

# **Bodies and reasons. Nietzsche and the human complexity\***

## **Cuerpos y razones. Nietzsche y la complejidad de lo humano\***

*Paolo Scolan\*\**

### **Abstract**

Nietzsche's various observations about the body, represent without a doubt a fundamental hermeneutic crossroad in the area of the moral reflection on the topic of corporeity. At the same time, the reconstruction of his thoughts on this delicate subject, constitutes a decisive test bed for critically re-thinking reasons, seeking to review his position within the world of the humane. The leitmotif of the body, firmly binds to one another, the harsh critiques that Nietzsche sends to the Western civilization, which, from Socrates onward, saw the dominance of an abstract and calculating form of rationality, to the detriment of an incarnated and more humane reason. From the early writings to the mature ones, from the Zarathustra to the last polemical pamphlets, through the myriad of posthumous fragments. Scattered around almost all of his works and stretching over almost twenty years, Nietzsche's interest in the corporeal dimension of the humane, never loses tension.

*Key words:* Nietzsche, corporality, Zarathustra.

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\*\* Sacro Cuore Catholic University, Milan.

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«How cold and strange are as yet, the worlds discovered by Science! For example, how diverse is the body as we feel it, see it, touch it, fear it, admire it, from the “body” as it is taught to us, by the anatomist!»  
F. Nietzsche, Posthumous Fragments, 1881-1882, 14 [2].

«The credibility of the body is the sole and only basis, on which, the value of thinking can be appreciated»  
F. Nietzsche, Posthumous Fragments, 1884-1885, 39 [18]

## 1. Nietzsche's body. Between suffering and power

At first sight, the strong philosophic impulse inside the topic of corporeity, immediately appears brand new, due to the image of a lively body by Nietzsche himself. He is well aware that in his person emerges an ambiguous corporeal condition, always on the edge between life and death. His physical body has been tragically debating between illness and health, labeled indelibly by suffering, but at the same time, an unforeseen source of energy. A convalescent and a wayfarer, just to use two of the terms Nietzsche loved to use to describe his Zarathustra.

The first thing that arises when reviewing Nietzsche's life, is that of having the impression to be standing in front of an individual with a really weak body. Since a very young age as it is referred in many letters sent to the family, by the school at Schulpforta, he suffers from nausea and vomiting seizures, severe migraine headaches, sight disturbances, stomach and gut's problems. A sickly morbid medical condition that stays with him throughout his existence. In his teen age years, he had to spend whole days in bed and in darkness. It forced him to quit, when he was a little over thirty years of age, to the University of Basel, and to continuously chase more favorable weathers and climates were to live. Finally, he was doomed to a mental degradation, and to a premature death.

Thus, he had a sick body, which kept him daily, as a prisoner of himself. Never the less, at the same time, it was an exuberant and creative organism. There were days when his physicality released energy and vitality. An extraordinary dynamism, of which Nietzsche himself seemed to wonder, and that, it had not taken him a long time, before they crystallized in several passages of his works, as in this auto-biographic comment in *Ecce homo*: «I have composed a part of Zarathustra, during the very hard and tiring seasonal climbing to the wonderful Moorish town of Eza, nested among the rocks, I always had the most muscular fluidity, when the strongest creative force was running through me. The body is exited: we left our “soul” on a side [...]. Frequently, they have seen me dancing: I was capable then, of climbing through the mountains, during seven or eight hours, without never feeling any fatigue. I slept well, and laughed a lot my strength and my patience were perfect» [1, pp. 65-66].

A body that was cured and restored as if by magic. Precisely, during those stays at the beach and at the mountains, which forced the metereopathic Nietzsche to escape forever from the hated plains of the German cities, in the fresh Sils-María, in the Upper Engadina region, in the summer, or in the peaceful Ligure Riviera or the French Blue Coast Riviera, during winter time. In some days during these periods of time, his body unexpectedly overflows, exudes optimum health, and it seems that, jointly with his thoughts, miraculously were regenerating.

Nietzsche was aware that, from a corporeality in such a good health, also thoughts are reactivated. In those time spans where the organism functions perfectly, that philosophic inspiration is re-launched in a way which, during the obscure moments of suffering, seemed to stop and decrease. After all, for him, these new thoughts, were not a different thing from the body, but that they carry with them its most beautiful and healthy features. “Thoughts born walking” –“Ergangene Gedanken”– as he writes in *The Idols’ Dusk*. “Walking Memories”, would be a better translation, staying more faithful to the German original, and surely of course, to the

author's intention. Wanderer thoughts that have body, that they are a body. A body fit, or a shaped body. Never loafer and/or "sedentary" thoughts, but always dynamic and "in motion" [3, pp. 5-7]: The only ones that, for Nietzsche, truly count, and therefore they may generate, give rise to a true and healthy philosophy.

## 2. Philosophize, misrepresent

The experience of his own body, showed Nietzsche that, when you are dealing with what is humane, body and thinking can never be apart from each other. He was aware that in the history of human kind, everything, good and evil, depends on corporeality: the body «is the best adviser», to whom to appeal to «in order to tell the difference between whatever has been achieved, and what has not». From religion to metaphysics, from art to music, from politics to daily relationships: everything on which men have built their own existence throughout the centuries, is nothing but «a perception of what is corporeal» [5, 25 (407)]. Thus, it becomes «essential», to Nietzsche, «to start from the body on, and use it as a leitmotiv» of his own inquiry [6, pp. 259-262].

