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# REFLECTIONS OF SUBJECTIVISM IN NIETZSCHE'S THOUGHT

## SÜBJEKTİVİZMİN NIETZSCHE'NİN DÜŞÜNCESİNDEKİ YANSIMALARI

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**Atıf Gösterme:** TAŞTAN, Fatih, Reflections of Subjectivism in Nietzsche's Thought", *Ağrı İslâmi İlimler Dergisi (AGİİD)*, 2020 (6), s.28-44.

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Geliş Tarihi:

7 Nisan 2020

Kabul Tarihi:

21 Mayıs 2020

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Tüm Hakları Saklıdır.

**Abstract:** Friedrich Nietzsche is an important philosophical figure of the contemporary times. Starting from his early philosophical career, he has created enormous effects on different branches of philosophy. His philosophical enterprise is generally overshadowed by his argument that "God is dead." However, one can see many other interesting and lively problems posed by him, which happened valuable contributions to the history of philosophy. This study tries to give a general picture of some of his ontological and epistemological understandings. The general framework of the discussions made within the study is constituted by his approach to the problem of being and becoming. The problem of being and becoming, obviously, refers to one of the most discussed distinctions by many philosophers. It has its origin within the pre-Socratic period of antiquity. To supply a historical background for the discussions on the matter, a concise description of the ancient approaches within this regard has been given. Nietzschean subjectivism is analyzed, in this study, within the terms of his perspectivism. For him, every experience is personal, and, therefore, refers to partial grasp of appearance. He argues that there can be no difference between appearance and reality, and, that appearance is the unique reality. Such a difference would lead men to turn a blind eye to their creative mission, and, therefore, open the way to conceptions of predetermined life, a life that is a closed system and accepts no interference. This kind of life is unacceptable for Nietzsche the philosopher of life.

**Keywords:** *Nietzsche, Subjectivity, Being/becoming, Pre-Socratics, Will to power*

**Özet:** Friedrich Nietzsche çağdaş dönemin en önemli felsefi figürlerinden biridir. O, düşünsel kariyerinin başından itibaren farklı felsefi disiplinler üzerinde dikkate değer etkiler yaratmıştır. Nietzsche'nin felsefi düşüncesi genellikle "Tanrı öldü" yönündeki iddiasının gölgesi altında kalmıştır. Fakat onun ortaya attığı ve felsefe tarihine yapılmış son derece kıymetli birer katkı olarak görülebilecek ilginç ve canlı problemlerin olduğu görülmektedir. Bu makale Nietzsche'nin bazı ontolojik ve epistemolojik yaklaşımlarına dair genel

bir tasvir sunmaya çalışmaktadır. Makalede yürütülen tartışmaların genel çerçevesini onun varlık ve oluş problemini ele alış biçimi belirlemiştir. Varlık ve oluş problemi filozoflar tarafından çokça tartışılmış ayrımlardan birine işaret etmektedir. Bu problemin kökleri Sokrates öncesi döneme kadar uzanmaktadır. Mevzu hakkında tarihsel bir zemin sunabilmek bakımından çalışmamızda söz konusu probleme yönelik antik yaklaşımlardan da kısaca bahsedilmiştir. Çalışmamız Nietzscheci sübjektivizmi onun perspektivizmi doğrultusunda tahlil etmektedir. Nietzsche'ye göre, her tecrübe kişiseldir ve bu nedenle de görünüşü yalnızca kısmî bir şekilde kavrar. O, görünüş ve gerçeklik arasında herhangi bir ayırım yapılamayacağını, görünüşün tek gerçeklik olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Böylesi bir ayırım, Nietzsche'ye göre, insanları kendi yaratıcı misyonlarına kulak tıkamaya sev keder ve böylece önceden belirlenmiş, kendi içine kapalı ve müdahale kabul etmeyen yaşam anlayışlarına kapı aralar. Bu tür bir yaşam, bir yaşam filozofu olarak Nietzsche tarafından benimsenebilir değildir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Nietzsche, sübjektivite, güç istenci, varlık/oluş, pre-Sokratikler*

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## Introduction

This paper is an outcome of an attempt to review the general framework of Nietzsche's philosophy. The core of the review turned out to be an analysis of his subjectivism. Nietzschean idea of subjectivism necessarily entails an examination of his approach to the historical discussions about the notions of being and becoming. The following pages, therefore, presents, greatly, a discussion on his way of comprehension about these notions.

It must be said, at the beginning, that a study on Nietzsche necessarily becomes critical. The main reason is that his philosophy in particular and his understanding and reevaluating way of the things in general seem to be rich in terms of contradictions. One can come across with this situation even through facile readings of and on him.

The triumphant figures of the history of philosophy are generally those who design a systematical way of thinking which creates an unescapable sense of necessity to find a system and coherence within a set of thought. However, Nietzsche pretends to have no systematical philosophy at all and it may be the cardinal reason of his contradictions. He willingly avoids from creating a system, and, moreover, condemns the system owner philosophers to be the idols of the history of thought. However, given the effects he created on contemporary intellectual life, he can also be seen as an idol without system.

