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# Nietzsche and travel as healing: pathos of distance and great health

*Nietzsche e a viagem como cura: páthos de distância e grande saúde*

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## Abstract

This article aims to examine healing—or great health—as the outcome of travel, shaped by the landscapes, climates, and routes traversed by Nietzsche. It seeks to show the importance the philosopher attributed to the pathos of distance as a necessary detachment from the sources of illness (symbolized by Bayreuth), making health possible through solitude. Nietzsche's journey to Sorrento and his stay at Villa Rubinacci are discussed within the framework of a healing itinerary from the Wagnerian ailment, marked

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by a crisis whose enduring monument would be his book Human, All Too Human. Ultimately, the article points to Nietzsche's philosophy of wandering as the possibility of great health.

**Keywords:** Nietzsche. Great health. Travel. Healing.

## Resumo

*Este artigo tem como objetivo examinar a cura — ou a grande saúde — como resultado da viagem, moldada pelas paisagens, climas e rotas percorridas por Nietzsche. Busca mostrar a importância que o filósofo atribuía ao pathos da distância como um necessário afastamento das fontes da doença (simbolizadas por Bayreuth), tornando a saúde possível por meio da solidão. A viagem de Nietzsche a Sorrento e sua estadia na Villa Rubinacci são discutidas no contexto de um itinerário de cura do mal wagneriano, marcado por uma crise cujo monumento duradouro seria seu livro Humano, Demasiado Humano. Em última instância, o artigo aponta para a filosofia da errância de Nietzsche como a possibilidade da grande saúde.*

***Palavras-chave:*** *Nietzsche. Grande saúde. Viagem. Cura.*

## Introduction

Geography is far from incidental; it plays a central role in Nietzsche's life and thoughts as a wanderer. It is integral to his philosophical drama and crucial when considering his psychophysical health, both biographically and, above all, philosophically. For Nietzsche, those who do not travel are subject to the illness of sedentary life, which he links to the pursuit of passive, apathetic comfort that weakens vital forces. Traveling, therefore, became a form of healing, as every journey is an adventure and a search for distance. The preliminary hypothesis of this article is that changes in landscape, climate, and companions served as a source of revitalization for the philosopher.

Furthermore, for Nietzsche, travel is an exercise in maturation, both in philosophical-physiopsychological (since these three aspects—thought, psyche, and body—are inseparable in Nietzsche) and literary senses (through Zarathustra, the wandering prophet of eternal return1). This paper aims to examine the relationship between travel and the maturation process concerning Nietzsche's journey to Sorrento, which provides existential expression to the pathos of distance and great health. If Bayreuth represents illness, Sorrento offers the possibility of healing.

## Distance and Health

As we aim to demonstrate, for Nietzsche, travel is an experience rooted in the *pathos* of distance (BGE, 257), in which the "affect of distance" (Affekt der Distanz or Affekt der Distance) or "feeling of distance" (*Gefühl für Distanz* or *Distanz-Gefühl*) has the opportunity to emerge. While traveling, one feels distant from what imprisons them and thus creates a "feeling of hierarchical difference" (PF[2] of 1885/1886 1[10]), a need to distance oneself from whatever impedes the growth of their own "organizing force" (TI, *Incursions of an Extemporaneous*, 37). The search for freedom, therefore, characterizes this pathos, which drives the traveler to distance themselves from what causes illness by weakening forces, disorganizing, and generating resentment. Thus, it is not a matter of escape but of liberation. While the sick person settles and seeks comfort in old ideals, the traveler seeks expansion and has the courage typical of one who dares. To flee from that "asylum air" or "hospital air" that characterizes the sick's shelter, the traveler seeks fresh air, mountains, and heights capable of saving them from the disease that contaminates them to avoid "the sick should not make the healthy sick" (GM, III, 14). Travel is, not by chance, an experience of solitude since "the highest instinct of cleanliness places those possessed of it in the oddest and most dangerous lonesomeness" as stated in BGE (271). Not by chance, in this aphorism, Nietzsche invokes the hygienic value of distance: "Whether one is

[1] D'Iorio emphasizes, in this regard, the close relationship between the narrative style and the journey of Zarathustra: "The narrative style allows Nietzsche to simultaneously portray Zarathustra's process of maturation in the assimilation of the eternal return and the effects this doctrine has on different types of human beings" (2012, p. 211). While traveling, Zarathustra has the opportunity to mature his own concept and test it with his companions and other characters he encounters along the way.