In *The foreword of the joyful science*, he tries to embrace with a look, all the western thinking, and draw out conclusions from all that which, up until now, has been to philosophize. He declares «having wondered quite frequently» if precisely all «the philosophy» from Socrates to Plato, from Christianity to Descartes, from idealism «up until today» «had not been mainly and only, an explanation of the body itself». The answer given by Nietzsche to this question of his, is affirmative: from this total calculation, the outcome is, that the body is the only hermeneutic key with what to penetrate to the inner part of all philosophic manifestation, and sift its attemptability.

In the same passage from "*The Gay Science*", immediately he adds a comment: «and its misinterpretation». Therefore, an explanation of the body, but moreover its misrepresentation. A section

in which, the general meaning of the statement, suffers a drastic turn. The comment in italics is an autograph, and there is no trace of a doubt, as to where Nietzsche wanted to take his own thoughts: “Men have not understood yet, anything about the body”. This interpretation of the corporeity over which all the philosophy stands, is not that transparent, but it encloses a mystification. It hides a sort of original misleading or an equivocal, which ended up vilifying the body and put it in a second plane in the background, making that something take its place, replaced by something that the body is not.

With a sharp genealogical method, Nietzsche discovers that behind the scenes of the «extravagant» scenario of the «metaphysics», especially when its actors try to «answer to the question about the value of our existence», they always come across with the «body’s symptoms», not only, of vital bodies and full of energy, with «their success, at their fullness, their plenitude, their potential, their self-control»; but also with tired and resentful bodies, with their «inhibitions, their fatigue, degradations, their sensing and wanting the end». «Behind the supreme value judgements, by which up until today the history of thoughts has been guided, misrepresentations of the corporeity condition, are hidden. This misunderstanding carries inside of it, a hypocrite mechanism, and a practice that Nietzsche believed so petty, the same as «to put your hair on end». While it seems to give more value to corporeality, in reality is leading to its oblivion. The body is not embraced by men, in all its fleshy and expired tragedy drama, but it is furtively «coated with a layer of the objective, of the ideal, and of the purely spiritual» [8, foreword; 9, pp. 275-276; 10, pp. 489-490].

### **3. Fragmented bodies, impoverished men**

Ever since his teen age years the issue about the body impassioned Nietzsche, a period in which he had a strong interest for Schopen-

hauer, jointly with an enthusiasm for reading Hölderlin, and the assiduity of Wagner. In a passage of *The Greek musical drama*, the text of a conference held at the University of Basel, in 1870, these two feelings, these two sensitivities, came out to light: the issues about the body, of “Schopenhauerian” origin, is set related to the critics to the fragmentation, and with the ideal of “Man in his entirety”, or “Man as a Whole”, in mutual collaboration by Hölderlin and by Wagner. In this short Juvenal work dedicated to the Greek world, Nietzsche the philosopher throws a strong criticism to men of modern civilization, claiming conclusively, that they are «reduced to fragments». This perverse fragmentariness condition comes out to light, precisely due to its own corporeality. «Broken in fragments, they are no longer capable of enjoying something as complete men», even if they strike to perform experiences «only as partial men»: «sometimes they can only have their ears to listen, other times as men that possess sight sense only. Etc.». Nietzsche’s German language results even more incisive and sharp: “*Obrenmenschen*” (“ear men”), “*Augenmenschen*” (“eye men”), and so on: creatures which, because of the hypertrophy of a single organ, or a single part in their body, they transform themselves in that organ [11, pp. 8-9].

This situation which characterizes modern times, marks indelibly young Nietzsche to such a point that, his interest in the topic of human fragmentation itself, would accompany him throughout his entire life. More than ten years after that conference, he wrote a full chapter in the second book of “*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*”, entitled *Of the Redemption*, centering it on the issue of the Hölderlinian origin of the human laceration and of its corresponding loss of unity. In the city of men, Prophet Zarathustra finds in a certain point «The reversed cripples», in whom the body becomes the symbol of a dis-harmony which embraces or covers man, in his various faculties. In the grotesque exaggeration of his physical features, these stereotypes also represent the testimony of how the

spiritual deformity of modern men, it reveals itself already, starting from his own body.

Nietzsche reports, how in these extravagant characters, emerges a logic so paradoxical and so petty, that: the fragmentation can also reveal itself as a unity. Yes, they are divided, but, unbelievably they appear as unitary individuals. The disintegration has so deeply affected his being, as to transfigure or transform all his person, in a sole unique fragment of themselves. This is, for Nietzsche, the most «repugnant» thing: when the whole (totality) disappears, each part in turn, becomes a whole thing. The gravest fact though, is not the division as such, but the modality with which, it is flaunted: these beings, these creatures, besides having imperfections and mutilations, they hypocritically pose as complete men. «The partial man» not only flees from the ideal of unity, but also carries in his guts, a concealed deceit: he wants to impersonate a «complete man». A hoax which allows him to disguise himself, and evade the society, posing as somebody that in reality he is not: «the people» will tell Zarathustra that, the creature or being he has to do with, «not only is a man, but a great man, even a genius».

