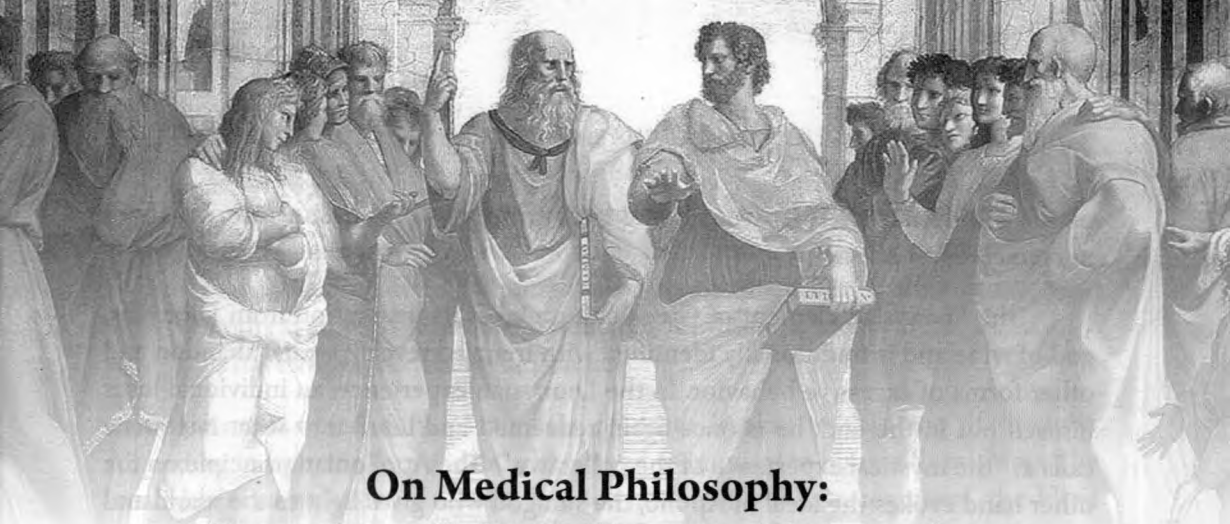




On Medical Philosophy: Nietzsche and the Hellenistic Philosophers

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This paper presents an interface between the thoughts of Nietzsche and the Hellenistic philosophers. It seeks to answer the question: What is philosophy for Nietzsche and the Hellenistic thinkers? It aims to provide, not a detailed map of the philosophical itinerary of these intellectual giants, but a synoptic description of the peak points of their convergence. It may be read as a profile of the anticipation of Nietzsche's thoughts by the Hellenistic thinkers or vice versa, that is, the reverberation of the ancients' voice in Nietzsche in something like a "profound spiritual dialogue" where "the other calls the other through the desolate intervals of the ages."¹ Contrary to popular notion, philosophy is not purely a speculative enterprise; it does not stand outside the world as Marx would say. Philosophy, in truth, is a discourse on human life and this is eloquently illustrated in this exchange between Nietzsche and the Hellenistic philosophers. For them, philosophy is essentially medical, that is, it is at the service of life. It is their favored prescription for all who seek to recover, restore or experience in its freshness, life's original vitality.

Philosophy and Life

Nietzsche's affinity with the Greeks is evidenced no less by his first major work, *The Birth of Tragedy*. The book is a hymn to the Greek tragedy as the embodiment of the aesthetic synthesis of the Dionysian and Apollonian elements of Greek culture.² The reconciliation of these opposite principles marks for the Greeks an important event in their cultural history. It signifies the "transfiguration"

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¹ Fink, Eugen, *Nietzsche's Philosophy* (New York, New York: Continuum, 2003), 31

² Cate, Curtis, *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Biography* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 134 – 5.

of the Dionysian festivals from being rites of orgiastic abandon into rituals of universal redemption.³