[2] In this article, we use the conventional abbreviations for citing Nietzsche's works: BGE (*Beyond Good and Evil*); EH (*Ecce Homo*); HAT (*Human, All Too Human* – Volume I & II); GS (*The Gay Science*); GM (*On the Genealogy of Morality*); AOM (*Assorted Opinions and Maxims* – Volume II of *Human, All Too Human*); UM (*Untimely Meditations*); TI (*Twilight of the Idols).* The abbreviation PF is used for the *Posthumous Fragments*, followed by the number and date, cited according to KSA (*Kritische Studienausgabe*).

privy to someone's indescribable abundance of pleasure in the bath, or whether one feels some ardor and thirst that constantly drives the soul out of the night into the morning and out of the dim and "dark moods" into what is bright, brilliant, profound, and refined—just as such a propensity distinguishes—it is a noble propensity—it also separates" (BGE, 271). Observe the dual movement of travel: it detaches from what once was, thereby liberating, and it distinguishes, by introducing separation and distance. Solitude, then, is the first experience of travel, offering an opportunity for cultivation as a virtue. "To remain master of one's four virtues: of courage, insight, sympathy, and solitude" writes Nietzsche (BGE, 284), emphasizing that "solitude is, for us, a virtue—a sublime inclination and impulse toward cleanliness, which senses that in human contact—in society—things inevitably become soiled. Every community, in some way, at some time, somewhere, makes something ordinary, vulgar". Travel offers an alternative against this dirt: by detaching from what makes one ill, one discovers the cleansing power of the virtues of sickness, casting new eyes upon the world. The cleanliness of this gaze is the clarity of thought—one that abandons idealism, now seen through the eyes of the traveler, eyes shaped by diverse landscapes and perspectives, but above all, by different solitudes.

However, this *health* is the condition for the "great health" (GS, 382) insofar as the detachment has not yet opened the possibility for creating new values—the free spirit is not yet the *Übermensch*. In a passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche shows that travel is important for the true philosopher (and man of science)—in contrast to the "philosophical laborers" (BGE, 211)—emphasizing that the "education of a genuine philosopher" (BGE, 211), the philosophers of the future, must also entail their becoming experimenters, "their passion for knowledge force them to go further with audacious and painful experiments than the softhearted and effeminate taste of a democratic century could approve" (BGE, 210). It is in this context that travel may be considered the supreme experience of the true philosophers of the future, who "will not only demand of themselves a critical discipline in every habit that fosters rigor and cleanliness in the matters of the spirit" but will also, beyond criticism, reach the highest degree of skepticism and perspectival experimentation that is proper to travel. That is why this new philosopher must "have been critic and skeptic and dogmatist and historian and also poet and collector and traveler and solver of riddles and moralist and seer and 'free spirit' and almost everything in order to pass through the whole range of human values and value feelings and to be able to see with many different eyes and consciences, from a height and into every distance, from the depths into every height, from a nook into every expanse" (BGE, 211). Clearly, only a traveler is capable of fully grasping these words, as it is through travel that one experiences the profound capacity for mental clarity, which grants them the conditions to create and legislate where others have remained mere laborers of philosophy, worshipers of conceptual mummies, dwellers of tombs, and caretakers of theoretical mausoleums. The *pathos* of distance, therefore, serves a higher task associated with true health—great health—that is, the creation of new values, something that is only possible by abandoning the "North," as we read in the famous aphorism 382 of *The Gay Science*, a passage in which Nietzsche describes travel to the South as an experiment: "He whose soul longs to have experienced the full compass of values and desires that have existed so far and to have sailed along all the coasts of this "Mediterranean" ideal, he who wants, through the adventures of his most personal experience, to know how a discoverer and

conqueror of the ideal feels" (GS, 382). For this, however, the freedom proper to the free spirit is required[3] —a freedom that manifests itself in the experience of travel. Unlike the laborers of philosophy (Nietzsche names Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as examples), whose role is important though neither satisfactory nor in any way sufficient, "genuine philosophers are commanders and legislators," because "their 'knowing' is creating, their creating is a legislation, their will to truth is—will to power" (BGE, 211).

## Bayreuth, the Disease

Few moments in Nietzsche's life reveal this situation as clearly as the events surrounding the production of *Human, All Too Human*. According to what he writes in *Ecce Homo*, it becomes evident how the trip to Sorrento represented a quest for health, with its premises linked to detachment from everything that Bayreuth represented. In this book, Nietzsche writes, "with it I liberated myself from what in my nature *did not belong* to me" (*EH, HAT*, 1), that is, from everything that was a foreign disease with which he had been contaminated. Health, in this case, is described as the conquest of freedom of spirit and, above all, as possession of oneself: "There is no other way for the phrase 'free spirit' to be understood here: a spirit that has become free, that has seized possession of itself again. The tone, the timbre is completely different: people will find the book clever, cool, perhaps harsh and mocking" (*EH, HAT*, 1). A sense of freedom, after all, which contrasts with the "dungeons" and "hiding places" of the ideals represented by Bayreuth: "a profound sense of alienation from everything that surrounded me" is one of its [the book *HAT*] assumptions. Wagner had become a disease: "They had translated Wagner into German." Bayreuth represented the German dungeon par excellence, against which it was necessary to travel— "*German* art! The *German* master! *German* beer!" Nietzsche here turns to nationalism and its symbols to show how Wagner had become the captive spirit imprisoned by the so-called "German virtues," which exemplified the national spirit of the *Reich* that should be "stuffed," the philosopher ironically suggests.

