumsal formasyonların ortaya çıkışıyla, pervasızlıklarında aktif hayvani eğilimler sergileyen, Nietzsche'nin sarışın canavar olarak adlandırdığı tipin hâkimiyeti altında insan-hayvan ilk kez ket vurulma durumu ile karşılaşır. Sonradan uygarlık süreci yoğunluk kazanarak devam eder ve bu süreç reaktif kuvvetlerin hakimiyeti altında aktif hayvan

içgüdülerine savaş açılan, bu içgüdülerin kendilerini ifade etmek üzere yeraltına inerek gizli yollar bulmaya zorlandıkları bir hayvan terbiyesi sürecine dönüşür. Aktif kuvvetlerin enerjilerini dışa vurma imkânı bulamayarak kendilerine döndüğü bu süreç Nietzsche'nin düşüncesinde reaktifleşme sürecidir. Nietzsche'ye göre Hıristiyanlık bu sürecin en yüksek noktasını temsil etmektedir çünkü burada hayvani içgüdülerin şeytanlaştırılması, bu itkilerin kökünün kurutulması hedeflenmektedir. Bu amaçla hem fiziksel hem de ahlaki araçlar kullanılır. Uygarlık süreci boyunca insan-hayvan hayvanlığını unutmak zorunda bırakılmış, bu süreçte karşılaşılan ket vurma faaliyetinin bir sonucu olarak bir içsellik geliştirip derinlik kazanarak Nietzsche'nin sözleriyle en ilginç hayvan haline gelmiştir. Diğer bir deyişle, Nietzscheci bir perspektiften bakıldığında, uygarlık süreci reaktif varlıklar üretmiştir.

Nietzsche'nin düşüncesi bu sağlıklı hayvan unutkanlığını yeniden kazanmaya çalışır, bunun nedeni burada yaşamın üstinsana götüreceği şekilde iyileştirilmesi imkânını görmesidir. Ancak, kanımca, bu romantik bir şekilde anlaşılmalı, yani tüm uygarlık sürecinin silinmesi amacıyla güderek 'orijinal' bir duruma geri dönüş olarak kavranmamalıdır. Nietzsche bu tür romantik anlayışlara karşıdır ve onları var olana karşı hissedilen yorgunluğun, yani nihilizmin bir semptomu olarak görür. Nietzsche'nin düşüncesine göre her görüngü kendi iç zorunluluğuna sahiptir ve her şey olduğu gibi olumlanmalıdır. Olumlama ancak her şeyin olumlanması ile mümkündür. Bu bakımdan Nietzsche uygarlık sürecine kategorik olarak karşı değildir. Nietzsche'ye göre uygarlık sürecinde üretilen hafıza kültür sürecine katılabilirse faydalı dahi olabilir. Uygarlık karşısında kültür süreci insanlaştırma sürecinin ikinci ayağını teşkil eder. Kültür süreci insanın hayvansal tarafının olumlandığı, içgüdülerin yüceltildiği ve yaşamın olumsuzlanmasından ziyade olumlayıcı bir şekilde başkalaştırıldığı (*transfiguration*) bir süreçtir. Hıristiyanlık uygarlık sürecinin bir üst noktası ise, Nietzsche için trajediyle karakterize olan Sokrates öncesi Antik Yunan medeniyeti de kültür sürecinin bir üst noktasıdır.

Hafızanın açtığı bir imkan olan geriye dönük olumlama kültür sürecine dahil edilmelidir. Bu geriye dönük olumlama Diyonososçu gerçeğin, aynı olanın sonsuz dönüşünün sindirilmesine ulaştırabilme ihtimali bulunan bir köprü görevi görür. Hayvanlar sağlıklı bir şimdinin içinde yaşasalar da sonsuz döngüyü tam anlamıyla