Zarathustra contradicts the hypocritical pretension of these human beings, exposing their false unity: truly they are only «fragments and men's limbs». At first sight, he sees «a big ear, as big as a man», but paying more attention, giving a closer look, he discovers that, «under the ear, a little and measly thing is moving, one with a difficulty in causing piety»: «the weak offspring» over whom «the monstrous ear is supported, is a man». Nietzsche calls them «crippled backwards», precisely because they «have too few of everything, and too much of a single thing»: «they are not only more than a big eye, a big mouth, a big belly, or any other big thing». Their development is unilateral, as far as they empower in a hypertrophic way a single organ in detriment of the others, they become «men who are lacking of everything». As Giovanola reminds us, they are impoverished humans, that they achieve, and at the same time they become worn out in a

single dimension of their existence, in detriment of their endurance and complexity [12, Of the Redemption; 13, pp. 217-218].

## 4. Christian Bodies, Moral Bodies

### 4.1 Christian/ Platonic Dynamics

Nietzsche's meditation regarding the body issues very soon intercepts, as it can be expected, one of the greatest controversy objectives of his philosophy: Christianity. His experience with the Christian religion was already settled in his infancy: he was raised in a very religious family and forced to study in the austere "school-convent" of Pforta; young Nietzsche very soon experiments a sense of disgusts related to the Christian doctrine and to its ritual practices. These juvenile impressions settle in time and turn into sharp attacks that, regardless of frequently generalizing tone and, with the vehemence with which Nietzsche throws them, they touch as in living flesh Christianity.

The body represents one of the fulcrums around which discrepancies rotate towards Christianity, which it was considered by Nietzsche one of the maximum civilization expressions against the body. Their «d disdain for the body, has been the greatest disgrace of humankind up to this day» [3, Raids of an out of timer, §47], railing against them in *The twilight of the Idols*.

In Nietzsche's analysis, the critics to Christianity goes hand in hand, with the discussion about Plato's philosophy. To be against Christianity, particularly to Saint Paul's interpretation, it means for Nietzsche to throw himself directly against Plato, the only one truly accused of this false dualism. It is not by chance that in *Preface Foreword of Beyond Good and Evil*, Christianity is defined by him as «Platonism for the "people"» [14, Foreword], as far as it dilutes the philosophical ideas of Plato in order to re-propose them to a vaster public. Saint Paul's dialectic «flesh-spirit», in fact, reinforces in religious terms

the platonic split body-soul, of an Orphic-Pythagorean origin. To a body of flesh opposes a spiritual soul. And as in the Plato's philosophy the body is the tomb of the soul, thus in the Christian doctrine «flesh lives the guilt». Consequently, for the Christians the body must «sent away», as long as «the flesh acts on the spirit», and the body ends up by disfiguring the soul [15, 4 (162),4 (164)].

The Christians are for Nietzsche «ill-fated interpreters» of the body. They consider him a «moral-religious phenomenon», improperly raising him and assigning to him features and connotations that really don't belong to him. Behind this behavior it is settled his great disturbance regarding the body. They are incapable of living in the finiteness: their discomfort towards the sensitive world, makes them to retreat scared in front of their body. They don't understand this strange being, this «machine with a very unknown coincidence», that escapes their reductive idea of reason, and to which they want by all means possible to find a meaning that will ease them. The Christian in reality cannot accept the body as it is, but they long for always go beyond this world, discrediting as a consequence, all that which is derived from it. They cannot conceive that the purity of their God and their values, be linked to something that «comes from the stomach, the guts, the cardiac beat, from the nerves, from the bile, from the sperm-of all those disturbances, those weaknesses, those over excitements». They must find at all costs a reason behind everything: they are curious to visualize, definitely, if behind this flesh «there is God or the devil, the good or the evil, the salvation or condemnation» [16, § 86].

#### ***4.2 The Logic of Resentment***

In the sharp analysis drawn by Nietzsche in *The Antichrist*, Christianity has set in motion an act of a logic of disassemble the physical world of the body, which spreads out in a double movement. On one hand, the Christians over assess the values of the body, in order to demolish it, and at the same time in parallel they assure the

health of the soul. On the other hand, they try by all means available, to put a snappy remedy to such destruction, because they look to build over such diminishing of the physical body condition, a false concept of perfection. It is a double journey with which, Nietzsche wants to show the self-contradiction condition of Christianity: precisely, in the moment itself in which it declares war on the body, the Christian religion seems to, in substance, depend on it more every time.

At the beginning, for Nietzsche, Christianity kills without any half terms, all that bodily, found in its own way. Christians experiment feelings of «rivalry, hatred, disdain, deadly hostility» against all things included in the bodily kingdom: against the «flesh», the earth, the «senses» and, in general, against the «joy» itself. Every particular reality that carries in itself the minimum sign of belonging to the sphere of the physical corporeality, is by them completely rejected. The Christians definitely pretend, «leave the body and want the soul only» [17, §21].

Well aware of its own weakness and inferiority, the Christian religion uses the insidious weapon of resentment, through which it begins cleverly a radical inversion of values which will end up in a total declining of the corporeality. The «Christians» deny the body, «making of insufficient nutrition a “merit”, they fight in health, a kind of enemy, the devil, the temptation». They «are living condemns, as if health, a well-built body, strength, pride, sense of power, would be in themselves reprehensible things, for which one day they should be bitterly redeemed». In their inverted table of moral values: «it is good whatever makes them sick»; «evil person» on the other hand, «it is the one who proceeds with the fullness, from the overabundance, of power». From this cruel battle, «the body» will come out diminished and bar thisr thisdly abated: Christianity has accomplished to reduce it to a «a corpse», aimed to putrefaction.