The discussions about the very ideas of being and becoming refer to an ancient problem of philosophy. Nietzsche does not affirm the term of being. He regards it to be one of the biggest mistakes of mankind. The reasons that led him to adopt such an approach shall be tried to be given through the discussions below. It will be argued, for example, that his ideas on the terms of being and becoming spring from his adoption of perspectivism. He regards the truth, if there is one, to be the result of personal experience. In this sense, it shall be compulsory to attribute it a kind of subjectivist ground. However, there are many interesting points in Nietzsche's thought that make it really difficult to fully comprehend

his perspectivism. He seems to be rejecting the concepts, like, subject and object. This is an interesting and somewhere enjoying idea that there is not such a thing as subject. The possible problems that come with this and other extra ordinary arguments will be the topic of the discussions throughout the study. It can be talked about the idea of truth and the very idea of the will to power. These ideas have certain relation almost with all the topics that are going to be tackled within the following pages. They will be held as the occasions arise. An attempt to concentrate on Nietzsche's idea of truth brings with it a compelling tendency towards tracing a pragmatist approach in his philosophy. He seems to have developed a kind of pragmatist understanding of truth against the one that included in the theory of correspondence.

### **1. The Problem of Being and Becoming**

The discussions that have taken place about the dichotomy of being and becoming are among the oldest, and may be the most important, topics of the Western history of thought. Human beings have attained to certain results about the universe in which they live by contemplating on it from different ways to comprehend. The essence of being, the kinds of becoming, the possible ontological and epistemological results that can be deduced from this dichotomy etc., constitute the main areas of thinking of philosophers since the pre-Socratic era.

Since the main objective of this study is to concentrate on Nietzsche's outlook on the distinction of, and discussions about, the concepts of being and becoming, it would be useful to give a historical sketch of the matter through some concise references to some of the pre-Socratics, sophists and Plato. It must be noted, before moving on to the presentation of the historical sketch, that the distinction of being/becoming and reality/appearance can be used interchangeably. These distinctions seem to have an overlapping nature. For this reason, one might argue, for example, that when Nietzsche's opinions about the appearance are touched upon, his opinion about becoming shall be pointed out, and vice versa.

There are many philosophers who have given an opinion about the concepts of becoming and being in the history of philosophy. The first philosophers of nature, described as pre-Socratics, have built their intellectual adventures largely on this debate. They discussed on the concept of *arche*<sup>1</sup> thoroughly for that matter.

Thales, for example, as the first pre-Socratic philosopher, believes that the principle at the beginning of everything is water. According to him, everything is derived from water. In this regard, everything has a divine quality. In his own words, "everything is full of gods."<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that his personal life, the geography in which he resided and the metaphysical explanations embarked on in

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<sup>1</sup> *Arche* is a concept that has been treated a lot and generally understood in a naturalistic-speculative way when philosophers of antiquity were discussing about the thing supplying a ground for being.

<sup>2</sup> Walther Kranz, *Antik Felsefe*, (İstanbul: Cinius-Sosyal Yayınları. 2014), 37.

that geography have an effect on his adoption of this idea. He is generally regarded as the first philosopher to use speculative thinking systematically to explain the being.

Anaximenes tells us that the arche is air. For him, what provides and sustains the existence of the universe is the air. It is like our souls, which is air in itself and keeps us alive. It is something like a breath.<sup>3</sup> Anaximander, however, conducts the debate on a more abstract ground and raises the idea that the arche is “apeiron”<sup>4</sup> (a Greek word meaning “unlimited” or “infinite”). Empedocles and Anaxagoras, unlike the monistic arguments of their predecessors, discuss the nature of arche on a more pluralistic ground. While Empedocles argues that the arche is the combination of four elements, which are air, fire, earth and water,<sup>5</sup> Anaxagoras believes that the arche is infinite in number and can be called as “sperma”.<sup>6</sup> Heraclitus, another pre-Socratic, identifies the arche as fire.<sup>7</sup> The most important factor that differs him from other pre-Socratics is his emphasis on becoming. His motto is *pantha rei*, which means that everything flows. According to him, the universe is in a state of constant change to the extent that no man can step into the same river twice. For, it is not the same river and he is not the same man.<sup>8</sup>

Democritus, another pre-Socratic philosopher, identifies arche with atoms. He can be regarded as the first philosopher who made a distinction between appearance and reality.<sup>9</sup> The argument that there is an irreconcilable difference between appearance and reality is one of the basic claims of subjectivism that emerged in the following periods. Leaving aside whether Democritus was in favor of subjectivism, one can argue that he made a distinction between appearance and reality which eventually led to the emergence of relativism within the case of sophists. A subjectivist theory can be imagined to have argued that objects have both visible and invisible aspects, which corresponds to appearance and reality. Our senses show us only the visible face of the objects. We have no way of knowing the invisible but the real and true nature of the things. It can be argued that not all subjectivist theories lead us necessarily to skepticism. However, the possible and actual relativistic interpretations and deductions depending on such subjectivist interpretations makes skepticism quite likely. In other words, there is an apparent way from subjectivism to relativism at the gate of which stands skepticism. Pyrrhonism, for example, gives us the perfect sample of ignoring the possibility of knowledge. It is worth to remind that Pyrrhonists’ argument for *epochē* (suspension of judgment) is a result of the distinction made between the visible and the true nature of things.