"In the midst of all this I headed off for a few weeks, very suddenly," Nietzsche recalls, "I carried my melancholy and contempt for Germans around with me like an illness" (*EH, HAT*, 2). Bayreuth thus came to represent cultural closure, the quintessential German disease from which one must heal. Bayreuth and later Basel are synonymous with something to be overcome for the health of the one who recognizes: "I realized it was high time to reflect on myself" (*EH, HAT*, 3) since—Nietzsche thinks—every moment spent by Wagner's side was a time of hunger, abandonment of oneself, surrender to "fusty erudition." This unworthy lack of oneself that led to "lethargy" came to represent a disease from which one had to free oneself. Against this German nationalism, the new philosophy of suspicion—like the original philosophy of the Greeks—was born abroad and speaks a stateless language, making Nietzsche, as D'Iorio suggested, a "stateless philosopher" (2012, p. 23). His cure is the overcoming of Germany and its stale idealisms.

[3] It is worth noting how, in this case, it is possible to understand the place of *Human, All Too Human*, in Nietzsche's work, considering what he writes in later texts, including passages from *Ecce Homo* and then the 1886 preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

Nietzsche met with Malwida and Brenner in July 1876 for the rehearsals of the Bayreuth Festival. The trip to Bayreuth had been marked by tremendous physical suffering: his health was worse than ever. Before the final destination, the stop in Heidelberg for rest proves how arduous it had become. Nietzsche wrote to his sister: "I almost regretted it! For until now it has been pitiful. Headaches from Sunday afternoon until Monday night. I can hardly write" (Janz, 2016, p. 562[4]). Later, another letter in the same tone: "I cannot manage. A constant headache… My vision! I want to be far from here! (...) anywhere but here, where everything is torture to me" (Janz, 2016, p. 562). On August 3, Nietzsche traveled to the Bavarian Forest, probably to escape that desperate situation, seeking peace and isolation. Bayreuth was "the place," metaphysically speaking. Nietzsche no longer fit in it, and the headaches only reinforced this sense of inadequacy. It was necessary to leave, like someone leaving a prison, breaking chains, and abandoning the comfort of old ideals. No free spirit could breathe that heavy and murky air of the Wagnerian circles and their "narcotic art". He declared to Mathilde Maier: "A Baroque art of excessive tension and glorified discovery… These were the two things that made me more and more ill (…) I fled, after the first performances, to the mountains" (Janz, 2016, p. 565). Far from there, already in Bavaria, in the middle of Klingenbrunn, he wrote: "This place is very good, deep forests and mountain air, like in the Jura region" (Janz, 2016, p. 565). Nietzsche needed to leave the refuge of Bayreuth to become free, which meant being himself. It was a sickness that needed to be cured.

The philosopher left Bayreuth on August 27, 1876, before the end of the Festival, accompanied by Edouard Schuré and Paul Rée. Back in Basel, he received an invitation from Malwida to spend a year in Sorrento: "I want to offer this homeland not only to him [Brenner] but also to you, at least for a year. Next winter, you must leave Basel. You need to rest under a milder sky, in the company of more sympathetic people, where you can think, speak, and create freely whatever fills your soul and where a truly understanding love will surround you" (Janz, 2016, p. 576). On May 19, 1876, Nietzsche submitted a request for leave from the University, justifying that he wished to undertake a "teaching activity—namely, a longer journey to the South, for a more liberated scientific formation" (Janz, 2016, p. 577). However, he did not hide the reason for his fragile health: "I highlight only one reason: over the past seven years, my health has become increasingly precarious" (Janz, 2016, p. 577). Thus, Sorrento was accepted as a "scientific journey" by the Ministry of Education, which granted him the leave. It was a "study trip" in the sense that it involved "visiting the classical sites" of philosophy (Janz, p. 577). While Nietzsche prepared for the trip, his health worsened: "An unbearable migraine accompanied by vomiting" (Janz, 2016, p. 579) was added to a permanently poor vision, which was treated with atropine. This state of health only increased his desire to reunite with Malwida in Italy. Nietzsche wrote to Freiherr von Seydlitz: "You will leave on October 1 for Davos, and I, on the same day, will head to Italy to regain my health in Sorrento. [...] I am also accompanied by a friend (Paul Rée) and a student (Albert Brenner) [...] We will form a sort of monastery for free spirits. [...] We will remain in Sorrento for about a year. Then, I will return to Basel, unless somewhere I build my monastery, the 'school for educators' (where they educate themselves)" (Janz, 2016, p. 579). In his letter to Seydlitz, Nietzsche wrote: "This neuralgia is so meticulous, it works with such scientific precision, probing how much I am