The Dionysian element of Greek culture takes its inspiration from Dionysus, god of wine and is traditionally identified with frenzied revelry, sexual abandon and other forms of excessive behavior. In the Dionysian experience, an individual loses himself but in the end, he is once again redeemed and lifted into what Nietzsche calls as “the mystical experience of the collective.”⁴ The Apollonian principle on the other hand evokes the ideal of Apollo, the sun god who gives light to the world and is commonly associated with structure, order and clarity. Apollo also symbolizes the dream experience of the Greeks. Dream is “a totally different reality,”⁵ totally apart from our day-to-day human experience. Compared to it, our everyday reality is only an illusion. Only dream can bring us closer to our “innermost being.”⁶ Only dream can make life “possible and worth living.”⁷

Nietzsche’s celebration of the union of these two opposite cultural poles, this “*esthetic triumph*,”⁸ brings him closer to the Hellenistic thinkers’ philosophical therapy of desires. Just as human flourishing for the Hellenists is not possible unless human desires are cured by philosophy, for Nietzsche human life may also fall into meaninglessness unless one finds in his life a happy balance between the Dionysian and Apollonian principles. The Dionysian is our desires and passions, our experience of spontaneity. The Apollonian is the life of thought and reflection. Life becomes worth living with the union of the two.

Therapy of desires does not mean obliteration of human passions. It is rather a movement towards *ataraxia* or recuperation of our emotions from disturbance and pain caused by false beliefs and empty desires. The goal of therapy is not negative but constructive, that is, “the continued undisturbed and unimpeded functioning of the whole creature.”⁹ Bodily pain, for Epicurus, is not the ultimate source of unhappiness but distress of the soul.¹⁰ The soul suffers distress not when it desires but when it desires no end, that is, when it desires, almost thoughtlessly, desire itself; when it desires for desire’s sake. As Nussbaum puts it:

³ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Anchor Books, 1956), 26.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁹ Nussbaum, Martha, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 109.

¹⁰ Cicero, On ends 1.55, A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, eds., *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 119.

Epicurus sees people rushing about after all sorts of objects of desire: wealth, luxury, power, love, above all, immortal life. He is convinced that the central cause of human misery is the disturbance produced by the seemingly 'boundless' demands for desire, which will not let us have any rest or stable satisfaction."¹¹

Lucretius's treatment of the fear of death is akin to this line of thought. According to him, the fear of death, like greed, is inimical to human flourishing. The insatiable accumulation of wealth, lust for honor or public recognition, the blind quest for power – these are manifestations of our thirst for uninterrupted existence. They are also the cause of what Lucretius referred to as the "great mental anguish and fear."¹² It bothers us so much to leave behind life as we know it and all the good things attached to it, but Lucretius says, we should not be afraid of death and that to do so (to fear death, that is) is irrational. To find meaning in our lives, we need to overcome this fear; we need to transcend our seeming helplessness and to rise above our vulnerability. This is possible only if we learn to relinquish our longing for immortal life, hence, our fear of our own mortality. Lucretius's preferred means towards this end is none other than reflective thinking. Reflective thinking eases, rather than increases, our obsession with life's brevity. By creating a certain space or detachment from our object of fear or longing, we are able to focus our attention on the more substantial aspects of aspiration, or as Plutarch puts it, our "longing for being, the oldest and greatest of all forms of eros."¹³ In effect, to enjoy our mortality, Lucretius is urging us to adopt a sort of an Apollonian strategy of looking at things through the eyes of reason. "This terror and darkness of the mind, then, must be spelled not by the rays of the sun and the gleaming shafts of day, but by nature's appearance and rationale."¹⁴ Only then can we live life to the fullest; only then can we experience freedom from the fear of death.

Nietzsche, Epicurus and Lucretius agree that human life cannot fall prey to its own excesses, be it fleshly pleasures, earthly desires or fear of death. Human beings should aspire for redemption, that is the transfiguration of these excesses, in order to live life more meaningfully. Philosophy is the way they all propose towards this end.