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<sup>3</sup> Kranz, *Antik Felsefe*, 42-43.

<sup>4</sup> Kranz, *Antik Felsefe*, 40.

<sup>5</sup> Kranz, *Antik Felsefe*, 117.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Preus, *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Greek Philosophy*, (New York: Longman&Littlefield, 2015), 363.

<sup>7</sup> Kranz, *Antik Felsefe*, 72-73.

<sup>8</sup> Kranz, *Antik Felsefe*, 72.

<sup>9</sup> Robin Waterfield, *The First Philosophers: The Presocratics and Sophists*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 165.

Many sophists, Protagoras in particular, following the same path, made bold claims to justify and re-justify the idea of subjectivism. According to Protagoras, for example, man is the measure of all things.<sup>10</sup> It is worth to note that he talks about human as an individual, not human as a species. The main reason why every person is a measure of truth, undoubtedly, is their own personal experiences. As I am the subject who experiences the things, I derive some results suitable for that experience. In this case, it is inevitable for me to concentrate on the result that I derive directly, not on the results derived by others. If I will only trust the conclusions I personally draw from my own experience, then I will have to follow this principle. It may even be impossible, from time to time, to get rid of the contradictions occurring between my own experiences. In such a circumstance, it would not be justifiable to make some universal judgments valid for all subjects. One can observe similar claims in different skeptic currents.

Now, it is clear that potential skeptical implications noted above cannot be accepted as they are. The wisdom human beings desire to possess cannot be derived from one-sided, self-enclosed knowledge. It is also possible to claim that knowledge, once its existence has been accepted, is universal and binding. At this point, it will be necessary to apply to one of the victorious followers of Socratic tradition, i.e. Plato, who elevates the knowledge from being a mere possibility to the level of necessity.

Plato treats being under two distinct concepts: The *world of Ideas* and the *world of appearances*. The world of Ideas, to define it roughly, is a self-identical and perfect world. There occurs no change and it constitutes the very essence of being. On the contrary, the *world of appearances* is a world in which change occurs permanently. Therefore, it is imperfect. It is constituted by the reflections of the *world of Ideas* and is full of deficiencies. It is worth to point out here that Plato regards the presence of change to be the reason of being imperfect. As a matter of fact, this way of thinking has occupied the agenda of philosophy abundantly. How it is possible for human beings “to know” in this world of appearances in which every kinds of changes prevail? We find the translation of Plato’s notions of being into epistemology at this point. In fact, there are two ways of “knowing”. These are, “the right opinion” (*orthē doxa*) and “true knowledge” (*epistēmē*). People think that they know things in the world of appearances, however, it is not possible to gain a true knowledge of things, because everything changes. In order for a true knowledge to be possible it is necessary to posit the presence of stability. Thus, the true knowledge is only of ideas. Knowledge, in fact, is a *recollection*. Because of coming to this imperfect world and retiring to a distance from perfectness, human beings have lost the thing they had before.

The Platonic notion that I tried to define here superficially seems to be one of the main reasons of discrediting the worth of the world we live in. If a thing glides from your hands constantly it is not possible for you to take a hold on it. Therefore, it seems to be difficult to grasp such a fluid thing to be something promising life for us. It may be one of the reasons why Nietzsche condemns Christianity to

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<sup>10</sup> Kranz, *Antik Felsefe*, 202.

be “Platonism for public”.<sup>11</sup> That is to say, Christianity is discrediting the life, and then, pushing it out of the domain of interest.

Within the discussions taking place around the concepts of being and becoming Nietzsche adopts an attitude in favor of the latter. This is the attitude he developed initially in his work of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*.<sup>12</sup> He sustains the same attitude in his other works. According to him, “we have no categories at all that permit us to distinguish a “world in itself” from a “world of appearance.” All our categories of reason are of sensual origin: derived from empirical world.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it is not possible to make a distinction, in Platonist meaning, between appearance and reality. One can notice here a serious rupture from Platonist interpretation of the Western metaphysics in ontological and epistemological senses. Nietzsche seems to think that Western metaphysics optimistically has missed the huge idea of becoming, and pessimistically set it aside, knowingly and willingly, for the sake of an unknowable substance. This situation leads human being to turn a blind eye to their own creative mission, and, therefore, opens way to conceptions of predetermined life, a life that is a closed system and accepts no interference. What Nietzsche aims is to destruct this conception of life which excludes the importance of human beings. One can see here that he is in favor of an idea giving human beings priority. Human beings are at the center of life. Consequently, a life in which they have no influence has neither meaning nor value for him.

Nietzsche regards becoming to be the unique reality. To maintain our own daily life in a certain regulation, he seems to think, we cover the being with a strait jacket, so to speak. By doing so “we corrupt for ourselves the *innocence of becoming*.”<sup>14</sup> Life is, at the same time, a kind of degeneration. It is transformation and degeneration of the reality, or whatever that can be qualified as real, in a way to make them enable to serve our practical needs. It’s the way of our tackling with the reality which leads us to the idea that it is what we conceive it to be. When we look from this point of view, we will see that “the perspective, therefore, decides the character of the “appearance”!”<sup>15</sup> The relation between being and the multitude of perspectives will be tried to be dealt with under the heading of perspectivism.

