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Friends and Heroes: Nietzsche's Agonistic Ethics

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Abstract

In this thesis I argue that Friedrich Nietzsche's ethics is an ethics of higher friendship. His notion of higher friendship is based on the ethos of the Homeric hero. As a result, he characterises higher friendship as a contest between great individuals. I show that he derives from Homeric contest two themes that underpin this notion of heroic friendship, namely, abundance and difference. In Nietzsche's conception of higher friendship, the individuals involved do not tyrannise or dominate one another. Instead, they promote difference as a way of determining ever-new standards of excellence. Their interactions are based on and produce personal abundance, both for themselves and for their friends. This understanding of social relationships is first developed negatively. I show that Nietzsche rejects the Christian morality as a morality based on *agape* love that denies difference and abundance: it accepts only *agape* love as the basis for moral action and it is based on a deficit understanding of human existence. I show that he rejects Schopenhauer's morality of compassion for the same reasons: the doctrine of Will and the emphasis on human suffering also deny the Homeric impulse. Having rejected love and compassion as the basis for morality, I argue that Nietzsche develops a new approach to the Homeric contest by drawing on evolutionary biology. He incorporates the idea of difference generated by random variations and natural selection but rejects what he sees as a privative proposal where mere survival is the best that the fittest can hope for. The new Homeric ethos he develops on this basis includes two important transformations of this ideal. Firstly, Nietzsche applies the idea of contest to the internal composition of each individual. He sees the individual as constituted by drives and redefines the 'great' individual as a person who has overcome themselves to bring alignment and integration to this internal contest. Secondly, he generalises this ideal by emphasising the importance of adversity for stimulating self-overcoming and, as a result, personal flourishing. This allows him to construct his ideal of heroic friendship, in which individuals have first overcome themselves and then, in higher friendship, inspire others to similar self-overcoming. This approach to higher friendship includes an intimate understanding of the other person and the requirements of their own self-overcoming. On this basis, friendship includes both adversity and cooperation, love and cruelty, dependent upon the needs of the moment. Unlike other interactions that could be similarly described, such as enmity and neighbourliness, I show that Nietzschean heroic friendship entails an intention to benefit the other person. It is possible, I argue, to show that Nietzsche's ethics is not solipsistic or narcissistic individualism, but heroic engagement with others in the form of higher friendship.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:

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To my friend, Carolyn, whose heroism in support of this project cannot be overestimated.

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Texts and Translations

Developing his account of ethical social relationships was a monumental task for Nietzsche, a task made difficult for the contemporary interpreter by Nietzsche's writing style. His method was not to write systematic philosophy but rather to attack traditional morality in a non-linear fashion, approaching several topics from many angles at once, seeking as much to disturb as to persuade, to destabilise as to formulate, to provoke as to solve. His weapon of choice was the aphorism rather than extensive and focused formulations of systematic philosophy. The result is a complex constellation of sharp statements, acerbic witticisms and confrontational, contradictory and often humorous argumentation.

The combination of the immensity of his task and his use of the aphoristic style have important consequences for this thesis. As some critics have complained, it can be difficult to see more than a disconnected series of attacks in his writing because he does not systematically develop solutions to the problems he brings to our awareness.¹ The result is that it is difficult to bring coherence to his views given the sheer number of texts involved, their fragmentary nature and sometimes contradictory content.

This leads to several crucial decisions: which texts to select as representative of underlying themes, how to deal with questions of consistency and the possibility of intellectual development over time and the selection of appropriate English translations for those such as myself whose German language skills are deficient.²

Selecting which texts to analyse has at least two dimensions to it. The first relates to the relationship between his unpublished notes, essays and other writings; and the second to the

¹ Arthur C. Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1964); Peter Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1995).

² As a philologist myself, one notable shortcoming of this thesis is my limited facility with German. I have not been able to offer my own translations of key texts or analyse grammatical and/or literary devices. I have, however, been able to reflect at several points on lexical choices where appropriate.

question of the periodization of his published works. My approach to the first issue, along with several other scholars, is to focus on his published works, with minimal reference to his unpublished notes. This is because Nietzsche revisited his published works throughout his writing career as he refined of his thought and its expression. This reworking of his publications over time gave him the opportunity to make choices about which elements from his notebooks to include in his published corpora. It seems likely to me that he excluded elements from his notebooks for publication because he thought them deficient rather than that he simply overlooked them, as if by accident. In other words, it seems to me that his published works present what he considered to be the best versions of his thought and the unpublished notes include texts that he was dissatisfied with.

His early unpublished essays, one of which is important for this thesis, present a slightly different case in that they seem to represent a set of material that he simply did not or could not get published, but which were nevertheless prepared for publication in the course of his academic duties. There is, at least to my mind, a significant difference between a fragment captured in a notebook while walking in the Italian Alps and an essay of several thousand words that has been worked and reworked for an academic audience. It is to this latter category that the essay *Homer's Contest* belongs, an important text for elucidating the Homeric themes that I rely on.

With respect to his published works, these are frequently categorised as falling into his early (pre-1881), middle (1881-1882) and late periods (1882-1889). This periodisation of the development of his thought is not sufficiently nuanced for the purposes of this thesis. In order to find the most coherent and least contradictory presentation of his ethical themes, I draw from texts published in the period 1881-1887, particularly *Daybreak* (1881), *The Gay Science* (1882, 1887) and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885), with some passing references to

Beyond Good and Evil (1887) and *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887).³ I emphasise *Daybreak*, *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* because these texts, at least to my mind, represent the best of his attempt to bring his ethical project to maturity. They are written after his rejection of Schopenhauer's philosophy (and his break with Richard Wagner) and before the full flowering of some of his more extreme ideas. By the time Nietzsche writes *On the Genealogy of Morality* in mid to late 1887 his thought has advanced these themes to the point where, at least in my opinion, they become less useful for understanding his ethical project.⁴ In his later works we see a less considered radicalism before his mental collapse in Turin in January 1889.

With regards to establishing authoritative original texts and English-speaking translations, the task has been significantly simplified in recent times. In the English-speaking world, an acceleration in the study of his philosophy can be traced to work done in the 1960s and 1970s by Walter Kaufmann (1921-1980) in North America and R.J. Hollingdale (1930-2001) in the United Kingdom. These scholars both together and separately produced major translations and interpretations of Nietzsche's work in English for the first time.⁵ Notwithstanding the importance of these works, Nietzsche studies in English are presently enjoying the release of what will no doubt become the authoritative translation of his complete works, published through Cambridge University Press in the series Cambridge Texts in the History of

³ With the added complexity the Book 5 of *The Gay Science* was a late addition, resulting in a second edition published in 1887.

⁴ Ruth Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1954); *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [Also Sprach Zarathustra], trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1961; repr., Reprinted 1969.); *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, Vintage Books (New York, NY: Random House, 1968); *Beyond Good and Evil* [Jenseits von Gut und Böse], trans. Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books (New York, NY: Random House, 1966); *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* [Zur Genealogie der Moral], trans. R. J. Hollingdale and Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: Random House, 1967); *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ* [Götzen-Dämmerung, Der Antichrist], trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1968; repr., Reprinted 2003.); *Beyond Good and Evil* [Jenseits von Gut und Böse], trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1973; repr., Reprinted 2003); *The Gay Science* [Fröhliche Wissenschaft], trans. Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books (New York, NY: Random House, 1974); *A Nietzsche Reader*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1977); *Ecce Homo* [Ecce Homo], trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1979; repr., Reprinted 2004).

Philosophy.⁶ It is on these translations that I rely throughout this thesis, with the one exception of *On the Genealogy of Morals* where I use Smith's translation.⁷ In quoting from these texts, I have retained Nietzsche's own emphasis in italicised lettering.

Studies in the original German texts have been significantly supported by the critical edition of the complete works of Nietzsche edited by Colli and Montinari, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe* (KGWB), and the development of the *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe* (eKGWB) at <http://nietzschesource.org>. Where I refer to the original German text, I have used the eKGWB.

I follow the standard conventions for abbreviations as indicated below. I have generally referred to the final editions of texts where late inclusions or prefaces have been added. Where this is significant, I will draw attention to it.

DWV	The Dionysian World View
HC	Homer's Contest
UM	Untimely Meditations
BT	The Birth of Tragedy
HAH	Human, All Too Human
D	Daybreak
GS	The Gay Science
TSZ	Thus Spoke Zarathustra
BGE	Beyond Good and Evil
GM	On the Genealogy of Morals
TI	Twilight of the Idols
AC	The Anti-Christ

⁶ *Human, All Too Human* [Menschliches, Allzumenschliches], ed. Karl Ameriks and Desmond Clarke, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, 2nd ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); *Daybreak* [Morgenröthe], ed. Karl Ameriks and Desmond Clarke, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, 1st ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Untimely Meditations; The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Karl Ameriks and Desmond Clarke, trans. Ronald Speirs, 1st ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); *The Gay Science* [Fröhliche Wissenschaft], ed. Karl Ameriks and Desmond Clarke, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro, 1st ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001); *Beyond Good and Evil* [Jenseits von Gut und Böse], ed. Karl Ameriks and Desmond Clarke, trans. Judith Norman, 1st ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002; repr., Corrected edition); *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. Karl Ameriks and Desmond Clarke, trans. Kate Sturge, 1st ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [Also Sprach Zarathustra], ed. Karl Ameriks and Desmond Clarke, trans. Adrian Del Caro, 1st ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006; repr., Corrected edition); *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, ed. Karl Ameriks and Desmond Clarke, trans. Ladislaus Löb, 1st ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁷ *On the Genealogy of Morals* [Zur Genealogie der Moral], trans. Douglas Smith, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Where I refer to the Greek text of the New Testament, I refer to *The Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies.⁸ Where I refer to English translations, I use the New International Version (see copyright page above).

⁸ Kurt Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd, corrected ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 1983).

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), writing in the final quarter of the nineteenth century in Europe, remains a controversial and stimulating figure in academic philosophy. The continuing interest in Nietzsche's thought encompasses many aspects of his philosophy, including metaphysics, ethics and epistemology. There is also recognition in the scholarly literature of the variety of precedents for and influences on Nietzsche's thought. These influences range from classical influences such as Homer,⁹ Democritus,¹⁰ Pyrrho,¹¹ Plato¹² and Aristotle¹³ through to the Stoics¹⁴ and Epicureanism,¹⁵ as well more contemporaneous influences such as Kant,¹⁶ Schopenhauer,¹⁷ Lange¹⁸ and Darwin.¹⁹

⁹ E.g. Christa Davis Acampora, "Nietzsche Contra Homer, Socrates, and Paul," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 24, no. 1 (2002); Herman Siemens, "Agonal Writing: Towards an Agonal Model for Critical Transvaluation," *Logoi.ph* (2015).

¹⁰ Jessica N. Berry, "Nietzsche and Democritus: The Origins of Ethical Eudaimonism," in *Nietzsche and Antiquity: His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Paul Bishop, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics and Culture (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004); Paul A. Swift, *Becoming Nietzsche: Early Reflections on Democritus, Schopenhauer, and Kant* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005).

¹¹ Jessica N. Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹² E.g. Dwight David Allman, "Ancient Friends, Modern Enemies," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 97, no. 1 (1998); Robert Sinnerbrink, "'We Hyperboreans': Platonism and Politics in Heidegger and Nietzsche," *Contretemps*, no. 3 (2002).

¹³ E.g. Daniel I. Harris, "Nietzsche and Aristotle on Friendship and Self-Knowledge," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 48, no. 2 (2017); Robert R. Williams, "Aristotle, Hegel, and Nietzsche on Friendship," in *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ E.g. Fredrick Appel, *Nietzsche Contra Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Michael Ure, "Nietzsche's Free Spirit Trilogy and Stoic Therapy," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 38 (2009).

¹⁵ E.g. Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Heroic-Idyllic Philosophizing: Nietzsche and the Epicurean Tradition," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 74 (2014).

¹⁶ David E. Cartwright, "Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche on the Morality of Pity," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45, no. 1 (1984); Tsarina Doyle, "The Kantian Background to Nietzsche's Views on Causality," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43, no. 1 (2012); Michael Ure and Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Contra Kant: Experimental Ethics in Guyau and Nietzsche," in *Nietzsche's Engagements with Kant and the Kantian Legacy: Nietzsche and Kantian Ethics*, ed. Joao Constancio and Tom Bailey (London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); Paul van Tongeren, "Kant, Nietzsche and the Idealization of Friendship into Nihilism," *Kriterion* 54, no. 128 (2013).

¹⁷ Cartwright, "Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche on the Morality of Pity."; "Schopenhauer's Compassion and Nietzsche's Pity," *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 69 (1988); Michael Ure, "The Irony of Pity: Nietzsche Contra Schopenhauer and Rousseau," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 32 (2006); Julian Young, "Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Death and Salvation," *European Journal of Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (2008).

¹⁸ George J. Stack, *Lange and Nietzsche* (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 1983).

¹⁹ Patrick Forber, "Nietzsche Was No Darwinian," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 75, no. 2 (2007); Dirk Robert Johnson, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010); John Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004).

This thesis focuses on Nietzsche's ethics and the influence of Homeric ideals on his conception of human social relationships, particularly friendship. One of the features of classical ethics is the tension between ethics based on altruism or cooperation and ethics based on competition or contest.²⁰ The Homeric influence on Nietzsche's thought pushes in the direction of a contest-based approach to ethics and in Nietzsche studies there is a growing interest in the importance of Homeric ideals in Nietzsche's ethics. This new focus has developed into a school of thought where Nietzsche's approach is described as agonistic (contest-oriented) ethics.²¹

This thesis contributes to this body of research by offering a new approach to Nietzsche's account of agonistic friendship as an ethical ideal. Central to this approach is an attempt to go beyond traditional ideas of love (exemplified by Christianity) and compassion (exemplified by Schopenhauer) as the bedrock of intimate social relationships.²² I propose an interpretation of Nietzsche's ideal of 'higher' friendship as a relationship in which individuals²³ respond to one another in ways that are tailored to the particularities of each person's character and circumstance. In Nietzsche's ideal, interaction between friends is based on an emergent and continually developing understanding of one another's inner lives. This ideal includes not only love and compassion but also any other stance towards one another that contributes to each person's life task. This task is, for Nietzsche, the task of self-overcoming.

²⁰ Arthur W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1970).

²¹ Acampora, "Nietzsche Contra Homer, Socrates, and Paul."; "Contesting Nietzsche," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 24, no. 1 (2002); *Contesting Nietzsche* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Lawrence J. Hatab, "Prospects for a Democratic Agon: Why We Can Still Be Nietzscheans," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 24, no. 1 (2002); *Nietzsche's Life Sentence: Coming to Terms with Eternal Recurrence* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2005); Herman Siemens, "Nietzsche's Agon with Ressentiment: Towards a Therapeutic Reading of Critical Transvaluation," *Continental Philosophy Review* 34, no. 1 (2001); "Agonal Communities of Taste: Law and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy of Transvaluation," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 24 (2002); "Agonal Writing."

²² It is noted here that several scholars have analysed this in terms of Nietzsche's response to Hegel: Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Criticism of Metaphysics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Elliot L. Jurist, *Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche*, Philosophy, Culture, and Agency (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); Williams, "Aristotle, Hegel, and Nietzsche on Friendship."

²³ The concept of the individual, as we will see, is itself problematic. I use the term individual throughout this thesis to indicate the specific combination of drives that define a particular person, holistically conceived. It should not be inferred from my use of the term that the individual is defined through concepts such as an indivisible soul or a disembodied consciousness.

I will show that Nietzsche's ideal of higher friendship is a more fruitful form of intimate relationship than other candidates such as romantic love, compassionate love or love for one's neighbours. Higher friendship is intimate because it is tailored to the characteristics of the people involved and it is fruitful because it is able to incorporate a wide range of emotional and behavioural features, even those that are typically thought to undermine or destroy intimate personal relationships (e.g. opposition and enmity). Nietzsche's Homeric definition of higher friendship means that even when friends become adversaries, they act with an intention to see the other person flourish. This is heroic friendship, in which great love goes much further than love in its other forms, even so far as to create (beneficial) adversity.

It is well-recognised in the literature that Nietzsche is antagonistic towards the ethics of pity (or compassion). I claim that, in addition to compassion, he is antagonistic towards love as an indispensable component of ethical intimate relationships, at least in its more 'ordinary' forms. This is a significant and provocative challenge. The singular importance of love and compassion for contemporary ethics reveals itself everywhere in popular media, music and literature. I argue that this emphasis on love and compassion has Judaeo-Christian roots, and that Nietzsche's agonistic interpretation of human social relations provides a distinctive, credible alternative. Specifically, Nietzsche responds to the idea in the Protestant and Lutheran tradition that Christian love is love in which the lover sacrifices themselves for the beloved. Nietzsche offers heroic friendship instead of this kind of love and compassion as the bedrock of ethical social relations.²⁴ Further, in offering this ideal, Nietzsche does not present an abstract or impersonal account. On the contrary: he embeds his ideal within the psychology of the individual and in the dynamics of their intimate lives.

²⁴ I use the terms 'heroic friendship' and 'higher friendship' more or less interchangeably. 'Higher friendship' evokes the classical tradition that Nietzsche draws upon, particularly Aristotelian ethics, and 'heroic friendship' is a coinage specifically relevant to the argument of this thesis.

There are significant difficulties in describing intimate relationships in this way. On the one hand, these difficulties may be due simply to the preternatural resilience of love and compassion as the bedrock for one major strand of Western ethics. If readers are unwilling to challenge the value of love and compassion for ethical social relationships, then they are likely to be dissatisfied with Nietzsche's thought or with this thesis. For those readers open to critically evaluating these ideas, a proposal for an ethics of higher friendship may be at least intriguing if not appealing. However, even for these readers, difficult questions emerge about how to positively describe ethical intimate relationships that are capable of including, for example, enmity. These issues are recognised throughout the literature.²⁵ Some scholars consider them intractable and have concluded that Nietzsche does not offer an ethics but rather a philosophy of solipsism, narcissism²⁶ or 'might is right' *Realpolitik*.²⁷ Others, myself amongst them, have persisted with the thought that Nietzsche's account offers coherent principles for ethical relationships. However, within this group of scholars there remains significant diversity of opinion as to the description and application of Nietzsche's account. There are those that think he offers a version of perfectionism;²⁸ others focus on power and virtuosity as ethical themes;²⁹ others (following Foucault³⁰) consider Nietzsche as a type of virtue ethicist,

²⁵ Peter Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*; Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Criticism of Metaphysics*; Paul Patton, ed. *Nietzsche: Feminism & Political Theory* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1993); Ted Sadler, *Nietzsche: Truth and Redemption* (London, UK: Athlone Press, 1995); Max Scheler, "Ressentiment," in *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert C. Solomon (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1973; reprint, University of Notre Dame Press).

²⁶ Peter Sloterdijk, *Nietzsche Apostle*, trans. Steven Corcoran, vol. 16, *Intervention* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2013).

²⁷ Hugo Drochon, *Nietzsche's Great Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

²⁸ Thomas Hurka, "Nietzsche: Perfectionist," in *Nietzsche and Morality*, ed. Brian Leiter and Neil Sinhababu (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007); Simon Robertson, "Nietzsche's Ethical Revaluation," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 37, no. 1 (2009).

²⁹ Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley, 3 vols., vol. 3, *The History of Sexuality* (New York, NY: Random House, 1986).

influenced by Stoic and Epicurean ideas of self-cultivation;³¹ and others adopt the Homeric-agonistic stance.³²

These schools of thought are not necessarily incommensurate or contradictory. Given the variety of Nietzsche's thought, his aphoristic and diffuse style, and the general difficulty of his project that rejects love and compassion as ethical ideals, it is not surprising that scholars have emphasised different elements of his work. I favour the Homeric-agonistic interpretation because in my view it offers not only a coherent framework for integrating some of the more confronting themes in Nietzsche's panoply of ethical ideas but it also offers a way of synthesising different schools of thought. One aim of this thesis is to show how Homeric themes can be used to bring together otherwise divergent strands of interpretation related to his ethics, his psychology, and his naturalism. This is the spirit of the present inquiry: to outline for Nietzsche's readers a new approach to his ethics that offers a substantive alternative to the ethics of love and compassion and, in doing so, to integrate into his ethical project his distinctive understanding of the individual and naturalistic approach to human behaviour.

To do this, we will have to develop an understanding of the influence of Homeric thought on Nietzsche, and also the ways in which he transforms Homeric ideals to suit his purposes. His interest in Homer was evident early in his academic career. His unpublished essay *Homer's Contest* (1872) lays the foundations for his adoption of contest into ethics.³³ There he argues that contest formed the basis of Hellenic life, rescuing that culture from savagery and promoting the discovery of new forms of excellence. Whether it be through competitive games, rhetorical

³¹ Thomas H. Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Affirmative Morality: An Ethics of Virtue," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 26 (2003); Christine Daigle, "Nietzsche: Virtue Ethics ... Virtue Politics?," *ibid.* 32, no. 1 (2006); Matthew Dennis, "Nietzschean Self-Cultivation," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 53, no. 1 (2019); Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, 3; Robert C. Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche: What the Great "Immoralist" Has to Teach Us* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004); Christine Swanton, *The Virtue Ethics of Hume and Nietzsche* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2015).

³² Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*; Hatab, "Prospects for a Democratic Agon."; *Nietzsche's Life Sentence*; Siemens, "Nietzsche's Agon with Ressentiment."; "Agonal Communities of Taste."; "Agonal Writing."

³³ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Nietzsche Reader*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson and Duncan Large, Blackwell Readers (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 95-100.

sparring or the battlefield, contest is taken to provide the conditions under which both individuals and society strengthen themselves:

[...] without envy, jealousy and competitive ambition, the Hellenic state, like Hellenic man, deteriorates. It becomes evil and cruel, it becomes vengeful and godless, in short, it becomes 'pre-Homeric' – it then only takes a panicky fright to make it fall and smash it. Sparta and Athens surrender to the Persians as Themistocles and Alcibiades did; they betray the Hellenic after they have given up on the finest Hellenic principle: contest [...]³⁴

In this essay the *agon* is presented as a social institution that provided both the creative energy for maintaining and improving civic life and the moderation of that energy so that its worst possibilities were restrained. Acampora neatly summarises Nietzsche's key point:

Agonistic contest, Nietzsche speculates, is a productive force that regulates without subjugating the interests of individuals, coordinating them without reducing them to the interests of the community, and providing radical openness for the circulation of power that avoids ossification into tyranny [...] Nietzsche envisions the best possible situation as one in which these interests are reciprocal and in tension: the community desires the production of greatness cast in terms it establishes; the most potent competitors achieve the affirmation of the community that provides the conditions for the possibility of their

³⁴ Ibid., 100.

victories, but they also aspire to become standard bearers and thereby bring about the reformation of judgement generally.³⁵

This thesis presents Nietzsche's ethics as an adaptation of these principles of contest in order to describe and evaluate human social relationships. Nietzsche, I argue, transforms Homeric contest in two ways: first, he shifts from focussing on contest in terms of externalised, public performance (e.g. warfare, competitive games and rhetorical jousts) and instead uses it to examine the psychological constitution on the individual and their internal drives; second, he expands the ethical scope of contest by drawing from it a general proposition about the value of adversity for individual flourishing.

It is in the context of the general value of adversity (and therefore adversaries) that Nietzsche develops his ethics of social relationships. One particularly fruitful avenue for describing the place of adversity in this ethical project is evident in the growing literature on Nietzsche's distinctive interpretation of friendship.³⁶ This literature has described Nietzsche's relationship to classical sources in formulating an ideal of higher friendship as *agon*. I argue that by drawing on these classical ideas and incorporating new elements, specifically insights drawn from evolutionary biology and individual psychology, Nietzsche's distinctive vision of heroic friendship emerges. This thesis integrates these threads—Homer's influence, Nietzsche's

³⁵ Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*, 25.

³⁶ Ruth Abbey, "Circles, Ladders and Stars: Nietzsche on Friendship," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 2, no. 4 (1999); Allman, "Ancient Friends, Modern Enemies."; John C. Coker, "Spectres of Friends and Friendship," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 16 (1998); Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins, Phronesis (London, UK: Verso, 1997); Dana Freibach-Heifetz, "Pure Air and Solitude and Bread and Medicine: Nietzsche's Conception of Friendship," *Philosophy Today* 49, no. 3 (2005); Jean Gauthier, "In Honour of Friendship" (Masters Thesis, Trent University, 1998); Daniel I. Harris, "Friendship as Shared Joy in Nietzsche" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Guelph, 2013); "Friendship as Shared Joy in Nietzsche," *Symposium* 19, no. 1 (2015); "Nietzsche and Aristotle."; Horst Hutter, "The Virtue of Solitude and the Vicissitudes of Friendship," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 2, no. 4 (1999); Robert C. Miner, "Nietzsche on Friendship," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 40 (2010); Paul van Tongeren, "Politics, Friendship and Solitude in Nietzsche (Confronting Derrida's Reading of Nietzsche in 'Politics of Friendship')," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 19, no. 3 (2000); "On Friends in Nietzsche's Zarathustra," *New Nietzsche Studies*, no. 5 (2003); "Idealization of Friendship into Nihilism."; Willow Verkerk, "Nietzsche's Goal of Friendship," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 45, no. 3 (2014); "Nietzsche's Agonistic Ethics of Friendship," *Symposium* 20, no. 2 (2016); *Nietzsche and Friendship*, Bloomsbury Studies in Continental Philosophy (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2019); John von Heyking, *The Form of Politics: Aristotle and Plato on Friendship* (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016); Williams, "Aristotle, Hegel, and Nietzsche on Friendship."; Benedetta Zavatta, "Nietzsche and Emerson on Friendship and Its Ethical-Political Implications," in *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought*, ed. Herman Siemens and Vasti Roodt (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2008).

rejection of the ethics of love and compassion, his interest in evolutionary biology and his understanding of individual psychology—into a description of Nietzsche's ethics as a radical adaptation of contest, applied to intimate personal relationships.

Let me briefly sketch Nietzsche's first application of the idea of contest as a means of understanding the individual's psyche. Nietzsche understands an individual's psychological constitution as an internal contest between competing drives.³⁷ For Nietzsche, the life task of an individual is to bring these drives into some sort of order, analogous to a piece of music or a harmonious city-state.³⁸ I argue that, for Nietzsche, achieving this internal order is important for ethical social relationships. One friend acts towards the other with a profound appreciation of his internal *agon*, and knows how best to enhance their self-overcoming.

GS §23 provides a useful introduction to Nietzsche's application of contest to the inner life of the individual:

[...] a society in which corruption spreads is accused of laxity; and it is obvious that the esteem of war and the pleasure in war diminish, while the comforts of life are now desired just as ardently as were warlike and athletic honours formerly. What is usually overlooked, however, is that the ancient civil energy and passion, which received magnificent visibility through war and competitive games, has now transformed itself into countless private passions and has merely become less visible; indeed in times of 'corruption' the power and force of a people's expended energies are probably greater than ever, and the individual

³⁷ Paul Katsafanas, *Agency and the Foundations of Ethics: Nietzschean Constitutivism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013); "Nietzsche on the Nature of the Unconscious," *Inquiry* 58, no. 3 (2014); *The Nietzschean Self: Moral Psychology, Agency, and the Unconscious* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016); Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994); John Richardson, *Nietzsche's Values* (forthcoming); Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*.

³⁸ Parkes, *Composing the Soul*; Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*; Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*.

spends them on a lavish scale which he could not previously have afforded – when he was not yet rich enough! And thus, it is precisely in times of ‘laxness’ that tragedy runs through the houses and streets, that great love and great hatred are born and the flame of knowledge blazes up into the sky.

Here he writes that the energy of a people, once spent in agonistic contests such as athletic honours and war, is now expended through private *agon* in the form of internal passions such as love and hatred. Further, this is not purely a matter of internal emotional experiences: private passions become public when they “run through the houses and streets.” Each of the stages of this transformation of the classical ideal, from performative contest to internal passion to social expression, are important for understanding his ethics of higher friendship.