The Importance of Living in the Present

One can also find echoes of Hellenistic thought on the fear of mortality on the ideas propounded by Nietzsche *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life*. Nietzsche, like Epicurus, believes that the flourishing of human life depends on a

¹¹ Nussbaum, 105.

¹² Lucretius 3.830-911, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 152.

¹³ Nussbaum, 201.

¹⁴ Lucretius 2.1 – 61, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 120.

person's capacity to pay attention to the details and demands of the life as he lives it in the present. "For there is nothing fearful in living for one who genuinely grasps that there is nothing fearful in not living."¹⁵ History, particularly, monumental and antiquarian history,¹⁶ may mislead us into thinking that life is a project with definite and fixed points. History, conceived this way, becomes a form of knowledge, pure and sovereign. It is seen as a "conclusion to life and a settling of accounts."¹⁷ This is not what history should be. History must stand in the service of life, in the service of the present so to speak. Nietzsche emphasized that: "Only from the highest power of the present can you interpret the past; only with the greatest exertion of your noblest qualities will you divine what in the past is great and worth knowing and preserving."¹⁸ The same insight we read from Lucretius. For him, life is like a banquet.¹⁹ We must enjoy the banquet to the fullest, find contentment in it without expecting any other value beyond it. The Epicureans also have the same thoughts about the present. The present defines man's mortality. It is the natural and most essential dimension of his human condition. Epicurus advocates relief of human fear of death so man can enjoy life. He believes that one can transform one's life into "a matter for contentment, not by abiding a limitless time (to life) but by removing the longing for immortality."²⁰ For Nietzsche, it was the past *for* the present; for the Epicureans, however, it was the present *against* the future. They have different starting points but both of them insist on living life to the fullest as it is found in the present moment, as it happens in our individual lives. As Nietzsche puts it: "The voice of the past is always the voice of an oracle; only if you are architects of the future and are familiar with the present will you understand the oracular voice of the past."²¹

Life is itself a present because of the present. To live in the present is not only to take possession of this gift; it is to unravel it and to allow oneself be possessed by such gift. This is what Nietzsche, Lucretius and Epicurus seem to say. We do not live our lives backward or forward. We live in the present, in all its fury and glory, in all its rancor and splendor. All the rest will matter more or less depending on the degree of our presence to our own present.

¹⁵ Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus, 124-7, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 149.

¹⁶ For Nietzsche's discussion of the three kinds of history, see "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life" in *Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard T. Gray (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 96-108.

¹⁷ Nietzsche, *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁹ Nussbaum, 203.

²⁰ Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus: Diogenes Laertius 10.124, Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson, trans., *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1988), 23.

²¹ Nietzsche, *Ibid.*, 130.

Our Becoming an Individual

By way of paying homage, Nietzsche named an essay after the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer whom he considered as the model educator of the individual not only because of what he taught but because what he was as an individual. Nietzsche regards Schopenhauer as a model educator because of his staunch commitment to the education of the individual and his readiness to be an example for everything his philosophy stands for. "I attach importance to a philosopher only to the extent that he is capable of setting an example,"²² wrote Nietzsche. As an exemplar, Schopenhauer did make a deep impression on Nietzsche on account of the former's honesty, cheerfulness and steadfastness: "He is honest because he speaks and writes to himself and for himself, cheerful because his thought has conquered the most difficult thing and steadfast because he cannot be otherwise."²³ These attributes of Schopenhauer characterized not only his person but his philosophic project as well. Schopenhauer's agendum, as depicted by Nietzsche, was the sovereignty of the individual. Philosophy is the tool that will guide the human person along the path of genuine self-rule. Through philosophy, one becomes aware of his weaknesses and limitations; he is also able to transcend his values and virtues, first for his sake, then later, for the sake of other individuals. Schopenhauer's philosophy, according to Nietzsche, "should always first be interpreted in this way: individually, by the individual for himself alone, in order to gain insight into his own misery and need, into his own limitations, in order to become acquainted with antidotes and consolations."

