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Nietzsche

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1. Introduction

*'What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devaluate themselves. The aim is lacking; "why?" finds no answer' (Will to Power, §2, 1901).*¹

Nihilism is usually defined as the rejection of values, religious beliefs, and moral principles, due to the sense of meaninglessness. It leads to thoughts such as vain actions or striving after wind and causes despair. There are various types of nihilism such as political, moral, cosmic, and existential nihilism that means 'negating the meaning of human life, judging it to be irremediably pointless, futile and absurd' (Crosby 1998). Solomon also claims that nihilism is a 'profound sense of disappointment' (2003, p 55). These definitions have a negative sense and are likely to lead to a negative attitude. Marmysz (2003) writes that the term is considered as similar to 'malaise' or 'cancer' because hopelessness and futility of struggle for life emphasised by nihilism and it necessarily causes despair (pp 1, 2). In the 19th century and later, the term has become widely used mainly through the influence of three writers; Ivan Turgenev with his book *Fathers and Sons* (1862), Fyodor Dostoyevsky with his novel *The Possessed* (1871-2)², and Friedrich Nietzsche (Crosby 1998). Nietzsche does not mention nihilism in his books *Birth of Tragedy* (1872), *Untimely Meditations* (1873-6), *Human, All Too Human* (1878-80) or *Daybreak* (1881); however, from the very beginning of his works, he points the root causes of nihilism such as religion and science. Reginster (2008) notes

¹ Throughout the essay, the following abbreviations will be used referring to Nietzsche's book: A_ *Antichrist*, BGE_ *Beyond Good and Evil*, BT_ *Birth of Tragedy*, EH_ *Ecce Homo*, GM_ *On the Genealogy of Morals*, GS_ *The Gay Science*, HAH_ *Human all too Human*, WP_ *The Will to Power*, TI_ *Twilight of Idols*, Z_ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, UM_ *Untimely Meditations*, P_ *Preface*. Also, AL refers to the *Dada Almanac*. All other references will be given in accordance with the Harvard Referencing System.

² It has been argued by some that novels of Dostoyevsky such as *Demons* or *Notes from Underground* also have nihilistic character.

nihilism has been the centre of Nietzsche's project since *BT*. It is the book where Nietzsche is concerned with cultural renewal which is to provide affirmation of life similar to the Greeks' way of dealing with the horror and despair of life. In his works, Nietzsche examines affirming life, human nature, morality, values, religion and cultures. Religion is important in terms of being an obstacle on the path to the culture he wants. Thus, the concept of nihilism is directly related to Christian morality which grants an ultimate value for man against the 'smallness and accidental occurrence' of him (*WP*, §4). Besides creating values for man to find life meaningful, religions give meaning to suffering with otherworld emphasis. Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche believe this world is full of suffering; however, unlike Schopenhauer, Nietzsche claims that not suffering itself, but the meaninglessness of it is the problem. Christianity has been the answer to the problem by creating an 'otherworld' meaning for centuries. However, it is believed by Nietzsche that the 'Christian God has become unbelievable' (*GS*, §343), because of the fact that doctrines (dogmas) of it have been undermined by means of the empowerment of science (Clark 1998). Related to this end, in *Gay Science* (1882), Nietzsche announces with the words of madman: 'God is dead' (§125) which is usually considered to be followed directly by nihilism. Thus, the entire morality of Europe 'must collapse because it was built on this faith [Christianity, God], leaned on it, had grown into it' (*GS*, §343). Nietzsche, as a 'perfect nihilist' who has already experienced total nihilism, describes what is to come 'in the next two centuries' in Europe and 'what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism' (*WP*, P §2-3, cf. *GM*, §27). Nietzsche's concept nihilism will be discussed in detail in the first section of the essay; however, before moving on, it is useful to examine his prophecy about the destiny of Europe with an example of a so-called nihilistic art movement³, Dadaism.

³ Although Erickson (1984) discusses that 'No such thing as Dada 'movement' has ever existed, however; only Dada existed, and a Dada way of seeing' (P), I will use the term for the simplicity throughout the essay.

2. Dada and Nihilism: an Introduction

'If the tremendous event that we have killed God reaches the ears of man—then night will close in, "an age of barbarism begins" (XI, 120), and "there will be wars such as have never happened on earth"' (EH IV 1)' (Kaufmann 1975, p 98).

Huelsenbeck defines Dada as a moral protest against not only war but also the illness of the age and culture, a protest which arose from creative thought (AL). It is an avant-garde art and literature movement spread internationally against the discontent of the age. According to Richter (1997), to understand the Dada movement, the mental and physical situation in which it grew should be considered because the impulse caused Dada to be born - 'no other atmosphere, no other time could better have favoured its birth' (Erickson 1984, p 1). The movement launched around 1916 in Zurich, which was then overrun with refugees, revolutionaries and anarchists during World War I (Green in AL). Hugo Ball⁴, who escaped the war with his future wife Emmy Hennings, rented Meirei for an artistic-literary night which he named Cabaret Voltaire.⁵ Future Dadaists such as Hans Arp, Marcel Janco and his brothers, Tristan Tzara, and Richard Huelsenbeck, amongst others, helped with the opening. Huelsenbeck explains the reason which gathered them together by saying 'We had all left our native lands, we all hated war, we all wanted to accomplish something in the arts' (ibid, p 2).

⁴ There are arguments about the founder of the movement. There are many sources points to Ball while some others accept Tzara as the founder. On the other hand, some other Dadaists claim the copyright such as Hausmann or Picabia (Erickson 1984, Richter 1997). Although Ball leaves the movement fairly soon and Tzara takes over, I find it more sensible to see Ball as the initiator since it was his idea to prepare such a night which later spread as Dadaism.

⁵ Ball explains in his diary that why he choose the name 'Voltaire' for the cabaret. He emphasise 'the anti-poet, the king of jackanapes' and 'the anti-artist' character of Voltaire which indicate the movement's later character (Green 1993). According to Stefan-Sebastian, Voltaire is not just a symbol, but the precursor of the movement (2011).

Similarly, Arp writes in *Dadaland* how they devoted themselves to their work while ‘the guns rumbled in the distance’, they ‘sang, painted, made collages and wrote poems... to cure madness of the age’ (Richter 1997, p 25). There was a common disgust among them with the rotting culture of Europe, which slaughtered millions of people, that Dada hoped to ‘sweep clean’ by attempting, in Ball’s words, a ‘fusion of all regenerative ideas’ (Green in *AL*). It can be seen that the atmosphere of war caused despair amongst these artists and thus their discontent with the situation led them to search for ‘a new order of things’ (Richter 1997). From this point of view, that Dadaists simply wanted to destroy old values, which will be explained later in detail, they are commonly defined as nihilists. There are many writers who point to the link between Dadaists and Nietzsche and it is known that Dadaists were aware of Nietzsche and his writings. The aim of this essay is to examine the possibility of connection which they might have by illustrating the similar and dissimilar attitudes in terms of life, nihilism and culture. For a comprehensive comparison, how Nietzsche and his philosophy related to nihilism will be explained from the views such as despair/disorientation of nihilism, and active/passive forms of nihilism. In the second part, the nihilistic attitude of Dadaism and the way to overcome nihilism will be argued to illustrate the extent of how similar Nietzsche’s and Dada’s attitude are. Finally, an answer will be provided whether Dadaists can be seen as the ‘children’ of Nietzsche’s ‘camel-lion-child’ metamorphose.