If it is to be reckoned in a connection with change, we see that there are two possible interpretations of being. The first one is roughly mentioned above with references to Plato. That is to say, the idea of change is a way of expressing being devoid of perfection. Viewed from this perspective, it is necessary to put forward a possibility excluding the change. Thus, the reality must not possess

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<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Foreword.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1998), sections 5 to 9.

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, (New York: Vintage, Later Printing, 1967), 488 (I will refer only to the number of the aphorisms).

<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 552.

<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 567.

change, it must represent a kind of structure with which change cannot meddle. Nietzsche puts forth a diametrically opposed idea to it. According to him, the world we live in is composed in terms of changes. And there is no other possibility. It is not possible to conceive an idea of becoming independent of change or representing a kind of structure without change. The concept of becoming emphasizes on a continuous change. The world is ““in flux,” as something and in a state of becoming”<sup>16</sup> The world is in a constant flux. It gives us itself over and over again in different forms. To confine it into definite molds is one of the biggest mistakes that can be done.

The only thing to do for a man who wants to see the reality must be to cast his eyes on this world, according to Nietzsche, because “the “real world,” however one has hitherto conceived it—it has always been the apparent world *once again*.”<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, a distinction between appearance and reality will bring with it a problem of knowledge. Depending on what basis one can decide whether this distinction is valid, or reasonable, or that it has a justifiable content? Questions of this sort, according to Nietzsche, have no answer. In order to give an answer to such a question one “have to have a previous knowledge of being—which is certainly not the case.”<sup>18</sup>

Nietzsche thinks that “in so far as the senses show becoming, passing away, change, they do not lie...The “apparent” world is the only one: the “real” world has only been *lyingly added*.”<sup>19</sup> In order to achieve an appropriate understanding of reality one must get rid of this second kind of world. It’s obvious that Nietzsche talks here about a problem of measure. To say that something is true or false is unavoidably to say that that thing is true or false according to another thing. In other words, in most of the cases we define truth or falsity by positing a certain thing. What if there is not a point of reference of this kind? What if everything is flowing? What if nothing remains the same? What if, the thing that we call reality exists together with inexhaustible change? How can we talk about a thing as if it exists while it is constantly changing? In fact, after his expressions about the being it may be seen to be odd to say that he talks about a thing that “is”. He argues in different contexts that things “are not”.<sup>20</sup> His expressions of this sort carry with them serious problems. When he says that “nothing is”, it seems that he wants us to consider whether it is possible to conceive a measure which one can apply when he tackles with becoming. And the answer is obvious: No. The nothingness of the things must be understood in this way. When one thinks deeply it will not possible for him to conceive a constantly changing thing in terms of a definite mold and to evaluate accordingly. This situation leads us to a strong idea of subjectivism.

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<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 616.

<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 566.

<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 516.

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), III:2.

<sup>20</sup> For some statements to this effect see Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 570 and 480.

If there is a constant flux, a continuous change or a transformation, the denial of which is impossible for Nietzsche, it will mean that there is not a ground on which we can determine the truth. To state it in a clearer manner, one can argue that the Western metaphysics works on a ground about trustworthiness of which it has no doubt, that “existence is”, that we can conceive it by dividing into, or reducing to, different parts and categories, and that we can know what can and cannot be said about it. But Nietzsche does not agree with the trustworthiness of that ground. He thinks that it is very weak. By destructing that ground one will destruct the measure of truth. When one tries to interpret Nietzsche’s idea that we cannot talk about true things, this condition must be taken into account. His ideas of this sort lead us to a strong idea of subjectivism which would make us unable to expose even a simple claim. Such a manifold of perspectives makes it impossible to say what is right or what is wrong. It can be added that the logical consequence of Nietzsche’s claim, that nothing is true, cannot be that everything is false, though he says it for several times at several pages of his books. For, by denying the metaphysical ground, which is pointed out above, and to describe becoming in terms of a constant change Nietzsche has lost his right to make a comment on being or at least to state something on it.<sup>21</sup> His speaking, despite this lack of right, even this speaking alone, will be enough to vindicate the accusation against him that he developed a metaphysical discourse.

Departing from Nietzschean comments given so far it is clear enough that there is not a secondary (or, alternatively, essential) driving force behind becoming. In this manner, one can say that becoming is a self-determining process. But it still remains as a problem in need of a solution. Is becoming an actualization of a potentiality? Nietzsche would, without doubt, say “No!” What the basic motive leading him to such a conclusion is not only the lack of ability to gain knowledge of that “potentiality”. The only reason is that he regards becoming to be the unique reality. However, it is difficult to say “No!” easily. For, such a circumstance will bring to mind an idea of being, detached *by itself* from all kinds of relations and, again, pulled *by itself* out of “nothingness”. How will it be possible, in such a manner, to acquire qualifications like “calculability”, “anticipability” procuring “the preservation and enhancement of the species”? Nietzsche affirms these qualifications both in concealed and apparent ways.<sup>22</sup> To state it in a clearer way, the preservation of the species is dependent on the calculability of things, which is to say that we anticipate things to behave in terms of a determinable scheme. And this, eventually, will mean to freeze becoming and to extend the part taken from it to the general. To argue that becoming works in terms of a definite law, in other words, to claim that we have reliable datum to enable us to know in which manner it will behave, will be to attribute it a certain

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<sup>21</sup> I need to say that I conceive the idea of change to be a negative concept. Although it is difficult to conceive the being independent of change or, in this sense, without flux, I find it more difficult to create an image of change which erases the identity and brings a complete differentiation.