[4] All translations for which no English version is available are our own, as is the case with Janz's book.

able to endure the pain, and this probing always lasts 30 hours. Every 48 days, I need to prepare for a repetition of this analysis [...] but now, I am tired, and I wish to live in health or not live at all" (Janz, 2016, p. 580). Having acquired a sort of passport granting him official protection but not citizenship recognition, Nietzsche could finally travel.

Tired of his work in Basel, the noisy meetings, and the frothy mugs of the North, Nietzsche headed South as someone seeking his own cure: "He no longer has the strength to resist the North, to frequent a certain 'foolish and artificial mood" (Pagani, 2021, p. 272). Nietzsche rejected this "stereotyped belonging" (Pagani, 2021, p. 273) that he associated with the disease of nationalism and Wagnerian idealism. Italy offered the longed-for cure for Germany and its pan-Germanic project, founded on the exaggerated cult of romantic sentimentality, folk sagas, and medievalism (Pagani, 2021, p. 273).

Thus, if lethargy symbolizes a state of drowsiness, weakness, or lack of energy that results in a significant decrease in physical or mental activity, causing a person to feel unwell, tired, apathetic, or uninterested in performing daily activities, the journey represents the opposite—precisely the ability to heal. A cure, however, that does not oppose illness but is derived from it: "the illness *slowly liberated me*;" "the illness also gave me the right to a complete inversion of my habits" – the Wagnerian illness served to purify, much like someone who has gone without food for a long time and, in the end, feels hunger. In the *Preface to The Gay Science*, the account of this cure is found: "From such abysses, from such severe illness, even from the illness of deep suspicion, we return *reborn*, with changed skin, more sensitive, more malicious, with a more subtle taste for joy, with a more delicate tongue for all good things, with more joyful senses, with a second, more dangerous innocence in joy, at the same time more childish and a hundred times more refined than we ever were before" (GS, *Preface* 4). Such "joviality" is contrasted with old age and the "romantic turmoil" of the Wagnerian past.

## Sorrento: Itinerary of a Cure

The journey to Sorrento began in Montreux, where Nietzsche met his friend Paul Rée[5] on October 1. From there, the friends traveled to Bex, southwest of Lake Geneva, where they spent two weeks. A year later, Rée would write: "This was, in a way, the honeymoon of our friendship, and the little secluded house, wooden porch, vineyards, and Le Sage (i.e., his novel 'Gil Blas') completed the image of a perfect state" (Janz, 2016, p. 582). Nietzsche's health began to improve. He started writing again. On October 18, he wrote to his sister: "I finished the fifth 'Consideration,' it just needs someone to whom I can dictate it." It is about the "Free Spirit," "the last plan for an 'Untimely Meditation'," as Janz (2016, p. 582) recalls, which would later be added to *Human, All Too Human*.

On October 19, the two friends left Bex and traveled to Geneva (where they met Albert Brenner[6]), and then continued to Turin and Genoa, where they boarded a steamer for a three-day

[5] Nietzsche first met Paul Rée in May 1873 through a mutual friend, Heinrich Romundt, who had brought him to Basel, where Rée attended Nietzsche's lectures. However, it was only in the winter of 1876/1877, in Sorrento, that their friendship deepened, shaped by southern Italy's new and idyllic landscapes.

[6] Albert Brenner had been a student of Nietzsche's. He suffered from a severe pulmonary illness, and doctors believed that the Italian climate could save him from death. In late October 1875, he traveled to Rome with that intention and initially experienced some improvement until he eventually passed away on May 17, 1878.