In this, Nietzsche finds a sympathetic voice among the Stoics who think that it is philosophy's job "to prompt a searching self-examination of culture and belief"²⁴ and it is the educator's task to show his students "new ways of seeing, new aspects of the seen"²⁵ and "to penetrate with her into every corner of her daily life and every angle of her vision, considering nothing too secret to be viewed by the eye of reason."²⁶ In this undertaking, philosophy has truly much to offer, according to the Stoics, because philosophy liberates the mind. In fact, it is "the only study whose activity is itself an exercise of human freedom."²⁷

Like Nietzsche too, the Stoics teach their students to be their own persons, to find their way towards achieving their own sovereignty. They want them to become their own pupils and teachers at the same time. "Become, yourself, both your own pupil and your own teacher"²⁸ said Epictetus. Yet, consistent also with Nietzsche's

²² Ibid., 183.

²³ Ibid., 189 – 90.

²⁴ Nussbaum, 328.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 347.

²⁸ Ibid., 345.

thoughts, this struggle to assert one's individuality through philosophy is never construed by the Stoics as something isolated or a purely private affair. Individuality is not commensurate with self-sufficiency to the exclusion of the other members of the community.

The world is also called the habitation of gods and men, and the structure consisting of gods and men, and the things created for their sake. For just as there are two meanings of city, one as habitation and like a city consisting of gods and men, with the god serving as rulers and men as their subjects. They are members of a community because of their participation in reason, which is natural law; and everything else is created for their sake.²⁹

To become an individual is to become a person that one is. In the preceding discussion, Nietzsche and the Hellenistic philosophers show us how philosophy can help us accomplish it. To be an individual according to one's determination is the ultimate expression of freedom. Nietzsche and the Hellenistic thinkers likewise affirm the value of human belonging in one's individual becoming. The human community is the primary context of human growth. Only in the community can one fully realize and participate in what one might call a reasonable life.

The Death of God

Thus Spoke Zarathustra is widely regarded as Nietzsche's most popular and most complex work because of a number of themes presented in the book. It is also a showcase of Nietzsche's originality as shown by his adept fusion of fiction and rhetorical device in the development and presentation of his philosophical thoughts. His early ideas on the *death of God*, the *will to power*, the *eternal return* and the *overman* also find a deeper and maturer expression in this particular work.

Zarathustra is the great Persian prophet whom Nietzsche used as his mouthpiece to address the crisis of nihilism sweeping across Europe during his time. The book is divided into four parts. The first part functions like a prologue. It treats the ideas of the superman and the ultimate man. These ideas are not extreme opposites. The superman is presented by Nietzsche as a possibility for the ultimate man who actually represents most of us. "Behold, I teach you the Superman. The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman shall be the meaning of the earth!"³⁰ It is also in the first part that Nietzsche spoke of the death of God.³¹ It is the main theme and the starting point of Zarathustra's teaching.

²⁹ Arius Didymus (Eusebius, *Evangelical preparation* 15.15.3-5; SVF 2.528, part), *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 431; see also Nussbaum, 343.

³⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans., R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 42.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

In the second part of the book, Nietzsche revealed another novel doctrine of his, the *will to power*. *Will to power* means enhanced vitality. It is a life characterized by new vigor and heightened creativity. A person exercising will to power ceases to be an ordinary human being; he becomes a creator, a re-inventor of life. He becomes a genuine, authentic human person. He posits new standards and values by which he lives his life.