Nietzsche draws on his concept of the psyche as the scene of an internalised contest among many competing drives in order to identify and defend an ethics of self-cultivation. We can see this ethic emerging in, for example, *D* §560:

What we are at liberty to do. One can dispose of one’s drives like a gardener and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis; one can do it with the good or bad taste of a gardener and, as it were, in the French or English or Dutch or Chinese fashion; one can also let nature rule and only attend to a little embellishment and tidying-up here and there; one can, finally, without paying any attention to them at all, let the plants grow up and fight their fight out among themselves – indeed, one can take delight in such a wilderness, and desire precisely this delight, though it gives one some trouble, too.

However, this harmonisation of inner psychic chaos is more difficult than this text suggests when considered alone. Nietzsche's view in other texts is not that there is a thinking subject who is able to desire particular outcomes and direct the drives in order to achieve them, the putative gardener described above. Rather, he asserts in a text of the same period that the drives order themselves organically and 'naturally,' as it were, through a process of victory and defeat, a kind of internal psychic Colosseum (*D* §109):

[...] *that one desires to combat the vehemence of a drive at all, however, does not stand within our own power; nor does the choice of any particular method; nor does the success or failure of this method. What is clearly the case is that in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of another drive which is a rival of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us: whether it be the drive to restfulness, or the fear of disgrace and other evil consequences, or love. While 'we' believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, at bottom it is one drive which is complaining about another.*

The Nietzschean task of self-overcoming is achieved through self-cultivation, and yet confusingly, without a clear view of what this 'self' might be apart from a coalescence of competing drives.³⁹ Importantly, this task is achieved not by capitulating to a single and overpowering drive, but by bringing the rich variety of a person's inner life, including aversive emotional experiences, into a finely calibrated state of harmony and integration.

These texts also provide a brief introduction to my second claim about Nietzsche's transformation of Homeric *agon*: the tantalizing connection between the internal contest of drives and the ethical ideal of heroic contest between friends. What we will see in this study is

³⁹ Ansell-Pearson, "Nietzsche and the Epicurean Tradition."; Dennis, "Nietzschean Self-Cultivation."; Michael Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy: Self-Cultivation in the Middle Works* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

that this connection rewards deeper investigation. In Nietzsche's ideal of higher heroic friendship, individuals can develop an understanding of the psychological requirements for each of them to develop a harmonious and integrated inner life. This understanding may well be, in Nietzsche's view, incomplete and continually developing as the individuals concerned clarify, refine and deepen their knowledge both of themselves and of each other. However, my claim is that Nietzsche presents the landscape of internal contest as one that can be brought to conscious awareness and reflection, which in turn allows friends to respond freely and ethically to one another with love *or* hatred, compassion *or* cruelty, generosity *or* withholding. In Nietzsche's account of higher friendship, a friend's responses must be tailored to the specific circumstances of the other so that they respect the differences between themselves and their behaviour towards one another must aim for and arise from personal abundance rather than deficit or need.

These two ideas—difference and abundance—are important concepts that I develop throughout this thesis in order to integrate this psychology of contesting drives into an ethics of heroic friendship. These two ideas are particularly salient to another strand of research in Nietzsche studies, namely, the ways in which Nietzsche did (and did not) engage with the developing scientific explanations of human behaviour in his time. I consider Nietzsche's move away from metaphysical explanations towards scientific and materialist explanations of phenomena to be of decisive significance for understanding his project as a whole and his ethics in particular. Many scholars have commented on this aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy—his so-called 'naturalism'—and how this might influence our interpretation of his ethics.⁴⁰ I take the

⁴⁰ Mario Brandhorst, "Naturalism and the Genealogy of Moral Institutions," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 40 (2010); Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Criticism of Metaphysics*; Christopher Janaway and Simon Robertson, eds., *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012); Johnson, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism*; "One Hundred Twenty-Two Years Later: Reassessing the Nietzsche-Darwin Relationship," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 44, no. 2 (2013); Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Critique of Morality: Philosophical Naturalism in Nietzsche's Theory of Value" (Doctoral Thesis, University of Michigan, 1995); *Nietzsche on Morality*, ed. Tim Crane and Jonathan Woolf, Routledge Philosophy Guidebooks (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2002); "Normativity for Naturalists," *Philosophical Issues* 25, no. 1 (2015); "Nietzsche's Moral and Political Philosophy," in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2015);

view that Nietzsche drives towards an anti-metaphysical and anti-teleological stance without assuming that he successfully completes that task. Rather, it seems to me that the trajectory of his philosophical project, when considered as a whole, involves an attempt to incorporate the physical and natural sciences into a materialist explanation of human phenomena, even those that do not lend themselves to this form of description particularly well.⁴¹ For the purposes of this thesis, I refer to this *tendency* in his thinking as his 'naturalism.'

There is substantial disagreement about the shape of Nietzsche's naturalism and what this means for his ethics.⁴² My claim is that Nietzsche saw a conceptual parallel between the mechanisms of evolutionary biology as a natural science and the Homeric ethos of contest. In particular, he was attracted to ideas drawn from evolutionary biology, particularly those of biological differentiation over time and the abundance of the natural world in the production of species. This is, at least in part, because he saw here an answer for the more problematic elements Christian and Schopenhauerian metaphysics. In responding to these ideas he does not simply reduce human behaviour to evolutionary causes or reactively claim a special place for humanity in nature's Pantheon. Rather, he borrows ideas from this scientific endeavour in order to elaborate his application of contest to human social relationships.

Nietzsche's borrowing of scientific ideas is especially apparent in his incorporation of the concepts of abundance and difference from evolutionary biology into his Homeric schema. He

Richard Schacht, "Nietzsche's Naturalism," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43, no. 2 (2012); "Nietzsche's Naturalism and Normativity," in *Nietzsche, Naturalism and Normativity*, ed. Christopher Janaway and Simon Robertson (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012); Peter R. Sedgwick, "Hyperbolic Naturalism: Nietzsche, Ethics, and Sovereign Power," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 47, no. 1 (2016); Michael Ure, "Nietzsche's Schadenfreude," *ibid.* 44 (2013).

⁴¹ Features of 'high culture', such as art, music and theatre, for example, might be considered such phenomena.

⁴² See Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, "The Naturalisms of *Beyond Good and Evil*," in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006); Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Ethics and Politics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015); Janaway and Robertson, *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*; Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Critique of Morality: Philosophical Naturalism in Nietzsche's Theory of Value."; "Normativity for Naturalists."; Simon Robertson, "Normativity for Nietzschean Free Spirits," *Inquiry* 54, no. 6 (2011); Schacht, "Naturalism and Normativity."; "Nietzsche's Naturalism."

draws from some strands of nineteenth century evolutionary biology the idea that the natural world is characterised by overflow and abundance. In *GS* §349, for example, he writes:

As a natural scientist, however, one should get out of one's human corner; and in nature, it is not distress which *rules*, but rather abundance, squandering – even to the point of absurdity.

The idea of abundance to the point of squandering is here presented as a feature of a natural scientist's observations in a text that is largely concerned with Darwinism. This idea is also an element in his presentation of the great individual's psyche and their relationships with others. In *GS* §55, for example, he writes:

[...] the passion that overcomes the noble one is a singularity, and he fails to realize this: the use of a rare and singular standard and almost a madness; the feeling of heat in things that feel cold to everyone else; a hitting upon values for which the scale has not yet been invented; a sacrifice on altars made for an unknown god; a courage without any desire for honours; a self-sufficiency that overflows and communicates to men and things.⁴³

There are many complexities, false starts and blind alleys in Nietzsche's exploration and application of naturalism to his ethics of higher friendship. What I aim to clarify in this thesis is that the concept of abundance (which Nietzsche borrowed from one understanding of evolutionary biology and implanted in the psyche of the great individual) provides an integrating idea between his psychology and his ethics. The result is that Nietzsche conceives the contest within oneself and the contest with others in social relationships in the context of

⁴³ I note that here the same term, *der Überfluss*, is translated as abundance (*GS* §349) and overflow (*GS* §55). Another term Nietzsche uses in this regard is *die Fülle* (e.g. *GS* §370)

personal superabundance. This emphasis on personal abundance is one important element of his thought that allows him to step away from Christian and Schopenhauerian moralities. As I aim to show, Nietzsche saw the Christian morality of *agape* love and the Schopenhauerian emphasis on compassion as moralities that promote a privative understanding of human life, albeit in different ways. His Homeric alternative responds to this by emphasising not privation but abundance.

I will show Nietzsche's ideal of higher friendship incorporates abundance in ways that help to define Nietzsche's approach as a distinctive ethics. By focusing on individuals who demonstrate his ideal of personal abundance, Nietzsche's ethics avoids the charge of narcissism or solipsism. This kind of great individual does not need to take advantage of, demean or diminish others in order to elevate themselves. On the contrary, they are able to support others in their own practice of self-overcoming. Moreover, in this kind of relationship the range of strategies available to friends is very wide, so wide that it includes elements not normally attributed to 'friendship' – hardness, indifference, combativeness, opposition. The concept of abundance furnishes higher friendship with these characteristics so that it does not devolve into simplistic notions of dominance, aggression or narcissism.

The idea of difference,⁴⁴ discussed above in terms of its importance for understanding the particularity of the individual in heroic friendship, is also related to Nietzsche's interest in evolutionary biology. I claim that Nietzsche saw a parallel between the idea of random variations that generate differences among individuals over long periods of time for the strengthening of the species and the idea of moral and intellectual difference as a means for strengthening individuals and society. For him, just as these biological variations allow the species to strengthen itself over time—the surviving individuals demonstrating superior

⁴⁴ Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1999); Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983); *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers (New York, NY: Continuum, 1994).

characteristics to those that are eliminated—so moral and ethical difference allows societies to make themselves stronger. As with abundance, this concept has its precedent in his understanding of the Homeric hero, in this case his interest in the classical *agon* as a testing ground for establishing ever-new standards of excellence. Nietzsche's idea was that the generative power of contest arises from its emphasis on difference. In *Homer's Contest* he writes:

The original function of this strange institution [contest] is, however, not as a safety valve but as a stimulant: the pre-eminent individual is removed so that a new contest of powers can be awakened: a thought which is hostile to the 'exclusivity' of genius in the modern sense, but which assumes that there are always *several* geniuses to incite one another to action, just as they keep each other within certain limits, too. That is the kernel of the Hellenic idea of competition: it loathes a monopoly of predominance and fears the dangers of this, it desires, as a *protective measure* against genius – a second genius.⁴⁵

Difference, here expressed as the continual emergence of new geniuses to challenge established excellences, supplies the contest with two characteristics. Firstly, it refreshes society by producing new excellences through the friction of otherness – this is its character as a stimulant. Secondly, it protects society from the excesses of an individual taste, that is, from hegemony or monopoly. I will show that Nietzsche applies this concept not only to society but also to the inner life of the individual and, beyond that, to his ideal of higher friendship. As with abundance, difference provides a mechanism for integrating internal and external contest that serves to moderate against the possibilities of narcissism, solipsism and *Realpolitik*. Tyrannical

⁴⁵ Nietzsche, *The Nietzsche Reader*, 98.

domination of one person over another is a destructive force because it undermines the generative power of difference within the contest.

Ultimately, we will see that Nietzsche transforms the Homeric contest to apply it to ethics, and draws on the 'naturalistic' ideas of abundance and difference to identify higher friendship as his ethical ideal. Difference is important because in higher friendship the specificity of an individual's constitution is respected: "At bottom, all our actions are incomparably and utterly personal, unique, and boundlessly individual" (*GS* §354). This is the basis for intimacy and mutual inspiration within the relationship. Abundance arises from an individual's inner contest of drives: "To 'give style' to one's character — a great and rare art! It is practised by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses that their nature has to offer and then fit them into an artistic plan" (*GS* §259). The great individual is the one who has experienced their own self-overcoming to such a degree that they are able to engage in agonistic exchange with their friends, not on the basis of need but on the basis of the personal abundance that they generate for themselves and that overflows towards others.

Nietzsche develops a deeply personal and intimate portrayal of friendship and one that licenses a range of emotions and behaviours that can be problematic in more traditional approaches. Friendship here includes not only love and compassion but also enmity, envy, indifference to suffering and other aversive emotions and adversarial behaviours. By incorporating these into friendship, Nietzsche offers an ethically productive understanding of social relationships that are capable of profiting from experiences that are otherwise be taken to undermine or destroy intimacy.

Chapter Summaries

In Chapter 2 I begin developing this account of Nietzsche's ethics by examining his response to Christianity and its morality of *agape* love. I show that he rejects Christian morality because it

contradicts the two important values he adopts from Homer's contest, namely, difference and abundance. Nietzsche argues that Christianity denies the validity other approaches to morality, eliminating difference on the metaphysical basis of its monotheism. He also argues that Christian morality proposes personal deficit rather than abundance. I establish this by analysing the concept of *agape* love at its root, namely, the Christian doctrines of the trinity, which establishes that in *agape* love the lover is self-abnegating, entirely concerned with the wellbeing of the beloved. Nietzsche's response to *agape* love defined in this way, albeit not a reflection on trinitarian metaphysics as such, reflects his Homeric concern with personal abundance derived from ethical self-concern. The result is Nietzsche's rejection of Christian love as the foundation of morality which, for Nietzsche at least, asks a significant question about the role of metaphysics in moral thinking.

In Chapter 3 I examine Nietzsche's rejection of Schopenhauer. Where Christianity offered a morality of *agape* love, Schopenhauer offers a morality of compassion. He also bases this on a monistic metaphysics, his doctrine of Will. I show that Nietzsche rejects this for similar reasons to those for his rejection of Christianity. Schopenhauer's monism militates against difference in that he argues that difference between individuals in the world of experience is a mere illusion. Schopenhauer is also, albeit in a different way to Christianity, deeply pessimistic about human experience. Schopenhauer's philosophy is centred on addressing human deficit, which is framed as an emphasis on alleviating suffering. For Nietzsche, this negative interpretation of human experience militates against the Homeric commitment to personal abundance. The result here is that, in addition to Christian love, Nietzsche rejects compassion as the only standard for moral behaviour and turns entirely against metaphysics as the basis for establishing morality.

Chapter 4 demonstrates Nietzsche's move towards a naturalistic account of morality, focusing on his engagement with the then-nascent field of evolutionary biology. I show that Nietzsche

was ambivalent in his response. He saw in the evolutionary idea of natural selection a scientific account of difference between individuals that leads to a general strengthening of the species. However, he rejected Darwin's notion of the survival of the fittest. His idea of heroic endeavour, borrowed from Homer's contest, includes much higher ambitions for human experience than mere survival. His abundant, 'great' individuals are capable of much more.

In Chapter 5 I argue for the Homeric foundations of the twin Nietzschean themes of difference and abundance and show that Nietzsche integrates his understanding of evolutionary biology into his understanding of contest. I demonstrate this from his early essay *Homer's Contest* (1872), in which he presents the essential elements of his turn against metaphysics that become the basis for his new Homerism. I then consider how his new Homerism influences his writings in the period 1881 to 1887, focusing on *Daybreak* and *The Gay Science*. I argue that contest remains a consistent theme in his ethics throughout this period but that he transforms the Homeric contest in several ways. Not only had he given it a naturalistic foundation from biological science, he had also begun to adapt it both to the internal and social life of the individual.

In Chapter 6 we see his new Homerism applied to the internal life of the individual. Nietzsche saw the individual as a multiplicity, as an internal contest of drives. His approach to this was not to extirpate the drives but rather to emphasise self-mastery or, in his words, self-overcoming. That is, by developing a deep understanding of themselves, a person can promote the health of some drives and stunt others, primarily by making changes to their environment. The person who is able to select their dominant drives in this way can be said to have overcome themselves. Out of this integrated and harmonious result of an internal contest, the individual becomes (at least somewhat) self-sufficient. We see here a new understanding of the Homeric themes of difference and abundance: the individual is themselves internally differentiated and can use this to generate their own abundance.

In Chapter 7 I consider this kind of abundant individual in their social relationships. I look at several different forms of social relationship in Nietzsche's thought: friendship, enmity and neighbourliness. I argue that while for Nietzsche each of these has a 'higher' and desirable form, friendship stands on its own because within higher friendship the participants are able to act so as to promote the other's flourishing. I argue that the prerequisite for higher friendship is a deep and personal knowledge of the other, that is, of their particular constitution and the environmental conditions under which their preferred drives will flourish. With this intimate knowledge of one another and because of their self-generated personal abundance, friendship can incorporate love or enmity, compassion or cruelty, as the circumstances demand for each on their particular journey towards self-overcoming. Friends value difference: they do not seek to assimilate or dominate one another. They are able to engage in this way because of their own abundance. I argue that Nietzsche's emphasis on the Homeric ideals of difference and abundance makes an ethics of contest possible within this most intimate personal relationship.

Chapter 2: Against Christian Love

In this chapter and the next I will examine two approaches to ethics that Nietzsche rejects. These are a Christian morality of love and Schopenhauer's morality of compassion. By considering the ways in which his rejection of these moralities reflects his own commitment to the Homeric idea of contest, we can begin to see the contours of his ethics of higher friendship. Throughout this thesis I argue for the importance of two particular themes derived from this Homeric background, namely, the themes of abundance and difference. Both Christian love (at least when conceived through the lens of self-sacrifice) and Schopenhauer's idea of compassion conflict with these ideas. Here I demonstrate this argument with respect to this kind of Christian morality of self-sacrificial love and in the following chapter I will address Schopenhauer's morality of compassion.

It is evidently not possible to address the whole topic of Christian morality in a single chapter. Firstly, I adopt the view that Christian morality can be understood as one that privileges love. This is not necessarily the kind of self-sacrificial love that Nietzsche has as his target, but rather, we can follow May in his argument that love emerges as a theme of singular importance in the Christian tradition:

The immensely diverse and adaptable group of related Churches that we call 'Christianity' brings about two innovations with which the Western world and many who have been influenced by it live today. It turns love into life's supreme virtue and moral principle [...] Christianity makes love a divine power that, if infused by God into the receptive human being, ordinary people can express. With the aid of this power and the

relationships that celebrate it we can rise above the terrors and traps of earthly life and redeem suffering, pain, loss, anxiety, evil and death.⁴⁶

The result of this is the fetishization of love as the supreme virtue in Western societies, which, according to May, has become only more pronounced as these societies have moved further away from their religious foundations. Having lost their concept of God, people in these societies now seek to divinise themselves by incorporating god-like love into their ethical frameworks. May summarises:

In the wasteland of Western idols, only love survives intact.⁴⁷

Given the significance of love as a moral ideal for these societies, it is clearly going to be both controversial and complex to establish that Nietzsche offers a viable ethics that rejects Christian love. In what follows I will demonstrate Nietzsche's rejection of love—and particularly, his rejection of the idea of love as self-sacrifice—in two different ways. One is metaethical: he rejects Christianity's proposition that love can function as a singular moral standard against which everything must be judged. I claim that he rejects Christian love, however it is conceived, because it conflicts with the Homeric ideal of difference. For Nietzsche, this ideal constitutes a situation in which multiple moralities, perhaps wildly different from each other, together fuel the process of contest that establishes new values and overthrows old ones.

The second part of Nietzsche's rejection of Christian love is substantive. More specifically, we see that he rejects the idea that the highest expression of love can be found in self-sacrifice, and that, therefore, self-sacrifice can serve as a moral standard against which other actions can be judged. This idea of love as self-sacrifice can be developed by considering the foundations of Christian doctrine, established in the first few centuries of the church, and how this finds

⁴⁶ Simon May, *Love: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 81.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

expression in some forms of Protestant—and especially Lutheran—philosophical theology. foundations of Christian love in Christian doctrine, we find that Christian love is of a particular kind. Where the ancient Greeks spoke of *philia* (brotherly love), *eros* (passionate love) and *agape* (self-giving) love, Christianity emphasises *agape* love. This kind of love is beneficial for the beloved and it requires self-giving or self-abnegation for the lover. It is love that is costly for the lover because it is solely with the flourishing of the other, the beloved. I will show that this ideal of *agape* love conflicts with the Homeric ideal of abundance. What we will see is that Nietzsche proposes an alternative to Christian *agape* love that allows him to preserve this Homeric ideal in what he calls “great love,” primarily experienced in higher (agonistic) friendship.

Understanding Christian Love

Before outlining these two components of Nietzsche’s rejection of Christian love and his proposal for great love, we must first consider the complexities of the concept and the history of its interpretation. Contemporary scholarship on the philosophy of love is surprisingly scarce. May’s *Love: A History* is an exception and he provides us with an overview of the philosophy of love from ancient to contemporary times.⁴⁸ In order to explain the Western obsession with love in contemporary societies, May looks to both secular and religious sources including Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, and Ovid; as well as Hebrew and Christian traditions.

May outlines the different perspectives on love provided by these sources. He argues that while the Hebrew and Christian traditions can both be described by the injunctions to love God and to love one’s neighbour,⁴⁹ the Hebrew idea does not emphasise self-abnegation in the way the Christian ideal does.⁵⁰ For him, the Christian ideal, best captured by the Greek word *agape*,

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 25-26, 91-92.

refers to a kind of “unconditional, altruistic, obedient, humble selflessness.”⁵¹ Other kinds of love are demoted or transformed to take on this fundamental posture. For example, while the Christian tradition includes *eros* as passionate desire to possess and to be possessed, this expresses itself not in its original terms—as a self-regarding desire to possess the beloved—but is transformed into a kind of *eros* that lends itself to self-abnegation.⁵²

The problem of self-concern and other-concern, and how these interact in the concept of love, is an important issue. According to May, love can be understood as the individual reaching out towards others in order to find their own ontological ground. For May, love arises from a feeling of insecurity in the world and the desire to find security through others. This desire to secure one’s place in the world he calls “ontological rootedness.”⁵³ On May’s account, self-love and love of others are linked: to love others is to love oneself, that is, by satisfying this desire for ontological rootedness. This explains the contradictory dynamics of love:

It involves seemingly contradictory attitudes: submission and possessiveness; generosity and selfishness; intense gratitude and – not least – the disrespect that is easily fostered by need when it becomes overwhelming and even violent.⁵⁴

According to May, these forces and counterforces in the idea of love lead to very different approaches in the history of its development. Christianity presents love as a possibility for participation in a transcendent divine power, or, indeed, as the possibility to become divine.⁵⁵ Nietzsche, according to May, interprets Christian love as a desire to transcend human

⁵¹ Ibid., 21–22.

⁵² Ibid., 94.

⁵³ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 81–94.

experience itself, which demonstrates to Nietzsche that Christian love is based (ironically) on a hatred for existence:⁵⁶

Love that originates in such a moral universe – one dominated by fear of suffering, loss, and weakness; one ruled by the morality of pity – is love that originates in resentment and hatred. This is Nietzsche's most spectacular claim about the tradition of love that evolves from Judaism and Christianity: it grows out of hatred. He is not repeating the commonplace that love and hate go together – for example that love easily nurses hate when its hopes are disappointed, or even in anticipation of their disappointment. Rather, he is suggesting that hatred of nature, of strength, of life itself, drives 'the religion of love'.⁵⁷

Nietzsche's solution to the problem of love, according to May, is *amor fati*, the love of fate. He presents Nietzsche's position as radical affirmation: where Christian love seeks transcendence beyond what actually exists—and is therefore a denial of it—Nietzsche seeks to describe love that affirms *everything* that exists, including suffering, change and destruction. On this view, Nietzschean love begins with self-love as an affirmation of everything about its object, including the context in which its object exists, which itself includes other people. Thus Nietzschean affirmative love is not solipsism or narcissism but love that starts with the self and works outwards to everything connected to the self, including others. Using May's ontological terms, where Christian love seeks to ground people in a beyond, first reaching out to the divine in order to find their own 'rootedness,' Nietzschean love seeks to ground people first in

⁵⁶ Ibid., 188-98.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 193-94.

themselves and then to reach out towards others. For May, this is how self-love, love for others, and the love of fate (*amor fati*) intersect in Nietzsche.⁵⁸

There is significant complexity here that merits further exploration. It is implicit in this presentation that love is an experience of a complex set of interactions between two parties: the lover and the beloved. In my view, in order to more fully understand Nietzsche's response to Christian love conceived as self-sacrifice, we need to explore what this Christian idea of love is in more detail and how it impacts on both the lover and the beloved.

The idea that self-sacrificial love begins with reaching outwards towards others in the search for transcendence, as May has described it, can be understood in more traditional terms. There is a tradition of interpretation within Christianity which privileges *agape* over other types of love, and especially over *eros*. For example, Anders Nygren, a prominent twentieth century Lutheran theologian, providing a now-standard description of *agape* love in contrast to *eros*. For Nygren *agape* love does not respond to the inherent value of the beloved but rather bestows value on him or her. This allows Nygren to make sense of the case where a beneficent lover loves an unworthy and undeserving beloved. This is important because it creates the conceptual space in which God can love sinful humankind, which, as we will see, is the archetypal example of *agape* within this tradition of interpretation.⁵⁹

Eros, according to Nygren, provides the Hellenic context into which the Christian idea of love arrives. Nygren interprets the classical concept of *eros* as a desire for possession which is based on recognition of, or belief in, the inherent value of the beloved.⁶⁰ Nygren argues that Nietzsche correctly saw in the Christian understanding of *agape* love a revolutionary reversal: in *eros* the lover desires the beloved for their inherent value. In *agape*, the lover bestows value on the

⁵⁸ See also Béatrice Han-Pile, "Nietzsche and Amor Fati," *European Journal of Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (2011).

⁵⁹ Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (London, UK: SPCK, 1982), 75-81.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 160-99.

beloved.⁶¹ We can understand Nygren's presentation to say that where Nietzsche rejects this reversal, Christianity celebrates it.

Karl Barth, a prominent twentieth century theologian in the European Reformed tradition, adds to understanding of *agape* love not only the bestowal of value on the beloved but also the costliness of this act for the lover. Also reflecting on the difference between *eros* and *agape*, he amplifies the experience of self-abnegation on the part of the lover. For him, *eros* is an act of self-interest for the lover⁶² and *agape* is an act of self-emptying:

The word for "love" in the New Testament is Agape. And from every context in which it appears the conclusion is obvious that it signifies a movement which runs almost exactly in the opposite direction from that of Eros. Love in the sense of Agape is admittedly also the total seeking of another, and this is the one thing that it has in common with love as Eros. In Agape, however [...] the one who loves seeks the other only for his own sake [...] If love, in the sense of Agape, is no doubt also a seeking, it is not an interested but a sovereign seeking of the other one. "Giving is more blessed than receiving." This seeking is sovereign precisely because it is directed and oriented not to the sovereignty of the one who loves but to the sovereignty of the beloved one.⁶³

For Barth, both *agape* and *eros* are a "seeking," a pursuit of the beloved. In *eros*, this is based on the "sovereignty" (read "free and independent personhood") of the lover, and in *agape*, it is based on the free and independent personhood of the beloved. He calls this act of love self-

⁶¹ Ibid., 200-05.

⁶² Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, trans. Grover Foley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), 201.