3. Nietzsche and Nihilism

‘The categories "aim," "unity," "being" which we used to project some value into the world- we pull out again; so the world looks valueless’ (WP, §12A).

According to Reginster, nihilism is one of the central themes of Nietzsche and regards it as the most significant contribution to philosophy amongst others such as eternal recurrence, revaluation of values or affirming life. Once Nietzsche’s philosophy is accepted as ‘a systematic response to the crisis of nihilism’ in European culture, it will be possible to grasp the nature and unique position for affirming life (2008, p 4). To be able to overcome nihilism and affirm life, Nietzsche believes, one should first recognize nihilism (Kaufman 1974). As the quotation above implies, some kind of value should be attributed to life to render it worth living, otherwise existence becomes meaningless. According to Nietzsche, there should be goals which inspires us to live and it is the only way to make life valuable (Reginster 2008). By value, Nietzsche explains in *BG*, he means what benefits human life provides in general in terms of promoting, preserving or cultivating species and life (Clark 1990). From this point of view, Christianity seems beneficial as it makes life bearable by providing meaning for suffering in this life. It gives man an afterlife goal such as heaven, and it presents the suffering and guilt, which must be gone through because of original sin, as a test and thus makes life meaningful. It also provides an answer to man’s cry; ‘why do I suffer’ (ibid). Thus, it removes despair and horror resulting from the meaningless of existence. As May writes ‘ascetic ideal is necessarily life preserving’ (1999, p 89) as it is a ‘great antidote’ against nihilism (WP §4). Thus, it can save man from suicidal nihilism by giving them hope to work towards in

exchange for the intrinsic value to life (Clark 1990). Nietzsche devotes the third essay of *GM* to those ascetic ideals and attempts to illustrate why they are harmful although they might save man from suicidal nihilism. He is aware of this effect of Christianity and thus he writes, ‘apart from the ascetic ideal, man had no meaning’ and he is ‘surrounded by fearful void’ (*GM*, III, §28). This is the first problem with Christianity; it loses its basis with the death of God and cannot provide a meaning for life any longer. The second problem might be the effect of Christian morality shapes human attitudes in a way which leads to ‘aversion to life’ as it asserts ideals of hate, fear, guilt (*ibid*). For centuries the ascetic way of living has been identified as the criterion of valuable life which is a ‘monstrous mode of valuation’, placed by ascetic priests. This mode is monstrous as the will is denied by ascetic priests while life is accepted as ‘a bridge to that other mode of existence’ (*GM*, III, §11). The priests can be seen as a group of weak people who shepherd an even weaker group of people (Wicks 2013) and they stimulate people against life by passively negating this world. Ascetic ideals demand repression and avoid feelings or behaviours for the sake of the other world life. By inserting low values opposed to the high ones, ascetic priests create ‘a will to nothingness’ (*GM*, III, §28). They blame individuals saying they are punished for their sin and that is the reason for them to suffer. However, ascetic ideals are not able to eliminate suffering even if overcoming those ideals and Christianity cause some to suffer and despair due to the fear of the void and meaninglessness (Nehamas 1987). In spite of the fear, it seems necessary to save people (not necessarily everyone) from ascetic ideals because they do not let them be themselves. Instead Christian morality requires behaviours that instincts, such as sexual instincts, should not be followed but repressed because they are labelled as sin. For this reason, Nietzsche writes in *EH* that the ascetic ideal is a ‘detrimental ideal par excellence, a will to the end, an ideal of decadence’ (*On the Genealogy of Morals*). ‘To have to fight the instincts – that is the formula for *decadence*: as long as life is *ascending*, happiness is equal to instinct’ (*TI*, The Problem of

Socrates, §11). It is harmful because ‘instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward*’ (GM, II, §16). Thus, not being able to follow desires or ambitions causes unhappiness and hatred of life or despair. This kind of attitude is not in favour of individuals in terms of promoting or enhancing life, but quite the opposite, it provokes a life where man would say ‘*I am sick of myself*’ (GM, III, §14). On the other hand, Nietzsche also claims that man is a brave animal who seeks meaning for suffering but meaninglessness of it is the curse (GM, III, §28).⁶ It does not seem terrible to suffer in all occasions. Suffering can be tolerated or be sought when it leads to an achievement (Nehamas 1987). According to Reginster, Nietzsche believes that whoever wants to be creative should welcome suffering and resistance which is to overcome by creativity (2008). Thus, it can be claimed that in the case of one benefiting from suffering, it might be concluded that suffering in such a case is meaningful. As Reginster claims, suffering can become an ‘ingredient’ in good for its own sake when it is used for will to power (ibid). So, if the attitude towards suffering is changed, it can be used for good ends. Thus, it can be seen that Nietzsche’s philosophy is not completely against suffering. He even writes that ‘what does not destroy me, makes me stronger’ (TI, Maxims and Arrows 8). This might be similar to the active nihilism. According to Nietzsche, active nihilism is a sign of ‘increased power of the spirit’, on the other hand, passive nihilism is the symptom of ‘decline and recession of the power of the spirit’ (WP, §22). The former happens when previous goals insufficient compared to great strength of the spirit and it is maximized with violent force of destruction. The latter is a sign of weakness, or exhaustion of spirit (WP, §23). These interpretations do not respond to the loss of meaning but refer to the way of this loss occurs. According to these definitions, active nihilism requires being active towards the suffering and meaninglessness instead of refraining from it and it includes the destruction of

⁶ There are discussions about the kind of suffering. It could be either physical such as pain, illness; or psychological such as depression. However, it will not be discussed in this essay and suffering refers only to psychological one.

the surrounding values in accordance with how strong the spirit is. According to Reginster (2008), Nietzsche does not sufficiently define the 'strength of spirit', yet it is estimated by the agent himself according to his own capabilities. If this division is combined with Nietzsche's view about strength, it might be concluded that active nihilism has a positive sense towards nihilism since it improves and increases the strength of man against suffering or the old values to be destroyed, even creating new ones. This is the kind of attitude required to be free from ascetic ideals.