After this perverse trans assessment, the Christian religion becomes aware that, while it has gained in detriment of the body, the

existence of a spiritual soul, has at the same time irrevocably lost ground in which to make it live. According to Nietzsche, the Christians must then, convince themselves by all possible means to bring along a “perfect soul” in this corpse of a body, by feeling for this, the need to prepare for themselves a new concept of “perfection”, a blood drained condition, unhealthy, fanatic in an idiotic manner, the so called “health”. Being aware of the irreversible damage that they have done to their body, they try to transfer the physical health conditions that used to belong to them, to the new concept of soul. With that, they have tried to create a new model of perfection, that nonetheless finds itself now without a place where to live. All that which remains of the «body» is nothing else than something «impoverished, exhausted, irreversibly deteriorated beyond any cure» [17, §§ 51-52; 18, III, § 14; 19, pp. 15-16].

#### ***4.3 Vampire Muralists***

Christianity is not alone in its fight against the body, but finds in moral one of its most faithful allies. Also, moral represents, in the eyes of Nietzsche, one of the main responsible for the profound degeneration of the bodily sphere. «Out of the body!», roared in a chorus the moralists. Also for them, as well as for the Christians, the body is something real of which you have to «liberate yourself», and escape as soon as possible. That belongs to the «senses», source of «deceit» and of «illusion»: it is not anything else but a «miserable, shameless and immoral scammer, that hoaxes over the true world, not allowing to perceive things as they are in reality» [3, The Reason in Philosophy, § 1].

In order to express in the most incisive way the logic of the moral, Nietzsche in *Ecce homo* uses the image of the vampire. An achieved metaphor, which reflects well enough and immediately, the idea of the behavioral way of ethics. Precisely, as the vampires

do, ethics harvests its victims «sucking» the blood from the body: it converts this body in an «anemic one» and, in a little time after that, prevents it from «life».

Moral performs these crimes, by inventing a dangerous network of concepts in opposition to the bodily dimension, that after that uses to discredit the existence. According to Nietzsche, the moral preachers have «learned to consider as something impure all that which is the budget of life», «faking the existence of a “soul” and of a “spirit”, in order to ruin the body». The moralists oppose the body through the creation of a spiritual vocabulary, that includes expressions such as «“God”, “afterlife”, “real world”, “soul”, “spirit” and also finally “immortal soul”». These are words of the western philosophical tradition, that for Nietzsche, find their “terrifying unity”, in a coalition against a common enemy, «the body, for the purpose of discrediting and making it sick». With these «concepts, created in opposition to life», the moral preachers «devalue the only way that exists, and don't allow any reason to the terrestrial reality». A completely radical inversion of values, that even «health» as ever so linked to the body, will change its name to call itself «the salvation of the soul».

This vampire-like action, is for Nietzsche not only «harmful and evil», but «clever and surreptitious», because it hides in its guts a double «misleading logic». On one hand, ethics hypocritically offers its “vampirism” as the “truth” as a «sacred excuse to “better humankind”». The moralists pretend to be right and, through these unreliable abstractions against the bodily kingdom, they claim for themselves the right to improve all men. They encourage everybody daily to improve themselves, to become more, virtuous, more altruistic, more rational, as if by lacking moral they were less human. On the other hand, this scares Nietzsche even more «the counter nature itself has had the greatest honors moral wise, and it has kept weighing over the humankind under the specie of law, of categorical imperative». All the values twisted by the moralists in their battle against the body, have been immediately been raised

to the honors of ethics, impacting on the existence of men, as a truly and proper moral law. What for them should have given a meaning and direction to the human life, is something that, paradoxically, is against the life itself [1, §§ 7-8].

## 5. Sacrileges of the body

### *5.1 Metaphysical/ despisers*

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche makes to converge all his thoughts and thinking on the issue about corporeality, taking them to a higher critical conscience level, and giving them a new and experimental form. Truly, his narrative and symbolic writing, in a certain way mysterious and almost initiatic, does not help to distinguish in the text a coherent and systematic thought about corporeality. The fact is that the images present in the works, so vivid and stimulating, tell us much more than many words, offering to us suddenly an articulated phenomenology of the human bodies.

In his journey through the city of men, Zarathustra came across those who live in a world behind the world (*The Hinterwelter*, or else the metaphysical according to the German etymology of the name [20, p. 12; 21, p. 133]), and with the despisers of the body. Two encounters told by Nietzsche in the first part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in a fast sequence: one after the other, a sequence not casual whatsoever. In their commentaries to Zarathustra, Pieper and Gerhardt concur to consider that, in these two chapters, Nietzsche has wanted without any doubt, to highlight the vary close relationship that is going on between the despisers of the body and the metaphysic [22, p. 149; 23, p. 138]. To live behind the world is equivalent for him to go over the earthly world, and therefore to despise their own body.

Thus Nietzsche declares, regarding to the despisers: «What is the thing that has created the appreciation and the despise, the

value and the will? The creating body has created for itself to appreciate and to despise, has created for itself the pleasure and the pain. The creating body has created for itself the spirit, and a hand of its will. Even in the madness of your despise, despisers of the body, you are serving your body» [12; 24, pp. 65-66].