“Life itself told me this secret: ‘Behold,’ it is said, ‘I am that *which must be overcome itself again and again*. To be sure, you call it will to procreate or impulse towards a goal, towards the higher, more distant, more manifold: but all this is one and one secret. I would rather perish than renounce this one thing; and truly, where there is perishing and the falling of leaves, behold, there life sacrifices itself – for the sake of power! . . . Only where life is, there is also will: not will to life, but – so I teach you – will to power! The living creature values many things higher than life itself: yet out of this evaluation itself speaks – the will to power!’”³²

The third part of the book is the culmination of the previous two parts. According to Eugene Fink, the third part is “the center and the heart of the work not only in the formal sense and in relation to its composition. The story certainly builds up consciously towards the third part.”³³ It is in this part that he laid down his doctrine of the *eternal recurrence*.

“Behold, we know what you teach: that all things recur eternally and we ourselves with them, and that we have already existed an infinite number of times before and all things with us. . . . Now I die and decay, you would say, and in an instant, I shall be nothingness. Souls are as mortal as bodies. But the complex of causes in which I am entangled will recur – it will create me again! I myself am part of these causes of eternal recurrence. I shall return, with this sun, with this earth, with this serpent – not to a new life or a better life or a similar life. I shall return eternally to this identical and self-same life, in the greatest things and in the smallest, to teach once more the eternal recurrence of all things.”³⁴

Kathleen M. Higgins offered two possible interpretations of what Nietzsche could possibly intend with eternal recurrence.³⁵ One is to think of it as an invitation

³² Ibid., 138; italics are from the original text.

³³ Fink, Ibid., 72.

³⁴ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Ibid., 237 – 8.

³⁵ Higgins, Kathleen M. and Robert C. Solomon, *What Nietzsche Really Said* (New York: Schocken Books, 2000), 201 – 6.

to pay attention to the very details of life. Details are very important in a sense that a change in details, say a few minutes advance or delay of a person's birth, may lead into a totally different configuration. The other interpretation is to look at it as a general framework of life. A person's decision to join religious life or get married is one choice that could really alter one's way of seeing and indeed, one's mode of living. Either way, eternal recurrence is Nietzsche's way of putting forth more strongly his insistence of the "affirmation of life," of embracing life to the fullest, of sucking the marrow out of it so to speak.

The fourth part of the book is unlike the first three parts. In fact, experts of Nietzsche treat this part with varied reactions.³⁶ Some scholars could only surmise that Nietzsche ends the book this way to heighten the irony of Zarathustra's stance as a prophet and maybe, his own stance too as a philosopher.

Among the major themes put forward by Nietzsche, his declaration that "God is dead" seems to sit well with the Skeptics who propose that human flourishing could be achieved more perfectly if we totally banish from our minds beliefs, not just false beliefs, but all forms of beliefs.

"The skeptics hopes to attain a freedom from disturbance by judging the inconsistency of appearances and ideas, and not being able to do this, they suspended judgment. . . . For this reason, we say that the goal of the sceptic is freedom from disturbance in regard to beliefs and moderate states in regard to matters of compulsion."³⁷

When Nietzsche says "God is dead," he is also proposing the banishment of a belief in a god that leads human beings astray instead of helping them to find themselves. He wants us to give up a belief in a god who reduces the capacity of human beings to be, to discover and live according to their own values and virtues. The same is advocated by the Skeptics who maintain that he "who suspends about everything which is subject to opinion reaps a harvest of the most complete happiness."³⁸ He becomes a eudaimon, that is, a "person who lives out his life free from disturbance and, as Timon says, situated in a state of calm and repose."³⁹

Unless God is dead, man himself cannot be reborn. The death of God should lead to the death of man, that is the death of him who clings to old beliefs. To be reborn, God must be dead. Man must overcome this God and only then can he fulfill his true self. The Sceptics also see the necessity of overcoming any form of supreme truth because such belief hinders man's journey towards tranquility. Only tranquility

³⁶ Magnus, Bernd and Kathleen M. Higgins, "Nietzsche's works and their themes" in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 44 – 5.

³⁷ Sextus Empiricus, PH 1.1-34, Ch. xii, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 189; see also Nussbaum, 284.

³⁸ Sextus, M 11.160 – 166, *Ibid.*, 238; see also Nussbaum, 302.

