



The "Absurd" in Nietzschean Thought

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Abstract : The "absurd" is an important concept in philosophical thinking. It is akin to a mental tendency where various phenomena are interpreted and understood using the mind. However, "absurdity" consists in understanding and interpreting things through irrational myths and tendencies, freed from the constraints of reason. This concept is not recent; it dates back to ancient times, when civilizations understood and interpreted phenomena using the mind. In this context, myth served the mind rather than the imagination, which is known as the ideal, that is, a myth with philosophical significance. This approach has persisted for some time, but contemporary times have seen a return to an absurd trend in understanding many issues. This led to a conflict between the reasonable and the absurd, an idea well expressed by Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy. For Nietzsche, mythical thinking has become a fundamental basis for perceiving and analyzing the phenomena of life.

Keywords: mind, the absurd, Nietzsche, thought, life

L'absurde dans la pensée nietzschéenne

Résumé : L'« absurde » est un concept important dans la pensée philosophique. Il s'apparente à une tendance mentale où divers phénomènes sont interprétés et compris en utilisant l'esprit. Cependant, L'« absurde » consiste à comprendre et à interpréter les choses à travers des mythes et des tendances irrationnelles, libérées des contraintes de la raison. Ce concept n'est pas récent ; il remonte aux temps anciens, lorsque les civilisations comprenaient et interprétaient les phénomènes en utilisant l'esprit. Dans ce contexte, le mythe servait l'esprit plutôt que l'imagination, ce qui est connu comme l'idéal, c'est-à-dire un mythe doté d'une signification philosophique. Cette approche a perduré un certain temps, mais l'époque contemporaine a vu un retour vers une tendance déraisonnable dans la compréhension de nombreuses questions. Cela a conduit à un conflit entre le raisonnable et L'« absurde », une idée bien exprimée par la philosophie de Friedrich Nietzsche. Pour Nietzsche, la pensée mythique est devenue une base fondamentale pour percevoir et analyser les phénomènes de la vie.

Mots-clés : l'esprit, L'absurde, Nietzsche, la pensée, la vie

Introduction

Philosophical thought has often oscillated between rationality and the absurd, this duality manifesting itself across the ages and schools of thought. In this context, the irrational, or the concept of "the absurd", occupies a significant place. Unlike rationality, which seeks to understand and explain phenomena through reason, the irrational privileges approaches based on myths and an unbridled vision of reality, escaping the constraints of pure logic. This approach is not new, but is rooted in ancient traditions, where mythology served reason rather than the imaginary. However, over time, this paradigm has been reversed, with mythology becoming a tool to destabilize the foundations of reason.

In contemporary times, this tension between the rational and the absurd has intensified, giving rise to a rich and complex philosophical debate. Friedrich Nietzsche is a thinker who has particularly explored this dynamic. His work reveals a rehabilitation of mythical and absurdity as an essential basis for understanding and analyzing the phenomena of life. The present research aims to examine this dimension of Nietzschean thought by detailing the impact and significance of the concept of the absurd in his philosophy.

-Research objectives

The main objectives of this research are :

1. To analyze how Nietzsche integrates the absurd into his philosophy.
2. To study the reasons why Nietzsche chose to use mythology and the absurd to develop his thought.
3. To examine the implications of this approach for the understanding of life and values in the Nietzschean context.

-Research questions

The following questions will guide the investigation :

1. How does Nietzsche define and use the concept of the absurd in his writings?
2. What are the mechanisms by which Nietzsche integrates mythology into his critique of traditional values ?
3. What impact does this use of the absurd have on Nietzsche's analysis of life phenomena and values ?

-Methodology

To answer these questions, the research will adopt a methodological approach combining:

A review of the philosophical and historical literature concerning Nietzschean thought and its influences.

-Research limitations

It is important to note that this research may encounter some limitations, including:

The availability and interpretation of Nietzsche's original texts, which may vary depending on translations and editions. The difficulty of establishing clear connections between Nietzsche's mythological aspects and critiques without interpretative bias. The need to contextualize Nietzsche's ideas in their time while comparing them to contemporary approaches.