<sup>22</sup> He says, for example, that “in order for a particular species to maintain itself and increase its power, its conception of reality must comprehend enough of the calculable and constant for it to base a scheme of behavior on it.” Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 480.



necessity. And this, once again, will be to confine it into a definite shape. Therefore, one can find Nietzsche's claims about becoming far from being satisfying.

## 2. Perspectivism

Keeping Nietzsche's opinions about becoming in mind one can see that becoming is essentially a matter of interpretation for him. The world is an achievement of us. It is we who grant it the reality. It is not possible to imagine a world without us. That the world exists independent of our interpretations as something in-itself is nothing but a fiction that created by our own minds, and facts are precisely non-existent, there are only interpretations.<sup>23</sup> These ideas bring the mind the claim of Berkeley stating that perceiving is the very condition of being. *Esse est percipi*, which means that to be is to be perceived (or to be a perceiver).<sup>24</sup> When we translate this idea into Nietzschean thought we can come across such a conclusion: *Esse est interpretatio*, that is to say, to be is interpretation.

One can find another point of similarity between Berkeley and Nietzsche. Berkeley argues, briefly, that if we deconstruct the secondary qualities there would remain nothing in the sense that there can be no quality other than the secondary ones.<sup>25</sup> If we assume that there are, then we would fall into a materialism which is contrary to Berkeleyan idea of immaterialism. I should accept that Nietzsche would find it to be a fatal error to be compared with a deeply religious man. But words have no controversies. It is important to read Nietzsche saying that "that things possess a constitution in themselves quite apart from interpretation and subjectivity, is a quite idle hypothesis: it presupposes that interpretation and subjectivity are not essential, that a thing freed from all relationships would still be a thing."<sup>26</sup> In other words, things exist only by us. It cannot be claimed that they do so independently from us, or in a way transcending our interpretation. As I will try to concentrate on, this and other remarks of this sort lead us to come face to face with a solipsistic idea.

There is no authority in interpretation. Reality defers depending on which view you treat it. "There are many kinds of eyes. Even the sphinx has eyes—and consequently there are many kinds of "truths," and consequently there is no truth."<sup>27</sup> Or, that "there is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; the *more* affects we allow to speak about a thing, the more complete will be our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity'"<sup>28</sup> This is the clearest expression of subjectivism. It is possible to reach a similar result to the one, which is mentioned above when we tackled with Nietzsche's contention that "there is no truth", together with his interpretation that "no-thing is". There are multitude

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<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 481.

<sup>24</sup> George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, (New York: MacMilan, 1988).

<sup>25</sup> George Berkeley, *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 560.

<sup>27</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 540.

<sup>28</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), III:12.

of possibilities. We create these possibilities by ourselves. To state that there is an absolute “truth” is to destruct our creativity. Therefore, there is not a final truth. I am of the opinion that Nietzsche does not claim that there is no *truth* of any kind. There is no doubt that *it* is doomed to remain as a personal matter. A new conception of truth has substituted the encircling and assimilating conception of truth of the old times.

Nietzsche seems to be in favor of a pragmatist understanding of truth. Being undetermined as content is the most prominent feature of this understanding of truth. Facts are dumb. They start to talk in our hands. It is we who make them enable to talk. Once they start to talk they do so in a suitable way for us. And the things they say, when talking, are, for the most part, the things we expect from them. Things take the shape of the vessel designed by us, so to speak. There is no other authority other than that vessel or its designer to rely on. Nietzsche says in this connection that: “That mountain over there! That cloud over there! What is “real” about that? Subtract just once the phantasm and the whole human *contribution* from it, you sober ones! Yes, if you could do that!”<sup>29</sup> Humanly contributions of certain sorts penetrate into things to a certain degree that they start to be conceived as if they belong to the essence of things. That’s why he says that “what started as appearance in the end nearly always becomes essence and *effectively* acts as its essence.”<sup>30</sup>

That to be stuck to definite ideas is not something acceptable in this way of thinking is quite clear. To sink into ideas is the easiest method of destructing the dynamism needed to say yes to the life. Above all, the more they turn out to be convictions the most they are dangerous. I think it’s something like this that Nietzsche tries to depict when he says that “convictions are prisons”<sup>31</sup> or “convictions are more dangerous enemies of the life than lies.”<sup>32</sup>

There are, without doubt, certain motives and expectations that lead us to make this or that kind of interpretation. And these are, naturally, possible practical consequences depending on the thing to be not that way but this way. ““Essence,” the “essential nature,” is something reflecting a perspective and already presupposes a multiplicity. At the bottom of it there always lies “what is that for *me*?” (for us, for all that lives, etc.)”<sup>33</sup> That means to say that when we incline to things we do so by certain intentions. These intentions are of importance since they affect our interpretations. Their proportion of satisfying our expectations determines their truth or falsity. In other words, if they do reassure us they are true “for us”, and if they do not then they are false “for us”. Nietzsche settles the will to power to the center of this reassurance. True things are those events which sharpen and, by doing so, strengthen our will to power. “The criterion of truth resides in the enhancement of the feeling power.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 57.