⁶³ Ibid., 200-01. See also Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), vol. 3, 182ff.

giving and surrender on the part of the lover. What is surrendered is the lover's sovereignty, their individuality and freedom, in the act of recognising of the reality of the beloved:

We must now give this act of self-giving its biblical name. We are speaking of Christian love [...] We have equated the concept of love in a general way with that of self-giving [...] what we have here—in Christian love—is a movement in which a man turns away from himself [and] turns wholly to another, to one who is wholly different from the loving subject [...] it does not turn to this other, the object of love, in the interests of the loving subject, either in the sense that it desires the object for itself because of its value [...] or in the sense that it attempts to perpetuate itself in its desire. Christian love turns to the other purely for the sake of the other. It does not desire it for itself. It loves it simply because it is there as this other, with all its value or lack of value. It loves it freely [...] In Christian love the loving subject gives to the other, the object of love, that which it has, which is its own, which belongs to it [...] In Christian love the loving subject reaches back [...] to give itself away; to give up itself [...] ⁶⁴

This is a complementary perspective to Nygren's. For Barth, the lover recognises the otherness of the beloved as an individual and is motivated by this sense of otherness to seek after them, freely surrendering themselves and their interests in doing so. For Nygren, this 'seeking after' involves the bestowal of value. In both cases, the orientation of *agape* love is towards the beloved and involves self-abnegation for the lover, that is, the free surrender of themselves as individuals to the otherness of the beloved. Thus we see the outlines of a concept of *agape* love

⁶⁴ Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 1st paperback ed., vol. IV.2, Church Dogmatics (London, UK: T&T Clark International, 2004).

in which the lovers' 'ontological rootedness,' to use May's term, is decentred. Wolfhart Pannenberg is another influential Lutheran theologian within this tradition who, coming after from Nygren and Barth, similarly privileges *agape* love.⁶⁵ He describes this understanding of love in terms of a distinctively Christian definition of personhood. Here 'persons' are understood as ontologically 'ecstatic', meaning *ex-stasis*, in which the being of each person is found not within the person but outside of themselves in others. This *ex-stasis* has a direction: Pannenberg describes it as "katabatic," emphasising the 'downward' or self-emptying directionality of *agape* love.⁶⁶ For Pannenberg, however, this is not the antithesis of eros but rather, it provides a Christian foundation for other concepts of love such a *eros*, neighbour-love, friendship-love and familial love.⁶⁷

Barth, Nygren and Pannenberg are influential figures in twentieth century philosophical theology. They all stand within a similar theological tradition—Reformed and Lutheran. Interestingly, this is the same tradition that, a century earlier, Nietzsche's father ministered within. Without reading these later theologians backwards into the nineteenth century, it is not difficult to imagine that the Christian teaching of Nietzsche's upbringing stood within this lineage and incorporated the seeds of the kind of thinking that was later articulated by these theologians. In my view, the tradition of interpretation that Nietzsche was most likely to be familiar with is one where *agape* love is the *sine qua non* of Christian morality, involving radical self-abnegation on the part of the lover in which they bestow value on their beloved. What will become evident in this chapter is that when we understand at least some of his attacks against love as attacks against this kind of love in particular, then we can see more clearly how his

⁶⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 482.

⁶⁶ *Systematic Theology*, 3, 184-85.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 192-96.

rejection of the Christian morality of love is shaped by the ideals derived from the Homeric ethos of agonistic exchange.

Finally, it is important to recognise that Christianity continued to exercise Nietzsche throughout his life.⁶⁸ Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Christianity as a young person raised in a pastor's house and his rejection of it through his teenage years are well documented.⁶⁹ Further, beyond personal biography, we see that the importance of Christianity as an enemy continued to the end of his writing career in 1889. For example, in the preface to the revised edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* (BT, Preface §5; added in 1886), he writes about Christianity as

the most excessive, elaborately figured development of the moral theme
that humanity has ever had to listen to.

In 1888, the last productive year of his philosophical life, he writes about himself as the anti-Christ in the book with that title, and the last line of *Ecce Homo* (EH §9; also published in 1888), includes a reference to the death of Christ in an attempt to summarise his philosophy:

Have I been understood? *Dionysus against the Crucified*.

That is to say, from his adolescence in the early 1870s right until the end of his productive life in January 1889, he was deeply influenced by Christianity as a singularly important instance of religious and moral commitment.⁷⁰ It is against this background that his own ethical project was articulated and structured.

⁶⁸ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche and Christianity*, trans. E.B. Ashton, Gateway Edition (Chicago, IL: H. Regnery Co, 1967).

⁶⁹ Julian Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁷⁰ Leiter, for example, omits Christianity entirely when describing Nietzsche's intellectual development. See Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 31-72. On the complex relationship between Nietzsche's thought and Christian thought, see Andre J. Groenewald, "Interpreting the Theology of Barth in Light of Nietzsche's Dictum 'God Is Dead'," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 63, no. 4 (2007); John Hennig, "Nietzsche, Jaspers and Christianity," *Blackfriars* 29, no. 343 (1948); Craig Hovey, *Nietzsche and Theology*, Philosophy and Theology (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2008); Jaspers, *Nietzsche and Christianity*; Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974); *Critique of Religion and Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); Gregory Moore, "Nietzsche, Degeneration, and the Critique of Christianity," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 19 (2000); Richard

Given the singular importance of Christianity for Nietzsche's philosophy, and given the importance it attaches to the question of *agape* love, the question before us is Nietzsche's response to the Christian morality of love and how this frames his own proposals for ethical social relationships. We begin with the metaethical question raised above: how does Nietzsche respond to the way that the Christian idea of love presents itself as the only standard against which the moral value of an action can be determined?

Against the Tyranny of Love

Nietzsche's rejection of theistic belief is perhaps most famously captured in his pronouncements about the death of God.⁷¹ It is a truism of Nietzsche scholarship that in these pronouncements Nietzsche is not simply referring to the Judeo-Christian God but rather to the function of the concept of God in general, and its role in the formation of Western ethics.⁷² In my view, while it is true that Nietzsche's attacks on these metaphysical and ethical commitments go far beyond a unifocal attack on Christianity, we must also not miss the continuing and specific influence of Christianity—and the Christian concept of God and the idea of *agape* love to which it is attached—as a foil for Nietzsche's thought. This specific articulation of God and his⁷³ love is important for the immediately following sections describing the metaphysical foundations for the Christian concept of *agape* love, but it is also relevant to his response to monotheism and the morality of custom. These objections, while having a general target in view, are also objections against Christianity in particular.

Rorty, *The Future of Religion*, ed. Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005); Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, Italian Academy Lectures (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002); "Nihilism as Emancipation," *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (2009); Craig Wiley, "I Was Dead and Behold, I Am Alive Forevermore: Responses to Nietzsche in 20th Century Christian Theology," *intersections* 10, no. 1 (2009); Stephen N. Williams, *The Shadow of the Antichrist: Nietzsche's Critique of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

⁷¹ See GS §§108, 125, 343 and in TSZ §2 of the Prologue, *Of the Compassionate, Retired from Service and Of the Higher Man*.

⁷² Julian Young, *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2003), 83.

⁷³ I use the masculine pronoun for 'God' in what follows. The Christian tradition of interpretation, particularly of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is unfortunately predominantly described in this gendered way and in describing this tradition I use its own formulation.

Against Monotheism

One of Nietzsche's objections to Christianity is contained in his general critique of monotheism. GS §143 is an important text in this regard. Here he critiques monotheism by contrasting it with polytheism. Where polytheism allows proliferation and differentiation by celebrating individuality, monotheism proposes a singular, normative view of the moral field:

The greatest advantage of polytheism. – For an individual to posit his own ideal and to derive from it his own law, joys and rights [...] The wonderful art and power of creating gods – polytheism – was that through which this drive could discharge itself, purify, perfect and ennoble itself; [...] To be *hostile* to this drive to have one's own ideal: that was formerly the law of every morality. There was only one norm: '*the* human being' – and every people believed itself to *have* this one and ultimate norm. But above and outside oneself, in a distant overworld, one got to see a *plurality of norms*: one god was not the denial of or anathema to another god! Here for the first time one allowed oneself individuals; here one first honoured the rights of individuals. The invention of gods, heroes, and overmen of all kinds, as well as deviant or inferior forms of humanoid life, dwarfs, fairies, centaurs, satyrs, demons, and devils, was the invaluable preliminary exercise for the justification of the egoism and sovereignty of the individual: the freedom that one conceded to a god in his relation to other gods one finally gave to oneself in relation to laws, customs, and neighbours. Monotheism, in contrast, this rigid consequence of the teachings of a normal human type – that is, the belief in a normal god next to whom there are only false pseudo-gods – was perhaps the greatest danger to humanity so far: it threatened us with [...] premature

stagnation [...] In polytheism the free-spiritedness and many-spiritedness of humanity received preliminary form – the power to create for ourselves our own new eyes and ever again new eyes that are ever more our own – so that for humans alone among the animals there are no eternal horizons and perspectives.

Here we see Nietzsche outline a relationship between monotheism and moral hegemony on the one hand, and polytheism and polyphonous ethical heterodoxy on the other. The idea of a single normative type for human beings, he argues, has monotheism as its “rigid consequence.” Once established, the belief in monotheism becomes a threat to humanity: it threatens it with “stagnation” because human beings become unable to create and recreate themselves, seeing themselves afresh with “ever again new eyes.” Polytheism is presented as an alternative that puts the individual at the centre in all their particularity and uniqueness. For Nietzsche, monotheism suppresses difference in human experience because of its tendency to moral hegemony whereas polytheism celebrates diversity.

This critique of monotheism can be coupled with his general interest in promoting the individual, and, in so doing, promoting ethical diversity. This sentiment is expressed, for example, in *GS* §335 where he argues that moral judgements should be tailored to the individual. This is not, in my view, a simplistic presentation of moral relativism. Rather, we see here a concern to emphasise the importance of difference, in which the specific circumstances of each individual are taken into account so as to discipline our thinking about morality and ethics:

No one who judges, ‘in this case everyone would have to act like this’ has yet taken five steps towards self-knowledge. For he would then know that there neither are nor can be actions that are all the same; that every act ever performed was done in an altogether unique and unrepeatable

way, and that this will be equally true of every future act; that all prescriptions of action (even the most inward and subtle rules of all moralities so far) relate only to their rough exterior [...] Let us therefore *limit* ourselves to the purification of our opinions and value judgements [...]

In *GS* §7 we see his idea that the methodology for arriving at these bespoke moral codes is (semi-)scientific observation and not metaphysical speculation. This kind of observation, because it is in the field of human behaviour, relies on heroic action because it demands the bravery to conduct moral experiments:

Something for the industrious. – Anyone who now wishes to make a study of moral matters opens up for himself an immense field of work. All kinds of passions have to be thought through separately, pursued separately through ages, peoples, great and small individuals; their entire reason and all their evaluations and modes of illuminating things must be revealed! [...] Has anyone done research on the different ways of dividing up the day or of the consequences of a regular schedule of work, festivals, and the rest? Do we know the moral effects of foods? Is there a philosophy of nutrition? [...] Has anyone collected people's experiences of living together — in monasteries, for example? Has anyone depicted the dialectic of marriage and friendship? [...] The same applies to the demonstration of the reasons for the variety of moral climates [...] If all these jobs were done, the most delicate question of all would emerge in the foreground: whether science is able to *furnish* goals of action after having proved that it can take such goals away and annihilate them; and

then an experimenting would be in order, in which every kind of heroism
could find satisfaction [...]

When read together these texts provide an insight into Nietzsche's emphasis on individual difference and how this relates to his rejection of Christian morality. His claim in *GS* §143 is that monotheism causes moral hegemony, which in turns threatens to cause stagnation of life. It is implicit here that difference is somehow related to the flourishing of life. In *GS* §§7 and 335 we see him propose an alternative to polytheism for promoting and understanding difference, namely, studying the relationship between the biological, social and psychological particularities of individuals and moral and religious proposals for societies.⁷⁴

It is clear in *GS* §7 that Nietzsche does not think that appropriate social scientific methods had yet been developed to assist with this task, an observation appropriate to his time. There is, however, a clue as to his thoughts about the general shape that this task will take. This clue lies in his appreciation of Homeric contest as an antidote to the kind of stagnation he writes against in these texts. His 1872 essay *Homer's Contest* argues that the tyranny of a single dominant person or idea leads to stagnation and decline. He sees contest as able to incorporate individual differences so that, when brought together in agonistic exchange, these differences act as a "stimulant" to refresh the process for determining new standards of excellence:

That is the kernel of the Hellenic idea of competition: it loathes a
monopoly of predominance and fears the dangers of this, it desires, as a
protective measure against genius – a second genius.⁷⁵

This thought can be understood to bring together the elements of his critique of monotheism and of moral hegemony: contest depends on individual difference for its generative power and,

⁷⁴ I say "loosely" described because, as we will see in later chapters, Nietzsche's attitude to science is not overwhelmingly positive. However, the proposals in these two texts seem to me to be consistent with the overall approach to his naturalism that I discuss will there.

⁷⁵ Nietzsche, *The Nietzsche Reader*, 98.

at the same time, it uses this power to generate further difference. The diversity inherent in the contest-ethos is relevant to moral questions in that it rejects a singular and authoritative view. Moral and ethical excellences are contingently established through a process of continual renewal. This process of continual renewal can be understood as the heroic bravery to conduct moral experiments – to become a transgressor, to be an immoralist, for the sake of ethical discovery. Thus, for Nietzsche, the contest ethos is directly contrary to the ethos of monotheism.

Against Customary Morality

Nietzsche's stance against Christian morality and its foundation in monotheism is further expressed in his stance against the morality of custom.⁷⁶ He proposes an intimate relationship between the customary morality of European societies and the way in which Christianity monopolises and universalises its morality of love. The morality of custom, as he saw it, requires the sacrifice of individual difference for the benefit of the collective (e.g. *HAH* §II.89, *D* §9, *GS* §149), analogous to the way individual differences are sacrificed to the normal human type demanded by monotheism.

In *D* §9, entitled 'Concept of the morality of custom,' he writes:

[...] morality is nothing other (therefore *no more!*) than obedience to customs [which] are the *traditional* way of behaving and evaluating. [...]
The free human being is immoral because in all things he is *determined* to depend upon himself and not upon a tradition: in all the original conditions of mankind, 'evil' signifies the same as 'individual', 'free', 'capricious', 'unusual', 'unforeseen', 'incalculable'. Judged by the standard of these conditions, if an action is performed *not* because tradition

⁷⁶ *Sittlichkeit der Sitte* and cognate forms, found in *HAH* §II.89; *D* §§9, 10, 14, 18, 19, 33, 101; *GS* §§ 43, 46, 143, 149, 296; *GM* Preface.4, II.2, III.9. See Clark and Leiter's introduction in *Daybreak*, vii-xxxiv.

commands it [...] it is called immoral and is felt to be so by him who performed it [...]

Obedience to the morality of custom denies the expression of individuality and difference, which is bound to be regarded as “evil” by these customs. Here he goes to claim that sacrifice is the signature feature of the moral life for these customary moralities:

The most moral man is he who *sacrifices* the most to custom [...] Self-overcoming is demanded, *not* on account of the useful consequences it may have for the individual, but so that the hegemony of custom, tradition, shall be made evident in despite of the private desires and advantages of the individual: the individual is to sacrifice himself – that is the commandment of [the] morality of custom. [...] Under the dominion of the morality of custom, originality of every kind has acquired a bad conscience [...]

Thus, for Nietzsche, the morality of custom requires sacrifice of individuality as a moral duty. With this, individual difference is either erased or acquires a bad conscience: the kind of sacrifice required is the sacrifice of individuality in order to act in accordance with tradition.

In *D* §18, *The morality of voluntary suffering*, Nietzsche returns to this theme but here he emphasizes that this morality of sacrifice is related to a negative anthropology. Because the morality of custom requires sacrifice in order for one to be considered moral, sacrifice itself—and the suffering that comes from it—turns into a moral act. Thus suffering and privation are valorised and abundance, excess, superfluity and the like become problematic. Difference is, in Nietzsche’s mind, connected to the idea of personal abundance. Where in *D* §9 the individual was considered evil simply because of their individuality, here the individual arouses mistrusts from the community simply because of their own “excessive well-being”:

[...] Cruelty is one of the oldest festive joys of mankind. Consequently it is imagined that the gods too are refreshed and in festive mood when they are offered the spectacle of cruelty – and thus there creeps into the world the idea that *voluntary suffering*, self-chosen torture, is meaningful and valuable. Gradually, custom created within the community a practice corresponding to this idea: all excessive well-being henceforth aroused a degree of mistrust, all hard suffering inspired a degree of confidence; [...] Thus the concept of the ‘most moral man’ of the community came to include the virtue of the most frequent suffering, of privation, of the hard life, of cruel chastisement – *not*, to repeat it again and again, as a means of discipline, of self-control, of satisfying the desire for individual happiness – but as a virtue which will put the community in good odour with the evil gods and which steams up to them like a perpetual propitiatory sacrifice on the altar.

This suspicion of individual well-being, a phenomenon he elsewhere calls the “religious or philosophical blacken[ing] of existence” (*D* §238), he attributes here to the morality based on social custom.

Against *Agape* Love

We have, then, a connection between the morality of custom and moralities based on monotheism. Both are, in Nietzsche’s view, opposed to individuality and difference, resulting in stagnation and suspicion. His critique of this approach can be understood in terms of his desire to promote individual difference and personal abundance. We turn now to the substantive element of his critique of Christian love, which provides a way for us to bring together his critique of morality based on monotheism and the morality of custom. Understanding

Nietzsche's critique of Christian love involves a nuanced discussion of the specific idea of Christian love as briefly described above, namely, the idea of *agape* love. In what follows I aim to show that just as Nietzsche critiques the morality of custom as a morality of personal sacrifice, he critiques Christianity's assertion of the morality of *agape* love for a similar reason, namely, its valorisation of a concept of love in which personal sacrifice is elevated. Thus his critique of the morality of custom and his critique of Christian love come together, crystallising in Nietzsche's rejection of self-sacrificial love as a moral value. His alternative, as we will see, is to promote self-concern rather than self-sacrifice. The kind of love that arises from this conception he calls 'great love,' which as it turns out, is a key feature of his ethics of friendship.

The Christian God and *Agape* Love

In order to appreciate the depth of Nietzsche's antipathy to Christian morality and, indeed, to Christianity as a whole, we have to investigate more thoroughly the foundations of this idea that Christian love is, in essence, the self-sacrificial stance of *agape* love. The idea that a moral expression of love involves self-abnegation and the bestowal of value on the beloved (as described above), is not limited to the Lutheran and Reformed traditions of Protestant Europe. The philosophical theology that informs this morality was established, in my view, in the ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries that founded church doctrine through their creeds and canons. The result of this is that the Christian morality of *agape* love can be shown to derive from a concept of God that distinguishes Christianity from other monotheistic religions. As Pannenberg describes it:

[...] love in the Christian sense of the word is not just or even a primarily anthropological phenomenon. It has its starting point in the reality of God on which faith relies and which forms the basis of hope.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3, 182.

In the twentieth century T.F. Torrance has been a singularly influential force in demonstrating the origin of these concepts in the early centuries of the church. Building on Karl Barth's work, he has developed a line of interpretation that explores the ontological foundations for the Christian concept of love as the essence of Christian morality.⁷⁸ He claims (and, in my view, rightly so) that an appreciation of the creedal formulations of the 4th and 5th century ecumenical councils demonstrates that Christian morality is not simply as a commandment to behave in a certain way or adopt certain attitudes towards others. The Christian morality of *agape* love reflects the most elemental conception of reality in Christian philosophical theology, including the being of God. These formulations centre on two core doctrines and their ontological implications. These are the incarnation of the second person of the trinity in Jesus Christ and the trinitarian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The incarnation climaxes in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which is held up as the supreme example of *agape* love. It is also interpreted as something that does not happen 'outside' the being of God, but rather, as an expression of the inner divine being of God, in which the three persons of the trinity exist not in themselves but in and for the others.

The idea that the Christian understanding of love is based on this understanding of God begins with the Johannine corpus of the New Testament. In texts attributed to the apostle John, likely composed in the first two centuries of the Christian church,⁷⁹ we find statements such as the following:

Those who do not love do not know God, for God is love God is love (ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν) [...] In this is love (ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη) , not that that we loved God but that he loved us (αὐτὸς ἡγάπησεν ἡμᾶς) and gave his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins [...] God is love (ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη

⁷⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1995); *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1996).

⁷⁹ Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004).

ἔσται), and whoever remains in love (ὁ μενων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ) remains in God and God remains in him.⁸⁰

Here, *agape* love is attributed to the very essence of the divine being and described as receiving full expression in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ “as an atoning sacrifice.”

The Pauline corpus, while less mystical in its orientation, includes a similar emphasis. In a letter attributed to Paul and addressed to the church in Corinth, Paul exclusively refers to *agape* love, climaxing with the famous statement:

Now there remain faith, hope, love, these three. But the greatest among these is love (ἡ ἀγάπη).⁸¹

These texts provided the beginnings for the development of early Christian philosophical theology. Torrance outlines the use of these texts and others to establish an ecumenical orthodoxy in the first centuries of the church. His analysis illuminates the singular significance of the trinitarian understanding of the being of God for understanding Christianity as an integrated set of philosophical-theological ideas, to which the idea of *agape* love as an ontologically ecstatic form of personal relationship is central.

He attributes particular importance to the early creedal formulations that resulted from the ecumenical councils of Nicea (325),⁸² Constantinople (381)⁸³ and Chalcedon (425).⁸⁴ Developed against the background of theological controversy surrounding the doctrines of the trinity and of the incarnation, these creedal formulations describe the trinity by stressing the Father as creator, Jesus Christ as the simultaneously fully human and fully divine Son of God

⁸⁰ Selections from 1 John 4:7-21, translation and emphasis my own.

⁸¹ 1 Corinthians 13:13, translation my own.

⁸² J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337*, Revised ed., SPCK Church History (London, UK: SPCK, 1987), 338-55.

⁸³ *Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church, AD 337-461*, Revised ed., SPCK Church History (London, UK: SPCK, 1989), 111-41.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 332-68.

and the Holy Spirit who ‘proceeds’ from both the Father and the Son. In order to reach these formulations, and to preserve Christian doctrine from polytheism on the one hand and strict monotheism on the other, Torrance describes the development of technical terminology such as ὁμοούσιος (*homoousios*; “one substance”),⁸⁵ ὑπόστασις (*hypostasis*; “person”)⁸⁶ and περιχώρησις (*perichoresis*; “co-inherence”).⁸⁷ These were deployed in order to maintain the idea that the Christian God was internally differentiated as three persons and yet was one God and to account for the claim that the human being Jesus Christ was also fully divine.

Torrance convincingly demonstrates the pervasive influence of the Cappadocian fathers—Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzen—on the development of the ecumenical creeds. Of particular importance for the argument I am developing here is the influence these theologians had in developing the idea of *perichoresis*. This is the idea that the persons of the trinity are not ontologically grounded separately, and in themselves, as persons. Rather, the Christian idea of God introduces a different idea of personhood, that Torrance has called the ‘*onto-relational*’ concept of personhood. Here the three persons of the trinity share in the same divine substance, not as something external to themselves, but as a dance of mutual envelopment, by virtue of *perichoresis*. Their very being is defined by their interrelations.

Torrance explains:

[...] perichoresis (περιχώρησις) is a refined form of thought which helps us to develop a careful theological way of interpreting the biblical teaching about the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son and the Spirit [...] It indicates a sort of mutual containing or enveloping of realities [...] applied to speak of the way in which the three divine

⁸⁵ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 125-45.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 310-25.

⁸⁷ Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 168-202.

Persons mutually indwell in one another and coinhere or inexist in one another while nevertheless remaining other than one another and distinct from one another. With this application the notion of *perichoresis* is refined and changed to refer to the complete mutual containing or interpenetration of the three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in one God [...]⁸⁸

For Torrance, this idea leads to an innovation that has implications for the idea of personhood and, consequently, for human social relations:

It was in connection with this refined concept of *perichoresis* in its employment to speak of the intra-trinitarian relations in God, that Christian theology developed what I have long called its *onto-relational* concept of the divine Persons [...] Along with this there developed out of the doctrine of the Trinity the new *concept of person*, unknown in human thought until then, according to which the relations between persons belong to what persons are [...] This onto-relational concept of 'person', generated through the doctrines of Christ and the Holy Trinity, is one that is also applicable to inter-human relations, but in a created way reflecting the uncreated way in which it applies to the Trinitarian relations in God.⁸⁹

In this conception of God, the story of creation and redemption including the incarnation and death by crucifixion of Jesus Christ do not take place in some imagined space 'outside' of God. Rather, this other-centred, self-giving and self-abnegating drama takes place within the internal

⁸⁸ Ibid., 102.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 102-03.

dynamic of the life of God himself, an ultimate expression of the love of the Father for the Son (and through him all humankind), mediated by the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰

The name given to the way that the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ give concrete expression to these trinitarian divine relationships is love:

The passion of Christ considered apart altogether from the passion of the Father would be no more than the noblest martyrdom [...] It is in his perfect oneness in being with God that the passion of Christ is saving [...] since the whole Trinity is involved in our redemption [it] derives from and is grounded in the eternal Communion of Love which is in his one indivisible being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit [...] our salvation is grounded immutably in the self-abnegating love of God which flows freely to us from the eternal Communion of Love in his Triune Being.⁹¹

In my view, this understanding of the dimensions of *agape* love within early Christian thought is useful because it allows us to see, in a way that Nietzsche himself perhaps did not even realise, the depth of the antipathy between Christian morality and his proposals for agonistic ethics.

Further, by understanding that the morality of *agape* love has this metaphysical foundation in doctrines that have defined ecumenical Christianity for centuries, we develop a new understanding of the contours and consequences of Nietzsche's rejection of the Christian morality of love and how this shapes his alternative proposals. Here we understand the Christian concept of love, and Nietzsche's response to it, not only as a transcendent and negating form of love. It is, rather, a combination of affirmation and denial. *Agape* love is a radical affirmation of the beloved, specifically at the expense of the lover. We saw above that

⁹⁰ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 91-92, 181-90.

⁹¹ *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 254.

May interprets Nietzsche's rejection of Christian love as grounded in his sense that Christian love was founded on a hatred of existence, and that Nietzsche's response to this is affirmation.⁹² This discussion, however, invites us to see Christian love as an affirmation of radical other-centredness that requires self-abnegation. We can consider this from these two twinned perspectives: that of the beloved on whom value is bestowed and that of the lover who surrenders themselves in self-abnegation.

In *agape* love, the beloved benefits tremendously from the love bestowed upon them by the lover. In this limited sense Christianity is able to affirm the individuality and importance of the beloved. For example, when God loves a human person, the beloved becomes known by God in various ways, as, for example, in the intimate way that a parent knows a child. This parental concept of *agape* love is expressed most explicitly in the self-giving of God to rescue his 'children' from sin.⁹³ This idea of one-sided self-giving is captured most clearly in the Pauline corpus of the New Testament by the idea of the grace (ἡ χάρις) of God in freely giving himself for undeserving humankind.⁹⁴ Here grace reflects a conception of love that includes abundance, overflow and superfluity on behalf of the lover and affirmation and acceptance on the part of the beloved.⁹⁵ Thus it is possible to see the expression of love in Christian *agape* as a bestowing of love by a superabundant lover and a humble receipt of love that includes the recognition of personal unworthiness on behalf of the beloved.

However, because the death of Christ is upheld as the supreme example of this bestowing love, even despite the self-evident abundance of God as lover, Christian *agape* love involves genuine

⁹² May, *Love*, 188-98.

⁹³ Brian S. Rosner, *Known by God: A Biblical Theology of Personal Identity*, ed. Jonathan Lunde, Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017).

⁹⁴ See Romans 2:23-24

⁹⁵ See Ephesians 2:4-9 (emphasis for *agape* and cognates mine, translation mine): "But God, being abundant in mercy, because of his great love (τὴν πολλὴν ἀγάπην) with which he loved us (ἣν ἡγάπησεν ἡμᾶς), while we were dead in our transgressions made us alive with Christ, - you have been saved by grace (χάρτι) [...] in order that he might show in the coming ages the overflowing richness of his grace by the kindness shown to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace (χάρτι) you have been saved through faith; and this is not from yourselves but it is a gift from God, not from works so that no one can boast."

sacrifice. This could not be more clearly distilled than in the idea that God himself suffers and dies—theoretically a metaphysical impossibility—when Christ suffers and dies.⁹⁶ Further, not only does *agape* love require self-abnegation for the lover, it also requires the beloved to recognise their unworthiness through the bestowal of value that takes place in the interaction. Thus, notwithstanding the potential to interpret grace and love as positive, overflowing ideas of love in Christianity, they both require self-abnegation, albeit in different forms, for both lover and beloved.

Higher Friendship as Great Love

We have seen above Nietzsche's rejection of the tyranny of the Christian morality of love and his rejection of self-sacrifice as the highest moral value promoted by the morality of custom. We have also seen that, at least on one interpretation, *agape* love achieves its vaunted status in the Christian pantheon of ethical possibilities because it has its foundation in the distinctively Christian understanding of God as inherently relational: as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The result of this is a decentring personhood by incorporating social relations into the ontological ground of the individual. This 'ecstatic' understanding of personhood⁹⁷ gives added meaning to the Christian morality of love as *agape* love. In this kind of love, persons live not for themselves but for others, freely sacrificing themselves and bestowing value on an otherwise unworthy beloved.