Ultimately, this research aims to clarify how Nietzsche uses the absurd critically reassess and reimagine traditional philosophy, thus offering an enriching perspective on the relationship between rationality and the irrational in modern thought.

1. Biography and intellectual career

Fouad Zakaria states : "One thing that all those who have written about Nietzsche agree on, and that he himself confirmed in his writings, is that his philosophy merged with his life and became a part of it. (Zakaria, n.d., 17). According to him, Nietzsche made his life an identity with his thought, eliminating all boundaries between them. Thus, all the characteristics of his thinking, including his mythological qualities, are undoubtedly linked to his life. It is therefore necessary to take a quick look at his biography.

Nietzsche, a German philosopher, was born on 15 October 1844 in Röcken near Leipzig. He lost his father, a Protestant priest, at a very young age, an event that marked his life. This loss prompted him to use the myth to define his father's personality. Dr. Mustafa Ghalib explains: "It seems that the death of his father at the age of five made him paint a mythical picture, boasting qualities that he probably did not know directly" (Ghalib, 1988, 12). Growing up in a feminine environment, her personality was marked by two feminine traits : sensitivity and tenderness (Alpha, 1992, 512). To compensate for this, Nietzsche sought to harden himself, and he found this strength in the world of myth. We can divide the stages of his life as follows:

In his childhood, he received a strict religious upbringing, as most of his family members were clergymen. This later led him to rebel against this education and to severely criticize religion, to the point of declaring himself an "enemy of Christ".

In 1858, he enrolled in a school in Forta, then left for the University of Bonn. When his linguistics professor moved to the University of Leipzig, he followed him. During this period, he specialised in linguistics and classical literature, having initially considered specialising in theology.

In 1867, he met Waggins, whose music greatly influenced him. He also admired Nietzsche's philosophy, although they later parted ways. In 1869, he became an assistant professor of philology at the University of Basel.

In 1870, war broke out again between England and France. He volunteered in the army, but weakened, he worked as a nurse. By being in contact with the sick and injured, he contracts various diseases that disrupt his life, forcing him to return to university.

In 1888, he went insane and fought against various diseases, including epilepsy and visual disturbances, until his death in 1900.

Regarding his life, his philosophy and his ideas, we can understand them by referring to the two main sources of his thought. Said Muhammad Tawfiq explains: "Nietzsche saw that Wagner's music is the embodiment of Schopenhauer's philosophy or will to life, and as he admired them both, he revolted against them" (Tawfiq, 1980, 269). He was influenced by Schopenhauer in his book on tragedy, which describes a life full of suffering. According to him, this suffering results from the decomposition of the musical spirit with the emergence of Socratic philosophy, represented by Socrates. He also took Wagner's music as a reference, which resulted in his book "The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music". He analyzes the link between Wagner's drama and Greek tragedy, speaking of an era dominated by instinct, the beginning of life, and the break with the abstract mind. However, the development of the relationship between Wagner and Nietzsche ends in a separation, with Nietzsche considering Wagner as his "shadow" and the Apollonian spirit.

It is important to note that Nietzsche studied Greek philosophy, which strongly influenced him, as did the poets of antiquity. In 1969 he gave a lecture on Homer and ancient philology. Homeric ideas are visible in Nietzsche's philosophy, which perceives nature as alive and unique while mocking the gods. He also admired Heraclitus' philosophy, but severely criticized Socratic philosophy.

From these influences was born a new philosophy with Nietzsche, often seen as a revolution against the old philosophies. This philosophy marks the beginning of the philosophy of life and nihilism, and is based on two principles: individualism and irrationality. Fouad Zakaria explains that the challenge for a student of Nietzsche's philosophy is not to ask: "Why was Nietzsche a philosopher of the individual mind in contradiction with himself?", but rather to explore this contradiction. Understanding this perspective solves the problem (Zakaria, n.d., 12). It is this invitation to irrationality and rebellion against rational thought that underlies Nietzsche's concept of myth.