So far, it is clear that ascetic ideals lead to problems relating to worth or meaning. Against these problems, the will to truth is imposed in favour of science and it makes humans disbelieve in supernatural entities. On the one hand science seems to help to overcome those problems by killing God. On the other hand, Nietzsche indicates the similarity of science and ascetic ideals and defines them as 'necessarily allies' because they both have the same foundation, in other words, 'the same overestimation of truth' (*GM*, III, §28). As it was stated before, madman announces that 'we have killed God' to emphasise the concept that the Christian God has lost power over man and over their destiny (Heidegger 1979). It is now common to say, as May states, that science has released us from religious concepts such as sin, essential guilt, and divine redemption etc. However, Nietzsche would definitely object to this standpoint because science presupposes an unconditional value for truth just as the ascetic ideal does (1999). Nietzsche claims that the goal of the ascetic ideal is universal and absolute in comparison to the insignificant and narrow interests of humans. Thus, the ascetic ideal is the dominant interpretation and no other interpretations or goals are ever allowed. This is very similar to modern science as the modern science 'is not the opposite of the ascetic ideal but rather the latest and noblest form of it' because 'it has faith in truth' (*GM*, III, §23). They both have faith in 'the absolute value of truth' and 'truth' is 'divine' similar to the Platonic ideals

or a Christian God (*GM*, III, §24). The problem is that the truth cannot be criticised or assessed (*GM*, III, §25) and the characteristic of this ‘unconditional will to truth’ in science is identical to the ascetic ideal. Leiter claims that Nietzsche is not against science or truth but the point he criticizes is that science attributes an excessive valuation to truth. In other words, ‘the asceticism of science and its ‘will to truth’ are his targets’ (2002, p 265).⁷ According to Nehamas (1987), the presupposition of a single, universal standard good for everyone, on the contrary, only strengthens the causes of nihilism. In the end, it is sensible to claim that they both presuppose ‘impoverishment of life’ (*GM*, III, §25). Nietzsche is certainly against this attitude since his aim is the opposite, preserving and promoting life. Although he might accept some benefits of ascetic ideals and science, he concludes that they both are harmful for human nature and they lead to nihilism.

Religion and science, along with the degenerated culture and war are likely to be the causes of the nihilism of the age. Still, the question remains how Nietzsche’s approach to nihilism should be interpreted. Many of the authors agree that Nietzsche’s nihilism is about revaluation of values, in other words, it is needed to replace present values with life affirming ones (Reginster 2008, Clark 2012). According to Reginster, these values either cannot be realized and thus life is meaningless, or there are no goals worth following. The death of God belongs to the first group and implies the conviction that ‘highest values cannot be realized’ (2008, p 49). Reginster calls this nihilistic despair which refers to the belief of inaccessibility for what is important to an individual. In this view, for instance, God and, probably, the otherworld is the ultimate goal for a religious person, but with the death of God, this person realizes that it is not possible to achieve that goal anymore and it leads to nihilism of despair which

⁷ There are various interpretations of Nietzsche’s theory of truth which will not be discussed here. For comprehensive discussions; *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche (); *Nietzsche Life as Literature*, Nehamas 1987; and Clark 1990.

Reginster suggests is the primary concern of Nietzsche. On the other hand, in the case of absence of worthwhile goals or purpose, frustration occurs as human beings need to find meaning for their existence. This type of nihilism, devaluation of all values, is called nihilism of disorientation (Reginster 2008).⁸ In accordance with these definitions of nihilism, it seems that Nietzsche's main concern is nihilism of despair as religion and science believes in universal truths of which Nietzsche does not approve due to their absolute character which cannot be objective. In this situation, it seems that 'it would be better if the world did not exist' (*WP*, §701). Individuals can value some things over others but as they are not ultimate values, it is possible to achieve them. On the contrary, disorientation causes losing the sense of life because there is no ultimate value to follow. It is clear that this is a negative attitude towards nihilism. Reginster states that there is a close relationship between nihilism and pessimism and sees nihilism 'nothing more than a kind of thoroughgoing pessimism' (2008, p31). However, as he adds, Nietzsche's pessimism is only about realizing Christian-Platonic values for the future. It was stated above that nihilism is commonly interpreted as a negative position, however, Kaufman writes 'the difference between tragedy and comedy is not in essence one of subject matter, but depends upon our point of view' (cited in Marmysz 2003, p 164). From Nietzsche's point of view, 'Dionysian pessimism' answers to those who characterize his philosophy as suicidal and passive modes of thought (Dienstag 2001). Thus, it can be said that Nietzsche has a positive attitude towards nihilism. He does not see it as a terrible situation, but as a means of giving humans a goal to strive for which might render life valuable. Attempting to promote the creation of new values, overcoming nihilism and affirming life might be seen as proofs for his positive attitude. In the next section, how nihilism can be overcome according to Nietzsche will be explained.

⁸ There are discussions about this distinction of Reginster. To see opposite accounts: Clark (2012), Hussain (2012).

4. Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism

'I consider life itself instinct for growth, for continuance, for accumulation of forces, for power: where the will to power is lacking there is decline. My assertion is that this will is lacking in all the supreme values of mankind— that values of decline, nihilistic values hold sway under the holiest names' (A 6).

Nietzsche suggests two ways to overcome nihilism. The first alternative is 'eternal recurrence' which simply means this it is at present, has occurred already and will occur again for innumerable times with every joy, suffering, thought and every little or great detail in it (GS 341). Although some interpreters consider the idea was created as a cosmological doctrine, many others seem to agree that it was not Nietzsche's intention.⁹ However, there are various arguments related to the function of the concept. For instance, some claim that Nietzsche aims to find meaning for existence while others considers the idea as a thought experiment (Hatab 2005, Reginster 2008). Some writers like Soll, claim that Nietzsche's focal point of interest is not the doctrine itself, but the psychological consequences (Nehamas 1980). Although writers have various opinions, it can simply be said that Nietzsche's aim is to raise awareness of the agents by the question of the 'demon'. Answer to the question brings the 'heaviest weight' on actions because each action should be considered in detail as it will happen for innumerable times. Williams argues, in the introduction of GS, that it is a test for man determining whether one is overcome by horror and meaningless of world or not (2001). On the other hand, Clark (1990) claims that eternal recurrence is asserted as a counter ideal against ascetic ideals since there is no other option that can 'fit the bill'. In other words, except for the doctrine of eternal

⁹ For cosmological doctrine interpretation: Loeb (2010).

cycle, there is no alternative theory that is suggested to counter religious otherworldliness. It seems reasonable, as Nietzsche writes, that 'I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes!' (Z, I, §3). Therefore, it can be considered that Nietzsche creates the idea against ascetic ideals and wants humans to believe in this world. This kind of thought might make them consider each of their actions since they have to live it again and again. This may help them to attribute meaning to their actions rather than relying on the 'other world'. Nietzsche suggests two way of affirmation. The first one is defined as reflective affirmation which means affirming life through eternal recurrence. It is claimed that Nietzsche recommends this for victims of self-vivisection for two thousand year. According to this, to be able to affirm life through reflective affirmation, one should step back, think and reflect (Gemes & Janaway 2012). The second way of affirmation will be explained in the following part, as it is related to art. So far, it can be seen that although the basis of Christianity is removed, it might still be meaningful to live and it seems possible with a careful assessment of every action and value in life.