³⁹ Nussbaum, *Ibid.*

must govern man, but tranquility is possible only if he is able to free himself from the shackles of dogmatism of any philosophical truth.

On Morality

On The Genealogy of Morals represents Nietzsche's reading of a wide range of moral phenomena which dominate individuals and societies alike. It is also a polemical material, addressed for the most part against the excesses of Christian morality. The book is divided into three essays, representing the three moral themes against which Nietzsche directed his critique. In the first essay, entitled, "Good and Evil," "Good and Bad," Nietzsche probes into the two forms of moralities which he describes as *master morality* and *slave morality*. Master morality is characterized by nobility and their happy confidence with who they are and what they have. Slave morality however is known for the resentment that accompanies it.

"Whereas the noble lives before his own conscience with confidence and frankness (*gennaios* 'nobly bred' emphasizes the nuance 'truthful' nor 'ingenuous'), the rancorous person is neither truthful nor ingenuous nor honest and forthright with himself. His souls squints; his mind loves hide-outs, secret paths and back doors; everything that is hidden seems to him his own world, his security, his comfort; he is expert in silence, in long memory, in waiting, in provisional self-depreciation and in self-humiliation."⁴⁰

Certainly, Nietzsche considers slave morality as inferior and Christianity for him is its ultimate form.

The second essay, "Guilt," "Bad Conscience," And Related Matters" is an attempt to look at man's instinct for cruelty more closely. In fact, Nietzsche thought that "soul" and "bad conscience" are but the instinct for cruelty turned inward because of their inability to find external fulfillment.

"All instincts that are not allowed free play turn inward. This is what I call man's interiorization; it alone provides the soil for the growth of what later called man's *soul*. Man's interior world, originally meager and tenuous, was expanding in every dimension, in proportion as the outward discharge of his feelings are curtailed. The formidable bulwarks by means of which the polity protected itself against the ancient instincts of freedom (punishment was one of the strongest of these bulwarks) caused those wild, extravagant instincts to turn in upon man."⁴¹

⁴⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Anchor Books, 1956), 172.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 217 – 18.

For Nietzsche, bad conscience is a disease but a disease “pregnant with possibility.”⁴² It can also motivate a certain feeling of selflessness which in turn leads to joy, the value of the altruistic.⁴³

The third essay, “What Do Ascetic Ideals Mean?” deals precisely with what the title tells us. For him, asceticism is a kind of moral decay, of decadence. Therefore the priest who is the staunch promoter of this is morally of the most inferior kind. He is supposed to be the physician of human suffering but instead of curing the sickness, he makes it worse because he does not cure its cause, the real disease. “But is our ascetic priest really a physician? – We have already seen that it is scarcely correct to call him a physician, much as he likes to see himself venerated as a savior. What he combats is only the discomfort of the sufferer, not the cause of his suffering, not even the condition of illness itself.”⁴⁴ Asceticism for Nietzsche is yet another expression of resentment which is prevalent among those who are declining or decadent.

The three essays in *On The Genealogy of Morals*, it seems to me, is trying to tell us that the old moral order is already passé and that the time has come for the new order to take its reign. That new morality is the master morality as Nietzsche calls it. It is a morality that derives from the values and strengths of the individual and not from the impositions of a particular person, culture, religion or institution. It is a moral order that springs from self-discovery through the route proposed by philosophy. It is the same route endorsed by the Hellenistic philosophers. In fact, the entire agenda of therapy of desire take this as a primary concern. Nietzsche is wary of the nihilism afflicting the human society. “It was here, precisely, that I sensed the greatest danger of humanity, its sublimest delusion and temptation – leading it whither? into nothingness?”⁴⁵ Epicurus also thinks the same way. He sees how man is easily corrupted by the external forces around him. Once imbibed, these external influences become a part of him and they too corrupt his nature.⁴⁶ There is, therefore, a need to recover our humanity as it really is – uncorrupted, healthy, pure. The remedy for this, said Stoics, is for man to learn to live according to nature. To live according to nature for the Stoics is to live according to virtue, or more precisely, according to reason. Reason is the most universal law and it is only through it that one finds his fulfillment as daimon. “And this itself is the virtue of the happy man and a smooth flow of life, whenever all things are done according to the harmony of the daimon in each of us with the will of the administrator of the universe.”⁴⁷

⁴² Ibid., 218.