2. The concept of myth in Nietzsche's philosophy

Identifying the truth of the myth in Nietzsche's philosophy is related to the nature of his philosophy. Nietzsche attempted to address the problems of his time by advocating individualism, the affirmation of life, and the critique of abstract reason, religion, and values. But how do these elements define the concept of myth in his thinking? Two meanings of myth can be evoked in Nietzsche's philosophy:

- The myth Nietzsche uses does not contradict his fairy-tale common sense, where heroes are the gods and natural forces that govern phenomena.

- Myth in Nietzsche is an irrational tendency, an appeal to the irrational to explain various phenomena. He campaigns against rationality, advocating a reversal of it in areas such as knowledge, values, and existence.

Based on these two concepts, Nietzsche's myth is distinguished by its unique characteristics. It differs from the Platonic conception, which connects it to the mind and regards it as its servant, seeking to establish transcendent knowledge and authentic values. Nietzsche, on the contrary, associates myth with the irrational, aiming to overthrow the mind and develop an intrinsic understanding grounded in life itself while rebelling against abstract values. Fouad Zakaria expresses this idea by stating: "The origin of knowledge is not in pure knowledge, or abstract logic, but it is an irrational factor, and it does not make sense, I mean it is the benefit of life" (Zakaria, n.d., 68). Through this, Nietzsche also seeks to overturn traditional metaphysics, criticizing its foundations such as reason and its principles, such as identity, causality, and the famous Cartesian cogito, "I think, therefore I am." For Nietzsche, the principle of identity is wrong because it simply serves to stop the becoming and transformation of things by the mind. He also criticizes morality and religion, rejecting the idea of pure essences and the existence of the world of forms, thus revolting against metaphysics. He gives a satirical definition of it, stating that metaphysics is "the science that studies fundamental errors as if they were the fundamental facts."

3. The Being of Nietzschean Mythos and Its Stages

Based on the meaning of myth and its characteristics, often associated with the irrational, its presence can be seen at all stages of Nietzsche's philosophy. This is established according to Fouad Zakaria's analysis of the scope of the irrational in Nietzsche's philosophy (Zakaria, n.d., 49), as follows:

The Romantic art scene, which ran from 1869 to 1876, was marked by the influence of Schopenhauer and Wagner on Nietzsche. This period ends with his detachment from these influences. The presence of the irrational and the myth manifests itself through Nietzsche's statement about the Apollonian and the Dionysian (also known as Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and pleasure) as starting points to explain the phenomena. Nietzsche shows a clear inclination towards irrationalism and a direct tendency to merge with spontaneous nature in its original form, before it is altered by pure reason. This reflects a willingness to turn to life.

The critical positivist stage, which lasted from 1876 to 1882, saw Nietzsche influenced by the scientific method. At that time, Nietzsche used the myth of the eternal return. He criticizes the elements of modern life while remaining faithful to the irrational. He launched a campaign against metaphysics, criticized common morality and advocated a reversal of values to bring them back to their utilitarian origins. He asserts that life is the origin of all knowledge and criticizes the transcendent abstract mind. Despite the calm intellectual style of his writings at this time and his adoption of the scientific method as a model, Nietzsche continued to criticize reason and remained adept at the irrational.

The pure mystical stage begins with the book of Zarathustra, from 1883, and continues until 1888. During this period, Nietzsche gained full intellectual independence and adopted a style based on mystical flow rather than critical analysis. It is also a time when Nietzsche continues to oppose pure metaphysical doctrines and those who believe in the abstract mind. He does this through the myth of Zarathustra, representing a mysticism linked to the earth, glorifying life and celebrating spontaneous nature, which is found in the idea of the superman, where instincts and the will to live predominate.

Thus, Nietzsche's thinking cannot be described as contradictory. It is based on a central principle: the critique of abstract or metaphysical absurdity, the exaltation of life, and an attachment to terrestrial nature, elements that are clearly found in the various myths that Nietzsche uses in his philosophy.