journey to Naples. Nietzsche arrived suffering from violent headaches, which reportedly lasted at least 44 hours. He then went for a walk along the port of Genoa, where he saw the sea for the first time. On October 23, Nietzsche left with Brenner for Livorno, with a brief stop in Pisa, where he met Rée again. From there, the three of them took a boat to Naples, arriving at dawn on October 26, 1876. Malwida von Meysenburg was already waiting for them. She later recounted: "I had never seen Nietzsche so full of life. He laughed with such joy". After much discussion, we decided to go to Sorrento and left yesterday morning. We arrived in fantastic weather and immediately looked for the *Allemande* pension Villa Rubinacci (now Hotel Eden), which I had recently discovered" (Janz, 2016, p. 584). In Naples, Nietzsche was enchanted by the Gulf, the storms covering Vesuvius, and the incandescence of the promontory of Posillipo. About the stay, Malwida adds: "Trina (a maid who accompanied the four friends) is bustling with activity. There are balconies on every side. The windows of the sitting room open onto sunlit Naples, my beloved Ischia, and Mount Vesuvius. In front of the house stretches a true forest of olive and orange trees, forming the green foreground of this painting" (Janz, 2016, p. 585). Nietzsche would remain there for six months, until May 7, 1876, on one of the floors of Villa Rubinacci, where Frau von Meysenbug had rented the second and third floors. From there, one could see Capri and Vesuvius to the west, and from the balcony, it was possible to glimpse Ischia, part of the volcanic archipelago in the Tyrrhenian Sea, along with the islands of Capri and Procida. Known for its stunning landscapes, thermal waters, and spas, as well as its archaeological sites and historic castles, Ischia had long been an idyllic place and held special significance for the author of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Sorrento, in turn, was a pleasant retreat, a kind of holiday colony for those wishing to escape the harsh climate of Northern Europe. It is the birthplace of the poet Torquato Tasso and the Italian writer Aniello Califano, and among its visitors were the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, the British poet George Byron, the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, and the English novelist Charles Dickens.

As Young (2011, p. 232) reminds us, "the lower floor [of the rooms rented by Malwida from the Attanasio family] consisted of a large dining room and living room for communal gatherings, as well as rooms for, as Wagner called them, the 'three boys,'" while Malwida and her servant Trina occupied the upper floor. The biographer continues: "The villa was situated on a raised spot surrounded by clusters of oranges and lemons, which were (and still are) used to make the delicious *limoncello* liqueur." These were interspersed with olive groves and vineyards, making intensive cultivation possible in the rich volcanic soil provided by Mount Vesuvius. Nietzsche loved to take long, thoughtful walks in the shade of the lemon trees. There was one particular tree, he told Malwida, under whose shade new thoughts would surely come to him. The villa was set against hills covered with pines— "pines that listen, deepening even further... the stillness of the south and the silence of noon" (KSA 8 [32]19)— beyond which lay the beautiful Gulf of Sorrento. From the front balconies, with a view of the Gulf of Naples, there were sights of Capri to the west and Mount Vesuvius to the northeast, which was active when Nietzsche arrived in Sorrento" (Young, 2011, p. 232).

Nietzsche's interest in Sorrento dates back at least to 1873 when Malwida von Meysenburg wrote him a letter from San Remo. Malwida had traveled to Italy for medical reasons (she was suffering from headaches, which were likely caused by an untreated ear inflammation). In the letter, she states

that "she was living a completely earthly life with the sea, the sky, the sun, and the flowers" (Janz, 2016, p. 537). She remained in Italy until 1875, and since then, she had nurtured the hope of spending more time with Nietzsche in these landscapes, certain that it would also bring health benefits. Nietzsche filled the void Malwida felt from her adopted daughter, who had just gotten married. In Sorrento, he provided a type of comfort that Germany could not offer in the form of a mother and sister figure. In a letter dated April 14, 1875, he asks his friend for a maternal love "without the physical bond of mother and child": "Give me some of this love, my dear friend, and recognize in me someone who, as a son, needs this mother" (Janz, 2016, p. 540). Most of Nietzsche's biographers have highlighted this same type of bond. Julian Young, for example, characterized Malwida's role as one of "substitute mothering". What is certain is that Malwida possessed immense sensitivity, capable of bringing together in one place the inner, intimate experience of a deep and sincere friendship, and the openness to the contemplation of the landscapes in which this affection developed: "the descriptions of nature, her experience of the South, shaped Nietzsche's vision; it already anticipates what would later represent the impressionistic charm of his later writings, especially 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra'" (Janz, 2016, p. 542). The friendships formed in this setting are part of the healing Nietzsche sought in relation to the emotional burdens that made relationships in the Wagnerian and family environment so heavy. Malwida offers Nietzsche the model of friendship and the lens of natural contemplation.

Between Malwida and Rée, the landscape serves as the backdrop to the inner world, the new thoughts, and the new affections that occupy Nietzsche's attention between the sea and the mountain. Janz recalls two passages from Nietzsche on the subject. In the first, he speaks of the *sea*: "The sea now appeared to me in a different light. I saw the deeply blue waves break against picturesque reefs, covered with blooming myrtles, heather bushes. […] I rested beside clear streams that run to the sea and form small islands, where wild and sneezeweed flowers bloom in white and red". In another passage, Nietzsche speaks of the mountains while returning from France through Dauphiné: "I looked at the white peaks, which shone in the rays of a cold sun, and it was as if I saw my destiny engraved in ice with a diamond writing […]: 'Do you wish to accept the task and not be frightened by the sacrifice it imposes on you?' […] Yes, I accept the task; without hesitation, I will follow the solitary path, traveled by those who seek the truth" (Janz, 2016, p. 542).