And so, Zarathustra comments regarding those that build ultra-mundane living spaces: «I know, even too well in what thing they believe more than anything. Truly, not in worlds behind the world: but they also believe in the body more than in anything else, and their own body is for them the thing itself. These ungrateful imagine to be abducted of their body, and of this earth. But to whom they owed the spasm and the ecstasies of their abduction? To the body and to this earth» [12].

These two anthropological categories seem to be linked to a very thin red thread, a species of common logic that Nietzsche brings to light. Both are united by the impossibility to get rid of, in every thought and in every action, of their own body. Both in the denigration of the body as well as in the creation of ultra-terrestrial worlds, they cannot discard to refer to, even in the despise, their bodily stratus. Such people look each other in the eye and they recognize themselves, as if they would be in front of a mirror. The body despisers live in a retro-world and belong to the meta-physic army. These in turn, see their own image reflected in that of the despisers, for what the metaphysical fantasies in which they diverse, depend unavoidably from the bodily kingdom.

Everything for Nietzsche, is born from the body: from the most fanciful creation, to the mostly acid or mean of the disdains. The meta-physicists and the despisers, live a bizarre situation, from which they cannot come out, and that entraps them in an eternal paradox, forcing them in the end, to involuntarily agree and give the reason to all that they would like to abandon and slander them. Their idiosyncrasy of the bodily dimension, is fatally destined for self-destruction; it puts the Judge in evidence, for it also is derived from the body. The claustrophobia of the body which displaces it-

self, is based on the fantasy of coming out from something that, in reality, it constitutes its most intimate essence [25, p. 59].

By means of a description of these characters, Nietzsche delivers to us, the image of a spurious metaphysics, not an original, that came out of a subterfuge regarding the body. They have «thrown their illusion beyond the man»: they have duplicated the only existing world, creating the fictitious heaven of metaphysics and filling it in of imaginary «Gods». But even the cleanliness of their language comes from and depends from the bodily: all the speeches about the abstractions of the terrestrial world, and about the purity of the heaven, they are not anything but a projection of the body. «Also, when they are induced to fantasize and poeticize and flutter here and there with broken wings, they speak about the body and they want the body» [12; 9, pp. 300-301; 22, p. 132].

### ***5.2 Bodies/ Prisons***

With the spectacular images of the meta-physicists and the despisers, Nietzsche has drawn the body as the ultimate and indispensable facet of the human dimension. Both, in the creation of the worlds behind the world, as well as in the intolerance towards their own physical person, the men found by Zarathustra cannot separate from the body, and they are forced to totally depend on it. This structural horizon in which they are entrapped, have for Nietzsche a sole totalizing grip over what is human, that ends up into extreme and paradoxical situations, both antithetical as well as dramatic. The first one is the impossibility to get rid of their own sick body, and the second is the lost physicality of this same body.

Thus spoke Zarathustra with respect to the impossibility for men to evade their own bodily condition: «But for them, it is a sickening thing: and with great pleasure, they would like to come out of themselves. Therefore, they listen to the preachers of death, and they preach themselves, the worlds behind the world.

Sick and dying, they were the ones that despised the body and the earth, and invented [12].

Nietzsche shows the meta-physicists and the despisers, as carriers of a sick body, fatally aimed to its «twilight». They live in their own skin a desperate condition: they are totally subjugated by a passive nihilistic dimension, which is the cause by which their corporeality has lost its own vital functions, and «it cannot do all that, that above all wishes, that is to say to create above himself». Their body is explained in a self-referred mode above himself: it looks only to himself, incapable as it is of transcending and reinvent himself. A body, that for Nietzsche, does not have anything more to say: it is not capable anymore to reborn, and does not want anything but «retire from life and die».

Incapable of accepting their existence, these characters are well aware of their tragic condition, and they would like at any cost «to say goodbye to their own body». Nevertheless, the dramatic situation is that, while they want more to decay and abandon their bodily dimension, they are more aware of the impossibility of this gesture. They are victims of a vicious circle from which they cannot come out, «becoming angered» and therefore «against life and earth». Full of «envy» and of «d disdain», they continuously stare «crooked glances» to this one their «sick body». Their attempt –Casini states– is as desperate as it is fantastic and paradoxical, meant to fall in the vacuum. They have a body from which, maybe, they would like to get rid of it immediately, but from which they are inevitably prisoners. They feel its weight, they become aware of its cumbersome physicality. But they cannot get rid of it once and for all, forced to carry it with them with a mobile prison. [12; 8, Foreword; 9, pp. 300-301; 26, p. 86].

The second declining of the paradox, is individualized by Nietzsche, in the loss of the materiality of the body. The miracles of the meta-physicists and the projections of the despisers, due to an excess of «suffering, incapacity, illusion, tiredness», and, as a consequence, to dematerialize and to lose their own physicality. This

body so heavy and cumbersome, in such a way static, as to seem in a certain way already as a corpse, it becomes suddenly immaterial and spiritual.

The pathological condition that now affects such characters is inverted with respect to the preceding one, but as serious as it, and in a certain sense much more distressing. Even in the spiritual world, where they have captured themselves with their own hands, these human beings cannot achieve to feel really free. Nietzsche sees his body trapped in a spiritual jail, ethereal, made of chains and bars not tangible anymore, but equally rigid and crushing. These «sick» and «dying» live in the tremendous nightmare of a «bodiless body»: lacking memory of their bodily origin, they seem continuously denying it, in detriment of the purity of the metaphysics heaven. Their «fingers» become «spiritual», with which «touch the last walls» of reality, to understand at what point «deepen» and go beyond this world. They pierce with the head, the last physical part remaining, the walls of their terrestrial home, in order to «fix it in the sand of the heaven things, at the humanized world and inhumane, a celestial void» [12; 23, pp. 139-140; 22 pp. 140-141].