4. The Embodiment of Myth in Nietzsche's Philosophy

Nietzsche's approach led to the use of myth in its original sense through his different opinions. He underlines its importance by saying that "the nation creates in its youth myth and poetry, and produces in its stage of decadence philosophy and logic. Greece, for example, first gave birth to Homer and Achilles, and then produced the logical Euripides in its decline, which led to the rational destruction of myth, symbolism, and the emotion of tragic pessimism in adulthood. Socrates replaced the Dionysian choir with an Apollonian assembly of oratorical dialecticians (Ghalib, 1988, p. 18). Thus, Nietzsche returns to Eastern and Greek myths, creating new myths that criticize reason, religion, morality, and metaphysics. The most famous of these myths are:

The myth of Dionysus and Apollo (also called Apollo, the Greek god of wisdom). Nietzsche used this myth in his book "The Birth of the Tragedy of the Spirit of Music". Mustafa Ghalib describes how Nietzsche speaks of two gods revered by ancient Greek art: Dionysus, or Bacchus, god of wine, orgy, pleasure, exalted life, active joy, astonishment, instinct, adventure, song, music, dance, and drama. And Apollo, the god of peace, tranquility, aesthetic emotion, intellectual contemplation, logic, oil painting, sculpture, and epic poetry. Greek art embodies the union of restless masculine power, that of Dionysus, and calm feminine beauty, that of Apollo (Ghaleb, 1988, p. 5).

We understand that Nietzsche divided Greece into two spirits: poets, symbols of evolution, representing the Dionysian spirit, and philosophers, from Socrates, symbols of decadence, representing the Apollonian spirit. Nietzsche expresses that what is considered a sign of decadence in Socrates is not only the chaotic disorder of the instincts, but also the enlargement of the debate and the malice that distinguish it (Nietzsche, 1960, p. 20). The supremacy of the Apollonic spirit, wisdom, and the rejection of life explains history, civilization, and art according to Nietzsche. The Dionysian element symbolizes enthusiasm, impulsiveness, and irrationality, especially in music and tragedy. The Apollonian element, a symbol of clarity, is embodied in the plastic arts. Tragedy is also synonymous with pain. Thus, ancient Dionysian ceremonies staged the sufferings of God, requiring a formal Apollonic principle to mask pain with clear images, through dialogue and characters. This is reflected in the philosophy of Socrates and Plato, who oppose Dionysian values (Nietzsche, 1960, p. 18).

In contrast, the philosophy of Schopenhauer (1788-1860), influenced by Kant and Indian thought, embodied the Dionysian spirit, also based on the music of Wagner, but later broke away from it, seeing musical values relegated to the background in relation to mental ideas. He perceived this as a realization of the Apollonic spirit. This binary vision shows that truth, for Nietzsche, is related to change and becoming, directly related to life, and not an abstract essence existing in another world.

This led him to criticize earlier philosophies based on this idea, instead hailing Heraclitus' philosophy, stating, "I bow to the name of Heraclitus" (Nietzsche, 1960, p. 26), as he did not advocate stability like other philosophies. Truth is identified with the Dionysian spirit, a duality that also applies to ethics, where history is a conflict between the Apollonian spirit, embodied by the morality of slaves, Jews and Christ, and the Dionysian spirit, embodied by the morality of masters, Greeks and Romans, triumphing in the Renaissance with the decline of Christianity. The greatest victory of slave morality was with the French Revolution and the fall of the nobility to the benefit of the popular classes.

Thus, this mythical perception, based on Apollinian and Dionysian dualism, proposes a new philosophy. It breaks with previous philosophies that relied on reason and abstraction, while rejecting life and the concrete world. This new approach invites us to return to real life and explore the cognitive, ethical, artistic and existential issues of human existence.

This viewpoint does not represent a setback, as it might seem, but rather a qualitative leap in the history of philosophy. This leap was imposed by the new realities of the time, following the Renaissance and scientific advances. This is clearly reflected in the myth that followed.

5. The myth of eternal return

To understand this myth, we need to clarify some details as follows:

- Its roots: Dr. Fouad Zakaria expressed the idea of eternal return by saying: "The idea of eternal return has a long history in philosophy, but before philosophy. Its origins date back to the time of ancient religions that were founded on a mythological basis that has nothing to do with science or mental logic " (Zakaria, n.d., 138).