kavrayamazlar. Sonsuz döngü geriye dönük olumlamayı, geçmişin yüklerinden kurtarılmasını zorunlu kılar. Bu düşünce aynı zamanda hafızanın askıya alınmasını da gerektirir, çünkü ancak bu şekilde geleceğe dönük yaşanabilir. Nietzsche için gelecek muhteşem bir sağlık, benliğin yüklerinden kurtarılması, hayvan masumiyeti ve neşesinin kucaklanarak üst-insana giden yolda pek insanca olanın aşılması çağrışımlarına sahiptir. İnsan-hayvanın kendisini oluşun akıntısına tekrar katabileceği bir muhteşem bir sağlık vaadini içeren üst-insanın gelişi yukarıda bahsedilen en korkunç hakikatin sindirilebilmesine bağlıdır. Nietzsche için sindirim, fizyolojik kuvvetler arasında kurulmuş bulunan ilişkileri dönüştürme kabiliyeti bulunan bir süreçtir. Sonsuz döngünün seçici bir düşünce olması da bu yüzdendir. Bu noktada sonsuz döngü düşüncesine kısaca değinmekte fayda vardır. Nietzsche'ye göre, varoluşun üzerinde herhangi bir otorite bulunmadığı için ve varoluşun herhangi bir başı ve sonu bulunmadığından dolayı, varoluş özünde bir oluş olduğu için, bir görüngüyü oluşturan kuvvetler ve koşullar sonsuz kez tekrar kesişecek, aynı koşullar tekrar oluşacak, aynı görüngü yaşamın içerisinde tekrar üretilecektir. Mevcut kuvvetler sonlu olduğundan dolayı, bu kuvvetlerin sonsuz bir kombinasyona girmeleri yaşanan hayatın aynısının, en ince ayrıntılarına kadar, tüm mutluluk ve kederiyle, tüm acısı ve neşesiyle aynı hayatın sonsuza kadar tekrar tekrar yaşanacağını ileri sürer. Bu noktada Nietzsche önemli bir soru sorar: bu döngüyü kabul etmek görece kolaydır, ancak Nietzsche için önemli olan soru bunun istenip istenemeyeceği sorusudur. Nietzsche için güç, oluşun sonsuz olarak geri dönen bir uçurum olduğu anlamına gelen Diyonososçu hakikate dayanma kapasitesidir ve gücü bu kapasiteye göre ölçer. Bu hakikate yalnızca olumlayıcı bir güç istenci dayanabilir, çünkü Nietzsche'nin perspektifine göre reaktif eğilimler veya kölelik eğilimleri böylesi dipsiz bir hakikatle karşılaştıklarında yok olacaklardır; çünkü bu tür eğilimler yaşamı olduğu gibi kabullenebilmek ve yaşamaya devam edebilmek için yaşamın ötesinde bir referans noktasına ihtiyaç duyarlar.

Nietzsche için sonsuz döngü düşüncesinin sindirilmesi alınması gereken bir risktir, ancak bunu gerçekleştirmek pek-insanca paradigma içerisinde sıkışmış olan mevcut insanlık için belki de en zor şeydir. Çünkü böylesi bir adım Diyonososçu gerçekliğin tecrübe edilmesi yolunda benliğin terk edilmesini zorunlu kılar. Ancak belki de

insanlık için en büyük getiri de burada yatmaktadır. Bu getiri – üst-insan – ancak bu macerada en büyük risk alınarak elde edilebilir ve bu risk insanlığın da sürekli olarak aşılmasını gerektirir. Bu sürecin söylendiği kadar kolay olmayacağı aşikârdır, ancak Nietzsche için geleceğin pek-insanca olan şimdiden daha önemli olduğu söylenebilir.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

TEZ FOTOKOPİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

- Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü
- Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü
- Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü
- Enformatik Enstitüsü
- Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Kuldası
Adı : Reha
Bölümü : Felsefe

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : Nietzsche's Overcoming of Humanism: The
..... Deanthropomorphization of Nature and the Reaturalization of
..... Human Being

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans



Doktora



1. Tezimin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılsın ve kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla tezimin bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisi alınsın.
2. Tezimin tamamı yalnızca Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi kullanıcılarının erişimine açılsın. (Bu seçenekle tezinizin fotokopisi ya da elektronik kopyası Kütüphane aracılığı ile ODTÜ dışına dağıtılmayacaktır.)
3. Tezim bir (1) yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olsun. (Bu seçenekle tezinizin fotokopisi ya da elektronik kopyası Kütüphane aracılığı ile ODTÜ dışına dağıtılmayacaktır.)

Yazarın imzası



Tarih