## **6. Bodies/Souls. Logics of the Primate**

### ***6.1 The original lie***

The review of the history of philosophy performed by Nietzsche in the *FIL ROUGE (The red thread)* of the body goes directly to the routes of the ancient body-soul dualism. Its revaluation of the corporeality unmasks the logics of the primate: the soul is that vital blow that gives life to the body, with which it is established since always a hegemonic relationship. That assumes the monopoly of life and perfection, facing a body that without it is reduced to a bunch of sensible inert matter.

By means of his historic-genealogical procedure, Nietzsche digs deep in the past of men, in order to unbury the mistake that these have committed by giving consistency and value to «the soul». They have «believed that something must correspond to words» [28, 24 (79)]. A misunderstanding with which the human being unavoidably donates his existence, to realities that only exist through his mind. Nietzsche goes back to the beginning of this distorted dualist vision, assessing the original blame to Plato, who «has completely separated the senses of reason, as if it would happen to be two completely different features». By doing this, not only «they had destroyed the mind as such» but also «have stimulated that by all means mistaken separation between spirit and body». A disastrous heritage that weighs over all those who have come «after him»: the original sin that «engraves as a curse over all the philosophy» [11, § 10; 27, pp. 7-9].

Such dynamics about the supremacy of the spiritual has represented through centuries a real totalitarian system of their own, of which it has been impossible to get out. Nietzsche does not hide the fact that how «the soul» has always represented «such a mysterious thought as well as attracting, of which reasonably, the philosophers have separated themselves from it, against their will». After all, it was not easy «to switch» the purity of a purity soul, with the uncertainty of a body made of flesh and of human impurity [6, 36 (35)].

Nietzsche finds this way to understand the relationship soul/body in the words of the «tightrope walker» of the *foreword or Zarathustra*. The acrobat shows himself on a rope to the eyes of the plaza's multitude, when suddenly «he loses his balance» and «crashes on the floor». «His body badly injured and in pieces, but not dead yet» falls precisely close to Zarathustra, who feels questioned by the unfortunate tightrope walker with these words: «I knew since long time ago that the devil had tripped me. Now, he takes to hell». Zarathustra then, cynically answers to him: «The things you are talking about do not exist. Your soul will be dead before your body» [12, foreword, § 6]. The tightrope walker, represents that

who does not achieve to go beyond the traditional beliefs. It looks like he is still too closely linked to that dualism «false and popular», which «separates and puts against each other body and soul». It is a way to think about what is human that has for Nietzsche, an anti-philosophic coarseness [29, §21].

### ***6.2 The price of the primate***

Again, *in the Foreword of Thus spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche argues against all those philosophies of Platonic-Christian and Cartesian origin, that claim a primate of the soul over the body. Currents that translate into daily practices of asceticism, preaching and tiny moralism. He accuses fully to those preachers and moralists of having promoted a net supremacy of the soul over the body. They have even achieved to invert the platonic logic of the body as a prison of the soul: now, the real prisoner is the body, kidnapped by the soul which has assumed the role of a jail keeper.

In this undisputed predominance of the soul over the body, Nietzsche sees in action a hypocritical logic. This primate is not original, if it is not based on the reaction, and on the denigration its own rival. «The soul» lives at the back of its own enemy, «the body», obtaining the priority because «it looks at it with despise». The soul tortures it, «it wants it badly bitten, horrible, and hungry». «Believes it can escape from him» in order to look for the confirmation of its own purity and transparency: it seems like if, in order to achieve to reaffirm its own identity, it should always have the need to discredit all that which is not spiritual.

For Nietzsche however, this violent and furtive ascetic despise becomes against the soul itself, making it to assume, in the end, the same characteristics of that she wants to fight: «this soul is also badly bitten, horrible and hungry». An ironic joke of destiny which will give life to a soul of «cruel voluptuousness», which wants at all costs to remain young and pure, without realizing that, behind her own appearance, it's becoming in reality each time, older and putrid.

The price to pay, in order to comply with the primate's covenant, is very high not only for the soul, but also for the body. It is precisely this last one, who will have to «manifest» the signs of the «soul»: a horrible and decaying body, a mirror for the soul wrapped in «poverty, scum and miserable wellbeing» [12, Foreword, §3]. The macabre logic of the spirituality, doesn't leave any escape for the body: where «the spirituality has dominates, it has destroyed with its aberrations» everything that is bodily, it has «despised the body and all of its instincts» it has «neglected and tormented it». This pathological asceticism «has created dark souls, loaded with tension and oppressed». Furthermore, it has put an illusion on them with «the belief of knowing the cause of their servility sense, and or maybe being able to eliminate them», indicating precisely «in the body» the goal over which to jump in with brutal violence. Behaving like this, has ended up by «tormenting and despising the man himself».

In essence, concludes Nietzsche, the cause of the soul's degradation could not «reside» in any other place but in this «body», pointed out with envy for being «every time more, too blooming», and therefore deserving of all kinds of flogging. A body that is made to shout each time it dares, with its physicality and with «its pains», raise, even it for only and instant its voice, «raising protest over protest against this continuous derision» [16, § 39; 9, p. 299; 30, p. 8].

