

ABSTRACT

The title of the thesis is **“Deconstructing the Concept of Body: A Critical Study”**. The thesis discusses the body of human beings. This human body is not only a biological one but an amalgamation of technology. Hence, here the body is a mixed being of biology and technology. To achieve the above aim, the thesis throws light on scientists and philosophers like Charles Darwin, Aristotle, René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Friedrich Nietzsche. After that, the thesis explores the issues of Transhumanism and Posthumanism. The very first concern of philosophy has two main sides, one is, about the nature and the origin of the Universe and another is, about human life and conduct. The body has a separate important place in Philosophy from the very first. There are some issues that are important in relation to the body, these are ‘what is the human body?’, ‘how is it made up?’, ‘how does it perform?’, ‘what it is made up of?’. Normally, the human body is an assemblage of different parts, such as the head, neck, arms, legs, torso, and so on. Besides all these physical parts, the human body consists of several biological systems, which work together to keep our bodies fit for surviving in this world. In the late 19th century, there comes an evolutionary reformation in the history of biology regarding the human body. The father of evolutionary biology, Charles Darwin, in his famous book *The Origin of the Species* (1859) discussed the above issues. He commented on “Natural selection” or the doctrine of “Survival of the fittest” instead of talking about the orthodox view, that the “Great Chain of Being”, where the human beings belong to a superior position to any other animals. Darwin simply deals with the ceaseless struggle to survive, to exist in the natural world, who reproduces more successfully, who struggled more strongly to live his or her life, is most fit than others in this world. According to him, human beings or the human body have such powers to struggle, to survive, so they are superior to any other animals. In the concern of the transition of the human body, the discussions about the philosophy of the body from different ages are important. So, at first, the views of Aristotle have been discussed here. Aristotle, being an eminent philosopher put emphasis on the discussion regarding the human body and soul, and gives a theory called ‘Hylomorphism’. He said, earlier philosophers fail to grasp the relation of the soul with the body. Whereas earlier Greek philosophers argued that the soul is something that is detached from the body and can live separately. Aristotle in his hylomorphic thought realized that the soul is not something separated or

detached from the body, rather body and soul are the unity, and both make a whole living creature. But although he claimed that body and soul together make a unity, it does not mean they are the same. They are logically differentiable, the soul is not the same as the body or life is not the same as matter, but the body is an instrument of a soul through which it can express itself. It is a body that helps a soul to live a particular life. The body holds the soul and provides a definite path for its intense growth. The body is a possibility that becomes an actuality only through the presence of the soul. So, both have equal contributions to each other. Descartes wants to make philosophy a presuppositionless science, which could be presupposed by all other natural sciences for their foundations. His whole philosophical thoughts come out depending on this aim. Depending on his final aim of building up a comprehensive scientific philosophy, he settled down with his great theory of the Cartesian Method. His method is based on systematic doubt. Through the systematic and continuous doubt, he finds the indubitable truth of existence, i.e., *Cogito-ergo-sum*, "I think, therefore I am". And then through this indubitable truth, he successively finds the truth of the existence of God and then the existence of the body. According to Descartes, the human body is a machine or automata. Many physical processes of humans are running automatically without the interference of the mind, like the respiratory system, digestive system, and, so on within the human body. The human body can perform any physical actions deliberately, for example, when we talk, walk, and move our body parts. When we perform any bodily action, our mind does not move our body parts, what the mind does is, sends signals to the pineal gland by influencing animal spirit, and then from the pineal gland our body parts receive signal and acts accordingly. The mind does not produce any energy or movement to our body, it is directly applied by God to our pineal gland which in return occurs our actions by sending signals. According to Spinoza, although we speak about a system of mind and a system of the body, no two systems are there. There is only one infinite system, under which all these come. But due to different points of view, one infinite system appears as two different systems of mind and body. To every mode of extension, there corresponds a mode of thought and this mode of thought is designated as 'idea' by Spinoza. Hence, every extended thing corresponds with an idea. From this, it follows that there are two orders and two chains of causes, the order of ideas and the order of bodies. But Spinoza upholds, ultimately there is only one order, Nature. According to Him, ultimately the order of the ideas is the same as the order of the things. Because Nature, whether we consider it under the