<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 58.

<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), 54.

<sup>32</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All too Human*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 483.

<sup>33</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 556.

<sup>34</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 534.

As a matter of fact, the will to power is the unique factor which belongs to the essence of things and constitutes their essence. “Will to power appears whenever an individual, group or institution reinterprets “facts” to promote its own values and interests. Reinterpretation, always involves the assimilation of a weaker to a stronger force and this process necessarily creates a new perspective upon the world.”<sup>35</sup> It forms the very essence of life:

*“What man wants, what every smallest part of a living organism wants, is an increase of power. Pleasure or displeasure follow from the striving after that; driven by that will it seeks resistance, it needs something that opposes it— Displeasure, as an obstacle to its will to power, is therefore a normal fact, the normal ingredient of every organic event; man does not avoid it, he is rather in continual need of it; every victory, every feeling of pleasure, every event, presupposes a resistance to overcome.”*<sup>36</sup>

This is a situation that encompasses all spheres of being, from the lowest organism to the highest, that is, human. The most basic urge is to become stronger:

*“Let us take the simplest case, that of primitive nourishment: the protoplasm extends its pseudopodia in search of something that resists it— not from hunger but from will to power. Thereupon it attempts to overcome, appropriate, assimilate what it encounters: what one calls “nourishment” is merely derivative phenomenon, an application of the original will to become stronger.”*<sup>37</sup>

Every single change taking place on this world consists the will to power absolutely. “When viewed from inside, the world, which defined according to its “comprehensible character”, is seen that it is nothing but the will to power.”<sup>38</sup> Nothing remains the same. Viewed from this perspective the will to power necessitates a continuous change. It is unavoidable for such a claim to bring into mind antagonistic associations. Certainly it is unavoidable for a system, designed according to constant refreshment and being more powerful at all times, to create conflicts. It is the basic requisite of the nature of the power. Power always wants to dominate. Therefore, there is not an idea of reconciliation in it but a constant struggle and conflict. “It is just as absurd to ask strength *not* to express itself as strength, *not* to be a desire to overthrow, crush, become master, to be a thirst for enemies, resistance and triumphs, as it is to ask weakness to express itself as strength”<sup>39</sup> If we apply this into the history of human beings there would appear a consequence like that of Thomas Hobbes’ famous argument regarding the *bellum omnium contra omnes* (the war of all against all). This is established into our existence spheres so much that one can see trace of it even in the domain called morality. Take, for example, “making goodness to

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<sup>35</sup> Lee Spinks, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 141.

<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 702.

<sup>37</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 702.

<sup>38</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, I:13.

someone". This kind of behavior, from an external view, seems to be an innocent one. But even this is for preserving our will to power.<sup>40</sup> Thus the will to power becomes the impulse behind distinct activities, the principle which informs all human relationships and all of man's dealings with nature. Its realization through the course of history, in the rise and fall of worldly and spiritual institutions, provides man with the horizon necessary to sustain life itself, but it is equally to be seen as the motive behind all individual cultural, artistic, and religious activity.<sup>41</sup>

It is clear that Nietzsche is of the opinion that there are innumerable multitude of possibilities for interpretation. A multitude of this kind is, naturally, brings with it a strong subjectivism. "The will to power is something hermeneutic, something engaged in interpreting. The struggle between the opposing tendencies of a multiplicity of wills is above all a struggle between competing interpretations."<sup>42</sup> Well and good. Is it not necessary to be a being to put this subjectivism forward? Absolutely it is. What is interesting is that Nietzsche deprecates such an idea. In other words, he rejects the notion of *subject*. Now I will tackle this idea and try to point out the implicit problems of it.

### **3. Action without Actor: Implications of Nietzsche's Understanding of Language**

Nietzsche opposes to an idea with which we are familiar in our daily lives and which is a natural thing in this respect for us. Language, as is well known, is based, to a certain degree, on a distinction between actions and actors. We do this distinction unconsciously because of our use of the language in order to make statements or judgments. Because of this situation we ask, after an event, for a person who did it or another thing which caused it to happen. According to Nietzsche, we have no right to do something like this. The distinction made between actions and actors is not valid. The only thing we can talk about is action. There is "no subject but an action, a positing, creative, no "causes and effects".<sup>43</sup> Main reason of making such a distinction, according to him, is the metaphysical structure of language. The worse thing is that we have no instrument, unfortunately, to eradicate this metaphysical structure. "We cease to think when we refuse to do so under the constraint of language."<sup>44</sup> That is to say, we lose our ability of thinking when we try to overcome this structure. So, what does action mean in Nietzsche's thought? It appears that he is talking about a unity. He must be talking about such a unity when he is saying that "a thing is sum of its effects, synthetically united by a concept, an image."<sup>45</sup> What I have in mind when I use the word "unity" is the total of qualities and possibilities included within a thing, regardless of their calculability or anticipability. Therefore, just like his opposition to the distinction

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<sup>40</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Peter Stern, *A Study of Nietzsche*, (New York, 1981), 181.