In Sorrento, after all, the journey begins to make sense: the four friends live an experience full of freedom. Brenner, for example, wrote to his relatives: "We live somewhat isolated, in that part of Sorrento where there are only gardens, villas, and summer houses. This entire area is like a monastery. The alleys are narrow and bordered on both sides by high walls, upon which orange trees, cypresses, fig trees, and vines of wine rise, beautifully framing the blue of the sky. […] We live in the 'Villa Rubinacci' […]. A small orange grove separates us from the sea. From the grove, one must descend vertically, as Sorrento was built on a rock. […] We have two large verandas with a view of the sea and the mountains" (Janz, 2016, p. 587). Brenner also reports: "Last week, Nietzsche and I took a three-hour walk every morning. We climbed the mountains behind Sorrento and descended to the Gulf of Salerno" (Janz, 2016, p. 587). Malwida also notes the same practice: "On the morning of the first day of January

1877, I took a beautiful walk with Nietzsche by the sea, and we sat on a rock […]. It was as beautiful as a spring morning" (Janz, 2016, p. 588).

In this case, friendship merged with the climate and the landscape, factors that acted on the body and produced a new form of thought. The experience was so powerful that Nietzsche and his friends began to nurture the desire to establish a "monastery for free spirits" or even a "missionary center" (Janz, 2016, p. 588), or, as Nietzsche wrote to his sister in 1877, a "school of educators," a modern monastery, an ideal colony, a "*université libre*" (Janz, 2016, p. 592), to educate adults for a free spiritual life. As Janz rightly points out, his model is the "Peripatetic School," not "modern schools." A state of physical well-being produced this spiritual health. On December 7, 1876, he wrote: "Now I am feeling a little better. The climate is very mild. Yesterday, Rée took a swim in the sea. I take many walks; my stomach and sleep are always very good" (Janz, 2016, p. 588). However, his headaches seem to offer no respite, and his health begins to worsen in early 1877, as we will see further ahead.

It is in this environment, therefore, that a new philosophy begins to emerge. Not a type of thought formulated in a dark room, in solitude and the cold of Germany, but a thought established in intersections, relying on the discussed formulations, the contributions of friends, and the brightness of the South. *Human, All Too Human*, is the product of this process. The book, published in 1878, on the centenary of the free thinker Voltaire, reflects the experience of a philosophy that abandoned romanticism and idealism, turning its attention to human matters. This new intellectual stance distanced Nietzsche, in turn, from both Wagner and Schopenhauer. His new influences, in addition to Rée, were the common readings and heated debates: Thucydides, Plato, Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, Vauvernagues, La Bruyère, Stendhal, and African Spir, among others. Now, in this context, we understand that healing is nothing more than a process and a task, characteristic of the *Freigeist* that appears both in *Human, All Too Human*, and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*[7]. "I have never been so happy with myself," writes the convalescent, who recognizes in the works of this period "a supreme kind of *healing*," through which the tired eye of books and philology opens up to the world's landscape. It was necessary for free spirits, to conquer themselves, to leave the "ground from which they came" and to which they are "chained," nurturing "a longing to move forward," which translates into "a vehement and dangerous curiosity for an undiscovered world," a feeling that "it is better to die than live here," "a rebellious, arbitrary, volcanic yearning for travel," as precisely read in the Preface to *Human, All Too Human* (HAT, Preface, 3). The healing of idealism takes place through "spiritual nomadism" (AOM, 211) proper to the free spirit, whose freedom is born from travel, as in it one gains "access to many and contradictory modes of thought" (HAT, Preface, 4). In travel, one can, after all, "living experimentally and of being allowed to offer itself to adventure," avoiding the sedentary nature of metaphysics[8]. In travel, perspectives increase; therefore, as if climbing high mountains and letting oneself be touched by the sea winds, one understands the value of distance. Perspectivism is the ability to broaden the "disparity of view" (HAT, Preface 1), to see with the distance of someone who sees more and better

[7] For a reading of the concept of the free spirit, see Richard Schacht's work, among several others. *Nietzsche's "Free Spirit"*, in: Bamford, Rebecca (ed.). Nietzsche's Free Spirit Philosophy. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

[8] Regarding the theme of travel as an anti-metaphysical metaphor in Nietzsche, see Oliveira (2015).

than those who stay at home: "Only after abandoning the city do you realize how the towers rise above the houses," writes Nietzsche in aphorism 307 of *The Wanderer and His Shadow*.