We turn now to see how Nietzsche's views on love respond, if at all, to this Christian notion of *agape* love. What I aim to show is that Nietzsche proposes that friendship (at least in its 'higher' form) can play a role as an ethical ideal and that this alternative is diametrically opposed to this

⁹⁶ See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden, 2 ed. (London, UK: SCM Press, 1974). for another German Reformed perspective on this issue.

⁹⁷ 'Ecstatic' meaning *ex-stasis*, in which the being of each person is found not within the person but outside of themselves in others, i.e. *ex-stasis*. See Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1, 482.

conception of *agape* love. This can be shown by developing the antithesis between great love as a signature feature of higher friendship and *agape* love as described above.

This antithesis can be seen by considering *agape* love in its peak expression. Considered from Christianity's point of view, this is the *agape* love demonstrated in the death of Christ, which is simultaneously and somewhat mysteriously, the death of God himself, sacrificing himself for the underserving. Nietzsche makes this connection between the death of God and the love of God for humankind himself. In *GM* II.21, discussing questions of metaphysically motivated guilt and punishment, Nietzsche ridicules the idea:

[...] we find ourselves standing in front of the horrific and paradoxical expedient in which tortured humanity has found a temporary relief, that stroke of genius on the part of *Christianity*: God sacrificing himself for the guilt of man, God paying himself off, God as the sole figure who can redeem on man's behalf that which has become irredeemable for man himself—the creditor, sacrificing himself for his debtor, out of *love* (are we supposed to believe this?—) out of love for his debtor!...

While *GM* is a later text that sits outside of the direct interest of this thesis, we see similar ideas woven together in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In this earlier text we see a complex interplay between ideas of pity, friendship, great love and Christian love. In several texts Nietzsche contrasts great love with love as exemplified by the death of Christ/death of God. In order to understand how these themes are layered together, we must weave several sections of *TSZ* together, each of them unfortunately obscure in their own way.

First, in '*On the Pitying*,' we find this passage:

But if you have a suffering friend, then be a resting place to his suffering,
yet at the same time a hard bed, a camp bed: thus you will be most useful

to him. And if a friend does evil to you, then say: "I forgive you what you have done to me; but that you did it to *yourself* – how could I forgive that!" Thus speaks all great love; it overcomes even forgiveness and pitying [...]

Woe to all lovers who do not yet have an elevation that is above their pitying! Thus the devil once spoke to me: "Even God has his hell: it is his love for mankind." [...] But note these words too: all great love is above even all its pitying, for it still wants to create the beloved! "I offer myself to my love, *and my neighbour as myself*" – thus it is said of all creators.

But all creators are hard."

Here we see several ideas tied together. On the one hand there is a negative view of love, which involves forgiveness for wrongdoers and pity for the suffering. This is contrasted with great love, which is above forgiveness and pitying, not out of simple cruelty but because it has a more elevated perspective. This elevated perspective involves, somehow, the idea of being a creator. Inferior, forgiving and pitying, love is here presented in terms of God's love for humanity, a love through which God experiences hell. Great love is self-directed: Zarathustra offers himself as the object of his own love in order to "create the beloved." Thus great love, self-love and self-creation are connected to the absence of pity through the idea of being 'hard' towards oneself, in a similar manner to the way in which great love towards one's friend offers them a 'hard' camp bed in the midst of their suffering.

Other texts can shed light on this set of largely unexplained connections and ideas. For example, in '*Retired from Service*' Nietzsche makes the connection between the love of God and the death of God more explicit. Speaking to a retired priest about the death of God, the conversation unfolds as follows:

“You served him up until the end,” said Zarathustra, pensively, after a deep silence. “Do you know *how* he died? Is it true, as they say, that pity choked him to death, – that he saw how *the human being* hung on the cross, and couldn’t bear that his love for mankind became his hell and ultimately his death?”

The old priest goes on to describe the love of this God in terms of reward and retribution, and, therefore, as inferior. He infers here that great love is not concerned with questions of sin, judgement or divine justice:

Whoever praises him as a god of love does not think highly enough of love itself. Did this god not also want to be judge? But the loving one loves beyond reward and retribution.

Thus, the contrast between great love and Nietzsche’s perception of Christian love as self-abnegation continues. For Nietzsche, the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice, required because of retributive justice and sin, does injustice to the concept of love itself.

The contrast between the ideal of *agape* love and Nietzschean great love can be understood by considering the role of self-concern in great love. Unlike this kind of Christian love, Nietzsche’s understanding of bestowing love does not require self-abnegation, but rather, intense interest in one’s own wellbeing. Further, it does not attempt to bestow value on the beloved. Instead, bestowing love recognises the beloved’s inherent value without appropriating that value for themselves. Nietzschean ‘bestowing’ comes out of the lover’s excess and flows into the beloved’s excess. Neither needs the other, which is how he can characterise this kind of bestowal as freely given, an intriguing inversion of the Christian concept of grace.

To see this line of thought in *TSZ*, we can look at connections between self-concern and great love, and the contrast drawn with neighbour-love. In *On the Bestowing Virtue* section 1, Zarathustra tells his disciples:

[Gold is highly valued] Because it is uncommon and useless and gleaming and mild in its luster; it bestows itself always [...] like me you strive for the bestowing virtue [...] This is your thirst, to become sacrifices and gifts yourselves, and therefore you thirst to amass all riches in your soul. Insatiably your soul strives for treasures and gems, because your virtue is insatiable in wanting to bestow. You compel all things to and into yourselves, so that they may gush back from your well as the gifts of your love. Indeed, such a bestowing love must become a robber of all values, but hale and holy I call this selfishness. There is another selfishness, one all too poor, a hungering one that always wants to steal; that selfishness is of the sick, the sick selfishness [...] When your heart flows broad and full like a river, a blessing and a danger to adjacent dwellers [...] When you are sublimely above praise and blame, and your will wants to command all things, as the will of a lover: there is the origin of your virtue.

For Nietzsche, the abundance that characterizes the lover in great love is generated by self-concern. This form of selfishness is such that it ultimately returns outwards towards others, it is not the “sick” selfishness of infinite degeneration, but a healthy selfishness that expresses itself in bestowing love.

The contrast between selflessness and self-concern is further developed by Nietzsche’s treatment of another Christian idea, that of neighbour-love (which expresses the idea of agapic other-concern exercised towards near-strangers) and higher friendship, which expresses itself

in great love. We have seen above that Nietzsche transforms the Christian commandment to “love your neighbour as yourself”⁹⁸ so that it connects to the idea of self-love: “I offer myself to my love, and my neighbour as myself.” This interpretation of the commandment to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ can be further understood by reading this text alongside *On Love of the Neighbour* and *On the Friend*. In the former, Nietzsche rejects selfless love of the neighbour as an example of the bad conscience imposed by Christian morality:

You crowd around your neighbour and you have pretty words for it. But I say to you: your love of the neighbour is your bad love of yourselves. You flee to your neighbour to escape yourself and you want to make a virtue of it: but I see through your “selflessness” [...] Do I recommend love of the neighbour to you? I prefer instead to recommend flight from the neighbour and love of the farthest! [...] I do not teach you the neighbour, but the friend. The friend shall be your festival of the earth and an anticipation of the overman.

Here, love of the neighbour is a compensation for not having first learned to love oneself, it distracts a person from themselves and their dissatisfaction with themselves. Instead of love of the neighbour, characterised as flight from oneself, Nietzsche promotes flight from the neighbour, which is love of the farthest and of the friend. We have then, the neighbour as the nearest and the friend as the furthest. Great love seeks the furthest, inferior love seeks the nearest.⁹⁹

In *On the Friend* we see great love described as love of the future and of the furthest. Here the friend—at least in her ideal form—plays a vital role in the self-knowledge and self-overcoming

⁹⁸ e.g. Mark 12:31

⁹⁹ I return to theme of neighbour-love in Chapter 7.

of the individual. The hard path of sober honesty with oneself involves not only an internal dialogue but also a dialogue with others. These others are able to be both friend and enemy:

I and me are always in eager conversation: how could I stand it if there were no friend? For the hermit the friend is always a third: the third is the cork that prevents the conversation of the two from sinking to the depths. Oh, there are too many depths for all hermits. That is why they long so for a friend and his height [...] If one wants a friend, then one must also want to wage war for him: and in order to wage war, one must be *able* to be an enemy. One should honour the enemy even in one's friend [...] In one's friend one should have one's best enemy. You should be closest to him in heart when you resist him.

Here higher friendship incorporates resistance against your friend, even warlike enmity. The purpose of this is described by an unusual metaphor derived from fishing. The beloved is underwater, looking upwards at a cork that floats on the surface and to which she is tied. This prevents her from sinking into the depths as she would if she were alone. The purpose of higher friendship is to allow the individual to flourish, to 'become what they are' through self-creation, which involves staying buoyant, being held up by the lifeline offered by one's friends.

We can now see that this combination of the love of the farthest and the love of the future is the signature characteristic of higher friendship. This kind of love is love for what the beloved is in process of becoming. Great love is love exercised towards an emergent person, the person from the future, created by the beloved out of hardship as much as from comfort. In higher friendship, people see in one another a vision of what they might be, rather than the naked truth of what they are:

For your friend you cannot groom yourself beautifully enough, for you should be his arrow and longing for the overman [...] Let your compassion be a guessing, so that you might first know whether your friend wants compassion. Perhaps what he loves in you is your unbroken eye and the look of eternity. Let compassion for your friend conceal itself beneath a hard shell [...] are you pure air and solitude and bread and medicine to your friend?

Here we see the unveiling of the true object of great love between friends: the overhuman. The beloved is a person intent on creating themselves. The lover directs their love towards this emergent self. This is the great love of Nietzschean friendship.

Conclusions

This Nietzschean picture of ethical social relations, described as great love between friends, contrasts strongly with the picture of Christian *agape* love. Seen from the perspective of the lover, we have a picture of a superabundant individual who, consequent upon their own self-concern, is able to love their friend as a true 'other,' as someone from whom they need nothing and for whom they desire nothing but their own flourishing. Flourishing, however, requires that the beloved is also concerned with themselves, with their self-creation. Seen from the perspective of the beloved, the lover provides an environment in which their self-concern and self-creation is enhanced. If both parties, from their own internal largesse, are able to provide this for each other, then both parties flourish without the Christian requirement of personal and costly sacrifice, or humble recognition of personal disvalue. Where in both the Christian and the Nietzschean picture the lover loves from abundance, in the Christian picture this is based on an ecstatic personal ontology, in which self-concern ("selfishness") is forbidden and in which the inherent value of the beloved is denied. In the Nietzschean picture, it is self-

concern that makes personal superabundance possible in the first place. As this superabundance flows outwards towards the beloved, it does not deny their inherent value but it responds to it, not necessarily as something immediately present but as the possibility of what that person might become.

GS §14, an important text on love and friendship that I will return to throughout this thesis, provides a useful conclusion to this chapter. It considers love of the neighbour, love of knowledge, love as compassion and erotic love. The text compares these forms of love to greed on the one hand and to friendship on the other. His argument in this text, one that I will return to later, is that each of these can be interpreted as the desire for possession, as greed (see *also* D §532 and GS §363). He concludes this passage by presenting friendship as the expression of a higher love that does not seek to possess the beloved, but rather to support them, whether in compassion or in cruelty, on their pathway to become what they are:

Here and there on earth there is probably a kind of continuation of love in which this greedy desire of two people for each other gives way to a new desire and greed, a *shared* higher thirst for an ideal above them. But who knows such love? Who has experienced it? Its true name is friendship.

This ethos, in which personal abundance and the preservation of individual difference are central themes, stems from the ethos of Homeric contest and it puts Nietzsche profoundly at odds with his Christian heritage. When he stepped out of Christianity and its ethos of *agape* love in his teenage years, he immediately embraced Schopenhauer's morality of compassion. This proved to be a step out of the Christian frying pan and into the metaphysical fire, so to speak. His dedication to Schopenhauer, and the vehemence with which he ultimately rejected both

Schopenhauer's pessimism about human experience and his monistic reductionism of all things to a singular Will, are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Against Pitiful Compassion

In the previous chapter we saw how Nietzsche's ethics of higher friendship represents a break with his Christian heritage, and how the themes of abundance and difference within that ethics help us to understand his rejection of the Christian morality of love. We turn now to understand how his involvement with, and ultimate rejection of, Schopenhauer might provide further insight into Nietzsche's ethics of agonistic friendship. The importance of Schopenhauer as an influence on the young Nietzsche is not in doubt: his embrace of Schopenhauer's philosophy arose as a teenage step towards intellectual independence, a first step away from his Christian heritage.¹⁰⁰ Nietzsche's interest in Schopenhauer establishes the trajectory by which Nietzsche moves away from metaphysics and towards a naturalist alternative. This is a trajectory that, in my view, is complete by the time he writes *Daybreak* in 1881.¹⁰¹ What I will later call his 'new Homerism,' an approach that emphasises a naturalist ethics based on contest, comes to the fore at least in part as a negative response to Schopenhauer's metaphysical monism, his metaphysics of Will. In what follows I aim to show how the two themes that occupy this thesis—abundance and difference—emerge from his rejection of Schopenhauer to play a role in conceptualising his own distinctive ethics of contest.

One reason to focus on Schopenhauer is that he clearly articulates a connection between ethics and metaphysics in his philosophy. Schopenhauer's ethics asserts that the only actions that have moral value are those that spring from compassion. Compassion, in turn, is based on his metaphysical monism.¹⁰² For Schopenhauer, the experience of separation, of differentiation between individuals, is an illusion, a mere 'representation' of the underlying reality. The underlying reality is a metaphysical unity of all things as will. Cartwright summarises:

¹⁰⁰ Young, *Nietzsche*, 81-95.

¹⁰¹ E.g. *D* §§99, 113

¹⁰² Cartwright, "Schopenhauer's Compassion and Nietzsche's Pity."

Thus we find that Schopenhauer viewed compassion as the motive for morally valuable actions. He also saw it as the only motive which conferred moral worth on an action. The ultimate end of *Mitleid* is another's well-being [...] *Mitleid* is possible because the separation between individuals is only apparent; metaphysically we are *Wille*.¹⁰³

In my view, Nietzsche rejects Schopenhauer's ethics of compassion (e.g. *D* §§148, 167; *GS* §§13, 99, 118; *TSZ* 'Of the Compassionate' 'Of the Love of One's Neighbour') not just because he disagrees with the way of life that Schopenhauer promotes at a practical level. He rejects this ethics because he sees in it a vision for human life that contrasts strongly with the Homeric ideals that he was attracted to. Schopenhauer's metaphysical monism, and the accompanying pessimistic conception of existence, contrasts strongly with the Homeric contest, which depends on profligate difference and personal abundance. Nietzsche's interrogation of Schopenhauer goes beyond a simple disagreement about preferences for this form of human life or for that one. Rather, it responds to Schopenhauer's ethics at its foundation, which is its metaphysical monism.

This is one critical moment in Nietzsche's development where his own journey away from metaphysics and towards a naturalist-materialist interpretation of existence collided with his search for a new foundation for ethics.¹⁰⁴ Nietzsche's move away from Christianity's morality of *agape* love led him to Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the will, which was essentially to substitute one form of metaphysics for another, monism for monotheism. In my view, as Nietzsche moves away from Schopenhauer, we see a more profound break with his past: a decisive move away from metaphysics in general. Understanding Nietzsche's interest in Schopenhauer as part of a broad movement away from metaphysical systems is vital to

¹⁰³ Ibid., 561.

¹⁰⁴ The question of Nietzschean naturalism will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

contextualising Nietzsche's understanding of the individual and his or her social relations. Ultimately, Nietzsche's alternative vision for social relations, built on a reimagined Homeric contest, is diametrically opposed to Schopenhauer's metaphysically grounded ethics of compassion in two ways: it proposes difference rather than monistic union, and it proposes abundance and superfluity rather than privation and deficit. This is not dissimilar to his stance against Christianity, as argued in Chapter 1, indeed, we can see his rejection of both Christianity and Schopenhauer as part of the same larger movement towards his reconception of ethics in agonistic terms, and, ultimately, in his proposal for higher friendship.

His positive project to build this alternative vision for social relations is the subject of later chapters. Here I aim to demonstrate that his response to Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the will and the associated ethics of compassion includes elements that turn out to be essential for his new Homerism. Firstly, Schopenhauer's monism requires him to propose that the experience of individuality is an illusion because, metaphysically speaking, all beings are one. This contrasts strongly with Nietzsche's understanding of the individual along naturalist and materialist lines. Secondly, Schopenhauer's pessimism, in which he understands suffering to lie at the heart of existence, contrasts strongly with the joyful embrace of human possibility that Nietzsche saw in the Homeric ideas of strength and personal abundance.

Schopenhauer's Metaphysics of the Will

The relationship between Schopenhauer's monistic metaphysics and his ethics is not, however, entirely straightforward. What seems at first glance to be a reasonable structural parallel between an underlying unity of all things and the expression of compassion for someone who suffers turns out to be a complex problem. David E. Cartwright has provided extensive analysis of these issues in Schopenhauer and presents two key problems. This first is the problem of motivational pluralism. Cartwright argues that there is an inherent tension in the idea that

there are many motivations for an action at the experiential level (altruism, malice, egoism) and yet a singular ontological reality at the metaphysical level. It is unclear, even in Schopenhauer's original presentation, how the individual can be differentiated at the motivational or experiential level and unified at the ontological or metaphysical level. The second problem that Schopenhauer raises involves the two different (and perhaps competing) explanations he offers to resolve this problem, one psychological and the other metaphysical.¹⁰⁵

For Cartwright, the first issue demonstrates the tension between motivational pluralism and metaphysical monism.¹⁰⁶ Motivational pluralism arises because Schopenhauer provides a catalogue of four basic incentives for action: one's own wellbeing, one's own woe; another's wellbeing; and another's woe.¹⁰⁷ We might call these motivations egoism, asceticism, compassion and malice. In Schopenhauer's approach, only compassion has moral worth.

The question at hand is how Schopenhauer transitions between his monistic metaphysics and this pluralistic understanding of motivation. In seeking a solution, Cartwright invokes the terminology of 'character':

[According to Schopenhauer] The behavior of evil characters, which expresses that others are nonegos, is not metaphysically warranted, since individuality is merely apparent. Good characters, whose conduct expresses that others are an 'I once more', engage in conduct that is metaphysically warranted. Certainly, one of the difficulties with Schopenhauer's analysis here concerns the sticky issue of how conduct expresses or shows a metaphysics.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ David E. Cartwright, "Compassion and Solidarity with Sufferers: The Metaphysics of Mitleid," *European Journal of Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (2008); "Schopenhauer on the Value of Compassion," in *A Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Bart Vandenabeele (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2012).

¹⁰⁶ "Compassion and Solidarity with Sufferers: The Metaphysics of Mitleid," 294-97..

¹⁰⁷ "Schopenhauer on the Value of Compassion," 255.

¹⁰⁸ "Compassion and Solidarity with Sufferers: The Metaphysics of Mitleid," 301-02..

Thus the solution to the problem of motivational pluralism is grounded in the concept of character. The four motivations are reduced to two character types: good and evil character, only the first of which is metaphysically warranted.

We can see in Cartwright's interpretation the notion that the individual stands at the interface of metaphysics and ethics. He invokes a complex set of ideas to explain this interface: character, conduct and metaphysical warrant. What is clear is that the individual has a functional role in translating between metaphysics and conduct. If the individual is of good character, they will express the unitive metaphysics of will by acting with compassion, through which they recognise the other person to be an "I once more." Thus their conduct is more or less a direct expression of metaphysical monism. If they are of bad character, they will not allow this metaphysical monism to be passed through to the world of appearance, so to speak. They will deny the underlying metaphysical union between the individuals in question and therefore fail to act with compassion, preferring instead either egoism or malice.

In *World as Will and Representation (WWR)* Schopenhauer addresses this question of character directly. He uses three categories in his analysis: the 'good', the 'just,' and the 'bad,' outlined in *WWR* Volume 1, sections 65-67. Here a person's character determines his or her response to others. The just person will refrain from injuring others while seeking his or her own wellbeing because

He *again recognises* his own inner being, namely the will-to-live as thing-in-itself, in the phenomenon of another.¹⁰⁹

The good person goes one step further. He or she actively seeks the wellbeing of others even at personal expense. This is expressed as a feature of his or her innate character through which

¹⁰⁹ Wolfgang Schirmacher, ed. *The Essential Schopenhauer: Key Selections from The World as Will and Representation and Other Writings* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 223.

he or she is capable of “self-conquest.” He or she does not merely refrain from injuring others but actively seeks “positive benevolence and well-doing.”¹¹⁰ This is because the good person has an intuition that the experiential distinction between themselves and others is a deception. They do not merely recognize themselves *in* the other, as with the just. They recognize that they *are* the other. Schopenhauer defines the person who gives to others out of benevolence, even injuring themselves in the process, as follows:

the simplest general expression and the essential character of his way of acting [is] that he *makes less distinction than is usually made between himself and others* [...] He recognises immediately, and without reasons or arguments, that the in-itself of his own phenomenon is also that of others, namely the will-to-live which constitutes the inner nature of everything, and lives in all.¹¹¹

The good and the just respond this way because each possesses, in their own way and to varying degrees, an intuitive experience of a noumenal reality in which there is a metaphysical union between themselves and others.

The person of bad character, by contrast, lives only in the phenomenon of difference, which contradicts this underlying metaphysical reality. This manifests in

an excessively vehement will-to-live [that is] involved in the *principium individuationis* [and] confines itself to the complete difference, established by this latter principle, between his person and all others.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 224.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 225.

¹¹² Ibid., 213.

The person of bad character is involved only in the world of appearance (the *principium individuationis*), which is by definition the world of differentiation.

Thus we find that in Schopenhauer's analysis, a person's character is evaluated by the degree to which their response to others aligns with the underlying metaphysical union of all beings. People of bad character are unaligned: *despite* the metaphysical reality of the ontological union of all things, they act with malice towards others. The just are more aligned with the metaphysical reality in that they do not actively seek another's woe. They merely act with egoism, namely, for their own benefit and aiming to do no harm. The good person, on the other hand, actively seeks the wellbeing of others even at his or her own expense. This represents maximal alignment with reality and can therefore be accorded moral worth.

Thus we have an explanation of the idea of metaphysical warrant.¹¹³ For Cartwright, in Schopenhauer's schema action can be assigned moral value on the basis of the degree to which it is aligned with the underlying metaphysical union of all beings. This alignment is the basis for metaphysical warrant. I would add that this approach places the individual at the intersection of metaphysics and ethics, as a kind of conversion or translation point. Because of the individual's innate character, the metaphysical reality of ontological union is passed through to experience to different degrees.

The idea that the individual is a construct that stands at the intersection of the experienced world and the 'real' world to mediate alignment between moral action and metaphysical structures can be seen directly in Schopenhauer. His metaphysics of the will establishes a strict separation between experience and reality. Moral conduct belongs to the former and the

¹¹³ Cartwright, "Compassion and Solidarity with Sufferers: The Metaphysics of Mitleid," 301-02; "Schopenhauer on the Value of Compassion," 263.

underlying metaphysical ground for evaluating such conduct belongs to the latter. Sections 63-67 of *The World as Will and Representation* (Volume 1) apply this dualism to the individual:

[...] the eyes of the individual are clouded, as the Indians say, by the veil of Maya. To him is revealed not the thing-in-itself, but only the phenomenon in time and space, in the *principium individuationis* [...] In this form of his limited knowledge he sees not the inner nature of things which are one, but its phenomena as separated, detached, innumerable, very different, and indeed opposed.¹¹⁴

This text seems to present the individual as somehow participating in both metaphysical and experiential worlds, but with limited knowledge of the metaphysical. In order to access metaphysical reality the individual requires a transcendent experience in which the illusion of difference and separation is overcome and replaced with a direct perception of this underlying union. This union is constituted by a metaphysical understanding of will: “the will is the in-itself of every phenomenon.”¹¹⁵

This unitive, monistic metaphysics has consequences not only for how the individual experiences realities other than themselves but how they experience and understand their own reality. The unique personhood of the individual as different from and separate from other individuals is called into question. For Schopenhauer, the deceptive character of experienced reality is constitutive of the individual:

¹¹⁴ Schirmacher, *The Essential Schopenhauer*, 199.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 201.

the person is mere phenomenon, and its difference from other individuals, and exemption from the sufferings they bear, rest merely on the form of the phenomenon.¹¹⁶

Thus we find an underlying tension in Schopenhauer's presentation of the individual. On the one hand the individual stands at the boundary that spans the real and the experienced, and he or she translates the underlying metaphysical union of all things into moral action to varying degrees dependent on his or her character. On the other hand, the individual does not exist in reality, but is merely part of the experienced world, and is constituted through the deceptive character of the experienced world. Schopenhauer effectively denies the existence of the individual while relying on the translational power of the individual's character for evaluating action. The individual becomes able to realize moral action in the world and, in a sense become real themselves, only at the moment they recognize that they do not exist.

This idea is presented without consideration of this contradiction in Schopenhauer's essay, *The Basis of Morality*.¹¹⁷ The effect of ontological monism, in which the individual as person is dissolved into the union of all beings, is expressed as follows:

The Altruist discerns in all other persons, nay, in every living thing, his own entity, and feels therefore that his being is commingled, is identical with the being of whatever is alive.¹¹⁸

The recognition that the boundaries of the self are a deception foisted on us by the *principium individuationis* is the foundation for moral judgment and for moral action.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 200.

¹¹⁷ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Basis of Morality*, trans. Arthur Brodrick Bullock (London, UK: Allen & Unwin, 1915; repr., Reprinted edition: Dover Philosophical Classics, Mineola, NY: Dover, 2005).

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 143.

This separation of the individual from the world lies only in the phenomenon and not in the thing-in-itself; and on this rests Schopenhauer's idea of eternal justice.¹¹⁹ Mystical self-destruction lies at the heart of Schopenhauer's morality. At this point one might pause to reflect on the pessimistic nature of Schopenhauer's philosophy in general: the metaphysical idea of an underlying union of all things is not benign. It is, in Schopenhauer's words, "evil".¹²⁰ The will to live is by definition the will to suffer. The ultimate solution for suffering is withdrawal from life, and, indeed, from all others. It is not surprising that personal annihilation is the outcome of Schopenhauer's theory of the individual.

In this respect Cartwright's description of the problem of motivational pluralism is not so much a problem as it is a recognition of Schopenhauer's description of the phenomenal realm. In the world of experience, there are many motivations for action. It is, after all, the world of *difference*. Also in the phenomenal world, there are many different individuals separately expressing their various motivations through a multiplicity of actions in the world. In reality, according to Schopenhauer, these individuals do not exist separately: they are part of a single, suffering being. The degree to which a person's character allows them to be deceived by the experience of difference corresponds to the degree to which a person acts morally. Presumably, however, these actions themselves and the motivations that underlie them only happen in the world of experience, and therefore are themselves not real. The only thing that is real is a unitive experience of suffering that lies at the heart of all existence.

The issue highlighted above, where the individual is both required by Schopenhauer for understanding moral action and declared not to exist in reality, has been identified by Cartwright as a difference between psychological and metaphysical explanations of Schopenhauer's morality:

¹¹⁹ Schirmacher, *The Essential Schopenhauer*, 200.

¹²⁰ Young, "Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Death and Salvation," 317.