<sup>42</sup> Gianni Vattimo, *Nietzsche, an Introduction*, (London: Athlone, 2002), 124.

<sup>43</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 617.

<sup>44</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 522.

<sup>45</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 551.

made between the flash and its lightning,<sup>46</sup> it can be argued that he is trying to reach a point of unity by including every attachable idea to the concept of human being. There is no reason to exclude the actions of a man. In fact, it is the cardinal factor in this unity. It includes all the things. Thus the reason of the identification of the action with actor (one might add the object to this identification) comes to the surface. Now, this idea seems to include lots of dilemmas. I have, at least, two different problems about it. Firstly, this idea can easily be reduced to absurdity. Secondly, and more importantly, it leads us to certain serious logical consequences at the top of which comes the idea of *solipsism*. Now I will try to base my arguments on a ground respectively.

To begin with, it is obvious that Nietzsche opposes to make a distinction between action, actor and that which acted upon (that is to say, object). It will be enough to support this claim to quote a sentence like this: ““Subject,” “object,” “attribute,” —these distinctions are fabricated and are now imposed as a schematism upon all the apparent facts. The fundamental false observation is that I believe it is *I* who do something, suffer something, “have” something, “have” a quality.”<sup>47</sup> According to him we can talk about only the action. Actor and object are nothing but our fictions. “There is no “being” behind the deed, its effects and what becomes of it; the “doer” is invented as an afterthought, -the doing is everything.”<sup>48</sup> If we use those three things mentioned above (that is to say, action, actor and the object) as variables, a similar reasoning can be formulized: Thinking, thinker and the object of thought. It can be asked here: Does action include the thinking or its object? If the things I tried to say above in a connection with unity are true, which seem to be the case according to Nietzsche, we have to accept that action and thought are identical. Therefore, if we claim that there is a horizontal and vertical identity between the first three variables and the second ones, I think, we would not be claiming something contrary to reason. If my thoughts are not different from me and from my objects of thinking, which, according to Nietzsche, are not, and, if there is an identity between thinking and action, as I tried to show above, which would not be an unacceptable idea for Nietzsche, then *my thoughts and my actions are identical*. Now, departing from such an identity constructed between thought and action, it would not be difficult for us to reduce Nietzsche’s claim to absurdity. Here is an example: “I thought to kill somebody, so I am a killer.” To *think* to kill somebody and to *kill* somebody. They may seem to be different grammatically. But if we keep his ideas about the identity in mind this sophistic conclusion seems to be quite possible to be drawn.

As for the other conclusion, namely, solipsism, which is arrived at through the identification which Nietzsche finds between action, actor and that which is acted upon (put another way, between thinking, thinker and object of thought): I may comment on it in the following way. Solipsism, put roughly, is the epistemological assertion according to which man’s knowledge is bound merely to his

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<sup>46</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 548.

<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 549.

<sup>48</sup> Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, I:13. For a similar expression, see Nietzsche, *Twilight of Idols*, V:4.

own reality and the reality or the existence of outer things can be had only when they are subject to man's consciousness. If my thought and the object of my thought are identical, then the only possible way of having knowledge of the existence of the things outside me depends on the fact that my thought and its object are identical.

In fact, we find a variety of expressions in Nietzsche which seem to be supporting the solipsist interpretation. For instance, he asserts that "the origin of "things" is wholly the work of that which imagines, thinks, wills, feels... The concept of "thing" itself just as much as all its qualities."<sup>49</sup> Also, he argues that "...the essence of a thing is only an *opinion* about the "thing."<sup>50</sup> Now, if the existence of a thing is completely a matter of interpretation or an affair of "thinker"; in other words, if the statement of "things exist" requires an interpreter, then to claim that the existence of the things outside our consciousness depend on our consciousness would be reasonable. All of the relations things have formed in accordance with our mind. It is not possible for them to exist in a fashion in which they are completely free from our mind. If we refer, once again, to Berkeley, we can now argue that "things possess a constitution in themselves quite apart from interpretation and subjectivity, is a quite idle hypothesis: it presupposes that interpretation and subjectivity are not essential, that a thing freed from all relationships would still be a thing."<sup>51</sup>

We have already underlined that Nietzsche sees the language as the common root of many difficulties we come across. Indeed, for him, this is the fate of human being. Human being comes to exist into a certain social milieu and experiences his life surrounded by those meanings attributed to the things by that milieu. In this respect, the subject is constructed: "With the help of the morality of custom and the social straitjacket, man was *made* truly predictable."<sup>52</sup> In this process of construction, cognitive, linguistic and social processes go hand-in-hand:

*"...only as a social animal did man learn to become conscious of himself—he is still doing it, and he is doing it more and more. My idea is clearly that consciousness actually belongs not to man's existence as an individual but rather to the community—and her-aspects of his nature; that accordingly, it is finely developed only in relation to its usefulness to community or herd; and that consequently each of us, even with the best will in the world to understand ourselves as individually as possible, "to know ourselves", will always bring to consciousness precisely that in ourselves which is "non individual" that which is "average"; that due to the nature of consciousness –to the "genius of the species" governing it—our*

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<sup>49</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 556.