This idea was also visible in Anaximander's philosophy. Anaximander (or Anaximandris, 610-457 BC) was a Greek philosopher of nature. He proposed the idea that infinity is the origin of things. He mentioned an infinite number of worlds, but it is not clear whether these worlds succeed each other or exist simultaneously. What suggests that they are sequential is Anaximander's belief in cosmic annihilation. This shows that there is a succession between different states of the world, similar to the theory of the eternal return, although we are not sure that these states are repeated in the same way.

The idea appears more clearly in Heraclitus. He thinks that fire is the basic element of the universe, which destroys the world periodically. The world then returns to its previous state through certain cycles.

The idea is also found in Empedocles (circa 490-430 BC), a Greek philosopher. He spoke of the four elements and suggested that there is an eternal succession of worlds that form and then degrade.

These earlier concepts examine an idea developed by the Pythagoreans. The Pythagoreans were a philosophical group interested in mathematics, astronomy and music, whose work is attributed to Pythagoras (572-479 BC). They had observed that time repeats itself, as do the seasons of the year, resulting in a repetition of world events at the end of each cycle.

The origins of this idea of eternal return show the influence of Greece on Nietzsche, who developed a concept with a deep philosophical and scientific meaning, based on rigorous principles. But how can this concept be defined?

- Its concept: Eternal recurrence is the idea of an infinite repetition of the cycles of the universe. Each cycle is similar to the previous ones, and the eternity of time requires uninterrupted force, thus implying the repetition of past events in future periods, in the same forms.

This concept is based on two principles (Zaher, 1979, 139): the finitude of forces and the eternity of time. If matter possesses limited strength, while eternal time engulfs all that is limited, it means that each individual, over the centuries, uses all available resources to modify his existence. Then it returns to its original form to relive the same life, with all its details. This repetition is proportional to the eternity of time and must permeate all things and people, because everything returns to its original state.

The philosophical and scientific connotations of the idea of eternal return are multiple. This idea contains philosophical and scientific dimensions, which we can define as follows:

- The perception of the universe as a limited force confirms a scientific approach, based on the limitation of cosmic forces that control phenomena. This approach moves away from the religious mind, which believes in the absolute and metaphysics.

- This idea clearly illustrates the mechanistic doctrine. According to this doctrine, the world is perceived as a blind machine. This machine would explain the same events infinitely every time.

- This theory affirms the supremacy of scientific law, emphasizing that it is immutable and cannot be modified or changed.

- This is the best way to reconcile the idea of stability, as conceived by the Elysees, with that of change, as Heraclitus saw it. Greek philosophy had already addressed this problem. Nietzsche added a new dimension by stating that change has become a reality in itself, not just a permanent transformation. It is now seen as a constant change.

- This idea reflects the immortality of life and the eternity of the world in which we live. It calls for an attachment to the earthly world, directing thoughts towards life, and not being afraid of death. It considers that after each death, there is a new life.

- The idea highlights the love of destiny, which implies the acceptance of life as a whole, with its pains and difficulties. It inspires hope and yearning for life, rather than abandonment and helplessness.

- This idea is linked to a moral rule: "Live as if you want to live this life over and over again". This rule replaces Kant's, becoming a universal standard of behavior. Nietzsche proposes another rule: choose the best path of life, because this path will be traveled infinitely.

Examining the idea of the eternal return, it appears that Nietzsche used mythological thought, even as a positivist attached to science. All this was aimed at promoting a belief in life and encouraging the struggle for it.

6. The Legend of Zoroaster

This myth is linked to the mystical stage of Nietzsche's philosophy, where he seeks to associate truth with life and the earth. For this, he chose the name Zoroaster the Persian in his famous work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Zoroaster is presented as one who sees good and evil as two forces in conflict with human life (Nietzsche, n.d., 30). Nietzsche gave this idea a new form, linking it to a constitution or teachings that he aspires to achieve through his book.

Zarathustra, a legendary figure, left his homeland at the age of 30 to retire to the mountains for ten years. Then he went down into the forest to meet an old sheikh who was celebrating hymns in his honor. Zarathustra then wondered, alone: "Hasn't this sheikh heard that God is dead? Then he went to the city to introduce the idea of the superior man as well as that of the death of God.