⁴³ Ibid., 221.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 266.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁶ Nussbaum, 107.

⁴⁷ Diogenes Laertius 7.84 – 131, *Hellenistic Philosophy*, 136.

Nietzsche, Epicurus and the Stoics lament the nihilism which has overcome man due to a false morality, a false way of living which impedes rather than promotes his individual becoming. To liberate himself from this nihilism, a new ethic needs to be articulated, one that puts man at the center and regards him as the primary consideration. Nietzsche does not negate virtue. What he rejects, together with the Stoics, is the kind of virtue that does not conform with nature, or reason to be more precise. Only through this virtue can man once again be his own master.

Conclusion

The Hellenistic philosophers' notion of philosophy as medical is an insight both fresh and enlightening. The term "medical" is traditionally associated with *healing* and *recuperation* and in the Hellenistic tradition, it is also used to describe a certain way of doing philosophy. The Hellenistic philosophers we refer to are the sages of the Hellenistic philosophical schools found in both Greek and Rome, namely, the *Epicureans*, the *Skeptics* and the *Stoics*. These three groups represent divergent schools of thought and yet despite their dissimilarities, one can also identify a shared conviction among them: the conviction that the end of all human endeavors is *eudemonia* (human flourishing) and that *eudemonia* is not possible without the intervention of philosophy. Notwithstanding its use as a device for rigorous discourse and logical thinking, philosophy, for the Hellenistic schools, has an intrinsic ethical end. It is itself the "art of human life" so much so that without it, all human striving is without purpose and empty of meaning.⁴⁸

Medical philosophy is the *leit motif* that characterizes the teachings of the three Hellenistic schools. The term itself suggests healing, transformation and promotion of good health. As a way of doing philosophy, it takes human condition as a starting point. One may ask however: if philosophy provides medication, what sort of illness does it heal? It heals primarily the ailment of the soul, with "soul" understood here not in the otherworldly sense but in the sense of human vitality. It is able to do this by cleansing ourselves of the unhealthy beliefs, arguments and desires traditionally held as true and reliable.⁴⁹ For the Hellenistic philosophers, philosophy is an inside job. It is something we must work out from inside out rather than outside in.⁵⁰ Passions, emotions and desires are traditionally lumped together and are collectively regarded as the "irrational part" of man. The Hellenistic sages think otherwise. Human passions are considered by the Hellenistic philosophers as instrumental rather than inimical to human flourishing. Passions and philosophy for them are not antithetical. The former are actually intelligent drives and can in fact strongly influence and modify knowledge. They are seen as "irrational" only if they are based on beliefs contrary to

⁴⁸ Nussbaum, 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 22.

reason but not in the sense that they have nothing to do with logical argumentation and discourse.⁵¹

We find resonances of the same insights in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. In the works discussed in this paper, we see Nietzsche as physician of the soul, as a ‘nihilist’ who seeks to destroy in order to build a new, as a thinker who is not afraid to be honest at the risk of being ridiculed. Philosophy, it is said, is the quest for the ultimate truth. It is not for Nietzsche. For him, philosophy is the quest for the ultimate question. Through his relentless inquiry into the nature of life, of truth, of nature, of everything that matters to man, he is able to expose our woundedness and hence, our need for healing. Nietzsche made our vulnerability a philosophic concern and in the same breadth, he is also able to translate our longing to be truly human into a possibility.

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⁵¹ Ibid., 38.