## 7. Beyond the primates

Nietzsche wants to move in other direction, looking to abandon the secular logic of the primates, in order to arrive to a completely new dimension, one of total corporeality. Nevertheless, in order to overcome this way of interpretation the relationship between the soul and the body, first it has the need to turn around the primate precedent, and face its opposite, the one of the body over the soul. He performs this step in the chapter *Of the despisers of the body*, in which he puts one in front of the other, two emblematic charac-

ters from the first book of *Zarathustra*: the boy and the snake. According to all what Nietzsche had already said a few pages before in *the three metamorphosis*, the child represents by himself a reaching point in the path of the human spirit, after the transitory phases of the camel and the lion. In fact, this child returns with certain importance in the chapter *of the despisers of the body*, where Nietzsche makes him talk putting in his mouth a concise and striking sentence: «Body and soul I am».

There are still both, the body and the soul, but immediately it can be figured out a drastic inversion. The order by which Nietzsche links the two terms is not casual, but let's understand a new primate: you are body first than soul. The child «speaks» therefore in this way, synthetic by incisive. And Nietzsche adds, «why shouldn't it be spoken like children?».

He seems wanting to proceed beyond the child. Naumann and Weichert, two of the greatest German commentators of *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, they concur that considering that in this context, that child has something of ingenuity: it's too much linked to the common opinion that it doesn't get to separate from the idea that there should always exist a soul and a body. Nietzsche wants to overcome this subsiding of the mind with respect to the body, where the dualism has not been really overcome, but better said the sign has been inverted. *Zarathustra* brings to the scenario the figure of a «clear minded», a «wise man». It is like having an esoteric knowledge in a dream, with which wants to initiate its listeners in something totally different to whatever was said by the child. It is okay to speak like innocent children «but» it is necessary for Nietzsche to go beyond. The wise man wakes up of the dream and, overcomes his childish dreams and the superstition of the people he announces: «Body I am in everything and for everything, and that is all» [12; 21, p. 138; 20, pp. 14-15; 31, p. 84; 22, p. 149; 23, pp. 141-142].

The primate's logic is interrupted. The traditional dualism is not already turn upside down, but it has vanished at all. Now, there do not exist anymore a soul and a body. There does not exist a before

and after, anymore. The man who has already reached this mysterious wisdom, understands to be only body. Nothing else but a body.

The body is not for Nietzsche, the simple alto of the soul, but becomes the only horizon of sense. An original condition to the limit of the paradox –writes Pasqualotto in his comments to Zarathustra–, transcendent and at the same time material. An opening at all possible, the existence condition that precedes and generates all things. The body is «a much more perfect formation than any thoughts and feelings system», an organism that «lives, grows and subsists as a whole», and that behaves in an autonomous mode, without further need of “a conscience or of a spirit”. A structure to say the least, «wonderful» claims Nietzsche. Something, finally, that «it would never end to be admired» [6, 37 (4); 5, 25 (408); 9, p. 328; 32, pp. 445-447; 10, pp. 494-495].

## 8. Me and the body

Nietzsche arrogantly brakes with the tradition. «*SUM ERGO COGITO* (*I think, then I exist*)», «live to think», lapidary ironic in *the jolly science* giving a turnaround to Descartes: definitely it is the body, the one that creates thinking [8, § 276; 30, pp. 28-29; 32, pp. 437-439].

The role of the rational I related to the body, is totally inverted: now it is the bodily dimension the one that has in its hands the networks of the “I”. In two fragments of the 1884-1885 years, Nietzsche argues with those thinking currents which have wanted to set a different reason and above the body. These have tried to match «the unilaterality of men with the cognizant I», «believing» mistakenly «that the ego –soul or spiritual subject– be whoever is the most true self». For Nietzsche, on the contrary, if there should exist in the human being «something unitary», this could never looked for in a purely rational and conscientious part. It will be

located beyond, «in another thing» in the «wisdom of the organism»: in a body that «from which the conscientious self is nothing but an instrument» [6, 34 (46), 36 (36)]. This last one, in a body dominating time and a sole rational component, is now aimed to give in and recognize itself dependent of it. It remains to the inner side of the bodily substrate only with a single instrumental function, as «a word to indicate something from the body». That which is called «spirit» it becomes, for Zarathustra, «a small reason, a little instrument and a toy of that big reason which is the body» [12; 32, pp. 435-437; 22, pp. 151-152; 33].

In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche insists in this fiery and delicate issue, using two full metaphors that efficiently show their understanding of the relationship I-body and at the same time emphasize the close dependence from the first related to the second. The body is, on one side, the father of the “I”, and on the other hand, his lord.

Above all, by mean of the image of the father, Nietzsche want to put in evidence a double turnover to the inner part of the relationship I-body. In the first place, it admits the categorical inversion of the parties: it is the bodily component the one that produces and gives life to that of the eye. Secondly, it highlights how the new relationship means something more than a simple role interchange, taking it towards an unexpected distortion of the relationship’s own modality. That is completely diverse to the other one to which philosophy had accustomed up until now. It is not about a transcendent, Kantian or Fichetian I that theoretically dominates reality. Between the body and the I, for Nietzsche, a practical relationship is set, not theoretical: the body «does not say “I”, but does “I”». It is behind the “I”, it generates it and it takes care of it. It is «the walker of the “I”, and the insufflator of its concepts»: it assists him rapidly and, precisely as a neonate, it teaches him to walk, or else to «think» and to act. The body makes grow this «I» and educates him in the existence: «it tells him when to fell pain or pleasure. And the «I» suffers and enjoys, and thinks on how not to suffer anymore, and how to enjoy more».