Schopenhauer believed that the phenomenon of pity could not be explained psychologically, [it can] only be explained by his metaphysics. *Mitleid* is possible, he argued, because the separation between individuals is only apparent; ontologically we are all one—expressions of the singular metaphysical will. There is, according to Schopenhauer, no ontological gap between beings.¹²¹

For Cartwright, the relation between self and other is best understood in metaphysical terms, through his idea of metaphysical warrant, which itself depends on an understanding of the individual as translating metaphysical reality into the world of experience through acts of compassion. As we have seen, however, this idea rests on a paradox where the individual both exists and does not exist. Reginster offers an alternative view, in which Schopenhauer's explanation of the process through which an individual identifies with the other and thereby develops a response to their suffering is entirely psychological.¹²²

Reginster proposes that Schopenhauer sees the self as will inasmuch as the world is will. From this premise, he develops Schopenhauerian concepts of knowledge, resignation, diversion and reflection. In this context, the Schopenhauerian individual is not determined by mystical access to their own annihilation but rather by their cognitive relations. Here, the individual relates to him- or herself differently to the way he or she relates to all other things:

Schopenhauer certainly seems right on one central point: if some object is to count as me or mine, I must have a special cognitive relation to it — whether it is special by virtue of being 'immediate,' or in some other way, I shall leave undecided — that is to say, there is, in the individual, 'a

¹²¹ David E. Cartwright, "The Last Temptation of Zarathustra," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31, no. 1 (1993): 54.

¹²² Bernard Reginster, "Knowledge and Selflessness: Schopenhauer and the Paradox of Reflection," *European Journal of Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (2008).

difference between the relation of his knowledge to this one object and its relation to all others.’¹²³

Reginster analyses several psychological constructs in this context. In particular, he analyses resignation and contemplation as experiences that express two different relationships between the will and knowledge. On the one hand, knowledge of the inevitability of frustration brings about resignation. On the other hand, knowledge as the capability to observe oneself objectively leads to contemplation. In resignation the will is quieted through self-suppression, in contemplation the will allows knowledge momentary respite from its servitude to the will.¹²⁴ Where Cartwright’s analysis leads down a mystical path to the recognition of one’s own ontological annihilation, Reginster’s analysis leads to a similarly pessimistic outcome: either the quieting of the will to live in resignation or release from the demands of the will to live in contemplation.

This leads to what Reginster calls “the paradox of reflection.”¹²⁵ In reflection knowledge releases the self from self-imprisonment by negating that “special” mode of cognition by which the self is differentiated from other objects. Knowledge breaks down the distinction between self and the world. The paradox that arises here is that the individual experiences at one and the same time alienation from him- or herself and alienation from the world. This leaves the self with nowhere to ‘be.’ It is not annihilated, it is excluded.

In other words, in his attempt to understand Schopenhauer’s theory of the self on purely psychological grounds, Reginster arrives at conclusion that is as pessimistic as the metaphysical approach, at least with regards to the individual. On both accounts, the reality of the individual comes into question. From the psychological perspective, this leads to a paradox that Reginster

¹²³ Ibid., 255.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 261.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 266-68.

does not resolve. From the metaphysical perspective, reflection can be understood not as a cognitive or psychological activity of a 'self' but as an intuitive mode of knowing in which the annihilation of the self comes to consciousness. In this case, the paradox of reflection dissolves: alienation from the world and alienation from oneself are one and the same thing.

One possible solution to this problem is to foreground Schopenhauer's mysticism. It seems to me that if we consistently place mystical experience at the heart of Schopenhauer's philosophy, we see that he emphasises a primary, direct experience of metaphysical reality through a mystical-ascetic practice, an experience that cannot be thought rationally or expressed verbally.

For example, in discussing the value of ascetic self-denial in *WWR* Volume 1, Schopenhauer contrasts the intuitive knowledge of the ascetic with their creedal or rational knowledge. For him, intuitive knowledge of metaphysical union trumps creedal variations:

Different as were the dogmas [of the Christians, Hindus and Buddhists] that were impressed on their faculty of reason, the inner, direct and intuitive knowledge from which alone all virtue and holiness can come is nevertheless expressed in precisely the same way in the conduct of life.¹²⁶

This non-rational and non-verbal experience of underlying metaphysical union takes precedence over explicit knowledge or linguistic expression and, further, it provides the interpretive framework for rational expression. All empirical data is assessed against a metaphysical template. In other words, Schopenhauer's mystical approach is sceptical of experience and knowledge of experience and, against Cartwright, cannot be considered truly

¹²⁶ Schirmacher, *The Essential Schopenhauer*, 239.

empirical.¹²⁷ This is expressed in the value Schopenhauer ascribes to asceticism and self-renunciation. It is a withdrawal from, and rejection of, the experience of life:

Thus it may be that the inner nature of holiness, of self-renunciation, of mortification of one's own will, of asceticism, is here for the first time expressed in abstract terms and free from everything mythical, as *denial of the will-to-live*.¹²⁸

Schopenhauer may have a drive to explain the phenomenon of asceticism empirically. However, his metaphysical interpretation of existence undermines the value of empirical experience and, further, places the highest value on precisely the opposite of life *as lived*. However, against Reginster, this cannot be considered a psychological or rational process either. Rather, mystical experience of the union of all being that leads to an appreciation of the value of compassion as the only moral action and the realization on the part of the individual that they do not exist as an individual, comes to its highest expression in ascetic practice.

Against Monism

There are several important themes here that shape Nietzsche's thought as he begins to develop his own distinctive ethics based on Homeric contest. There are two ideas in particular that rise to prominence as we investigate his critical response to Schopenhauer. These are Schopenhauer's privative and ascetic stance, which is expressed as a pessimism in which suffering stands at the heart of all existence; and his annihilation of individuality through his monistic metaphysics of the will. As we will see in later chapters, Nietzsche's reformulation of

¹²⁷ Cartwright, "Schopenhauer on the Value of Compassion."

¹²⁸ Schirmacher, *The Essential Schopenhauer*, 239.

a Homeric ethics based in contest respond directly to these two ideas by proposing abundance instead of privation and difference instead of monism.

For Cartwright, Nietzsche's response to Schopenhauer is singularly focused on the psychological explanation of the ethics of compassion. He considers Nietzsche's critique of Schopenhauer unsuccessful because it does not address the underlying metaphysics.¹²⁹ What I aim to show below, however, is that Nietzsche addresses both the metaphysical and psychological aspects of Schopenhauer's annihilation of the individual. Nietzsche's concern is to restore the individual without relying on metaphysics, and to do so in such a way that the individual is conceived through the interpretive lens of the personal superabundance of a Homeric hero.

Nietzsche's relationship to Schopenhauer is complex and it developed over time. What began with fervent devotion ended in disillusionment and rejection.¹³⁰ While the focus of this thesis is the period 1881-1887, the early Nietzsche provides interesting clues to this development. Even during his most fervent Schopenhauerian period in the 1860s, we find him expressing serious doubts about Schopenhauer's metaphysical project. For example, in notebook writings from the period 1867-1868, in a discussion of will and the 'thing-in-itself', Nietzsche writes:

Schopenhauer's supporting tissue becomes tangled in his hands, least of all as a result of a certain ineptitude of its maker, but mainly because the world cannot be fitted into the system as comfortably as Schopenhauer had hoped [...]¹³¹

¹²⁹ Cartwright, "Schopenhauer's Compassion and Nietzsche's Pity," 564.

¹³⁰ KGW 1.4 57 [51-5] Young, "Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Death and Salvation."

¹³¹ Nietzsche, *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, 4. See also Christopher Janaway, "Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's Educator," in *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's Educator*, ed. Christopher Janaway (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1998); Young, *Nietzsche*, 90-95.

This short comment provides an important insight into Nietzsche's response to Schopenhauer. He was not an unthinking devotee: from the beginning of his Schopenhauerian conversion in 1865, he was concerned with his metaphysics and the obliteration of difference. This concern is, in my view, a key element in his ultimate rejection of Schopenhauer by the time he publishes *HAH* in 1878. I aim to show in what follows that from this starting point, namely, the rejection of Schopenhauer's monistic metaphysics, Nietzsche responds by reasserting the individual and by rejecting asceticism.

The Reality of the Individual

There are several texts in the period relevant to this thesis that discuss, either obliquely or directly, this distinctively Schopenhauerian question of the dissolution of the individual into a metaphysical monad. There is a positive and a negative aspect to this. On the positive side, Nietzsche proposes that the individual truly exists.¹³² On the negative side, he rejects any attempt to use a metaphysically grounded ethics of altruism to dissolve the personal identity or particularity of an individual.

GS §99, *Schopenhauer's followers*, demonstrates key elements of Nietzsche's response to Schopenhauer. The text aims to show that Wagner, while claiming to be Schopenhauerian, was only attracted to parts of Schopenhauer's philosophy. Wagner's heroes embody a philosophy that was, in Nietzsche's view, quite opposed to Schopenhauer's pessimism. In the course of this discussion Nietzsche explains Schopenhauer's philosophy by connecting his metaphysics to his dissolution of the individual and its outworking in an ethics of compassion premised on a pessimistic view of existence. These connections are outlined in the quotes below, elided so as to draw attention to these elements of Nietzsche's presentation:

¹³² See also Nuno Nabais, "The Individual and Individuality in Nietzsche," in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006).

[...] Schopenhauer's mystical embarrassments and evasions in those places where the factual thinker let himself be seduced and corrupted by the vain urge to be the unriddler of the world; the indemonstrable doctrine of *One Will* ('all causes are merely occasional causes of the appearance of the will at this time and this place'; 'the will to life is present wholly and undividedly in every being, even the least, as completely as in all beings that have ever been, are, and shall be, taken together'); the *denial of the individual* ('all lions are at bottom only one lion'; 'the plurality of individuals is an illusion'), just as *development* is only an illusion [...] his ecstatic reveries on *genius* ('in aesthetic intuition the individual is no longer individual but pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge'; 'the subject, in being wholly taken up in the object it intuits, has become the object itself'); the nonsense about *compassion* and how, as the source of all morality, it enables one to make the break through the *principium individuationis*; and also such claims as 'death is actually the purpose of existence', 'one cannot deny *a priori* the possibility that a magical effect cannot also emanate from someone who has already died' — these and other such *excesses* and *vices* of the philosopher are always what is accepted first of all and made into a matter of faith — for vices and excesses are the easiest to imitate and require no extensive preparatory practice.

In this text Nietzsche programmatically outlines the logic of Schopenhauer's approach, connecting metaphysics, the individual and ethics. His point is that these elements of Schopenhauer's philosophy are what are most likely to "enchant" somebody because they are the "vices and excesses" of this thought. That is to say, Nietzsche is expressing his opposition to

precisely these elements of Schopenhauer's philosophy as a set of "mystical embarrassments and evasions."

In the critique that follows he goes on to focus on the issue of the destruction of the individual by pointing to Wagner's inconsistencies as a disciple of Schopenhauer. Nietzsche's argument is that, despite claiming to be Schopenhauerian, Wagner's heroes demonstrate "the innocence of the utmost selfishness" precisely where Schopenhauer obfuscates the individual's qualities and emphasizes sacrifice and pity:

[...] Wagner let himself be misled by Hegel; he repeated this mistake when he started reading Schopenhauer's doctrine into his characters and began expressing himself in terms of 'will,' 'genius,' and 'compassion.' Nevertheless it will remain true that nothing goes so directly against the spirit of Schopenhauer as what is genuinely Wagnerian in Wagner's heroes: I mean the innocence of the utmost selfishness; the faith in great passion as the good in itself, in a word, what is Siegfried-like in the countenances of his heroes.

That is, against Schopenhauer, Wagner's art celebrates the individual in the particularity of their personal identity, as a 'hero', a term that inevitably invokes a Homeric context. Indeed, Wagner himself embodies this problem. His artistry is based on his own particularity, and yet his thought has become captivated by Schopenhauer's errors:

Let us remain faithful to Wagner in what is *true* and original in him — and especially, as his disciples, by remaining faithful to ourselves in what is true and original in us. Let us leave him his intellectual tempers and cramps; let us, in all fairness, ask what strange kinds of nourishment and needs an art like his may *require* in order to be able to live and grow! It

doesn't matter that as a thinker he is so often wrong; justice and patience are not for *him*. Enough that his life is justified before itself and remains justified — this life which shouts at every one of us: 'Be a man and do not follow me — but yourself! Yourself!' *Our* life, too, shall be justified before ourselves! We too shall freely and fearlessly, in innocent selfishness, grow and blossom from ourselves!

In Nietzsche's view this contradiction between Wagner's heroic artistry and the intellectual "delusion" that was true to Schopenhauer in his philosophy is grounds for optimism. Despite Schopenhauer's destruction of the individual and Wagner's supposed agreement, he was able to celebrate the individual in all their particularity through his art. He concludes with a quotation from his own "Untimely Meditation" on Wagner's art, which focuses on the freedom of the individual in which "being honest in evil is still better than losing oneself to the morality of tradition." In contrast to Schopenhauer's dissolution of the self and denial of the individual, Nietzsche here outlines a nascent concept of an individual who is unique and self-generated, in whom difference from others, the grounds for their distinction, is preserved and celebrated.¹³³ This points towards the theme of difference and its role in Nietzsche's ethics of heroic friendship, to be discussed in detail in later chapters.

Another important text in Nietzsche's response to Schopenhauer is *GS* §127, *Aftereffects of the most ancient religiosity*. Here he provides three propositions that are explicitly developed to refute Schopenhauer:

With his assumption that only that which wills exists, Schopenhauer enthroned a primordial mythology; he seems never to have attempted an analysis of the will because like everyone else he *believed* in the

¹³³ E.g. *GS* §371, *We incomprehensible ones*; *TSZ* §18, *Of the Tree on the Mountainside*

simplicity and immediacy of all willing—whereas willing is actually such a well-practised mechanism that it almost escapes the observing eye. Against him I offer these propositions: first, in order for willing to come about, a representation of pleasure or displeasure is needed. Secondly, that a violent stimulus is experienced as pleasure or pain is a matter of the *interpreting* intellect, which, to be sure, generally works without our being conscious of it; and one and the same stimulus *can* be interpreted as pleasure or pain. Thirdly, only in intellectual beings do pleasure, pain, and will exist; the vast majority of organisms has nothing like it.

The context for this section is a general critique of the concept of will, in which willing is turned into an absolute given and is considered as a simple and effective cause. In critiquing Schopenhauer's doctrine of will, he attempts to provide a materialistically oriented psychological explanation of will, that is, he presents will as a complex natural phenomenon.

Given the critique already outlined in *GS* §99, this passage can be understood as an inversion of Schopenhauer's concept of will so that it is grounded now in the empirical reality of an individual. Will is not given as a metaphysical absolute from which the individual derives their existence in the observed world. Rather, willing is derived from a physical stimulus that an individual intellect interprets either as pleasure or as pain. Will is a phenomenon based on the experiences of an individual as an embodied being in the world of experience and observation. Further, it applies only to intellectual beings and cannot necessarily be attributed to the "vast majority" of organisms that do not possess an 'intellect.'

Here we see Nietzsche formulating his views against Schopenhauer's. Where Schopenhauer proposes a metaphysical explanation, he proposes an empirical one, and where Schopenhauer

dissolves the individual Nietzsche asserts its existence as a natural phenomenon.¹³⁴ This emphasis on the observed reality, where differentiation between individuals is evident, is one critical element of his Homeric ethos of contest.

Against Asceticism

Not only does Nietzsche oppose the dissolution of the individual on both metaphysical and psychological grounds, he also opposes Schopenhauerian pessimism. In *GS* §370 Nietzsche explains the mistake that he had made by following Schopenhauer in his early life in search of a solution to the problem of suffering. He proposes to differentiate his approach from Schopenhauer's by identifying two types of sufferers and two corresponding types of philosophical inquiry:

You see that what I misjudged both in philosophical pessimism and in German music was what constitutes its actual character — its *romanticism*. What is romanticism? Every art, every philosophy can be considered a cure and aid in the service of growing, struggling life: they always presuppose suffering and sufferers. But there are two types of sufferers: first, those who suffer from a *superabundance of life* — they want a Dionysian art as well as a tragic outlook and insight into life; then, those who suffer from an *impoverishment of life* and seek quiet, stillness, calm seas, redemption from themselves through art and insight, or else intoxication, paroxysm, numbness, madness. All romanticism in art and in knowledge fits the dual needs of the latter type, as did (and do) Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner, to name the most famous and

¹³⁴ See also *D* §§ 532 and 549 on Nietzsche's rejection of self-dissolution.

prominent romantics that I *misunderstood* at the time — *not*, incidentally, to their disadvantage, one might in all fairness concede.

The two types of sufferers are those that suffer from their personal superabundance and those that suffer from personal impoverishment or privation. The kind of art and philosophy that suits the former is Dionysian and the kind that suits the latter is Schopenhauerian and Wagnerian. He explains that both the desire for immortalizing (for “being”) and the desire for destroying (“becoming”) are ambiguous. Each might arise either from abundance or from privation:

Nowadays I avail myself of this primary distinction concerning all aesthetic values: in every case I ask, ‘Is it hunger or superabundance that have become creative here?’ At first glance, a different distinction may appear more advisable — it’s far more noticeable — namely, the question of whether the creation was caused by a desire for fixing, for immortalizing, for *being*, or rather by a desire for destruction, for change, for novelty, for future, for *becoming*. However, both types of desires prove ambiguous upon closer examination, and can be interpreted under the first scheme, which seems preferable to me. The desire for *destruction*, for change and for becoming can be the expression of an overflowing energy pregnant with the future (my term for this is, as is known, ‘Dionysian’); but it can also be the hatred of the ill-constituted, deprived, and underprivileged one who destroys and *must* destroy because what exists, indeed all existence, all being, outrages and provokes him [...] The will to *immortalize* also requires a dual interpretation. It can be prompted, first, by gratitude and love; art of such origin will always be an art of apotheosis, dithyrambic perhaps like

Rubens; blissfully mocking like Hafis; bright and gracious like Goethe, spreading a Homeric light and splendour over all things. But it can also be the tyrannical will of someone who suffers deeply, who struggles, is tortured, and who would like to stamp as a binding law and compulsion what is most personal, singular, narrow, the real idiosyncrasy of his suffering, and who as it were takes revenge on all things by forcing, imprinting, branding *his* image on them, the image of *his* torture. The latter is *romantic pessimism* in its most expressive form, be it Schopenhauer's philosophy of will or Wagner's music — romantic pessimism, the last *great* event in the fate of our culture.

The difference between the Dionysian and the Romantic is that the former arises from abundance and the latter arises from privation. The Dionysian sufferer may desire destruction because of “an overflowing energy pregnant with the future”, or they may desire immortalization prompted by gratitude and love, a “Homeric light and splendour.” The Romantic sufferer may desire destruction because of their hatred of existence and desire to escape it, or they may desire to immortalize something by seeking to “stamp as a binding law and compulsion” their own particular suffering on the world at large. In order to avoid this ambiguity and privilege neither being nor becoming, Nietzsche’s proposes that an evaluative criterion for “aesthetic values”: they are evaluated positively or negatively depending on whether they arise from abundance or from impoverishment, respectively.

We can now see that underlying Nietzsche’s analysis is the thought that Schopenhauer’s asceticism arises from the intersection of his annihilation of the individual and his privative assumptions about human existence. When the individual intuits their ontological unity with the world as will, they discover an infinitude of suffering that arises directly from existence. The ascetic relieves suffering by opposing existence itself, by ‘quieting’ the will to live. Nietzsche’s

response to this is opposite: the great individual responds to suffering from the deep well of their personal superabundance. This does not eliminate suffering but rather the need to alleviate it, precisely by asserting the ontological primacy of the self-grounding and overflowing individual:

He who is richest in fullness of life, the Dionysian god and man, can allow himself not only the sight of what is terrible and questionable but also the terrible deed and every luxury of destruction, decomposition, negation; in his case, what is evil, nonsensical, and ugly almost seems acceptable because of an overflow in procreating, fertilizing forces capable of turning any desert into bountiful farmland.

We see this approach to suffering developed and repeated throughout Nietzsche's work. In *TSZ*, for example, the figure of Zarathustra embodies these ideas in a complex and oblique fashion. Part One expresses these connections between metaphysics, the individual and superabundance in a general way, touching not only on Nietzsche's experience of monistic metaphysics through Schopenhauer's philosophy but also his experience of Christianity and metaphysical approaches in general. An example of this is in the section *On the Hinterworldly*.¹³⁵ Here Zarathustra criticizes the idea that anything lies "beyond mankind in reality":

It is drunken joy to the suffering one to look away from one's suffering and to lose oneself. Drunken joy and losing-oneself the world once seemed to me. This world, the eternally imperfect, the mirror image and imperfect image of an eternal contradiction – a drunken joy to its imperfect creator: thus the world once seemed to me. So I too once cast

¹³⁵ I prefer a less literal translation of *Von den Hinterweltlern*, Kaufmann's translation has it as "Of The Afterworldly" and Hollingdale as "Of the Afterworldsmen", both of which are preferable. However, for consistency, I provide above Del Caro's translation from the Cambridge University Press series, See Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 58; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [Also Sprach Zarathustra], trans. Walter Kaufmann (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1966), 30; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 20.

my delusion beyond humans, like all hinterworldly. Beyond mankind in truth? Oh my brothers, this god that I created was of human make and madness, like all gods! [...] Believe me, my brothers! It was the body that despaired of the earth – then it heard the belly of being speak to it. And then it wanted to break head first through the ultimate walls, and not only with its head, beyond to the “other world.” But “the other world” is well hidden from humans, that dehumaned, inhuman world that is a heavenly nothing. And the belly of being does not speak to humans, unless as a human.

Despite the characteristic opacity of the language, and that the latter parts of this section are targeted at Christianity specifically, it is clear that Nietzsche alludes also to his brief enchantment with Schopenhauer’s philosophy here. In seeking an answer to the problem of suffering Schopenhauer also posited a metaphysic, an ‘otherworld.’

In this context, the obscure phrase “the belly of being” appears to mean something similar to the ‘thing-in-itself.’ In the search for a solution to the problem of suffering the sufferer, “the body that despaired of the earth”, hears “the belly of being” speaking. That is, the metaphysically understood ‘thing-in-itself’ seeks to address the problem of suffering and in doing so proposes a ‘heavenly nothing.’ Thus this text expresses Nietzsche’s scepticism about the metaphysical enterprise in both its Christian and Schopenhauerian forms.

Zarathustra goes on to propose an alternative. Instead of heavenly nothings, Zarathustra speaks about the “meaning of the earth” and its relationship to the body. I take this to mean that Nietzsche’s alternative to the metaphysical proposals offered by Schopenhauer and Christianity is a thoroughly naturalistic one. In critiquing the hinterworldly (or, afterworldsmen, see footnote above) Zarathustra claims that their belief is

Indeed, not in hinterworlds and redeeming blood drops, but instead they too believe most in the body, and their own body is to them their thing in itself. But to them it is a sickly thing: and gladly would they jump out of their skin. Hence they listen to the preachers of death and they preach hinterworlds themselves. Hear, my brothers, hear the voice of the healthy body: a more honest and purer voice is this. More honestly and more purely speaks the healthy body, the perfect and perpendicular body, and it speaks of the meaning of the earth.

This text echoes the sentiment of *GS* §370 and its discussion of two different types of inquirers—the Romantic and the Dionysian are here recast as the sick and the healthy. Here we also find two different solutions, which depend on one's type. Nietzsche opposes the "heavenly nothing" to the "meaning of the earth" and the "sickly" body to the "healthy body." The problem with the "heavenly nothing" is with those who formulate it: their experience is sick, they want to flee from themselves, and so they devise hinterworlds, (or, as Kaufmann and Hollingdale translate it, "afterworlds.")¹³⁶ By way of contrast, the healthy body is capable of honest speech (unlike the belly of being) and it "speaks of the meaning of the earth." In other words, Nietzsche sees the embrace of embodied existence, including its suffering, as a healthy alternative to the sickliness of metaphysics.

Conclusions

Nietzsche's analysis of Schopenhauer's philosophy includes criticism both of Schopenhauer's dissolution of the individual on the basis of metaphysical monism and his pessimistic interpretation of the individual on an assumption of personal privation. Against Schopenhauer, he asserts his concept of an abundant and heroic individual as the foundation for ethics. His

¹³⁶ See footnote 135.

rejection of Schopenhauer means that the question of suffering is no longer the critical question for ethics to answer. In Nietzsche's alternative approach, an abundant individual can embrace even the ugliest or most painful elements of experience. The themes of his new Homerism—personal superabundance and individual difference—stand against Schopenhauer's philosophy, in similar ways to the ways in which they enabled him to turn away from the Christian morality of love.

More than a rejection of metaphysical monism, however, we see in Nietzsche's turn away from Schopenhauer a rejection of metaphysics in general and, specifically, metaphysics as a foundation for ethics. We can see in the arguments he mounts against metaphysically grounded ethics that his alternative will include an emphasis on abundance and on difference. In the following chapter I begin to describe how Nietzsche develops this positive alternative by drawing on evolutionary biology in order to 'update' Homeric contest with the most contemporary empirical tools he had available to him. What I aim to show is that this results in a naturalistic ethics based on personal superabundance and difference between individuals within a framework of heroic contest.

Chapter 4: A Naturalist Alternative

I have argued in the preceding chapters that Nietzsche rejects both Christian and Schopenhauerian morality, in part because they are founded on a metaphysical enterprise. Moral themes such as the Christian valorising of *agape* love and Schopenhauer's morality of compassion are problematic for him. I have proposed that the alternative he pursues breathes the air of heroic contest, drawing on Homeric ideals such as personal abundance and individual difference to support an ethics of agonistic friendship. These ideals stand directly opposed to what he sees as privative pessimism and monistic reductionism in metaphysical moralising.

Nietzsche builds his alternative approach by drawing on the naturalist-materialist methodologies that were available to him, derived from his interest in materialist classical and contemporaneous philosophy, and also from developments in the field of evolutionary biology. By bringing these together, I aim to show that he develops a new approach to Homeric contest, in which higher friendship emerges as an ethical ideal. In this chapter I aim to demonstrate the influence of the then-emergent field of evolutionary biology on the development of this new Homerism, despite his occasionally antagonistic stance towards this emergent field and, in particular, to Darwin. The general thrust of this argument is to show that Nietzsche turns away from metaphysics, searching for a naturalist approach to support these Homeric ideals.

There is a significant contrary perspective in Nietzsche scholarship in which Nietzsche is not thought to reject metaphysics but to develop it. Perhaps most influentially, Heidegger proposed that Nietzsche was the last great metaphysician in the Western tradition, demonstrated in the doctrines of the will to power and the eternal return of the same. For Heidegger, Nietzsche

completes the circle of Western metaphysics that began with Plato.¹³⁷ Significant figures following Heidegger have argued similarly, particularly with reference to the will to power.¹³⁸

One of the most recent scholars in this tradition is Tsarina Doyle who, while disagreeing with Heidegger's views on the success or otherwise of Nietzsche's approach to metaphysics, nevertheless argues that Nietzsche does not reject metaphysics in favour of naturalism. Rather, she claims that he develops a distinctive approach to metaphysics that illuminates its continuities with naturalism. In responding to the problem of nihilism, she claims that Nietzsche proposes a metaphysics of the will to power that emerges from the continuity between mind (conceived metaphysically) and the world (conceived naturalistically). This, she argues, is how Nietzsche proposes values, indicating that his is not, as some suppose, a nihilist:

By metaphysical continuity, then, I mean that the mind, for Nietzsche, is immersed in nature by virtue of sharing certain metaphysical features in common with nature but that it is also irreducible to it. Metaphysical continuity entails not mere correlations of events observed from the outside but rather a shared metaphysical character, which emanates from within, that is, from the essential nature of a thing. [...] Since to be differentiated from nature does not entail that the human mind is divorced from it, the issue of a value's objective standing, for Nietzsche, is intrinsically connected to its metaphysical continuity with the character of mind-independent, empirical, reality.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. David Farrell Krell, vol. 1 (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1991), 199-208; *ibid.*, 2: 200-10.

¹³⁸ Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*; Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*.