Art and nothing but art! It is the great means of making life possible, the great seduction to life, the great stimulant of life. Art as the redemption of the sufferer-as the way to states in which suffering is willed, transfigured, deified, where suffering is a form of great delight. In this way, this book is even anti-pessimistic: that is, in the sense that it teaches something that is stronger than pessimism, "more divine" than truth: art. (WP 4)

The other alternative to overcoming nihilism, despair and to suffering meaningless existence, suggested by Nietzsche, is art. According to early Nietzsche under the influence Schopenhauer, existence and world can only be justified as an aesthetic phenomenon (BT, ASC 5). The main material on this topic can be found in BT and his unpublished writings. In

BT, besides explaining that Greek art originated in Dionysius and the ‘rationality’ of Socrates, the relation of those concepts to cultural renewal is examined by Nietzsche. He compares ‘rationality’ against instinct and claims ‘rationality’ is a ‘dangerous force that undermines life’ (*EH*, Birth of Tragedy, §1). Nietzsche believes that we are grateful to art because it invented the ‘cult of untrue’ against the deceitfulness of science that otherwise would be unbearable for us (*GS*, II, §107). At this point, it might be useful to suggest that Nietzsche proposes the eternal recurrence doctrine against ascetic ideals, due to the otherworldly character of religions and this worldly character of the doctrine, while supporting art against science. This distinction can be found to be similar to the distinction of reflective/naive affirmation. The naive or unreflective affirmation refers to the earlier stages of human history which Nietzsche is said to explain in *BT*, ‘in all productive men it is instinct that is the creative-affirmative force, and consciousness acts critically and dissuasively’ (Gemes & Janaway 2012, p 294). Naive affirmation requires drives to be considered as the main source to affirm; however, it is claimed that Nietzsche implies impossibility of naive affirmation for modern humanity unless man gains it back in the far future (*ibid*). Both the eternal recurrence and art are significant concepts in Nietzsche’s philosophy, but it might be claimed that naive affirmation through art is emphasised greater than reflective affirmation through eternal recurrence. Nietzsche’s aim in writing *BT*, for instance, is commonly interpreted as his desire for the rebirth of culture through art. Even Ball, in his thesis, considers Nietzsche as a *Kulturreformator* of Germany (Ştefan- Sebastian 2011). Following Nietzsche, Ball searches for how to renew German culture (Elderfield 1974). Nietzsche’s work does not only investigate Germany. *BT* is accepted as a valuable contribution in terms of the debates included about Central Europe and ‘the ills of society’ (Geuss 1999). Moreover, Solomon (2002) describes nihilism as a cultural experience. This is parallel to Nietzsche’s emphasis on cultural rebirth through art, i.e. tragic illusion in case of pre-Socratic Greece, as he proposes

art as a treatment for the modern illness and to overcome nihilism. He sees the potential saviour of European culture is the tragic spirit (Wicks 2013). There is reason for Nietzsche to put emphasis on Greek art. He believes that art is devaluated to mere entertainment in modern society; myth and music are ‘debased and disfigured, transformed into the ‘fairy tale’’ (*UM*, Richard Wagner in Bayreuth, §8). Thus, he begins with Dionysian and Apollonian Gods as the origin for development of art and society in ancient Greece. There is a continuous struggle and periodical reconciliation between them. Apollo, who teaches wisdom, is the god of visual arts, measure, inner world and dream while Dionysius is the god of music, creativity, joy in existence, intoxication, and orgies (*BT*, §2-5, Wicks 2013). The former constitutes the visual and rational part of art while the latter belongs to the musical and emotional part. Although these two concepts are very different from each other, they work together with the ‘Hellenic will’ and form Attic tragedy. Reginster notes that Nietzsche considers tragic art as providing ‘a consolation to the Hellene [. . .] whose piercing gaze has seen to the core of the terrible destructions in world history and nature’s cruelty; and who runs the risk of longing for a Buddhist denial of the will. He is saved by art, and through art, life has saved him for itself’ (2008, p 51). Reginster also writes that Nietzsche certainly asserts the purpose of tragic art is to remove nihilism (*ibid*). It is clear that Nietzsche uses art against nihilism but as it has been mentioned above, he does not mention nihilism directly in *BT*. However, in *EH*’s *BT* section, he notes that ‘it is nihilistic in the most profound sense’; although the work is profoundly silent about Christianity.¹⁰ Still, Christianity is involved in Socratic illusion which Nietzsche compares to tragic illusion (Geuss 1999). Geuss claims that tragic illusions should be preferred to Socratic illusion for a few reasons such as instability of Socratic illusion which

¹⁰ Nietzsche writes that he meant Christian priest when he writes ‘vicious kind of dwarfs’ which is questionable according to Kaufmann (1989). Moreover, in the second edition of *BT*, Nietzsche writes another Preface named *An Attempt at Self Criticism*, where he claims that the book is ‘anti-Christian’ and criticizes Christian morality from Dionysian stand.

eventually leads to music (Geuss 1999, Kaufmann 1974). The concept of tragic illusion is important because;

There is only one real world which is the apparent, moreover, this world is false, cruel, contradictory, seductive and meaningless, so art is a kind of lie which helps people in order to overcome the unpleasant truth (*WP*, §853/1).

Nietzsche believes the Greeks were not pessimists in the conventional sense since their pessimism can be seen as life affirming. In fact, the underlying message of *BT* is optimistic (Battersby 2010). It is due to the fact that the illusionary feature of art is used greatly in the Attic tragedy. Pre-Socratic Greeks were aware of the horrors and cruelty of the world, but they covered them with a veil of illusion (*BT*, The Dionysiac World View, §2), or, in other words, myth as Nietzsche claims that cultures would 'lose their healthy, creative, natural energy' without it (*BT*, §23). According to Nietzsche, those Greeks knew how to live (*GS*, P to 2nd ed. §4) that in spite of the negative events that surrounded them, they find a way, i.e. tragedy, to deal with the negative side of life. Similar relationships between a cruel, horrifying environment and having creative, vital energy seem to occur in the Dada movement too. It will be explored in the next section whether Dadaists construct the relation between nihilism, art and culture or not.

5. Dada and Nihilism

‘Cynical regarding the progressivist dreams of modernism, which hoped to shape the cultural world in the image of technology, industry and science, [Dada] is resolutely ironic regarding the enabling myths of art, culture, society and philosophy.’ (Pegrum 2000, p 101)

As it was briefly mentioned above, it is important to examine the age which led to such a movement. Until European Enlightenment, which is associated with modernity, religious myths and Christianity govern society. However, perhaps with Darwin’s theory of evolution, ‘reason’ considered as the new redeemer of mankind and causes the rise of modernity in correlation with capitalism (Pegrum 2000). In the beginning of the 20th century, these developments eventually lead to World War, a disaster which increases the sense of the crisis of modernity. Dadaism arises in such a chaotic environment where the meaning of life and values are questioned. Richter (1997) writes about Ball’s constant search for meaning against the absurd and meaninglessness of the age. It seems that Ball understands his age as he echoes Nietzsche’s ‘God is dead’ to explain the dissolution of a religion based culture, with the increasing strength of science (Pegrum 2000).¹¹ In 1918, Dada Baader shouts in a church, ‘What is Jesus Christ to you? To you he’s rubbish’ and Hausmann reports that they have to let everyone know about the death of God (Battersby 2010). This could be similar to Reginster’s nihilistic disorientation which means that values are devaluated since they lack objective stance (2008). Reginster claims that if there is no objectivity, then nothing matters but this is