This myth can be understood through the different characters, which are symbols with precise meanings. Zoroaster represents a historic upheaval and a rebellion against established values. According to Nietzsche, he is the first immoral thinker and the first to perceive in the struggle between good and evil the true dynamics of events. Nietzsche chooses Zoroaster because he is more explicit than any other thinker, and his teachings are marked by frankness. For Nietzsche, the victory of morality over itself is an expression of the love of truth.

To clarify the meaning of the myth, we will explain two basic ideas it contains:

- First: The death of God and the superior man:

The idea of the "death of God" is manifested in the teachings of Zarathustra, illustrated by the example of the sun. The joy of the sun lies in the fact that everything it illuminates receives a part of its light. Nietzsche, in this sense, compares himself to the sun itself. After God imposes his own teachings, God's death marks a turning point. It heralds the end of abstract idealism, which obscures the sensitive world and makes truth transcendent.

Nietzsche argues that an individual capable of understanding these teachings must emerge. This man, surpassing himself, becomes the superior man. It embodies the meaning of earthly life by making full use of it, rejecting the illusions of the metaphysical world. Thus, to reach the truth, it is essential to destroy all metaphysical notions in knowledge, ethics and attachment to life.

- Second: The triple transformation of the mind:

Nietzsche proposes here a new story that integrates a group of animals in addition to the child. He explains this transformation of the mind in three stages: "I will explain to you the transformation of the mind in its three stages, so I tell you how the mind became a camel, how the camel became a lion, and how the lion finally became a boy" (Nietzsche, n.d., 43). Nietzsche shows how man transcends through the following transformation :

The camel represents the human being who bears the most difficult tasks and submits to a more powerful authority than himself. He carries the heaviest loads, like a camel carrying loads in the desert. In this way, he advances towards his own inner desert, where he transforms into a lion.

The lion symbolizes the liberated man. He begins by asserting his sovereignty in the desert by confronting the dragon, which represents the "you must" commandment. The lion overcomes this constraint by saying "I want". The dragon embodies all the old laws, while the lion seeks to establish new rules. However, helpless in the face of this task, he turns into a child to face the duty.

The child succeeds where the lion fails, because it embodies renewal, play, and cyclical movement. It represents the beginning of a quest to find one's own world. Thus, the child encounters the character of Zarathustra, which creates new values reflecting the meaning of the earth and life.

These three steps illustrate Zarathustra's teachings for reaching the truth. They show that the human being carries the illusions of moral, religious and philosophical doctrines. At first, he is subjected to these influences, then he seeks to free himself from them by facing these illusions without fear or danger, like the lion facing the dragon. Eventually, it reaches the state of the child, which represents the creation of new personal values, such as strength, manhood, and love of life. These qualities define the superior man, according to Nietzsche, and establish the concept of the will to power, which represents the principle of conquering and realizing life.

Conclusion :

Through this succinct analysis of myth in Nietzsche's philosophy, it becomes clear that this concept is of great importance. It helps us grasp the big questions of his philosophy, such as metaphysics, knowledge and ethics. This understanding of the myth also sheds light on previous philosophies, including Greek philosophy. In addition, it is essential to recognize the place of myth in contemporary thought. Contrary to what one might think, myths and illusions have not disappeared since ancient times. Philosophical, scientific, religious and moral ideas continue to play a crucial role in today's philosophy. It is therefore important to integrate them appropriately in the various studies, especially in Nietzsche's philosophy, which can only be fully understood through the analysis of the myths he uses and their meanings.

This research leads to various results, including questions about the truths related to earthly life. It highlights the value of metaphysics, often perceived as illusions and errors that the mind considered as simple facts. Nietzsche thus underlines the gap between historical philosophy, which seeks an abstract and transcendental truth, and the concrete reality of life that should follow from it. Through this reflection, he addresses certain problems of the man of the twentieth century, such as the desire for life and individuality. Nietzsche also criticizes unquestionable religious values, such as the weaknesses of Christianity and Judaism. He believes that the beliefs of these religions are based on erroneous ideas and are not applicable in contemporary human life.

Thus, Nietzsche's philosophy, with its use of myth, represents a crucial element in the history of philosophical thought. It addresses, in all its aspects, the problems of modern man, which must be examined and studied in depth in the future.

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