¹³⁹ Tsarina Doyle, *Nietzsche's Metaphysics of the Will to Power: The Possibility of Value* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Doyle's approach has much to commend it, not least her deep appreciation of Nietzsche's complex relationship to Kant.¹⁴⁰ There are, however, many interpreters that question metaphysical interpretations of Nietzsche and who assert that Nietzsche rejects metaphysical thinking in general.¹⁴¹ These interpreters tend to refer to Nietzsche's approach as a form of 'naturalism' that is either post- or anti-metaphysical. Among this group of scholars there are different ways of understanding 'naturalism' and, as we have seen to some degree with Doyle's approach, not all of them exclude metaphysics. In what follows I propose to consider different ways of understanding Nietzsche's naturalism in order to better understand the context out of which he responds the field of evolutionary biology.¹⁴²

As we have seen in the previous chapters, Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysical approaches to morality reflects his interest in Homeric ideas of abundance and difference. In order to successfully reject metaphysics and retain these ideals, he requires a new foundation for them, one that does not rely on metaphysical constructs such as those found in classical literature (e.g. the gods and fate, *moira*). We have seen that he rejects both Christianity and Schopenhauer because they tend, albeit in subtly different ways, towards a privative understanding of nature premised on deficit and a monism/monotheism that, at least in Nietzsche's view, devolves towards tyranny and reductionism. What we will see here in examining his naturalism is an ambivalent outcome. While evolutionary biology satisfies the requirement for difference in that it proposes a naturalistic explanation for the diversity of biological life, Nietzsche understands evolutionary biology—through his reading of Darwinism through Spencer in particular—to be

¹⁴⁰ "Nietzsche on Epistemology and Metaphysics" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Warwick, 2002); "The Kantian Background to Nietzsche's Views on Causality."

¹⁴¹ Maudemarie Clark, "Nietzsche's Attack on Morality" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1977); *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, vii-xxxiv. (Introduction by Clark and Leiter); Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Critique of Morality: Philosophical Naturalism in Nietzsche's Theory of Value."; *Nietzsche on Morality*; Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1985); "Nietzsche's Naturalism."

¹⁴² The relationship between Nietzsche's understanding of the will to power and his naturalist conception of human existence is a complex topic that has divided scholars in this field. A full explanation of how my conception of human social relationships might intersect with this topic is a useful avenue for future research. In particular, it might be useful to link the idea of contest, the drives of an individual naturalistically conceived, and social relationships of contest together under the rubric of a naturalist conception of the will to power.

stuck in a privative or deficit understanding of nature, which does not satisfy his commitment to abundance as a condition for his ethics.

I argue that his complaint against Darwinism is focused in his response to the idea of the struggle for survival. He understands Darwinism to emphasise a minimal threshold for evaluating the health or otherwise of a living being, namely, whether it manages to reproduce and survive. Not only does he argue that this minimalist understanding of the natural world is contradicted by empirical evidence of its superabundance, he also cannot accept mere survival as the basis for evaluating human existence. The abundance of human life is expressed in higher forms of cultural and individual expression, for example, in artistic accomplishment. The result is that, while Nietzsche welcomes the evolutionary explanation of difference through the idea of genetic mutations that take effect over long periods of time, he rejects an understanding of natural selection in which individuals within a species are caught in a downward spiral, a fight to the death, as it were, struggling simply to survive.¹⁴³

His counterargument to this privative view of natural struggle is the Homeric ideal of abundance expressed in contest. In his view, nature (including human life) is not characterized by deficit and privation but by abundance (GS §349). For him, the experience of distress and deprivation are peculiarly human traits, and, indeed, a peculiarly human distortion of the evidence. A truly 'scientific' understanding of human nature would take as its basis the same underlying premise of abundance that a scientist, freed from Darwinian presuppositions, is able to observe:

To wish to preserve oneself is a sign of distress, of a limitation of the truly
basic life-instinct, which aims at *the expansion of power* and in so doing
often enough risks and sacrifices self-preservation. It is symptomatic

¹⁴³ It is not clear that Darwin's approach warrants this criticism. For the purposes of this thesis, it is enough that Nietzsche perceived this to be a weakness in the Darwinian schema.

that certain philosophers, such as the consumptive Spinoza, took and indeed had to take just the so-called self-preservation instinct to be decisive: – they were simply people in distress. That today's natural sciences have become so entangled in the Spinozistic dogma (most recently and most crudely in Darwinism with its incredibly one-sided doctrine of the 'struggle for existence' –) is probably due to the descent of most natural scientists [...] English Darwinism exudes something like the air of English overpopulation [...] As a natural scientist, however, one should get out of one's human corner; and in nature, it is not distress which *rules*, but rather abundance, squandering – even to the point of absurdity. The struggle for survival is only an *exception*, a temporary restriction of the will to life; the great and small struggle revolves everywhere around preponderance, around growth and expansion, around power and in accordance with the will to power, which is simply the will to life.

In what follows I will show how Nietzsche, while vehemently denying Darwinism, adopts those elements of it that best fit his interest in providing an anti-metaphysical description not only of natural diversity, but also of the kind of personal abundance that is required for higher human beings to successfully engage in higher friendship.

Nietzsche's Naturalism

I have characterized the development of Nietzsche's naturalism as an attempt to unify Homeric and scientific ways of understanding the natural world. One starting point for this is the observation that he approaches both scientific and Homeric thought as vulnerable forms of naturalism. For Nietzsche, both ways of thinking can be deflected from a genuine attempt to

explain empirical phenomena in natural terms and begin to incorporate metaphysical approaches. Homerism, for example, relies on the gods and on the concept of *moira* in order to provide the outer limits of permissible behaviour for its heroes (e.g. *GS* §130).¹⁴⁴ Similarly, he claims that scientific thought can rise from a mistaken desire for completely objective truths and, in doing so, it can draw on what he sees as metaphysical concepts such as “bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content” that are not empirical but rather “articles of faith” (*GS* §121, see also *GS* §112).

Thus Nietzsche’s general trajectory away from metaphysical explanations stands in an ambiguous relationship to both ancient naturalism and scientific naturalism. This can be at least partially understood by differentiating naturalism from materialism. The distinction between naturalism and materialism in ancient thought is described by Irwin.¹⁴⁵ He demonstrates that various forms of naturalism in ancient thought are not synonymous with materialism. With regard to early Greek thought in Homer and his immediate successors, Irwin writes:

Apparently, then, we might suppose, a complete naturalist, believing that everything is determined by the nature of the stuffs and their interactions, will have no need and no room for gods. This supposition, however, is far too simple to capture the naturalists’ attitude to the divine. For in fact they say quite a lot about gods.¹⁴⁶

Beyond Homer and the example of *moira*, he gives Plato’s concepts of the Forms¹⁴⁷ and Aristotle’s view of the soul¹⁴⁸ as examples of naturalist interpretations of the world that include metaphysical commitments. In a similar vein, Dodds demonstrates that otherwise naturalistic

¹⁴⁴ Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility*; Terence Irwin, *Classical Thought* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁴⁵ Irwin, *Classical Thought*.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 113-17.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 130-32.

explanations of phenomena that defied the rationality of the classical mind were often explained by using metaphysical devices.¹⁴⁹ Naturalism in antiquity, according to Irwin, can be thought of as an impulse to describe phenomena as ordered. For him, the naturalist movement expressed a desire to describe laws or patterns that govern the existence of phenomena and their interactions. In describing such a system, a naturalist may or may not utilize metaphysical components. By way of contrast, a materialist will explicitly attempt to avoid including metaphysical elements, however successfully.

These strands of naturalism and materialism in classical thought provide a complex set of ancient influences on Nietzsche. Tracing these influences is made more complex by the intellectual climate of nineteenth century Germany, which itself included a significant materialist movement.¹⁵⁰ Nietzsche was no doubt influenced by this movement, both by its protagonists such as Feuerbach and by its critics such as Lange.¹⁵¹ One particularly important influence that relates directly to the scientific thought of Nietzsche's day and his interest in Homeric contest is the contribution of Wilhelm Roux through his idea of struggle. Soderstrom has demonstrated how Roux contributed to the evolutionary idea of struggle for survival by thinking about it at a cellular level. He shows how this idea of a cellular, physiological struggle within an individual member of a species influenced Nietzsche's approach to the body and to history that can be framed in terms of contest. For Nietzsche, this struggle within an individual's body becomes a physiological mechanism for interpreting experience, which is otherwise chaotic and devoid of structure, just as history can be understood to interpret the chaos of past experience on the part of the historian. According to Soderstrom, Nietzsche understands these biological and historical mechanisms as cyclical movements of assimilation that involve

¹⁴⁹ E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951).

¹⁵⁰ Michael N. Forster, Kristin Gjesdal, and Kurt Bayertz, *Materialism*, 1st ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁵¹ Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche and Modern German Thought* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 1991); Katia Hay and Leonel Ribeiro dos Santos, eds., *Nietzsche, German Idealism and Its Critics* (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2015); Stack, *Lange and Nietzsche*; Swift, *Becoming Nietzsche: Early Reflections on Democritus, Schopenhauer, and Kant*.

resistance, wounding and re-emergence as newer, stronger versions of themselves. Here Nietzsche is understood to extend Roux's understanding of cellular struggle to struggles within the individual and across history.¹⁵²

Taking this approach and elaborating it further, we can see that through his reading of Roux (and perhaps also his responses to Feuerbach, Lange and Darwinism through Spencer) Nietzsche adapts concepts from biological science to the conceptual world of the Homeric hero. In doing so, a new understanding of the function of contest within the life of the hero begins to emerge. As we will see in later chapters, one result of this new understanding is Nietzsche's internalisation of Homeric contest through his notion of the individual as a being composed of competing internal drives. Here I aim to demonstrate the more general point that Nietzsche incorporates elements of evolutionary biology into an overarching Homeric schema in order to replace the metaphysical elements of Homerism with (quasi-)scientific alternatives. In doing so, he reinterprets concepts such as natural selection, species change over time and random genetic mutation within this Homeric schema.

There are different approaches to the overarching topic of Nietzsche's naturalism. The question before us in evaluating these approaches is the extent to which they illuminate his attraction to the Homeric ethos of contest and explain how he develops this ethos so that it is unencumbered by metaphysics.

Naturalism as Scientism

One school of thought relates Nietzsche's naturalism to his general interest in science and scientifically empirical analyses of human experience. For these scholars, the purpose of Nietzsche's naturalism is to extend scientific analysis of natural phenomena into the realm of social and psychological analysis, a novelty at the time. A leading proponent of this approach is

¹⁵² Lukas Soderstrom, "Nietzsche as a Reader of Wilhelm Roux, or the Physiology of History," *Symposium* 13, no. 2 (2009).

Brian Leiter, who differentiates between a scientific naturalism that makes substantive claims and one that has strictly to do with application of scientific method.¹⁵³ He argues that Nietzsche's concern as a naturalist is not to do with substantive claims but rather that it is strictly related to the application of scientific method to the topics that interested him.¹⁵⁴ Leiter's Nietzsche does not propose, for example, that only physical things exist (as a materialist might). Rather, Leiter's Nietzsche asserts that proposals for describing phenomena such as human social relations ought to adopt a scientific method of analysis and description and apply it to these domains.¹⁵⁵ Leiter argues that Nietzsche's critique of morality achieves this by developing and applying his genealogical method, which is understood here precisely as a way to extend the methods of the hard sciences to these domains. If successful, this would allow the method of genealogy to provide a basis for addressing moral/ethical questions and to do so scientifically.¹⁵⁶

This approach has limited value for this study. In my view, Nietzsche frequently makes substantive as well as methodological claims, a problem that Leiter himself acknowledges.¹⁵⁷ In failing to provide a basis for substantive claims about Nietzsche's ethics, such as the claim that he values heroic friendship as the highest form of social relationship and that this form of relationship can be described in some detail, Leiter puts Nietzsche's naturalism at odds with any substantive claims he might make.

There is, however, a second and perhaps more important problem with Leiter's approach. When Leiter refers to Nietzsche's extension of scientific methods to social and psychological phenomena, he refers to this as Nietzsche's genealogical method. However, when Nietzsche makes substantive or normative ethical claims, he does not always ground them in his

¹⁵³ Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Critique of Morality: Philosophical Naturalism in Nietzsche's Theory of Value."; *Nietzsche on Morality*; "Nietzsche's Moral and Political Philosophy."; "Normativity for Naturalists."

¹⁵⁴ e.g. *Nietzsche on Morality*, 3-11.

¹⁵⁵ "Normativity for Naturalists."

¹⁵⁶ *Nietzsche on Morality*.

¹⁵⁷ "Normativity for Naturalists."

genealogical method. Further, there are times when the genealogical method of analysing social and psychological development is construed by Nietzsche as being opposed to scientific methods. Nietzsche's opposition to scientific methods can be seen in those aphorisms in *The Gay Science* that discuss the importance of error, subjectivity and passion for human survival and flourishing (e.g. *GS* §§57, 111, 112, 427).

The importance of error is emphasised in *GS* §37. Here Nietzsche argues that three errors have provided the foundation for the promotion of science: (1) the idea that science is compatible with theism, (2) that its truths are useful for life, and (3) that it is objective and dispassionate. Nietzsche's understanding of science is opposite: he understands it to promote atheism (*GS* §§109, 123), that scientific truth may in fact be harmful to human existence (*GS* §§111, 344), and that it arises from passions and individual dispositions (*GS* §§113, 151).

Nietzsche's interest in error and emotion in scientific judgement provides the conceptual background for those aphorisms where he expresses scepticism about the value of scientific methods in general. This scepticism is not entirely consistent: there are texts in which Nietzsche is positively disposed to scientific approaches (*GS* §§46, 113, 293, *TSZ*, *Of the Tarantulas*, *Of Science*). There are also, however, important texts where Nietzsche criticizes science as something that commands commitment from people in the same way as does religious faith (e.g. *GS* §§344, 347 and 373).¹⁵⁸

In *GS* §151, for example, Nietzsche argues that scientific thinking stands in a complex relationship to questions of objectivity, truth and knowledge. As a result, scientific thinking is as susceptible to fulfilling humankind's metaphysical need as religion once was. The loss of religious foundations for the "other world" does not mean for Nietzsche the loss of the "other

¹⁵⁸ These texts come from a later period of Nietzsche's writing, having been published as Book 5 of *The Gay Science* in 1887 but are, in my view, consistent with themes less clearly expressed in earlier writings, in particular *Daybreak* and the first edition of *The Gay Science*.

world" altogether. The conclusion is that scientific thinking can be taken to furnish a person with an alternate "other world," nu, as he puts it, "this time only a metaphysical one and not a religious one." For Nietzsche, this substitution of a religious-metaphysical world with a naturalist-metaphysical world is an error because the religious-metaphysical world was originally "an error in the interpretation of certain natural events, an embarrassing lapse of the intellect."

Contra Leiter, here it is clear that Nietzsche's naturalism is not a simple matter of extending an accepted scientific method to questions of social and psychological significance. The relationship between the natural sciences and the social sciences, as it may be understood today, is expressed by Nietzsche not as a simple application of the methods of the former to the data of the latter. There is, rather, a complex interplay between these domains, and the spectre of lapsing into metaphysics remains even when scientific methodologies are privileged.

This thought is expressed in an early form in *D* §427 and §453. In the former Nietzsche argues that philosophy is not simply an extension of scientific method but rather a transformation of the natural sciences into "entertainment" through their beautification. In other words, the methods of the natural sciences establish provisional truths that can be transformed by the application of methods peculiar to philosophy in order to bring these provisional truths into the light of ordinary human experience. In *D* §453, Nietzsche makes a complementary argument that sciences such as psychology and sociology may well be an extension of the natural sciences, but that the methods and conclusions of the science of his day are not developed enough to provide a solid basis for these new forms of inquiry. In this case, it is clear that he considers that scientific methods are in need of development and transformation in order to be fit for purpose if they are to be applied to social and psychological phenomena.

In all of these texts there is a complex web of continuities and discontinuities between scientific naturalism in the domain of the hard sciences and Nietzsche's quasi-scientific naturalistic equivocations in the domain of social and psychological analysis. There are, however, themes that recur throughout. I will highlight one continuity and one discontinuity. The continuity is that Nietzsche clearly sees value in paying attention only to observable phenomena. This method of post-hoc observation and analysis is something that he sees in the natural sciences and that he wishes to apply to personal and social questions. It is also, at times, crucial to his critique of science – where science loses faith with this core principle (as, for example, in the concept of cause and effect), Nietzsche rejects it. The way in which Nietzsche thinks this principle can be applied to personal and social questions is through the concept of moral and social experiments (*D* §§164, 432, *GS* §§7, 41, 51, 324, 335, 356).

The discontinuity between Nietzsche's thinking and scientific methods relates to the problem of meaning, as opposed to mere description. The relationship between Nietzsche's interest in the meaning of human existence and his naturalist approach has been taken up by a number of scholars who describe his naturalism specifically in terms of meaning-making. In this approach Nietzsche's naturalism is not just a reflection on his attitude to the natural sciences and how this might be relevant for his understanding of human experience. Here Nietzsche's naturalism is construed in terms of human experience exclusively: it is deeply concerned with human affairs and has as its goal the development of appropriate methods (i.e. 'naturalistic' methods) for exploring human affairs and the question of meaning. It does so by intersecting with, and referring, to scientific methods but not as a simple extension of them. Rather, the examination of human affairs involves discovering or creating these methods of enquiry, which, turn out to be different to the methods of enquiry in the natural sciences.

Richard Schacht is a leading interpreter who takes this approach.¹⁵⁹ For Schacht, Nietzsche's naturalism is an attempt at a naturalistic explanation of phenomena that are not well-suited to scientific explanation. He argues that meaning-making experiences are frequently the subject of Nietzsche's naturalistic interpretation of the world, encompassing cultural, linguistic, musical and otherwise artisanal endeavours. His analysis focuses on Nietzsche's later use of the German term for 'sensitivity'. This usage, he argues, is evidence that Nietzsche's naturalism cannot be narrowly construed along the lines of an extension of the natural sciences:

In sum: for Nietzsche no naturalism is worth taking seriously that ignores or is clumsy in dealing with all that gives depth and richness to human reality—such as the dimension and character of human reality I have been discussing in terms of “sensibilities” and what they make possible.¹⁶⁰

Schacht seeks to avoid reducing human experience to the domain of the natural sciences, which includes an assertion that even experiences that are not amenable to scientific investigation can be explained naturalistically. As he puts it, naturalism in this sense is the idea that

[...] everything that comes to be in this world is the outcome of developments occurring within it that are owing *entirely* to its internal dynamics and the contingencies to which they give rise.¹⁶¹

For Schacht, Nietzsche's naturalism sees the natural world as the only legitimate domain of investigation and as containing within itself all of the explanatory resources for human (and other) experience. In stark contrast with Leiter, Schacht defines the social and personal

¹⁵⁹ Other writers who address these issues include Christoph Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007); "Beyond Selflessness in Ethics and Inquiry," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 35, no. 1 (2008); Janaway and Robertson, *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*.

¹⁶⁰ Schacht, "Nietzsche's Naturalism," 208.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 193–94.

domains of human experience in terms distinct from the methodologies of the natural sciences, as being unavailable to scientific methods of investigation:

That is: he strongly objects when scientific thinking—and especially natural-scientific thinking—is taken to provide us not only with considerable knowledge of many things, but with the whole story with respect to everything, human reality and the whole panoply of the human world included.¹⁶²

Schacht has here raised a question of fundamental importance in the attempt to understand human experience—and the meaning of human experience—from a naturalistic perspective. A naturalism that is unable to address social and cultural institutions in terms of meaning, but rather reduces them to simple scientific mechanisms, is not sufficient for Nietzsche. In my view, this kind of critique of the natural sciences as reductionistic when it comes to questions of meaning is well supported by texts such as *GS* §373. There Nietzsche decries a form of scientific interpretation of human experience of human artistic experience as absurd, precisely because it is disconnected from the question of meaning. Addressing scientists, he writes:

That the only rightful interpretation of the world should be one to which *you* have a right; one by which one can do research and go on scientifically in *your* sense of the term (you really mean *mechanistically*?) – one that permits counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, grasping, and nothing else – that is a crudity and naiveté, assuming it is not a mental illness, an idiocy. Would it not be quite probable, conversely, that precisely the most superficial and external aspect of existence – what is most apparent; its skin and sensualization – would be grasped first and

¹⁶² Ibid., 2.

might even be the only thing that let itself be grasped? Thus, a 'scientific' interpretation of the world, as you understand it, might still be one of the *stupidest* of all possible interpretations of the world, i.e. one of those most lacking in significance [...] an essentially mechanistic world would be an essentially *meaningless* world! Suppose one judged the *value* of a piece of music according to how much of it could be counted, calculated, and expressed in formulas – how absurd such a 'scientific' evaluation of music would be! What would one have comprehended, understood, recognized? Nothing, really nothing of what is 'music' in it!

However, somewhat contrary to Schacht, this rejection of scientific description in the field of artistic endeavour and meaning-making is not as straightforward in the field of ethics. In *GS* §7 Nietzsche shows that he would value some form of systematic (if not mechanistic) description of the human experience of social life and morality. In contemporary terms, the text reads like an appeal for the development of what we now consider to be the social sciences:

Anyone who now wishes to make a study of moral matters opens up for himself an immense field of work [...] So far, all that has given colour to existence still lacks a history; where could you find a history of love, of avarice, of envy, of conscience, of piety, of cruelty? [...] Is there a philosophy of nutrition? [...] Has anyone collected people's experiences of living together – in monasteries, for example? Has anyone depicted the dialectic of marriage and friendship? [...] Everything that humans have viewed until now as the 'conditions of their existence' and all the reason, passion, and superstition that such a view involves – has this been researched exhaustively? To observe how differently the human drives have grown and still could grow depending on the moral climate – that

alone involves too much work for even the most industrious; it would require whole generations, and generations of scholars who would collaborate systematically, to exhaust the points of view and the material [...] If all these jobs were done, the most delicate question of all would emerge into the foreground: whether science is able to *furnish* goals of action after having proved that it can take such goals away and annihilate them; and then an experimenting would be in order, in which every kind of heroism could find satisfaction – an experimenting that might last for centuries and eclipse all the great projects and sacrifices of history to date. So far, science has not yet built its cyclops-buildings; but the time for that will come, too.

In this text we see Nietzsche express his desire for the development of a method of investigation that is appropriate to personal and social phenomena and is not completely removed from the realm of scientific enquiry. It is clear he does not think that the natural sciences—at least as they existed in his time—are appropriate for this kind of investigation. Rather, as above, he seems here to yearn for an as-yet unrealized interpretation of human existence that incorporates the ‘scientific’ notion of experiment, the question of meaning, as well as a thoroughly naturalised understanding of human being.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ See also GS §335, Long live physics, where he writes that “we must become the best learners and discoverers of everything that is lawful and necessary in the world, we must become physicists.” It is clear from the context that he is ironically applying the title of ‘physicist’ to the domain of ethics: he is calling for an as-yet undeveloped science of society, morality and personality.

Naturalism and Evolutionary Biology

Leiter's analysis brought to the fore the importance of the scientific concept of experiment for understanding Nietzsche's approach to social and personal questions and Schacht's analysis highlights the importance of social and cultural institutions for question of meaning, and their unsuitability for strictly scientific investigation. We have also seen from texts in *The Gay Science* that Nietzsche questions the value of the natural sciences for describing human experience but at the same time searches for a way to understand ethics that is naturalist in its orientation and that works in parallel with the natural sciences.

To add further complexity to this question, but also to propose a way forward, we must acknowledge that the question of Nietzsche's naturalism cannot be understood apart from the development of evolutionary biology as a science in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many scholars have commented on Nietzsche's relationship to this then-emergent science, and to Darwinism in particular. One insight common to these approaches is that evolutionary biology offers something of a bridge between the stricter 'scientism' of the natural sciences and the importance of topics such as meaning-making, sociability and ethics in human development. This seems to be because evolutionary biology offers the opportunity to consider the historically observable development of both the species and of the individuals that constitute the species. Moreover, evolutionary biology offers the concept of natural selection as a framework for understanding this development. Within this framework, I claim that Nietzsche sees a possibility to integrate the scientific method of experiment with the Homeric concept of contest.

Attempts to understand Nietzsche's positive stance towards evolutionary biology are immediately complicated by the observation that Nietzsche does not adopt an evolutionary perspective uncritically. More specifically, he is highly critical of Charles Darwin (e.g. *GS* §349) and Herbert Spencer (e.g. *GS* §373). However, this does not mean that he rejects the science of

evolutionary biology wholesale. What I aim to show is in the midst of this critique there are several important concepts in evolutionary biology that Nietzsche adopts and adapts. These include adaptation for survival, species-level change over long periods of time, and random mutations. There are also elements that Nietzsche rejects. Importantly, he rejects the emphasis of Darwinism on *mere* survival, which he sees as opposed to the ancient philosophical concept of flourishing (*eudaimonia*). What we will see in the following chapter is that this critique of Darwinism and simultaneous incorporation of evolutionary concepts returns us to his underlying commitment to the Homeric values of abundance and difference.

One scholar who has commented extensively on Nietzsche's relationship to Darwinism and how this influences his broader philosophical project is John Richardson.¹⁶⁴ He attempts to describe two important philosophical (and problematically metaphysical) ideas as the foundations of Nietzsche's naturalism, namely, teleology and will to power. Both concepts sit uneasily with a naturalist account: teleology because it seems to require a concept of intentionality or foresight in otherwise blind natural processes; and will to power because of a long history of interpreting it as a metaphysical element in Nietzsche's thought.¹⁶⁵

Richardson argues that Nietzsche's uses the idea of will to power teleologically: an organism's will to power provides us with the purpose for its action in the world. This can be understood through a biological notion of drives, which allows both teleology and will to power to be naturalised:

[Nietzsche's] core notion of will to power [...] gives us a prospect or chance to *naturalize* these notions [i.e. "drives" and "instinct"] and

¹⁶⁴ John Richardson, "Nietzsche Contra Darwin," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 65, no. 3 (2002); *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*; "On Richard Schacht's Nietzsche," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 46, no. 2 (2015).

¹⁶⁵ E.g. Doyle, *Nietzsche's Metaphysics of the Will to Power: The Possibility of Value*; Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 1.

especially to naturalize what may seem to be their most suspect aspect:

Nietzsche's *teleological* use of them.¹⁶⁶

The idea seems to be something like the following: (1) a biologically determined organism acts in the world with the purpose of expressing its will to power and (2) this is a drive that is built into the organism as the result of the processes of evolution.

In order to make this argument Richardson defines two ways in which Nietzsche uses the concept of teleology: the narrow sense which illuminates this with this claim, and its general usage which does not. The narrow sense of teleology is based on etiology, an idea that Richardson argues allows the notion of purpose to be considered retroactively. That is, the purpose of a design feature is understood retrospectively. This unusual definition of teleology commits Richardson to an unfortunate circularity where the purpose of a design feature (for example, a particular drive) is derived from its history of adaptation.¹⁶⁷ Looking forwards, drives emerge through the process of natural selection, a blind, purposeless process. Looking backwards, the drive to eat finds its purpose in the notion of species survival.

At this point in the argument we can note that this is not the same as the usual understanding of evolutionary processes as genuinely stochastic, where the history of adaption alone explains what survives and what does not. It seems to me that the concept of selection and mutation as random processes is evident in Nietzsche's reflections on chance and waste, evocatively captured in, for example, his references to the dice box of chance (*D* §130 and *GS* §109). In my view, Richardson does not adequately incorporate the enormous waste of evolutionary processes into his concept of purpose and, consequently, he does not give appropriate emphasis to the concept of chance in Nietzsche's understanding of nature. The idea of a retroactive concept of purpose as a way to naturalise the concept of will to power as a way of describing

¹⁶⁶ Richardson, "Nietzsche Contra Darwin," 537.

¹⁶⁷ Nietzsche's *New Darwinism*, 26-35.

biological drives seems to be on an uncertain footing. It is, in my view, more consistent with Nietzsche's overall approach simply to acknowledge that he does not, overall, accept the idea of purpose but favours the truly Darwinian idea of randomness and its function within the process of natural selection.

This problem in Richardson's description re-emerges when he invokes a 'minority' interpretation of the will to power to support this narrow concept of teleology. He concedes (wrongly, in my view) that the will to power is a *mostly* metaphysical notion in Nietzsche but that sometimes Nietzsche uses it in a naturalistic way that is more consistent with his own naturalism.¹⁶⁸ My view, which is a controversial one that runs against the grain of much of the commentary of significant scholars in this field, is that the notion of will to power is not as central to Nietzsche's thought as it is often taken to be. In my view, the supposed centrality of this thought emerges primarily as an historical artefact of his sister's cynical compilation published as *Will to Power* and the subsequent and extremely unfortunate association of these ideas with her Nazi sympathies.