¹¹ Ball is an enthusiast of Nietzsche which is considered as a great influence for his future, and has an unpublished dissertation on Nietzsche called *Nietzsche in Basel*. He also mentions Nietzsche, sometimes critically, in his diary, *Flight out of Time* (1974) and *Critique of the German Intelligentsia* (1919). On the other hand, Ball is one of the first to leave the movement and later he becomes religious. In this essay, only his thoughts and performances in his Dada days will be referred to.

unsuitable for human beings as they need meaning for their life. It can be seen that Ball is not the only one who searches for a meaning in such a horrible situation since the movement spreads quickly with great support.¹² It is important to emphasise the birth of Dada again as Ball writes that ‘the deeper meaning of our work was suffering’ which they accept as a ‘passport to leave’ themselves, in other words, to go beyond their limits (in Ștefan-Sebastian 2011, p 64). Although it is common to interpret the movement as a negative one due to its nihilistic character, Dada indeed has a creative, yes-to-life point of view with its energy and vitality which possibly can be seen as the cause that helps the movement spread. The term ‘Dada’ is a childlike sound, has no meaning in many languages which fits well to the nihilistic character, while it means ‘yes, yes’ in Slavonic languages which Richter sees as affirmative language reflecting the optimistic character of Dadaism (1997). Dada is considered by many as anarchic, without hopes, yet according to Richter, it is a meaningful and life-giving movement to those who experience it within (ibid). Baader seems to support this optimistic position as he defines a Dadaist as ‘someone who loves life in all its uncountable forms, and who knows, and says that, ‘Life is not here alone, but also there, there, there (da, da, da)’ (In Richter 1997, p 215). It can perhaps be accepted that Dada’s birth out of meaninglessness and its destructive features are the negative side of it. There might be found a similarity to Nietzsche’s initial position from Schopenhauer’s pessimism, but departing from it later by replacing it with a fully affirmative attitude towards life (Geuss 1999). Dada has a similar affirmative attitude. Thus, it brings a new tendency in art (Ball 1974). A new repertoire is developed quickly, with the contribution of new inventions such as simultaneous poem or experimental dance and music. They also change religious based oil painting dominated art of 400 years which they consider as religious artefacts ‘viewed solely by priests’ (Erickson 1984, p 99). Instead, they say, ‘we ‘painted’ with scissors, adhesives, plasters’ and other

¹² New York, Berlin, Hanover, Cologne, and Paris are other cities where Dada can be found.

materials which they used for collages (Richter 1997, p 49). Moreover, Ball and Huelsenbeck find ‘sound poems’ that are claimed to be the evidence for Dadaist excitement, courage and creativity (Kleinschmidt 1974). It can be seen that Dadaism replaces old methods of art with new kinds. Although this can be considered as similar to Nietzsche’s revaluation of Christian values, Kaufmann claims that there is a significant difference. Unlike Dadaists, Nietzsche does not offer new values or virtues for the destroyed ones. Instead, ‘revaluation’ refers to the courage of recognizing them and the war against accepted valuations without creating new values (Kaufmann 1974). From the quotation below, it can be seen that Nietzsche is in favour of revaluation;

‘For why has the advent of nihilism become necessary? Because the values we have had hitherto thus draw their final consequence; because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals—because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what value these ‘values’ really had.—We require, sometime, new values’ (WP, P §4).

Hussain seems to disagree with Kaufmann as he claims that it is the responsibility of free spirits or higher man to revalue the old values, not only by removing them but by creating new ones (2007).¹³ This might be reasonable as, for instance, Nietzsche suggests eternal recurrence, art or the ideal of overman to provide meaning for life. Also, Dadaist attitude is more similar to this view. Dada artists, by horror, disgust and anger against their age and culture, attempt to change traditional means of art and replace it with what can express their feelings about meaninglessness or the absurd world. They clearly revalue what has been found valuable for centuries. It is clear that they have that courage to realize and fight against the old values Kaufmann mentions; however, they go further as they have a strong desire to

¹³ Hussain emphasises that Nietzsche uses ‘*umwerten*’ and not ‘*entwerten*’ to clarify the distinction between removing or creating values (2007).

find a remedy and change the society (Green in *AL*). This might be similar to Nietzsche's active nihilism. Dadaists do not only realize, but by destroying the traditional values, they attempt to create new ones. New art forms such as collages and photomontages, extraordinary poems such as dynamic and simultaneous poems, also new tools such as wood, ready-mades, and plasters instead of oil paintings can be counted among their inventions. With the help of these methods and tools, they try to change conventional point of view towards art and render it more valuable.

Can Dada artists be seen as free spirits from this point of view since they attempt to revalue their era's values as Nietzsche seems to define? Revaluation might be assigned to the Dadaist movement; however it is doubtful whether it was their aim or an ordinary reaction towards the values of the era which concluded in millions of deaths and proved to be meaningless. It is claimed that Dada cannot be regarded as a systematic movement. It cannot be pursued as a goal or as a new school (*ibid*). They are against systematisation and rationalisation (Pegrum 2000). Similar thought can be found in the late writings of Nietzsche. He points to the philosophers and claims that 'the will to a *system*' is a sign of corruption, a disease of character and stupidity (Kaufmann 1974, p 80). According to Kaufmann, Nietzsche means those who believe in the absolute truth of a system without examining the presuppositions of it. The same can be claimed for Dada, as Huelsenbeck writes that it is not possible for Dada to 'grasp people's attachment to anything' whether it is money or an absolute idea because a Dadaist is 'the freest man on earth' (1993, p 11). Richter also implies this aspect of Dadaism by stating that their aim is to be 'free from tyranny of rationality, of banality, of generals, fatherlands, nations, [...] and the past' (1997, p 65). As it can be seen, freedom is important for Dadaism and it is closely related to their active and destructive character due to their attitude against the old values. In this case, it is also possible to claim that Dada wants to

destroy to be able to be free to create a new kind of art or 'to bring forward a new kind of human being' (ibid). For this reason, they protest 'all systems in the name of freedom, in the name of the individual' to create their own decisions and values (Huelsenbeck 1974, p xviii). Ball also mentions 'independent spirits' in the preface to *Cabaret Voltaire*. It is claimed that this emphasis hints to Nietzsche's 'free spirit' (Ştefan-Sebastian 2011). Similar to the desire for a new kind of human being of Dadaism given above; Nietzsche also wants to bring free spirits or overman (übermensch) forward from the human herd (Hussain 2007). An overman is not 'the inevitable outcome of evolution' (Z, I, Editor's Note), but a new kind who is capable of creating new norms. Nietzsche sets overman as an ideal for man to strive for. 'Free spirit', who is the exception might dare to work for it, is a significant concept in Nietzsche's philosophy too. Nietzsche refers to free spirit in GS 347 by stating that complete freedom from 'a god, prince, class, physician, father confessor, dogma, or party conscience' (Golomb 2006). He devotes two of his books, namely, *Human, All Too Human- A Book for Free Spirits* and also GS (Kaufmann 1974). In section 225 of *HAH*, Nietzsche defines free spirit thus;

'He is called a free spirit who thinks differently from what, on the basis of origin, environment, his class and profession, or on the basis of the dominant views of the age, would have been expected of him.'