Not by chance, the mountain is a recurring metaphor: in it, "the space is free, and the view wider around it," with its air "fresher, yet also gentler" (AOM, 237). This purer air also makes "its walk [...] livelier and firmer," in the conjunction of "spirit and circumspection" typical of the wanderer who feels the "most solitary," yet also the most courageous in facing the "most dangerous." It is by experiencing such a situation that the wanderer will be "grateful to his wandering, to his hardness and self-alienation, to his viewing of far distances and bird-like flights in cold heights," (HAT, Preface, 5) finally saying: "What a good thing he had not always stayed 'at home', stayed 'under his own roof' like a delicate apathetic loafer! (HAT, Preface, 5). In a letter to Malwida von Meysenburg, dated May 13, 1877, Nietzsche refers to the healing brought about by the mountains: "I do not want to disguise that the closer I got to the mountains, the better I felt" (KGW/BVN-1877, p. 615). In Sorrento, in fact, Nietzsche and his friends became adept at long, evasive walks and outings, and especially with Rée, he had the habit of crossing dangerous mountain heights[9]. Like the volcano, the mountain symbolizes the planet's geological past—a memory of its interior, magma, gases, and ashes. From his window in Sorrento, Nietzsche sees Mount Vesuvius, the island of the "fire dog," and through it, he sees history and discovers the depths rising to the surface, the ancient revealing itself and bearing witness to its power.

In the *Preface* to *The Gay Science*, one reads about this when Nietzsche refers to his "cure": "Is it not precisely this that we return to—we, the daring ones of the spirit, who have climbed to the highest and most dangerous peak of contemporary thought and from there look around, we who from there look *down*?".

## From Sorrento to Rosenlauibad

In February 1877, Nietzsche complained of the severity of his headaches, although he still believed that Sorrento was "excellent for recovery; it is a renowned place for healing the eyes" (Janz, 2016, p. 593). Then, Nietzsche traveled to Naples for a medical consultation, accompanied by his friends. From there, they visited Pompeii and Capri. Eventually, Rée and Brenner departed, leaving Nietzsche alone with Malwida until his departure from Sorrento on May 8, 1877. He left by boat bound for Genoa, passing through Brignole, Milan, and Lugano, with a stop in Bad Ragaz, in the upper Rhine Valley near the border with Liechtenstein, where he underwent hydrotherapy. As this treatment proved ineffective, he headed to the mountains of Rosenlauibad (literally "avalanche of roses") on June 11, where a spa was located. Nietzsche experienced significant discomfort throughout the journey. Nonetheless, he remained in Rosenlauibad for three and a half months, owing to the temporary improvement in his health.

Janz described Rosenlauibad as "the most extreme solitude Nietzsche ever sought" (2016, p. 606). It was a remote mountainous location where one could bathe in alkaline natron waters, breathe the pure air of pine forests, and feel the light wind against the skin. On June 25, Nietzsche wrote: "The

[9] It is worth noting that, years later, this very habit may have contributed to Rée's death in an accident—though the possibility of suicide has also been suggested—when he fell from a cliff in Charnadüra, Engadine. He is believed to have slipped on the snow and plunged into the Inn River from a height of 60 meters. As Janz recalls (2016, I, p. 507), his watch had stopped at 1:07 p.m.

climate is mild and pleasant from morning to evening. But I need to be careful with longer walks—twice now I've had to pay for it […]. Whenever a storm approaches, the headaches return. Perhaps I need to find a higher region? (a bit above 4,000 feet[10]). I am very much alone despite the many English visitors who pass through here. In the long run, the stay must have a positive effect. It is *my* kind of nature" (Janz, 2016, p. 606). Nietzsche remained in Rosenlauibad from June until the end of August. He returned to Basel on September 1, 1877, already planning to leave his academic post. In this case, cure also meant renouncing the bureaucratic structures of the University and everything associated with them. This would take place on May 2, 1879, with the submission of his letter of resignation to Carl Burckhardt, the rector of the University of Basel.[11]

## Final Considerations: Philosophy as Great Health

The philosophy born during this journey was "a matter of meteorology, physiology, climate, skin" (Pagani, 2021, p. 275), something that inspired in Nietzsche an enthusiasm powerful enough to make him participate in the dream of creating a "school of educators," a school for free spirits, like himself and his friends Rée, Brenner, and Malwida. This "free zone" of thought ultimately led Nietzsche not only to spiritual healing but also to philosophical and even stylistic healing, the product of which would emerge two years later in the form of *Human, All Too Human*. The landscape of Naples, between the mountains and the sea, the high and the low, the sacred and the profane, was marked by the "porosity" and permeability of the soil and the thoughts that grew within it, by which, as Benjamin suggested in his 1924 text, everything coexists, aggregates, and interpenetrates. Nietzsche had to bathe in this sea and climb these mountains to formulate what he would later call the "school of suspicion," this fragile and porous thought that contrasts with the impermeable solidity of metaphysics. In this case, the landscape organizes his thoughts, which are far from the academic obligations of Basel. From then on, Nietzsche would become a *fugitivus errans*, carrying "his whole world locked in a suitcase" (Pagani, 2021, p. 280). The journey began to play a central role in the life of the anti-German philosopher, whom Italy had transformed as an alternative to the illness that, like him, came from the North.