These are complex issues that cannot be fully addressed here. Their relevance to the present argument not in their application to evolutionary biology but in their application to human social behaviour. Despite the problems of Richardson's use of otherwise metaphysical and teleological concepts to describe Nietzsche's approach to evolutionary biology, Richardson does helpfully build on the concept of evolution by natural selection by developing two other kinds of selection: social selection and self-selection. This helps us to resolve the domain problem, namely, how to apply concepts in biological science to the domain of human social interaction and, correspondingly, to ethics. By organizing natural, social and self-selection around the central concepts of Darwinian evolution, I think we can see the beginnings of a

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 52-59.

Nietzschean method for moving between these domains and remaining true to his materialist-naturalist commitments.

Richardson explains these three levels of evolutionary explanation as follows:

There are these different ways our behaviors have been selected: first the Darwinian, explaining the *animal* in us, then the social which explains our more peculiarly *human* behaviors, and finally a certain *superhuman* possibility we're pointed toward.¹⁶⁹

Social selection operates through two quite different mechanisms: custom and morality. Both of these mechanisms are in conflict with the goal of natural selection:

Nietzsche's main strategy here, I suggest, is to uncover a basic *conflict* in our human values: we all aim at two contrary sets of ends, designed into us by two selective regimes.

Importantly, the goal of social selection is homogeneity, which is achieved by imposing customary morality onto our natural inclinations:

Habits are selected to bind us to society, and the most effective means, under both the ethic of custom and morality, are habits that attack and undermine our drives and their natural "healthy selfishness."¹⁷⁰

This conflict is resolved by the third form of selection: self-selection. Richardson argues that this a form of selection characterized by valuing freedom.¹⁷¹ The way that this resolution works is two-fold. Firstly, natural desires are prioritized over social constructs:

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 78.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 120.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 121.

More than this, Nietzsche wants us to use the “taste” of our bodily drives to judge the social values laid over them.¹⁷²

Secondly, choice is exercised not as a cognitive process but by choosing one’s environment:

[Nietzsche] insists that we pay close attention to the conditions—climactic, nutritional, behavioral—of our health as organisms.

This allows Richardson to integrate evolutionary history at the species-level with freedom in the individual:

A behavior is self-selected and free, not by what happens in the moment of choice itself—in that microsituation—but in the macrohistory by which the dispositions producing this behavior were designed.¹⁷³

There is much to commend Richardson’s approach. While he has not, in my view, gone far enough in removing metaphysics from Nietzsche’s thought, he provides a useful set of elements for integrating Darwinism into Nietzsche’s thought, despite Nietzsche’s frequent remonstrations against it. Richardson brings the strictly scientific elements of Nietzsche’s approach (his ‘Darwinism’) together with his comments on human social behaviour and social and cultural institutions. He shows that Nietzsche’s naturalism can be extended to the domain of social interaction and ethics, not as Schacht proposes, but rather as a genuinely scientific enterprise incorporating insights from evolutionary biology. At the heart of this extension of naturalism into ethics lies Nietzsche’s claim that the individual can be understood as a

¹⁷² Ibid., 123.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 103.

composite of natural drives and, further, that the species is a composite of these individuals and their interactions.

Conclusions

Considering Leiter, Schacht and Richardson, it is clear that Nietzsche's naturalism sits in a complex and sometimes contradictory relationship to his views on the natural sciences. In my view, this complexity can be reduced by returning to Nietzsche's Homeric-heroic impulse. Richardson's approach, in which an individual's drives are brought into the evolutionary schema as a way of developing a naturalistic account of human social relationships can be enhanced by understanding that Nietzsche saw a connection between the logic of natural selection and the logic of Homeric contest. As we will see in the following chapter, Nietzsche does not approach Homeric contest simply on the level of brute competition. Rather, he internalises Homeric contest in ways that draw on the logic of natural selection. This subtlety in his treatment of the topic enables him to connect scientific and heroic endeavour so as to avoid a simplistic brutality in conceiving human social relations as a competitive struggle to survive. In particular, as we will see, Nietzsche's reimagination of heroic contest, transformed by his consideration of this internal struggle of the individual, presents not brute competition but agonistic friendship as the solution to the problem of bringing ethics and contest together.

We can understand Nietzsche's reimagining of Heroic contest by considering the elements of heroic endeavour, at least as Nietzsche conceived it. Heroic endeavour is connected to the logic of natural selection in, for example, *GS* §318. Here, while arguing that most people respond to pain as a warning signal and make adjustments to avoid it, he also makes the distinctly Homeric point that there is another kind of person—the hero—who welcomes pain. This heroic type is 'species-preserving' and 'species-enhancing':

Wisdom in pain. – There is as much wisdom in pain as in pleasure: like pleasure, pain is one of the prime species-preserving forces. If it weren't, it would have perished long ago: that it hurts is no argument against it – it is its essence [...] True, there are people who [don't resile] when great pain approaches and who never look as proud, bellicose, and happy as when a storm is nearing – yes, pain itself gives them their greatest moments! They are the heroic human beings, the great *pain-bringers* of humanity [...] They are eminently species-preserving and species-enhancing forces, if only because they resist comfort and do not hide their nausea at this type of happiness.

Nietzsche advances this kind of argument by transposing this kind of species-preserving heroism to the search for knowledge through the scientific notion of experiment applied to morality. *GS* §324 makes the point that the search for knowledge can be understood in terms of heroic experiment:

In media vita. - No, life has not disappointed me. Rather, I find it truer, more desirable and mysterious every year – ever since the day the great liberator overcame me: the thought that life could be an experiment for the knowledge-seeker – not a duty, not a disaster, not a deception! And knowledge itself: let it be something else to others, like a bed to rest on or the way to one, or a diversion or a form of idleness; to me it is a world of dangers and victories in which heroic feelings also have their dance- and playgrounds. '*Life as a means to knowledge*' – with this principle in one's heart one can not only live bravely but also *live gaily and laugh gaily!* And who would know how to laugh and live well who did not first have a good understanding of war and victory?

The Homeric idea of contest, adapted to include intellectual and psychological elements, offers an opportunity to bring these threads together in a new way. Nietzsche has connected, albeit loosely, the ideas of scientific experiment, heroism in the search for knowledge, and the evolutionary concept of species preservation and enhancement. This heroism involves a certain kind of bravery – the bravery to eschew comfort, even to invite pain – in a quest for moral and ethical discovery.

This is a perspective on ethics that is deeply influenced by the Homeric hero, and the associated concept of contest. The twin themes of abundance and difference, at home in the world of evolutionary biology, are expanded to include the individual and the individual in their social relations. Natural selection relies on abundance, “squandering to the point of absurdity” (*GS* §349), in the production of difference, expressed as ever-new forms of biological life. Ethics, as we will see, involves individuals who also engage in abundant squandering, expressed as a contest in which ever-new forms of personal and social life emerge. What we will see in the closing chapter is that, for him, the highest form of social life, the one that most easily captures this spirit of adventure, of trial and error, and of the capacity to incorporate hardship, is friendship.

I claim that Nietzsche bases this kind of friendship on the Homeric concept of contest. The following chapter aims to explore, in detail, how Nietzsche understood the Homeric contest and how he distilled from it the touchstone ideas of abundance and difference.

Chapter 5: Nietzsche's New Homerism

In the preceding chapters we have seen Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics and of morality unfolding in several different ways. First, we saw that in his rejection of Christian morality he also criticises the concept of *agape* love and self-sacrifice. Then, after an initial passionate engagement, Nietzsche rejected Schopenhauer's morality of compassion. In these critiques we saw Nietzsche's desire to develop an ethics that emphasises individual difference and personal abundance, and how both of these approaches included components that were essentially incompatible with this. This incompatibility is due, in part, to their metaphysical foundations. As Nietzsche moves away from metaphysics towards naturalism, he draws on evolutionary biology to support his approach but also finds Darwinism problematic because of its pessimism about human possibilities, crystallised for Nietzsche in the idea of survival of the fittest and its converse, the struggle to the death.

Throughout I have claimed that Nietzsche saw in the Homeric ethos the basis for an ethics that would allow for individual difference and promote personal abundance, and that the essence of this Homeric idea is contest.¹⁷⁴ My claim is that, as far as Nietzsche's approach can be considered systematic,¹⁷⁵ in his approach he develops the ethical ideal of higher friendship based on the Homeric notion of contest but adapted and updated.

In what follows I aim to demonstrate how these themes of personal abundance and individual difference emerge from Nietzsche's understanding of the Homeric contest, and how the idea of contest continued to influence Nietzsche's thought. I will show how he transforms the idea of contest so that it could be applied not only to war and competitive games, as in the ancient world, but to the contest of drives within an individual and to their personal relationships. I

¹⁷⁴ General introductions to the conceptual background in antiquity can be found in Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility*; Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*; Irwin, *Classical Thought*.

¹⁷⁵ On Nietzsche as a systematic thinker, see Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*; John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996).

begin with an overview of the Nietzsche's treatment of individual difference and personal abundance as elements of Homeric contest.

Individual Difference and Personal Abundance

In the Homeric contest two great individuals vie for supremacy. Nietzsche generalises this by moving away from the purely physical contests of antiquity and including agonistic engagement over ideas. In both forms of contest—the brute performative notion of it and this intellectualised-spiritualised version of it—it is critical that the individuals that engage in the contest represent genuine alternatives to one another. One cannot have a genuine contest between two people who are essentially the same. That is to say, individual difference is necessary for the possibility of contest.

We have seen how in his response to Christianity as customary morality and to Schopenhauer's monistic metaphysics, Nietzsche rejects their common drive to homogeneity. He sees in the concept of Homeric contest the opposite possibility. There the possibility of a human experience in which difference (and the associated possibilities of variance, deviation and transgression) are not ruptures to some metaphysical fabric that need repair, or sins that need atoning, or even problems that need solving. The Homeric contest celebrates (and depends on) an understanding of humanity in which the contrary, the new, and the different are signature features of human greatness.

Here the pallid sameness of Christian monotheism and Schopenhauerian mystical give way to an existence characterised by change, improvement and development achieved through a clash in which opponents test their differences against one another to see which features emerge as stronger, more vital, more alive. Nietzsche found some support for this idea in evolutionary biology – in natural selection we see a creative process in which new things – truly *new* things – emerge. However, it is the Homeric contest that allows him to develop from this an ethics.

Nietzsche considers that the things that make human existence truly worthwhile – its *greatness* – emerge from contest.

Another feature of these metaphysical systems is their pessimism about human potential generally. Nietzsche considers that both Christianity and Schopenhauer propose a privative view of human existence: Christianity through its understanding of agape love as self-abnegation and Schopenhauer with his metaphysical interpretation of suffering. Evolutionary biology offers the possibility to abandon this metaphysically grounded negativity by proposing a naturalistic interpretation of human phenomena. Human beings can be understood as naturally abundant. While this is in itself attractive to Nietzsche, there are elements of this emergent science that he takes issue with. Through Darwin, Spencer and Paul Rée,¹⁷⁶ he comes to the view that this new science had not freed itself from privative assumptions. In particular, he rejects its characterisation of the natural world as the stage for a mere struggle for survival, which takes place as a competition over meagre and diminishing resources in which the highest goal is simply to remain alive long enough to propagate. This view of the natural world cannot explain the rich variety, creativity and depth of human experience.

Nietzsche sees the Homeric contest as premised on a different view of nature and, in particular, of human nature. The contest depends for its efficacy on the natural abundance of the individual. This creative, generative, or innovative view of human possibility suggests that human beings can adopt a higher standard for evaluating their life's work beyond mere survival. For example, the personal abundance of great individuals provides possibilities such as the development of high culture including music, theatre and fine arts. The privative view of nature cannot furnish a naturalist-materialist rationale for these aspects of human existence. It is the Homeric *agon* that, for Nietzsche, gives expression to these creative and generative capacities in human life.

¹⁷⁶ Brendan Donnellan, "Friedrich Nietzsche and Paul Rée: Cooperation and Conflict," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 43, no. 4 (1982); Robin Small, *Nietzsche and Rée: A Star Friendship* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Reconceptualising Homeric Ideals

These ideas coalesce into a new form of Homeric idealism that permeates Nietzsche's thought. In some of his early writings he reflects explicitly on the Homeric contest, arguing for these features. In later writings, and in particular the writings of 1881-1887, these key ideas re-emerge but they do so implicitly, embedded particularly in his descriptions of great individuals and human social relations. Where Nietzsche is sometimes cast as purely interested in the flourishing of solipsistic individuals at the expense of social or relational outcomes, I aim to show that the Homeric notions of difference and abundance allow for a new interpretation of his approach to social relations. In the following two chapters this will become evident: he first transposes the contest so that it applies to the individual in their self-overcoming, and only then does he take it outwards towards others. We will see in the final chapter how higher friendship emerges as a form of social relation that not only supports a contest ethos but is able to draw on it to express individual and social flourishing.

Recent Interpretations

Before we can build this picture of his contest-based ethos, we must first, however, understand the structure of Homeric contest as he saw it and the ways in which he adapted it for his purposes. Several scholars have stressed the importance of Homeric contest in Nietzsche's thought.¹⁷⁷ My interest here is in understanding the pervasive influence of Homeric contest in Nietzsche's thought more generally. Christa Davis Acampora's *Contesting Nietzsche* provides a rich analysis of Nietzsche's thought through the concept of the ancient Greek *agon*. She considers four philosophical contestants Nietzsche engaged with: Homer, Socrates, Saint Paul

¹⁷⁷ Acampora, "Contesting Nietzsche."; "Nietzsche Contra Homer, Socrates, and Paul."; *Contesting Nietzsche*; Appel, *Nietzsche Contra Democracy*; Hatab, "Prospects for a Democratic Agon."; Vanessa Lemm, "Nietzsche's Agon for Politics?," *Contemporary Political Theory* 14, no. 1 (2015); Siemens, "Nietzsche's Agon with Ressentiment."; "Agonal Communities of Taste."; "Agonal Writing."; Yunus Tuncel, "The Principle of Agon in Nietzsche's Thought" (Doctoral Thesis, The New School, 2000); *Agon in Nietzsche* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2013); Verkerk, "Nietzsche's Agonistic Ethics of Friendship."

and Wagner. She extracts from these contests general aspects of the Homeric *agon* as Nietzsche understood it and the resulting contributions to Nietzsche's overall project. From Homer she develops the function of the *agon* for revaluing values; from Socrates the function of the *agon* in understanding Nietzsche's 'artful naturalism;' from Saint Paul the concept of decadence (in the sense of personal and social decline) as an anti-*agon*; and from Wagner the idea of decomposing the subject into an internal contest of drives.

Acampora identifies the Greek concept of *agon* as a focal point for Nietzsche's thinking about the relationship between the individual and the community. She writes that in *The Birth of Tragedy*

Nietzsche argues that Homer's valorization of the *agon* produced new forms of possible relations that allowed people to forge significant attachments among individuals and groups and between people, the city, and the powerful forces of the gods.¹⁷⁸

That is to say, inasmuch as the contest focuses on the achievements of great individuals, it is also an inherently social construct in that the community moderates the process and outcomes of agonistic exchange:

Thus it is the *community* and not any great individual competitor that founds this form of interaction [contest]. The community has this priority by virtue of the fact that it provides the conditions for the possibility of meaningful agonistic exchange—it provides the judges, the grounds for deciding outcomes, and the conditions for participation.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*, 50.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

That is, there is a sense in which the true benefactor of agonistic exchange is not the victor but the community that sustains the possibility of agonistic exchange through which new 'excellences' are established.

We see in Acampora's description the importance of contest as a developmental process. Agonistic exchange is a process that repeats over long periods of time. Through it values are both established and overthrown, to the benefit of the victors in the short term and the community as a whole. The contest is, therefore, the site of revaluation as contingent values are established and overthrown in an ever-improving cycle. Through the contest society is able to develop over time by venerating the success of its strongest. The situation of decadence, in which an individual or a society becomes locked in a struggle that sees the vitality of the combatants diminish with each bout, is one in which the conditions for contest have failed. Contest and struggle are mutually exclusive options: contest results in improvement and development over time, struggle results in decline towards *ressentiment* and decadence.

While Acampora does not make this connection, this concept of development over time in Nietzsche seems derived from the evolutionary concept of natural selection. The result is a rejection of a bald Darwinian notion of struggle for survival, a downward-spiralling fight to the death, that results in his proposal for a new Homerism that integrates this evolutionary element with concepts derived from Homeric heroes and their contests.

Acampora highlights not only the social dimensions of Nietzsche's Homerism but also the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions. It is in these areas that we see most clearly an articulation of the themes of abundance and difference in Nietzsche's ethics. She expresses the concept of difference as Nietzsche's way of integrating the Apollonian and Dionysian in social relations. Here the Dionysian is understood as the ecstatic dissolution of the individual into the

whole and the Apollonian as the principle of individuation or separation of the individual from the whole.¹⁸⁰ In the contest

Agonistic relations [...] quite literally *activate* the process of individualization, the basis of distinguishing one from the other.¹⁸¹

In other words, the *agon* depends on difference. The function of the contest depends on two unique and distinct competitors, and “individualisation.” Further, the process of differentiation is based not only on the characteristics of each individual within themselves, but also by each individual’s social context:

Organizations form on the basis of their constituent parts (drives) and the kinds of possible relations are thereby circumscribed. They are also constituted in and through their external relations.¹⁸²

Lawrence Hatab presents a similar view:

For Nietzsche, every advance in life is an overcoming of some obstacle or counterforce, so that conflict is a mutual co-constitution of contending forces. Opposition generates development. The human self is not formed in some internal sphere and then secondarily exposed to external relations and conflicts. The self is constituted in and through what it opposes and what opposes it; in other words, the self is formed through agonistic relations. Therefore, any annulment of one’s Other would be an annulment of one’s self in this sense. Competition can be understood as

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 56-64.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 25, 36-37.

¹⁸² Ibid., 193.

a shared activity for the sake of fostering high achievement and self-development, and therefore as an intrinsically social activity.¹⁸³

We have seen in the previous chapters that, at least in my view, Nietzsche steadfastly resists any notion that the self is ecstatically constituted. Rather, he seeks to ground the individual in themselves as a natural, self-sustaining entity. The primary mechanism for this, as we will see in the next chapter, is also a process of contest, an internal contest through which the great individual achieves an alignment between conflicting drives.

This great, self-sustaining and self-defining individual is more frequently characterized as threatening, challenging and overthrowing the limitations of their social context rather than being constituted by it. However, it is also true to say that without an 'other'—a truly differentiated, similarly self-defining and self-sustaining other—the possibility of contest and therefore of further flourishing and development, disappears. At a practical level, when the individual enters into a contest, their role as contestant is constituted "in and through their external relations."

This understanding of the individual as constituted by the relationships stands in tension with Nietzsche's idea of the independently constituted individual who truly finds and knows herself only in solitude. For him, it is often in solitude that the great individual is able to fully express or recover themselves (e.g. *D* §§ 323, 325; *GS* §§285, 359).¹⁸⁴ This difficulty in interpretation is easily overcome: while the contest is essential to Nietzsche's understanding of interpersonal relations, the contest-relation is not essential to his understanding of the individual. Otherwise we risk reintroducing the Christian metaphysical idea of ontologically decentred personhood, in which the individual is constituted by their relations (see Chapter 2). Reintroducing this idea

¹⁸³ Hatab, "Prospects for a Democratic Agon," 134-35.

¹⁸⁴ Appel, *Nietzsche Contra Democracy*; Freibach-Heifetz, "Nietzsche's Conception of Friendship."; Hutter, "The Virtue of Solitude."; van Tongeren, "Politics, Friendship and Solitude."

would undermine the naturalist-materialist thrust of Nietzsche's thought. For him, the individual is constituted by virtue of an inner necessity—the mere biological fact of their physical existence.

A final insight to draw from Acampora's work is the notion that the contest depends on an assumption of abundance at several levels. The competitors bring their own abundance to the contest and the society in which they participate furnishes the conditions for endless victory and loss. Acampora stresses that the abundance that is required for the contest to become the generative principle of individual and social development is fragile.¹⁸⁵ It can fail in various ways but perhaps most notably it fails when difference is eliminated, that is, it fails in presence of tyranny. Tyranny leads to failure of the conditions for contest because it limits the expression of abundance to the singularity of an individual, group or party, something we saw expressed in Nietzsche's rejection of Christianity and of Schopenhauer.

We see here the close affinity of between abundance and difference: the kind of abundance that Nietzsche values both arises from and is generated by the friction that exists at the boundary conditions between two distinct, differentiated beings. This virtuous circle is what creates the upward-spiralling positive vision of social relations characterised by contest, in contrast to the failure-conditions of social relations characterised by struggle.

This insight about natural abundance as a necessary condition for Nietzschean contest opens up further avenues for understanding how the contest ethos relates to social organisation. For example, one could use this framework to argue that in the Nietzschean contest there are no Pyrrhic victories and no excuses. Each contestant is to be as powerful as they can be in opposition to one another, and there must always be the possibility of overthrowing the established powers. Emphasising the possibilities of a society organised in this way around

¹⁸⁵ Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*, 42-43.

contest contrasts with tyrannical and decadent forms of social organisation. The tyrant's accumulation of power and resources necessarily leads to Pyrrhic victories. Abundance is restricted: his or her enemies are simply starved of the strength to compete because the goal of the tyrant is not to stimulate effective opposition but to annihilate his or her enemies (e.g. *D* §199; *GS* §23). A decadent society—characterised by slave revolt and herd morality—allows contestants to blame external factors for their failures. In this case, the triumph of Christianity and its emphasis on personal abnegation and humility—the privative context of existence is the ultimate root of any ethical, financial, personal or other failure.

Nietzsche consistently evaluates these privative elements negatively. In my view, he evaluates the decadent society more harshly than the tyrant's society. The decadent society is, in Nietzsche's view, the final victory of Christian morality, characterised by the ascendancy of deficit and privation. Christianity aims to destroy both master and challenger. Not only does it aim at ideological hegemony for itself (as in the case of the tyrant), it also robs the victors of power through the concept of sin and of faith.¹⁸⁶ Society and the individual become locked in a struggle to the death.

There is a curious tension in Nietzsche's thought here. This strong, ideal form of society characterised by abundance and difference, set on an upward-spiralling path by continual contest to produce every higher standards of value, is also a fragile form of social organisation. Weak forms of social organisation—the decadent or the tyrannical—represent an ever-present threat to this supposedly ideal and strong form of social organisation. Nietzsche recognises this capacity of the Christian faith to overcome the strong society (e.g. *D* §71), or for the tyrant to emerge and dominate a society for their own individual ends (e.g. *GS* §23). The strong society turns out not to be so strong after all.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 112–22.

The answer that he seems to provide, as unsatisfactory as it is, is that these decadent and tyrannical forms of social organisation achieve their victories by appealing to the worst rather than to the best. They are characterised as a kind of poison (*D* §321, *GS* §359) that weakens society by undermining its best and brightest. The outcome—slave revolt and herd morality—is an ever-present possibility that threatens, in his view, to put the human race, its societies and its individuals on the path to annihilation.

This contrast between the tyrant, the decadent and the strong provides a useful context for thinking about Nietzsche's ethics. In particular, whatever Nietzsche have to say about the great individual and the redemption of self-concern, he does not contemplate one-sided tyranny in social relationships. The focus of this thesis is not on these failure modes—tyranny, decadence and the like—but rather on the ascendant forms of individual and social life that are made possible under the conditions of Homeric contest, for Nietzsche's somewhat idealised great individuals. For the present, it is sufficient to note that Acampora has furnished us with the important ideas of abundance and difference as two essential elements of contest. Further, she provides us with the insights (1) that contest is an inherently social idea: it structures the relationship between the individual and their society and (2) that contest can be seen both interpersonally in terms of social relations and intrapersonally, in which the individual is conceived as themselves the site of competing drives.

This provides us with a framework for developing Nietzsche's ethics: abundance and difference on the one hand and the transformation of contest to apply to both interpersonal and intrapersonal *agon*. In subsequent chapters I will articulate this framework in detail. In what follows I will examine how Nietzsche himself describes and develops the concept of contest. One difficulty that presents itself immediately is that Nietzsche rarely discusses Homeric contest explicitly. In what follows I aim to show that what Nietzsche does say explicitly about Homeric

contest in his early writings is extended and sublimated in such a way that it permeates his later published works.

Contest in Nietzsche's Thought (1870-1887)

It is generally accepted that Homer is an important influence on Nietzsche, beginning with his academic career as a classical philologist and continuing throughout his life. The precise nature of this influence, however, is debated. I am not proposing an exhaustive survey of the issues in relation to the validity of his treatment of Homeric texts and themes. Rather, I propose to consider the way in which those themes that Nietzsche identifies early on as 'Homeric' remain influential throughout the period under consideration in this thesis, namely, the period 1881-1887.

In Nietzsche's early writings there is considerable evidence of Homeric influence. Nietzsche himself recognises this influence explicitly and writes directly about the idea of contest. What we find is that Nietzsche starts with a concept of contest that is an amalgam of Homeric ideas and Schopenhauerian metaphysics, and that by the time he publishes *Daybreak* he has decisively rejected the metaphysical elements of it in favour of a naturalistic approach. This is itself an advance on the original texts, which contain their fair share of metaphysical ideas.

What emerges is a system of thought strongly influenced by Homer but that stands on a naturalistic foundation. This has significant consequences, including the way it changes Nietzsche's approach to the notion of contest. When Nietzsche re-bases the concept of contest on his own naturalist foundation, he develops a version of it that is essentially optimistic about human endeavour because it focuses on the ideas of abundance, development and difference. This stands in stark contrast to the metaphysically grounded concept of contest with which he begins.

Three early texts that demonstrate this transformation of the concept of contest are *The Dionysian World View* (1870), *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871), and *Homer's Contest* (1872). *DWV* sections 1 and 2 outline the basic structure of Nietzsche's early thought in which the metaphysical opposition of Apollonian and Dionysian is central. The Apollonian represents moderation ("measure") and limits, operates by means of dream-states and results in semblance (the "veiling of truth"). For Nietzsche, this originates in Greek thought and is expressed in Homeric epic poetry, painting, sculpture and musical "architectonics". The Dionysian represents excess as opposed to moderation, operates by means of intoxication-states as opposed to dream-states, and results in direct access to truth rather than veiling it. It originates in "Asia" and is expressed in lyric poetry, musical harmony and ecstatic dance. In Nietzsche's view, the genius of Greek thought was its capacity to integrate these two streams of thought, turning the Asian "spring" of Dionysian thought into a Greek "river":

Never was more fuss made of a stranger [i.e. Dionysus]; [but] he was a fearful stranger (*hostis* in every sense of the word), powerful enough to demolish the house of his host. A great revolution began in all forms of [Greek] life: Dionysus penetrated into every area, including that of art.¹⁸⁷

This dynamic tension is resolved by integrating the new Dionysian ideas with the old Apollonian ideas, resulting in tragic-comedic art forms. The Dionysian ecstasy results in disgust for the mundane aspects of life that Apollonian thought consecrates. By integrating these two impulses, Nietzsche argues that Greek thought becomes able to live in between them, hovering between the Apollonian desire for beauty and the Dionysian lust for intoxication. This middle position is characterised by probability rather than certainty and by experiences of the sublime and the comical as responses to the absurdity of daily life.

¹⁸⁷ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, 127.