Nietzsche stresses the ability of being genuinely creative for this spirit of "dancing even near abysses," a situation when there is a crisis and there is no rational criteria available (Golomb 2006). Besides Dada's emphasis on the concept of freedom, it seems that Dadaists fit well in these definitions especially in terms of their different thinking against the dominant point of view and the irrational chaotic environment of their age. In addition to this, it is claimed that Nietzsche considers free spirit as an event which will bring hope for Europe (Ştefan-Sebastian 2011). Indeed, in the second preface of *HAH*, Nietzsche announces that the sons of tomorrow, active and audacious, could be the free spirit of Europe although they do not exist in the age

he lives in. Instead, fettered spirits are all around where free ones are the few exceptions. Following from the definition above, Nietzsche continues;

He is the exception, the fettered spirits are the rule; the latter reproach him that his free principles either originate in a desire to shock and offend or eventuate in free actions, that is to say in actions incompatible with sound morals. Occasionally it is also said that this or that free principle is to be attributed to perversity and mental over excitation; but this is merely the voice of malice, which does not believe what it says but desires only to wound: for the superior quality and sharpness of his intellect is usually written on the face of the free spirit in characters clear enough even for the fettered spirit to read (*HAH*, §225).

This quotation includes a striking similarity to the performances and productions of many Dadaists. Performances such as simultaneous poems or theatres, also manifestations they announce are conceived as extraordinary and violent. For instance, the poem-manifesto of Ribemont-Dessaignes starts with such a sentence: ‘Before descending amongst you in order to eradicate your decayed teeth, your scabby ears, your canker-ridden tongues’ (*Almanac*, p 105). Another example could be Janco’s masks, which recalls Ancient Greece, designed to affect at a distance (Richter 1997). Moreover, Elderfield mentions violent impact of shocking effects on conservative audiences (1974). They deliberately attempt to provoke and to ‘wake the citizen from his miserable state’ (Green in *AL*), which turns into a routine and gets harder to achieve (*ibid*, Codrescu 2009). As a result, when the public develops immunity to a poison like bacteria, they have to think of another one (Richter 1997). An extreme example could be the ‘Fountain’, the work of Duchamp, which contains a man’s urinal, and it illustrates well a shocking and discomforting experience (Jones 2006). It is unsettling to many who witnesses the work because ‘the public mind, consciously or not, needs a definition, any definition, because public taste, as Duchamp showed it, is based on stereotypes which most of the time

bear no relation to truth or reality' (Foster & Kuenzli 1979, p 17). It is considered by many spectators as a prank or practical joke questioning nihilism (Prager 2013). This desire to unsettle has the aim of unleashing the existing but unconscious energy of the spectator (Erickson 1984). Although this kind of performances or artworks might irritate some people, it seems necessary if the aim is to create a new state of mind which can make them free from what has been imposed by a system and culture for years. Such works seems in accordance with the aim of Dada; destroying the usual artworks and their effects. However, 'the desire for destruction, change, and becoming can be an expression of an overflowing energy that is pregnant with future' (GS §370). So far, along with Nietzsche's other prophecies, i.e. death of God or nihilism for the following two centuries, the advent of free spirit can also be considered as true if Dadaists are accepted as free spirits. Based on this attitude of Dadaists, the prophecy seems true. However, it is necessary to examine the artworks of Dadaists to decide whether they could be those free spirits Nietzsche mentions or not.

6. Overcoming Nihilism and Art in Dada

'The irrational chaos in the pictures and poems of the Dadaists was not only a reflection of that despair; it also constituted the first step towards overcoming it' (Erickson 1984, p 116).

The doctrine of eternal recurrence does not exist in the Dada movement. On the other hand, as it is an art movement, Dada uses art to overcome negative events in life similar to Nietzsche. Art, in Western society, originally served ritualistic expressions of religions (ibid). By destroying the tyranny of common values or systems of the last two thousand years, Dadaists free themselves from obstacles to be able to succeed in art and through art, it seems that a basis is provided for them to remove the chains of a culture which they are not content to live in. Nietzsche's aim in using art and methods of it could be considered as similar to Dada's. As Nietzsche believes that art loses its function and value in modern society, Dadaists also reject the premises the Western art is built on. They see modern art, which turns into reproductive mass art, as an indicator for wealth of the ruling class (Erickson 1984). Thus, the value of an artwork is determined by 'the price of the product' (ibid, p 101). Although there seems an agreement on art's role is no longer provides meaning for life by being an entertainment object or indicator of status, there is a difference between Nietzsche's Greek tragedy and Dada's new way of art. As it was mentioned before, Nietzsche emphasises the importance of the two opposite forces, Dionysius and Apollo, which merge into one for creating Attic tragedy. The duality between Apollinian and Dionysian resembles the duality between sexes. The latter is necessary for reproduction or birth in the same way as the former is necessary for art (BT §1). The tension between them is exactly what brings creativity; the dancing chorus with the Dionysiac singing and performance of players with speech (Geuss 1999). Similar

concept might be found in Dada too. Dadaists believe that to create an 'artistic whole', opposite ends need to be united. Dada grows on that tension of those two ends which is supposed to remain balanced (Erickson 1984, Richter 1997). Reason and feeling, sense and non-sense, consciousness and unconsciousness are seen as necessary parts of a whole to create simultaneous art (Erickson 1984). This notion of balance is not only needed for art, but also for life itself. For this reason, Richter writes that, since Descartes there is a belief that everything can be explained rationally, and an inversion is required to restore the balance (1997). Although there should be a balance between Dionysius and Apollo for the creation of art, Geuss (1999) claims that Nietzsche puts more emphasis on the Dionysian character of the tragedy. This claim is reasonable as Nietzsche believes with the increasing rationality of Western culture, creative Dionysian energy is weakened by Apollonian forces of logical order (Wicks 2013). Also, it can be said that Dada is under influence more of Dionysian art rather than Apollonian. Dionysian art is based upon 'play with intoxication, with the state of ecstasy' (*BT*, The Dionysiac World View, §1), in other words, a desire for 'uninhibited frenzy and expression of energetic impulses' (Marmysz 2003). Considering the examples of Dadaists given above, a similar sense of ecstasy or frenzy can be ascribed. This might be the reason for Dada to be described as a 'Dionysian force which dances in a tragicomic fashion among the remains of civilization' (Pegrum 2000, p 151). Especially when they perform on stage with the beating of Negro drums or polyphonic simultaneous poems, they seem to lose themselves and say things or act in a way which are shocking to the audience. Perhaps this is why critics associate Dada with Dionysius and claim that Dadaists reject Apollonian order (*ibid*). However, although some of these performances or art products might be considered as nonsense, it should not only be seen as anarchy but also as an illustration of the destruction of century-old traditions which turns into something positive (Kleinschmidt 1974). Parten also supports this view by pointing to the powerful, genuine feeling which Dada created for life