But according to Nietzsche the paternal logic is not enough to bring out exhaustively, the reasons for the turnaround of this relationship. Together with the father's apprehension, it is necessary the solution of the Lord. The body «dominates and is the Lord of the "I": listens, searches, compares, forces, conquers and destroys». It is «a powerful and wise king that is behind the thoughts and the feelings», making of corporeality its own kingdom: «it inhabits the body» and «concurr» with it.

It seems that for Nietzsche it is very important wanting to speak about this body submission to the "I" in order to highlight an ulterior aspect. In fact, while he underlines the supremacy of the body, puts in motion an ironic and sharp counter-phenomenology that makes transparent the bodily features of the «I»; as if he would want to highlight the register of the dominion exerted by the body related to the "I", is something that, for centuries, has always belonged to the self. He draws this last one as a king deprived but capricious, that still possesses a «big vanity» and despite his will he bends before his new master. He does not resign himself so easily, at not being anymore «the objective of all things». After all, Nietzsche admits, it is not so easy for this «vain self», so accustomed to dominate the body, to recognize itself suddenly as «instrument and toy of the body». Now is the body, according to him the ultimate goal of the actions and of the thoughts of the "I". The body «laughs» and enjoys with the «self-flights» and its «pride jumps», aware that these are not anything else but «a deviation towards its goal» [12, of the despisers of the body; 25, pp. 55-58; 26, p. 83].

## 9. The great reason

From what was highlighted by Nietzsche about the bodily condition, emerges a new image of the body and of the reason. This

rationality that up until now seemed to be growing as it was getting away, it was rising from the bodily world, finally gets in contact with him, becoming a part in him. The Nietzsche's philosophy inaugurates a period of the body which is reason, and of a reason which is body. On one hand a corporeality provided of its own rationality, different from the common and abstract concepts of reason. On the other hand, a reason in synergy with this bodily dimension, that cannot be without her, and becomes, in the end, a body herself.

To speak this new language means –as Messer reminds us, in his comments on *Zarathustra*–, round the risk, incumbent when it has to do with the body, of falling to two opposed fronts: spiritualists versus materialists. The former, met physicists of the spirit, reduce the body to a spirit. The latter, met physicists of the body, reduce the spirit to a body. Both points of view, apparently completely opposed, in reality concur in the diminishing of the human complexity. On one hand, there is a body that, without a reason, slides in a condition of irrational “organicism” or mechanistic materialism. On the other hand a reason that, without the corporeality component, goes back to be abstract and sterile. Separated by body and reason, each one would depend always from the other one, unavoidably falling again in the logic of the primates. A body without a reason, would have the need to feel submitted to a spiritual rationality, which, deprived of a bodily dimension, would search everywhere a matter to dominate [27, p. 13; 34, pp. 28-31; 9, p. 336; 23, p. 126].

Disassociated of these insidious logics, means, to Nietzsche, to move towards a double hermeneutic conquer: a new interpretation both of the body as well as of the reason. In the first place, the body possesses reason. It itself is a reason. The corporeality is no longer reduced to a grave or container of a rational soul, nor a simple machine, as perfect as needed of a rationalizing guidance different from it. In the second place, the body influences in a determinant way about the physiognomy itself of the reason, making

it to assume guidance that up until now, she didn't even think of possessing.

Nietzsche establishes between the body and reason an intense and fruitful dialogue. The first one says to the second one, that she can no longer consider herself abstract, ideal, fleshless; but she must be concrete, dense, and fleshy. It must feel irrigated by the same blood that runs through the body. The reason replies to the body that he is no longer something irrational, left to fortuity, but also it has its rationality, maybe hidden and mysterious. A rationality foreign diverse, and in a certain sense paradoxically more rational than the own thinking as Corradini highlights. It is that so, that Nietzsche claims, by the words of Zarathustra, that «there exists reason in your body than in your best wisdom» [12, of the despisers of the body; 10, p. 509].

These theoretical revenues, concur in a new existential dimension that in *Thus spoke Zarathustra* is called «the big reason», to distinguish it from that «small reason» that the “I” rational was. Nietzsche tears down the ideal of an abstract and monological reason, which wants to lead whatever is human, with a pretension of an identity swallowing all otherness, and absorbing all contradiction. He defines this reason-body as «a plurality with a single meaning». A twilight condition where meaning and multiplicity coexist without mutually excluding each other: the meaning does not claim forcefully, a singularity that excludes a priori the multiplicity, which in turn does not speak about a needed dispersion of an identity, at all costs. Nietzsche suggests to us that in this reason/body duality, the contradiction is not solved. In its inner part live together an eternal and flourishing conflict lived among its rivals; «there always will exist a war and peace, a community and a pastor» [12; 35, p. 218; 27, pp. 9-11; 9, pp. 302-305; 32, p. 439; 22, pp. 150-151; 23, p. 144].

A different and interesting way to look at the reason: more bodily, more complex, and more human.

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