attribute of thought or under the attribute of extension, would always find as one and in the same order and connection of causes. In Nature, it does not matter whether a thing follows from the attribute of thought or from the attribute of extension because ultimately there remain no such differences between the things. Then the discussion of the thesis follows the views of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Friedrich Nietzsche. It has been criticized that; Heidegger neglected the ontological significance of the human body as lived body. The concept of body in the Heideggerian sense is different from the cartesian model. Heidegger unlike Descartes is concerned about the real living body, a body that works, dreams, eats, takes parts in different activities, becomes afraid, joyful, and even dies. Heidegger is looking forward to a body, which really lives out there in the biosphere, a living body, not a corpse body. According to him, corporality signifies only about physical presentation of the body. But the body has other issues too, mere physical presentation would never clarify the problem regarding the body. The phenomenological problem of the body, that, we are 'in the world' as a 'bodily manner', is overskipped by corporeality and hence the problem arises. Heidegger asserts a body personalizes in a lived environment. A person is not a mere composition of different body parts or does not belong to mind-body dualism as mentioned in cartesian thought, rather a person is an integrated bodily unit who is situated in space and time. Every person belongs to a body and according to the degree of their body, they befitted the physical conditions of their uniqueness and developed as an integrated psychological being. Hence, in the pre-reflective level a person who has a body thinks, he/she is embodied in the sense that he/she is his/her own body. Thinking of the embodied body as our own body indicates that we are living in the world really like a living body, besides the soul which has its own wishes to fulfil. However, it can also be stated that, when Heidegger mentions *Befindlichkeit* or how-one-finds-oneself-ness as equiprimordial with understanding and discourse, as the way of disclosing the Being-in-the-world, he actually gave a definite answer against the criticism of the negligence of the concept of body in his *Being and Time*. So, against the philosophers, who criticize Heidegger for overlooking the concept of the lived body in his theory, it can be said that the concept of mood and thus the thinking of disclosedness of Being-in-the-world, is impossible to think without imposing the concept of the lived body. This is because, *Befindlichkeit* always appears in the lived experience as a form of a mood and in the way of disclosing Being-in-the-world, the disclosive affectivity always requires some component parts of the body, or to say, requires 'bodily

attunement'. Hence, Heidegger, though does not use the 'lived body' explicitly but has placed 'the lived body' in the heart of *Dasein's* disclosedness. In concern to the concept of the body, Merleau-Ponty develops an idea in which the body is not merely regarded as an object to the world. He was very much aware of the objections which may be raised by others. One might argue that, even after everything we have realized, is it not true that the body still falls into objective space? Is it not having parts separated from each other in the space, such as the hand and the elbow as separated parts, one is here, and another is there? Belonging parts outside parts, is not the body an extended object? In reply to all such objections, Merleau-Ponty turns his attention toward the spatiality. Is the space as same as the objectors think it is? Is space something like geometry only? Is space something that treats the body like other objects? Is the space something more than all these? According to Merleau-Ponty, it is important to turn to space because, as it is given in experience, we can give all the answers with the help of space. In the objection of the body that it presupposes the objective space; Merleau-Ponty maintains that this view does not occupy the heart of the matter. The space of the body is much different from the objective space. Moreover, it is not the space that makes enabling the body to be understood rather it is the body that brings about the notion of space. The body is the condition for the presence of the space. In the way of understanding the lived experience of the space, we can realize that the body is not an object like other objects, rather it is a condition of living spatial meanings. The body plays the role of a condition and mediator concerning the objective character of an object. The unity of the body is more than just a combination of its parts. The body acts as an instrument to conquer other instruments. The unity that the body possesses is there just so it can open itself to situations in order to acquire them. Hence, the unity of the body is always prior to the space and spatial relationships. This pre-spatial unity or synthesis of the body not only separates the body from other objects of the world but is also the precondition of spatiality. Nietzsche by disagreeing with the traditional concepts of philosophy claimed that the human origin cannot be found in the 'spirit' or 'divinity' anymore. Instead, humans can find their origin back in the animality only. He said a human as an animal is a body. Humans are not perfect animals, they are 'blond beast', therefore, lost and failed animals. However, the body is a series of instincts that represents reality. The body is the intermediary between reality and the conscious spirit. Nietzsche describes the body as a 'plurality of intellect'. Ultimately, he talks about the concept of *Übermensch*. Any person can become an *Übermensch*. And not inspired by traditional values, an

Übermensch depending on his/her feeling, thinking, and emotion an *Übermensch* creates new values for the betterment of humankind. A posthuman like an *Übermensch* also wants to create new values for all human beings, so that, through which all humans of the world can live a happy, healthy, and better life. However, the main purpose of the present thesis is to highlight the recent developments in the body that have changed the scenario of the 21st century, especially from the standpoints of the recent Posthuman thoughts. So, in the chapter, The Posthuman Turn, I have tried to show that, nowadays, the body not only remains a biological one but gets moulded into various forms and figures. Transhumanism is a cultural, intellectual, and moreover a technological movement, which helps humans to improve their fundamental possibility and desirability through the application of widely available as well as immensely developing technologies. This strong bonding of technology with human's everyday life not only enables human beings to overcome their fundamental limitations but greatly enhances their intellectual, physical, emotional, and psychological capacities as well. As an umbrella term 'posthumanism' was firstly developed by the feminist theorists in the 1990s, which can be considered as critical posthumanism. The main amazing thing about posthumanism is the theory which once started its journey from feminism or critical race studies, nowadays finds its intensified position and attention in a mixed-up form of human biology and mechanical technology, which is terminologically depicted as 'Cyborg'. A cyborg is a combination of human and machine. Posthumanism constantly tries to improve the human conditions from all sides, such as bodily, mentally, psychologically, socio-politically, and so on. But the main critic of posthumanism, bioethicists, has criticized them largely. The body development technology would definitely carry various types of effects and uncertainties on human mental health, society, environment, economics, culture, and politics according to the critics. So, here, in the thesis, I have shown different sorts of replies coming from the sides of posthumanist philosophers against their critics. I also try to uphold some positive sides of body enhancement technology by explaining how the posthumanist agenda brings lots of opportunities for human survival.