(AL). 'In all of its manifestations Dada exercises a positive, life-preserving force, in reaction to the humbug of social, political, and artistic systems that determinedly delimit and destroy' (Erickson 1984, P). It is important to remember that the ascetic ideal is defined as necessarily life preserving too. However, when examined, it can be seen that Dada preserves life by destroying whatever is an obstacle to life. It does not try to provide a meaning similar to the ascetic ideal or require an absolute truth. Instead, it affirms and promotes life by using art against the nihilistic and meaningless features of life. One of the methods they use is 'chance' as a principle for this destruction and anarchy (Richter 1997). Arp finds this method by chance and is adapted by many Dadaists because it is considered as a way to understand the inner nature that is inaccessible to intellect (Green in AL) and it reflects well the meaninglessness and chaos of the earth (Pegrum 2000). It is seen as a way to eliminate conscious acts of creating art because it requires 'a complete surrender to Unconscious' (Arp in Richter 1997). This also means breaking the interference of reason. Considering the emphasis of Nietzsche on instincts and naive affirmation, Dadaists attitude could be similar as, instead of 'subjugating instincts to reason', they aim to release instincts in a more positive way through their art (Pegrum 2000, p 159). Ball defines Nietzsche as the first philosopher who destroys reason (1974) and Dadaists seems to find a new way to destroy it. Moreover, Nietzsche's point of view towards consciousness can be found supportive for Dada's celebrating the unconscious. According to Nietzsche, consciousness is similar to a 'shallow, thin, relatively stupid, [and] general' sign-world which hides personal and unique actions at the bottom (GS 354) and thus leads to countless errors (GS 11). As it can be understood, unconscious actions are the true nature of humans whilst being conscious brings corruption due to its character of generalization and Nietzsche considers it as dangerous.

'In his heart every man knows quite well that, being unique, he will be in the world only once and that no imaginable chance will for a second time gather together into a

unity so strangely variegated an assortment as he is (...). The man who does not wish to belong to the mass needs only to cease taking himself easily; let him follow his conscience, which calls to him: 'Be your self!' All you are now doing, thinking, desiring, is not you yourself' (UM, Schopenhauer as Educator, I, p. 127).

It seems possible to say that Dadaists pay attention to themselves and in a way Nietzsche advises us to behave and perform regardless of audiences' or readers' judgements. Although Dada style and artworks are not accepted by many, Dadaists maintain to work to create a new understanding and in an optimistic manner. In spite of the terrible conditions around, they have a sense of 'newly-won freedom' caused by using new methods to express themselves in a completely different way which help them to say 'Da, da - yes, yes to life' (Richter 1997). This might recall Nietzsche's wish of being 'a Yes-sayer' who wants to learn and see more in order to make things beautiful (GS, §276). With such a positive attitude, many of the Dadaists believe through art they give life meaning and that they are able to change the world through their art (Pegrum 2000). Nietzsche describes art's function as;

'[...] art approaches as a saving sorceress with the power to heal. Art alone can re-direct those repulsive thoughts about the terrible or absurd nature of existence into representations with which man can live; these representations are the sublime, whereby the terrible is tamed by artistic means, and the comical, whereby disgust at absurdity is discharged by artistic means' (BT, §7).

This passage might be considered as another prophecy of Nietzsche which comes true. Regarding the absurd and meaninglessness of the age, art seems to save lives and gives, at least to Dadaists, a hope to say yes and love life by healing the repulsive attitude caused by war. Although there are negative sides to the movement which link them to nihilism, i.e. destroying old means and values or provoking an attitude which is not appreciated, Dada seems to be a positive and creative art movement.

7. Can Dadaists Be Seen as the Children of Nietzsche's Camel-Lion-Child Metamorphoses?

'Dadaist: childlike, Don Quixotic being, who is involved in word games and grammatical figures' (Ball 1974, p 105).

It has been said that Dada is a positive art movement despite all the negativity around. Now, it might be asked as to how Dadaists can express an optimistic attitude in such terrible conditions. The answer to this question lies behind the character of Dada. One of the unique features of Dada which enables them to stand against their surroundings is, namely; laughter. Richter (1997) writes that 'we destroyed, we insulted, we despised- and we laughed. We laughed at everything' (p 65). It is different from Nietzsche's positing laughter as contrary to the sublime (Battersby 2010). From laughter, Codrescu claims, Dada draws its force (2009). As it can be seen, laughter provides Dadaists a way out of the hostile environment and gives them energy to affirm life. However, it seems to have a sense of insanity. Witnessing all the horrors and fear of the war, meaninglessness of the human life, it might not seem possible to some to laugh. Perhaps Dadaists are aware of the oddness of this situation, as they also take interest in madness. According to Ball, as Dada is against reason, madness can be asserted as an alternative (1974). It is not only Dadaists who see themselves as mad. Society also considers them as clinically insane; however, Dadaists take this as a compliment due to their view of regarding madness as a fresh perspective on reality (Pegrum 2000). It is easy to understand why the public labels Dadaists as mad considering the distinct stance and shocking effects of Dada art. They build a new world with own laws and form, and with new problems and tasks (Ball 1974) and this world is obviously unacceptable to fettered spirits. Nietzsche himself praises madness as he writes 'oh grant madness, you heavenly powers! Madness that

at last I may believe in myself' (Heller 1973). When laughter and madness are considered together, the reaction of the public becomes clearer with Nietzsche's words; 'You will frighten and prostrate them with your laughter; and your power over them will make them faint (Z, The Soothsayer). Dadaists are not really mad but temporarily occupy madness, irrational and incoherence, against what culture and society impose and it seems normal to behave extraordinarily in that era as Middleton writes 'the tendency at this time to merge primitive art, children's art and even mad art' (in Pegrum 2000, p 126). Primitivism should be explained as it reveals another significant feature of Dada.

Primitivism refers to the non-Western art forms, styles and subjects that are adopted by European artists at the end of 19th century (Biro 2009). As it has already mentioned, Negro music and dances as well as masks of Janco, and also the simultaneous, dynamic and Bruitist poems can be seen as examples of these methods used by Dadaists. For them, it is a noble savage approach which enables them to escape the mire of civilization (Green in *AL*). This primitive approach is seen as similar to childhood (Pegrum 2000). Indeed, a childlike character would explain Dada's energy, irrational activities, sense of freedom, yes saying and playful character. It has been illustrated that Dadaists can be seen as the free spirits or higher men of their era according to Nietzsche's definitions. Marmysz (2003) writes that these spirits possess the child spirit in Nietzsche's philosophy. Based on Nietzsche's definitions of child spirit, whether Dada has a similar attitude or not will be examined.

'Innocence is the child and forgetting, a new beginning, a play, a self-propelling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yes-saying' (Z, I, On the Three Metamorphoses).