<sup>50</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 556.

<sup>51</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 560.

<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, II:2

*thoughts themselves are continually as it were outvoted and translated back into the herd perspective.*"<sup>53</sup>

It becomes evident here that Nietzsche is complainant of the linguistic clichés which are incompatible with his conception of dynamic universe or existence. It is also clear that the language will not satisfy him unless it has the capability of change as powerful as the being possesses. Well then, is it possible to imagine a language which has the capabilities Nietzsche imagines? It seems that it would not be possible as long as we have the beings as restricted as we are. Yet, I will dare to claim here that Nietzsche attributes to language too much defaults. It is quite understandable that language includes both change and stability at the same time. What language can be independent of change totally? The use of language by itself triggers, if not calls for, change. This is an inevitable process. Yet, the reverse also applies here: What language is as fertile and creative as to be source of an endless change? What is more, we might ask, do change and novelty, as the antinomies of stability, always give birth to good consequences? Can one not claim for the other extreme of that argument? When we bring together what Nietzsche says about the language it may be possible to argue that the language is the most prevailing barrier in front of us and the main reason behind this is the metaphysical foundation. As long as we are unable to get rid of this metaphysical aspect of language we will never be able to get away from the problems brought about by it into our lives. I see that Nietzsche's basic assertion is this. Yet I still infer here that he has an assumption that we will get a better condition vis-à-vis language through a certain (historical) process. I cannot help asking here: Is the process totally prone to seek for the better? Does not such an understanding of process, which is accredited with so much positive meanings, take us to an understanding of progress? Nietzsche, in a variety of contexts, declared that he was against such an understanding.<sup>54</sup> What is more, what would be the measure for good and progress?

Nietzsche asserts that we give names to things, assign meanings to them and import sense into them. And later we reveal these through speech. Yet we still attach independent status of existence to them. He is very critical about this: "The 'truths' of language, logic, science and philosophy are... simply analytical or tautological: they tell us nothing more than what we originally built into them" To name a thing is not to bring it into existence. Any assertion arguing this will be bothering with reduction of language to existence, or identification of language with existence (by giving priority to language). That is to say, he asserts at first step that through language we reveal meanings that we pre-stored in the words. So far so favorable, it seems here. However, it seems to me unfavorable to have a judgment about the "truth" or "falsity"<sup>55</sup> of the things, by looking at the fictive character of language. The existence of language depends totally on practical needs and recognition of being is a natural consequence of its use.

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<sup>53</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 354.

<sup>54</sup> He says, for example, that "mankind does *not* represent a development towards a better, stronger or higher type, in the sense in which this is supposed to occur to-day. "Progress" is merely a modern idea—that is to say a false idea.": Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 4.

<sup>55</sup> I use these two words here to mean "existence" and "non-existence" respectively.

Put thusly, we find no aim of bringing things into existence in the emergence of language. The distorted and manipulated use of language is the natural consequence of the process and it does not seem possible to get rid of this fact.

Lastly, in connection to the quotation I made from Nietzsche above, I will argue that he arrives to an ontological conclusion through an epistemological assumption. It is a credible attempt to question such an attempt. That is, put in a general question, how accurate is it to assert that all of the speeches about the things are false, by referring to the fact that we “name” things and hide in them meanings through certain mental operations and tools such as metaphor, word, image and concept?

### **Conclusion**

I have tried to tackle Nietzsche’s ideas about so-called distinction between being and becoming. We saw that he finds this distinction to be something metaphysical, that is to say, unbelievable. By doing this he declares his general attitude towards the metaphysics. Through the paper I thought about this attitude. As a result, one can find it reasonable the argument that he has a metaphysical way of thinking. I regard it only as a way of thinking because there is not a systematical approach in his thought. One can come across different ideas about the same thing in different pages. Of course it is a criticism which have been made from inside. Although it is necessary to put forward an objective way of investigation by giving the fundamental importance to the origin of the object through the process, it will not mean to destruct all the understanding gained before. Such a way of understanding would make us frozen in the middle of skepticism. In other words, to do justice in a discussion is not to accept or reject all the arguments put forward by the counterpart. One of the important things about the Nietzschean metaphysical way of thinking is that it is rooted particularly on the idea of language. Although he discredits the language as having metaphysical structure, he falls into the same situation by using it. He says, quite easily, that it is not possible to think without language. And on the other hand he tries to get rid of it. It is strange enough when we read him to be regarding the poetry (which is nothing but a linguistic expression) as a strong tool of expressing the “truth”. In short there is truth for Nietzsche but it cannot be generalized to the common. It is, as we saw, a name for different perspectives.

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