As he continued his journey, "alone" (HAT II, Preface 3), Nietzsche assumes what is his own, and for that, it was necessary to pilgrimage to foreign lands and strange climates: "as physician and patient in one, compelled myself to an opposite and unexplored clime of the soul, and especially to a curative journey into strange parts, into strangeness itself, to an inquisitiveness regarding every kind of strange thing…" (HAT II, Preface 5). This otherness, by the way, refers to the most ancient eras, when

[10] Rosenlauibad was situated at approximately 1,300 meters above sea level. It was known for its stunning waterfalls, hiking trails, and privileged views of the surrounding mountains—especially the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau peaks. Due to these natural attractions, the site was frequently visited by English tourists, including, notably, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes (Young, 2011, p. 237). Another prominent visitor was Goethe, who traveled there in 1780. Nietzsche is also said to have met George Croom Robertson at Rosenlauibad —a professor of philosophy at University College London and editor of the prestigious journal *Mind*, which was an important reference for Nietzsche.

[11] This period coincided with Nietzsche's writing of the second volume of *Human, All Too Human*. In March, he completed *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, and by September—already liberated from the bureaucratic life of a professor—he sent his friend Peter Gast the manuscript of *The Wanderer and His Shadow*.

peoples had not yet donned "the garb of Europe" (GM 223), as stated in the aphorism titled "Where one must travel," the answer being away from what is European, German... "Distant regions, in little-visited mountain valleys, in more closed communities," where one can still find remnants of that valuable and wild past, not in Berlin. It is through a "long training in the art of travel" that one becomes "Argos with a hundred eyes," accompanied by "his Io – his *ego*." Nietzsche here, as is well known, plays with the name of the mythological character to speak of the encounter with oneself. It is precisely this achievement that is celebrated a little further on in aphorism 237 of *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, whose title is *The Wanderer Speaks for Himself on the Mountain*: For Nietzsche, the "signs" that someone has "advanced and ascended," or in other words, distanced themselves and healed, are that "now the space is freer and the view wider." This is the result of a dietetics: "A protracted wandering around, seeking, changing followed from this, a repugnance towards all staying still, towards every blunt affirmation and denial; likewise a dietetic and discipline designed to make it as easy as possible for the spirit to run long distances, to fly to great heights, above all again and again to fly away. (HAT II, *Preface 5*). This is, therefore, for Nietzsche, "the history of an illness and recovery, for a recovery was what eventuated" (HAT II, *Preface 6*). This is precisely what makes his "travel books"(HAT II, *Preface* 6), as the philosopher himself characterizes them, whether because they are books written during travel, or because they bring an invitation to travel, a "recommendation" for those "*good Europeans*," those who make "the way to a new health, and alas! to go along it, a health of tomorrow and the day after, you predestined and victorious men, you overcomers of your age, you healthiest and strongest men" (HAT II, *Preface 6*).

Nietzsche then makes it clear how these "*good Europeans*" oppose the sick Europeans, the weak and sedentary ones. The "*good Europeans*," unlike the Germans, live in a more favorable "*tropical* climate" (HAT, 236). Thus, "whatever labyrinths he may stray through, among whatever rocks his stream may make its tortuous way - if he emerges into the open air he will travel his road bright, light and almost soundlessly and let the sunshine play down into his very depths". (HAT, 291). A character, after all, who is described in the last aphorism of the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*, whose title, *The Wanderer*, is a direct reference to the text from the second volume, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, and, at the same time, to *The Dawn*, as it ends by discussing a "philosophy of the morning:" Whoever has achieved, to some extent, the freedom of reason, can no longer see themselves as anything other than a wanderer on Earth – not a traveler heading toward a final goal: for such a goal does not exist. But they will observe and keep their eyes open to all that truly happens in the world; for this reason, they cannot tie their heart too firmly to anything in particular; within them, there must be something wandering, something that delights in change and passage." (HAT, 638). It is through a wandering attitude, detached from any fixity and interested in the landscapes, that the free spirit can finally prescribe *great health* for itself.

## Data availability statement

The main focus of this article is contributions of a theoretical or methodological nature, without the use of empirical data sets. Therefore, in accordance with the journal's editorial guidelines, the article is exempt from being deposited in SciELO Data.

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