According to Nietzsche, child is the final stage of a spiritual development which starts from the camel, turns into the lion and finally becomes a child. The features of these figures are

distinct. The camel, the beast of burden, symbolizes obedience and cultural conformity while the lion refers to the denial of stable conditions with the strength of No-saying (Hatab 2005). It can be seen that the lion is a powerful figure which stand against the traditional values of cultures. This 'defiant' lion spirit rejects to 'kneel down like a camel'; instead he fights the last God, the great dragon which is called 'Thou shalt' (Z, On the Three Metamorphoses). However, Nietzsche explains, the lion is not capable of creating new values, thus the third metamorphosis should occur because only the child, the first movement, can seek new values to enjoy 'future-to-be' and to shout like a seafarer when 'the coast disappears and boundlessness roars all around him' (Nietzsche in Loeb 2010, p 197). Moreover, according to Nietzsche, 'for the game of creation ... a sacred Yes is needed: the spirit now wills his own will and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world' (Z, I, On the Three Metamorphoses). There is no doubt that Dada can be seen as being similar to the lion, as they fight against what is imposed by culture and environment. On the other hand, there seems no reason not to claim that Dadaists are child spirited. Remembering Ball's words about a new world, it seems that Dadaists create their own world with their own laws like a child, and with a childish name, Dada. Perhaps, they can be seen as the conquerors of their own world where they like to retreat from adulthood and rational world. However, 'it is not merely a source of childish content or sounds which can be juxtaposed with the rational languages of Europe, but informs the shape of Dada, which sees itself as childlike, playful, mischievous' (Pegrum 2000, p 125). Hatab writes, Nietzsche mentions the gathering of the free lion and the creative child together with the spirit of laughter (2005, cf. Z, III, 12, 1; Z, IV, 11). He claims that Nietzsche sees laughter as a symbol of higher man and Nietzsche says 'laughter I have pronounced holy; you higher men, learn to laugh!' (Z, On Higher Man, 20). Could it also be the symbol of Dada? Freedom, forgetting, play, creation, innocence, novelty and affirmation are traits of child-spirits (Loeb 2010, p 196). Most of these features have been mentioned

throughout the essay in a relationship to the Dada movement and the Dadaists seem to have these features. Moreover, the yes saying character of Dada should be emphasised again. In the light of all these similarities, it seems possible to see the Dadaists, ‘pregnant with lightning bolts that say Yes and laugh Yes’ (Z, The Seven Seals), as the free spirits of Nietzsche who are ‘more ticklish and malicious, with a more delicate taste for joy, with a more tender tongue for all good things, with merrier senses, with a second dangerous innocence in joy, more childlike and yet a hundred times subtler than one has ever been before’ (GS, P, §4) and thus the children of his ‘highest hope’ (Z, IV, The Welcome).

8. Conclusion

'During the last decade of Nietzsche's life and the first decade of the 20th century, his thought was particularly attractive to avant-garde artists who saw themselves on the periphery of established social fashion and practice. Here, Nietzsche's advocacy of new, healthy beginnings, and of creative artistry in general stood forth' (Wicks 2013).

In the first two sections, how Nietzsche's philosophy related to nihilism is examined and possible ways to overcome nihilism are given. According to the definition of existential nihilism, given in the beginning, it is clear that Nietzsche is not nihilist in this sense. Instead, he seems to describe the prospect of the coming centuries which is to be espoused by nihilism. According to Nietzsche, there are two reasons for it. The first is that of losing the faith of religion and death of God with developing science and technology. In this case, if not all, most people realize that many events on earth can be explained by science. However, the production of such an approach turns into a similar position which is already provided by ascetic ideals and this is the second reason leading to nihilism. According to Nietzsche, believing in God or believing in science as absolute truths is no different than each other. Reginster defines this kind of nihilism as nihilistic despair which is caused by unrealizable ultimate goals and he claims that this is the main concern of Nietzsche. Reginster also considers both forms of nihilism, i.e. active and passive, are involved in the nihilism of despair (2008). In terms of destroying old values, standing against Christianity or scientific dogmas, Nietzsche might be accepted as an active nihilist. However, as he is willing to create new values and affirm life, he cannot be considered as a nihilist in the negative sense.

Marmysz seems correct as he writes ‘the sickness of modern humans is a symptom of nihilism, but nihilism is also the ultimate cure’ (2003, p 32). Nietzsche can be considered to have a similar attitude as he uses nihilism as a means to make life more meaningful. Eternal recurrence and art might be seen as the new values which he wants to posit against life-negating values. Although there are discussions on eternal recurrence, it seems more reasonable to accept it as a thought experiment which helps humans to think of this world carefully instead of having hope for another world. Thus, they can assess their situation, and reflect on it. This is called reflective affirmation. On the other hand, art stimulates life and helps sustain it. Through art, Dionysian artistic energy is released which is healthy for human beings. By this, it is possible to affirm life by naive affirmation. The reason for Nietzsche to pay attention to life affirmation might be seen as the ideal of overman since affirming life can be seen as a bridge towards it. In this case, the doctrine of eternal recurrence is significant in relation to changing individuals’ point of view while art’s importance is related to rebirth of culture. Thus, life-negating values will be removed and life in this world could be improved.

In the third section, Dada’s attitude towards life and art is explained from a nihilistic point of view. Possible reasons for labelling Dada as a nihilistic movement could be either its birth in a nihilistic age, or their destructive character against the accepted values. This feature of Dada might be similar to nihilism of disorientation based on the Reginster’s definition. As it has been mentioned, the chaotic environment, i.e. war, deaths and repression, caused some artists to develop disgust and anger towards the culture they are surrounded by. Rather than being angry at the world and the value system resulting in meaningless but painful events, Dada artists prefer to destroy whatever is based on that system and as Nietzsche mentions they enjoy ‘beyond all terror and pity- that joy which includes even joy in destroying’ (*EH*, The Birth of Tragedy, §3). Dada artists have a great, vital energy which is able to create new

values in the same sense that Nietzsche mentions about the being future, not destroying because of ‘hatred of the ill-constituted, disinherited, and underprivileged’ (*GS*, §370). This seems to point to the ‘Dionysian wisdom. Joy in destruction of the most noble and at the sight of its progressive ruin: in reality joy in what is coming and lies in the future, which triumphs over existing things, however good’ (*WP*, §417). From this point of view, just as being unable to describe Nietzsche as a nihilist, Dada cannot be seen as a nihilist movement in the negative sense because their aim is not to create an anti-art even if they are famous for that (Pegrum 2000). Parallel to that, it has been claimed by many critics that Dada is situated in the tradition of Nietzsche (*ibid*). It is clear that they are influenced a lot by Nietzsche, as Huelsenbeck writes, that they discovered Nietzsche’s realm of invention (*AL*, cf. *BGE*, §223). Erickson claims that Dada’s anti-art should be considered as a ‘new art’ because its character reflects nihilistic and destructive features against the absolutists (1984). Instead of negating art or life, they say yes to life even if it requires the shocking of spectators, being insulted as mad and externalized from society as ‘Dada cannot be justified by any system that approaches people with ‘thou shalt’’ (Huelsenbeck in *AL*). Yet, as it has been illustrated, only free spirits among the public have the strength of a lion to say no to the ‘thou shalt’, at what Dadaists seem successful in. In accordance with Nietzsche’s desires, as being free spirits, they seem to ‘write new values on new tablets’ (*Z*, P). According to Nietzsche, these spirits are strong and original who can provide stimuli to revalue (*BGE*, 203). Besides being suitable for the definitions of free spirits, the general attitude and characteristics of the movement, such as freedom, creation, joy or yes-saying, seems to be compatible with Nietzsche’s definition of child spirit. Although being the free-spirited children of Nietzsche might not their deliberate intention, there seems enough evidence to claim that they are.

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