Nietzsche overlays this union of Apollonian and Dionysian impulses in Greek with a Schopenhauerian interpretation. Here two Wills—the Apollonian and Dionysian Wills—are interpreted as expressions of a singular underlying metaphysical unity, derived from a common goal:

The struggle between both manifestations of the Will had an extraordinary goal, the creation of a *higher possibility of existence* and the attainment thereby of a yet *higher glorification* (through art).¹⁸⁸

This understanding of the function of art and its relationship to Will has a core feature that is especially relevant to this discussion. Here Nietzsche discusses various forms of artistic expression (acting, music as harmony, music as rhythm, sculpture, and painting) on the basis of their ability to mediate between the underlying metaphysical reality of Will and ordinary human experience. Here Nietzsche's theory of art, aimed at integrating the Homeric expression of (western) Apollonian optimism with (eastern) Dionysian pessimism, depends on Schopenhauer's unitive metaphysics of the Will. At this stage of his development, Nietzsche's concept of contest is tied up with a metaphysical binary of opposing forces, and it remains essentially pessimistic. What we do see, however, is an emphasis on aesthetic experience that is deeply infused with metaphysical and ethical consideration, and that aims at ascendant forms of human experience.

This combination of aesthetics and metaphysics is sharpened in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where Nietzsche expresses the relationship between Dionysian excess and Apollonian moderation in a strongly Schopenhauerian direction. The Apollonian is explicitly identified with the *principium individuationis* (the principle of individuation) and the Dionysian with the underlying metaphysical unity of Will. Individuality is the illusion of Apollo, self-abandonment

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 133.

and the annihilation of the individual in ecstatic performance is the truth of Dionysus. Homeric art is here completely identified with the Apollonian world of illusion:

Homeric 'naiveté' can be understood only as the complete victory of the Apolline illusion.¹⁸⁹

Nietzsche is here asserting several things at once. The function of Dionysiac art—whether it be in music or in Attic tragedy—is to provide metaphysical solace in the face of suffering:

the solace that in the ground of things, and despite all changing appearances, life is indestructibly mighty and pleasurable.¹⁹⁰

This consolation is achieved by the dissolution of the individual and stands in opposition to the solace provided by Homeric art. In Homeric art the gods justify ordinary human experience by their participation in them ("the only satisfactory theodicy!").¹⁹¹ There is here a form of Homeric excess which, in contrast to Dionysian excess, confirms and justifies human existence:

Nothing here [in the world of the Olympian gods] reminds us of asceticism, of spirituality and duty; everything here speaks only of overbrimming, indeed triumphant existence, where everything that exists has been deified, regardless of whether it is good or evil.¹⁹²

While this text hints at the Homeric idea of abundance and its importance, Nietzsche is here subordinating Homer to Schopenhauerian pessimism. The Homeric enthusiasm for existence, what Nietzsche here calls Homeric naiveté, pales in comparison to the mystical experience of the Dionysiac festivals of singing and dancing. This understanding of mystical experience is derived from his reading of Schopenhauer: in ecstatic experiences the true nature of reality (in

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 25.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 39.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁹² Ibid., 22.

which individuals are manifestations of an underlying Will that is itself characterised by the experience of suffering) breaks through into the world of appearance and is made available to individuals as experience. That is, despite his interest in the Homeric “overbrimming” and “triumphant” experience of existence, at this stage he remains wedded to Schopenhauerian metaphysics. Homer is naïve in his enthusiasm; Schopenhauer’s ecstatic mysticism expresses reality.

There appears to be a radical change of direction in his thinking on the value of Homeric ideals between these texts, written during 1870 and 1871, and the essay *Homer’s Contest*, written in 1872. In this essay he praises Homeric competitive practice for both its ethical function and for its aesthetics. Release from the obscurity of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics of Will, Homeric optimism about human possibility combined with the ‘Apollonian’ drive to moderation and discipline is no longer dismissed as “naïveté,” but comes to the fore in a conceptual move through which the world of ‘mere’ appearance triumphs. Central to this transformation in Nietzsche’s thought is the Homeric concept of life as contest, which is at once the foundation for art, ethics, and the concept of the state.

The logic of this short essay is as follows. Nietzsche begins by arguing that Homer’s concept of contest provides a mechanism for interpreting the violence and cruelty of the pre-Homeric age. Without this mechanism, the pre-Homeric age would appear nihilistic:

The wake of that bloody [pre-Homeric] period stretches deep into Hellenic history [...] the conclusions to which a continual exposure to a world of combat and cruelty led [were] nausea at existence, [...] the belief that existence and indebtedness were identical.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ Nietzsche, *The Nietzsche Reader*, 96.

This pessimistic conclusion he attributes to “India and the Orient in general,” a reference to Schopenhauer and his ‘Asian’ influence. The Greek interpretation of combat and cruelty, he argues, was opposite. Rather than leading to nausea, Hellenic culture was inoculated against nihilism by framing combat and cruelty within the concept of contest.

To understand this interpretation of contest, Nietzsche points to the dual character of *Eris* (envy) in Hellenism:

In order to understand it, we must assume that Greek genius acknowledged the existing impulse [to combat and cruelty], terrible as it was, and regarded it as *justified* [...] Combat and the pleasure of victory were acknowledged: and nothing severs the Greek world so sharply from ours as the resultant *colouring* of individual ethical concepts, for example *Eris* and *envy*... [quoting Pausanias] ‘One should praise the one Eris as much as blame the other [...] One promotes wicked war and feuding [the other] drives even the unskilled man to work [...] neighbour competes with neighbour for prosperity.’¹⁹⁴

This is not dissimilar to the issues we saw in Nietzsche’s engagement with evolutionary biology. There we saw Nietzsche’s concern to promote ascendant forms of life contrasting with the idea of the struggle for survival. Here, in this earlier text, we could characterise these two forms of envy as two different types of competition: ‘struggle’ that promotes mere feuding, and ‘contest’ that promotes prosperity.

Nietzsche elaborates:

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 96-97.

And not just Aristotle but the whole of Greek antiquity thinks about grudge and envy differently from us and agrees with Hesiod, who first portrays one Eris as wicked, in fact the one who leads men into hostile struggle-to-the-death, and then praises the other Eris as good who, as jealousy, grudge and envy, goads men to action, not, however, the action of a struggle-to-the-death but the action of the *contest*.¹⁹⁵

The distinction Nietzsche draws here between “struggle-to-the-death” and “the action of contest” is important. The first form of competition is life-negating and the second is life-affirming. In the former, the trajectory of the struggle is towards a minimum, death, where one party merely survives and the other is extinguished. In the action of contest people are “goaded to action.”

We have here in this concept of good *Eris* the emergence of abundance as a core motif for Nietzsche’s concept of contest. It is based on his earlier view that Homer’s concept of life is based on an overbrimming, triumphant form of existence. Where previously that was considered naïve, here it is baptised as the prod that goads people to action, the action of a contest that results in prosperity. Where this is cast in general terms, we will see later how this is further developed by Nietzsche into his idea of the overflowing personal abundance of his great individual.

In the remainder of this essay Nietzsche applies the concept of contest to the state and to culture. He uses this discussion of social institutions to articulate a second core idea that is important in later writings. This is the idea that contest depends on difference, which is expressed as the endless emergence of new competitors to oppose the established victors. Through the contest

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 97.

generated by the emergence of new and different competitors, society is able to refresh.

Hegemony and homogeneity are antithetical to the contest:

The original function of this strange institution is, however, not as a safety valve [the destruction of potential opponents through ostracism] but as a stimulant: the pre-eminent individual is removed so that a new contest of powers can be awakened: a thought which is hostile to the 'exclusivity' of genius in the modern sense, but which assumes that there are always *several* geniuses to incite each other to action, just as they keep each other within certain limits, too. This is the kernel of the Hellenistic idea of competition: it loathes a monopoly of predominance and fears the dangers of this, it desires, as *protective measure* against genius – a second genius.¹⁹⁶

Thus the core themes of abundance and difference are expressed in Nietzsche's early interpretation of Homer's contest and these ideas contribute to his positive re-evaluation of the Homeric world. One final theme to note from this early essay is the idea of development over time on the basis of contest, for both individuals and communities. This is important because it resonates with the key ideas he takes from his reading of evolutionary biology, which is that as contest takes place over time, it can lead to the emergence of new (and perhaps stronger) forms of life.

First, in applying this concept to the state, Nietzsche describes the alignment of communal and individual goals. For him, personal development is integrally connected to the wellbeing of the state:

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 98.

[...] 'selfishness' [for the Jesuits, here cited positively] obtains its character of 'good' and 'evil' from the aims towards which it strives. But for the ancients, the aim of agonistic education was the well-being of the whole, of state society. For example, every Athenian was to develop himself, through competition, to the degree to which this self was of most use to Athens and would cause least damage.¹⁹⁷

Second, he considers the development of high culture over time and through contest, especially in artistic expression. The connection here is expressed ambiguously but lays the groundwork for his theory of art in later works: "the Greek knows the artist *only in personal struggle*." Without elaborating, Nietzsche recognises the problem that this idea poses for his own social context:

What a problem reveals itself to us when we enquire about the relationship of the contest to the conception of the work of art!¹⁹⁸

This interest in the relationship between contest and art is connected to his later objections to evolutionary biology: high culture and artistic endeavor are as much the outcomes of contest as is species-survival, meaning for Nietzsche that the goal of mere survival is not sufficient.

Finally, we see the concept of development expressed in an evolutionary context in *Human, All Too Human* (published 1878), the last of his 'early' works. In §224 *Ennoblement through degeneration*, Nietzsche uses the idea of development over time *against* the concept of "struggle for existence." At both the species (and "community") level, and at the individual level, Nietzsche here argues that communities and individuals evolve by overcoming defects. In the case of communities, the 'defect' is a free spirit who is prepared to try new things, and in the

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 99.

case of individuals, the defect is some physical or psychological disadvantage. In these cases, the host organism (community or individual) adapts itself to the defect over time by providing some other compensatory, strengthening feature.

Thus we find that the important ideas of contest, abundance, difference, and development towards higher goals all find expression in the early texts and, I would argue, remain as foundational concepts for the following series of publications beginning with *Daybreak*. I conclude by noting a conspicuous and consequential absence. In *Homer's Contest* and other related writings of this period (late 1872-1873),¹⁹⁹ we find Nietzsche develop the ancient concept of contest without reference to either Apollonian-Dionysian or Schopenhauerian metaphysics. It is especially noteworthy that the Apollonian-Dionysian distinction has lost its importance. This change of perspective reflects Nietzsche's growing impetus to reject metaphysical systems, whether classical or contemporary, and reinforces the notion that Nietzsche's ethics is an attempt to understand human experience on a naturalist-materialist foundation. This is the foundation of Nietzsche's new Homerism: the conceptual contrast between life-negating struggle and life-enhancing contest that promotes the emergence of new standards of excellence over time.

Between writing these essays in 1870-1872 and the publication of *Daybreak* in 1881 Nietzsche continued to write and publish, culminating in *Human, All Too Human* volume one (1878) and volume two (1880). These writings represent a period of Nietzsche's development in which he continued to analyse and critique classical and contemporary philosophy and to develop his own approach. It is marked by an increasing interest in science and scientific method.²⁰⁰

Daybreak marks a turning point inasmuch as Nietzsche begins to focus more directly on a critique of morality. This critique draws on his earlier thinking but recognises the limitations

¹⁹⁹ Especially *The Greek State and Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (ibid., 88-94, 101-13.)

²⁰⁰ See the Introduction by Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, Nietzsche, *Daybreak*.

of the science of his day in its application to psychological, social and ethical questions. In my view, this period of his development culminates in 1886-1887 with the republication of *The Gay Science* with the inclusion of its fifth section. In subsequent publications, from *On the Genealogy of Morals* onwards, Nietzsche becomes hard-line, narrow and aggressive in his approach, characterised by unhelpful features such as increasing xenophobia and misogyny.

The period 1881-1887 is fruitful for this analysis because it constitutes, in my view, Nietzsche's most focused attempt to address problems of ethics and sociability in a (relatively) measured fashion that draws together the various strands of his earlier thought. The important texts of this period, at least for my purposes, are *Daybreak* (1881), *The Gay Science* (Books 1-4 in 1882, Book 5 in 1887), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885) and *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886). The concept of contest that Nietzsche analyses and adapts in the early essays described above appears in these later works largely implicit ways, where explicit discussion of Homeric contest moves into the background and derivative concepts such as heroism, danger, opposition, adversity and (self-)overcoming take centre stage.

Other scholars (notably Yunus Tuncel) have pointed out the difficulty of analysing the concept of contest in these writings because of its embedded and implicit character.²⁰¹ Fully understanding the concept of contest in this period is further complicated because not only does Nietzsche refer to the contest in this indirect fashion, he also extends the concept to new domains. Whereas the Homeric concept focused on the physical struggle between two athletes, Nietzsche extends it to include interpersonal contest (contest in personal relationships) and internal contest (Nietzsche's notion of a composite self).

This extension and internalization of contest means that Nietzsche uses new language to describe it. Contest becomes, for example, power (*GS* §297, 369), will (*GS* §347), war (*GS* §92,

²⁰¹ Tuncel, "The Principle of Agon in Nietzsche's Thought."

362), victory (*D* §571, *GS* §258, 323), heroism (*GS* §268, 283, 292, 318, 324, 333), error (*GS* §344), difference (*GS* §143, 149, 260, 355), danger (*GS* §303, 343, 375), suffering (*GS* §48, 56, 302, 318, 37) and contradiction (*GS* §297, 369). I will not attempt to fully describe all of these texts. Rather, in what follows, I will consider those texts in which Homeric contest is explicitly recognised as an ongoing inspiration for Nietzsche's thought and those texts where he discusses his attempt to internalise and/or extend it. Throughout, I will draw attention to core themes of abundance and difference as integrative ideas.

GS §349 is an exemplary text in this regard. Here Nietzsche contrasts Darwinism with natural abundance along lines similar to the distinction between contest and struggle. He argues that creatures in a state of distress focus on self-preservation. In contrast, creatures that suffer from their own abundance focus not merely on self-preservation but on expansion, growth, power and dominance. This text is important because he explicitly connects Darwinism with the view that nature is premised on lack and privation. This is opposed to his own view that nature is abundant:

It should be considered symptomatic when some philosophers—for example, Spinoza who was consumptive—considered the instinct of self-preservation decisive and *had* to see it that way; for they were individuals in conditions of distress. That our modern natural sciences have become so thoroughly entangled in this Spinozistic dogma (most recently and worst of all, Darwinism with its incomprehensibly one-sided doctrine of the “struggle for existence”) is probably due to the origin of most natural scientists [...] their ancestors knew the difficulties of survival only too well first-hand. The whole of English Darwinism breathes something like the musty air of English overpopulation [...] but a natural scientist should come out of his human nook: and in nature it is

not conditions of distress that are *dominant* but overflow and squandering, even to the point of absurdity. The struggle for existence is only an *exception*, a temporary restriction of the will to life. The great and small struggle always revolves around superiority, around growth and expansion, around power—in accordance with the will to power which is the will to life.

Here we see Nietzsche expanding on the contrast he drew in *Homer's Contest* between a struggle to the death and life-affirming contest by connecting it to his interest in evolutionary biology. That is, the struggle-to-death and the Darwinian struggle-for-existence together represent the negative aspect of contest conceived as competition based on scarcity. Conversely, the idea of will to power here represents the positive aspect of contest, which, using the analysis of his early texts, we can see it conceived in its Homeric form, that is, based on abundance. Struggle is a negative form of competition that descends towards death and in which life becomes defined as mere survival. By way of contrast, contest is a positive form of competition that ascends towards an open future based on the enhancement of human excellence.

Not only does Nietzsche describe these two types of competition, he also describes their foundations. The negative form is based on pessimism about human existence (the “human nook”) that assumes lack, privation and threat, and then extends this negative picture to all of nature. The positive form is based on a naturalist-materialist optimism about existence that proposes absurd squandering as the distinguishing feature of nature, and then extends this quality into human experience. This absurd squandering fuels the positive action of contest that produces excellence. That is not to say that excellence is necessarily produced by the naturally wasteful process of contest – it is rather that contest is able to produce excellence whereas struggle is not. Thus we see in *The Gay Science*, albeit implicitly, the Homeric notion of contest and the theme of abundance. This is but one example of how implicit reference to Homeric

contest, and its themes of abundance and difference, continue to influence Nietzsche during this period.

Given that Homeric contest continues to influence Nietzsche's thought, we can also see in this period how Nietzsche takes the Homeric idea of contest and extends it to new domains. For example, in *GS* §23, Nietzsche describes the signs that might demonstrate that a particular society is in decline as the "signs of corruption." One sign of corruption is 'laxness.' I quote his analysis in full:

[...] a society in which corruption spreads is accused of laxity; and it is obvious that the esteem of war and the pleasure in war diminish, while the comforts of life are now desired just as ardently as were warlike and athletic honours formerly. What is usually overlooked, however, is that the ancient civil energy and passion, which received magnificent visibility through war and competitive games, has now transformed itself into countless private passions and has merely become less visible; indeed, in times of 'corruption' the power and force of a people's expended energies are probably greater than ever, and the individual spends them on a lavish scale which he could not previously have afforded – when he was not yet rich enough! And thus it is precisely in times of 'laxness' that tragedy runs through the houses and streets, that great love and great hatred are born and the flame of knowledge blazes up into the sky.

Here Nietzsche explicitly transposes the Homeric performative notion of contest—"war and competitive games"—into a more personal and internalised expression. The examples he gives of this transposition are tragedy, love, hatred and knowledge. The point of the passage is that

the accusation of laxness against such a society is false because the accuser is concerned only with this performative notion of contest and is unable to discern the subtler forms of contest, based again on the personal abundance of the participants, in the arena of 'private passions.'

Another example of this can be found in *GS* §283. Here Nietzsche explores the relationship between social and individual goals in terms of war, bravery, heroism and danger:

I welcome all the signs of a more virile, warlike age approaching that will above all restore honour to bravery! For it shall pave the way for a still higher age and gather the strength that the latter will need one day – the age that will carry heroism into the search for knowledge and *wage wars* for the sake of thoughts and their consequences. To this end we now need many preparatory brave human beings who surely cannot spring from nothingness any more than from the sand and slime of present-day civilization and urbanization: human beings who know how to be silent, lonely, determined, and satisfied and steadfast in invisible activities; human beings profoundly predisposed to look, in all things, for what must be *overcome*; human beings whose cheerfulness, patience, modesty, and contempt for great vanities is just as distinctive as their magnanimity in victory and patience with the small vanities of the defeated; human beings with a sharp and free judgement concerning all victors and the share of chance in every victory and glory; human beings with their own festivals, their own working days, their own periods of mourning, accustomed to command with assurance and equally prepared, when called for, to obey – in each case, equally proud, equally serving their own cause; more endangered, more fruitful, happier human beings! For – believe me – the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest

fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is – *to live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors, you seekers of knowledge! Soon the time will be past in which you had to be content living hidden in forests like shy deer! Finally the search for knowledge will reach for its due; it will want to rule and possess, and you with it!

Nietzsche here extends the concept of heroic war to the search for knowledge. The echoes of Homer are abundant in this passage: war, victory, glory, pride, heroism and seafaring, for example. However, rather than conceive this new age in terms of brute political actions, Nietzsche describes this coming age as one where wars are waged between peers on the basis of ideas and in the search for knowledge. This is clearly not a socio-political or geopolitical concept of war. It is the Homeric ethos extended into an interpersonal domain (“Live at war with your peers”) in an exhortation to “live dangerously.” This applied to social life and to personal relationships. Further, the concepts of danger, overcoming, war and victory are connected to ideas of personal abundance. The human beings that can engage in this kind of war are fruitful, happy, cheerful, magnanimous, and patient (as well as modest!).

GS §13 takes this idea even further. Here Nietzsche interprets personal relationships through the lens of contest:

Benefiting and hurting others are ways of exercising one's power over them – that is all one wants in such cases! We *hurt* those to whom we need to make our power perceptible, for pain is a much more sensitive means to that end than pleasure: pain always asks for the cause, while pleasure is inclined to stop with itself and not look back. We *benefit* and

show benevolence toward those who already depend on us in some way (that is, who are used to thinking of us as their causes); we want to increase their power because we thus increase our own, or we want to show them the advantage of being in our power – that way, they will be more satisfied with their situation and more hostile towards and willing to fight against the enemies of *our* power. Whether in benefiting or hurting others we make sacrifices does not affect the ultimate value of our actions; even if we stake our lives, as martyrs do for their church, it is a sacrifice made for our desire for power or for the preservation of our feeling of power.

Here Nietzsche finds a common basis for malefaction and benefaction. Both represent an urge to exercise power over another. On the surface such actions may represent sacrifice but Nietzsche's interpretation of sacrifice, when seen as contest, is that an individual makes sacrifices in view of a greater benefits to themselves. These texts are examples of a broader shift in Nietzsche's use of the concept of contest. He takes the bare concept of contest as competition between athletes and war between nations, and he extends it to the personal and internalised domains of the passions and interpersonal relationships.

Finally, we can also see that Nietzsche takes the concept of contest even further and applies it to the internal constitution of the individual. In this period he develops an idea of the individual constituted by a complex interaction of internal drives. *D* §119 is a good example. Here Nietzsche describes the individual in terms of their drives, each of which is nourished by a particular set of experiences. Nietzsche seems to lament the chance nature of this nourishment, because people are most often unaware of the laws that govern the growth or stunting of their drives.

However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of *drives* which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counter-play among one another, and above all the laws of their *nutriment* remain wholly unknown to him. This nutriment is therefore a work of chance: our daily experiences throw some prey in the way of now this, now that drive, and the drive seizes it eagerly; but the coming and going of these events as a whole stands in no rational relationship to the nutritional requirements of the totality of the drives: so that the outcome will always be twofold - the starvation and stunting of some and the overfeeding of others. Every moment of our lives sees some of the polyp-arms of our being grow and others of them wither, all according to the nutriment which the moment does or does not bear with it.

In *Daybreak* §560 Nietzsche develops this idea further, proposing that it is possible to learn the laws that govern the growth of one's internal drives (see also *D* §§109, 143, 245 and *GS* §333). The metaphor is a botanical one.²⁰² The individual is conceived as a garden composed of many plants and personal development likened to the fashioning of this/ garden:

One can dispose of one's drives like a gardener and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis; one can do it with the good or bad taste of a gardener and, as it were, in the French or English or Dutch or Chinese fashion [...]

²⁰² Perhaps calling to mind the garden of Epicurus.

For him this understanding of the individual as heterogeneous and composite is the basis for the very notion that the individual can develop:

Do the majority not believe in themselves as in complete fully-developed facts? Have the great philosophers not put their seal on this prejudice with the doctrine of the unchangeability of character?

Conclusions

These examples demonstrate the ways in which Nietzsche is prepared to reinvent the Homeric notion of contest so that it can serve his purpose in developing his ethics. The transformation is manifold: he 'updates' Homeric contest with the naturalist approach of evolutionary biology and he extends it away from the performative notion of athletic competition and political aggression towards the interpersonal and the psychological. Despite this transformation, I claim that the important themes of abundance and difference remain.

We have also seen how Nietzsche develops these ideas against the backdrop of numerous influences, including Christianity, Schopenhauer and evolutionary biology. Where Christianity and Schopenhauer present metaphysically grounded alternatives, evolutionary biology presents a naturalist alternative. Neither presents a satisfactory solution for Nietzsche, because each in their own way presents a view that, at least on his interpretation of them, opposes these core ideals. Christianity empties the individual through *agape* love, Schopenhauer dissolves the individual into a metaphysical *Wille*, evolution allows individual difference but posits mere survival as the its goal.

In other words, these three influences, in their own ways, propose a life-denying struggle that contrasts with the life-affirming character of contest. Nietzsche adapts this life-affirming content so that it moves beyond the performative and into the personal. In the next chapter I

will discuss the consequences of internalising the contest through the concept of the drives, and in the following chapter I will show how this informs Nietzsche's ethical ideal of higher friendship.

Chapter 6: The Individual As Contest

In the preceding chapters I have argued that Nietzsche constructs his ethics by adapting the idea of Homeric contest for his own purposes. These adaptations include the rejection of metaphysical grounds for ethics and the inclusion of some motifs from evolutionary biology. The result is an ethics characterised by contest between individuals as the naturalistically conceived basis for an ethics that values personal abundance and individual difference.²⁰³ This agonistic approach is radically different to the metaphysical and scientific approaches that Nietzsche rejects. It assumes an overwhelming natural abundance both within the contestants and in their environment. It celebrates genuine and radical difference as the engine room of contest, and it embraces change in the form of social and individual development over time as the outcome of contest.

In his works published between 1881 and 1887 Nietzsche explores this kind of contest and the possibility of an ethics based on it in many different ways. In this chapter I will begin with the individual and in the following chapter I work outwards towards the individual in their social relations. I will show how Nietzsche conceives individuals as themselves as a site of contest and explore how this conception of the individual as internally differentiated relates to the idea of personal abundance. In particular, I aim to show that this conception of the great, self-concerned individual is not that of an unconstrained narcissist or egotist, but rather that of a person who through self-overcoming is able to bring harmony and order to their internal world. This, in turn, allows the great individual to engage in social relationships that feature, for example, love and generosity.

²⁰³ It should be remembered that when I use the term 'individual,' I am referring to a particular person as constituted by their underlying drives – a social structure of drives and affects. The term should not be taken to refer to ideas such as an indivisible soul or a disembodied consciousness.

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That Nietzsche describes the individual in these terms is uncontroversial. Beyond this initial premise, however, there is little agreement. Nietzsche's view of the drives has been understood biologically, psychologically and even cosmologically, or in various combinations. I begin with two important contributions to this discussion, namely those of Parkes, who uses a musical motif in which the Nietzschean individual brings harmony to his internal drives as in the analogy of a musical score, and Thiele, for whom Nietzsche conceives the individual as analogous to the Athenian *polis*, where harmony is achieved through democratic contest.²⁰⁴

Parkes draws attention to the multiplicity of the self as a Nietzschean theme that contrasts with the usual assumption that the self is unified:

Although the topic of the multiple self has important ramifications in a number of fields of philosophical inquiry, it has been generally ignored. Many problems in philosophy and their putative solutions rest on an unquestioned conception of the unity of the self. Whether we understand ourselves as some kind of unity or as a complex multiplicity of persons or agents is less a theoretical question than an existential issue with far reaching psychological and ethical implications.²⁰⁵

In drawing out this picture of the composite self, Parkes provides extensive commentary on the influences that shape Nietzsche's concept of it, including Fichte and Holderlin.²⁰⁶ He also identifies some of the ancient influences on Nietzsche's thought, including a distinctively Homeric influence in which the individual is conceived as a society, with its own internal

²⁰⁴ Parkes, *Composing the Soul*; Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*, 196.

²⁰⁵ Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, 320.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 35, 262-66.

‘citizens,’ the thought that Thiele takes up in some detail.²⁰⁷ He also articulates a relationship between the Homeric contest and the ancient Greek conception of self-cultivation through the idea of integration: he proposes an interpretation of self-cultivation that requires integrating the drives in order to bring them into balance.²⁰⁸

The idea of the composite self that Parkes articulates has several important features. Firstly, the health of the individual depends not on extirpating the drives but in nurturing them. This is central: for Parkes Nietzsche is here breaking with the Christian tradition and what Nietzsche perceives as its largely negative relationship to the passions.²⁰⁹ Harmonising the drives gives the individual the ability to construct their experience of the world by bringing multiple imaginative and creative perspectives to bear on it. The harmony of drives does not take away from their fundamental differentiation, instead, it allows the individual use the many perspectives presented by their drives and to form from them a single integrated vision of the world. This allows the individual to exercise their power over the world through imaginative interpretation:

Insofar as [drives] imaginably interpret the world (as presented in nerve stimuli), the drives are manifestations of will to power.²¹⁰

Parkes’ analysis has much to commend it, in particular his ability to bring together Nietzsche’s concept of the drives, his naturalism and his experimentalism into a unified framework. He also provides something of a solution to the problem of how drives are to be governed if not by unitive self. In this regard, he considers the intrapsychic multiplicity of the great individual to

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 252, 312.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 159–73.

²⁰⁹ Whether Parkes is right to attribute this stance to Nietzsche is questionable. The question for Nietzsche seems to be one of the passions either being inflamed and out of control (something he attributes to Christianity, see *D* §§58, 192) or being moderated through self-cultivation. In either case, it is evident enough that the passion for self-distinction and pre-eminence—a Homeric passion—seems at the same time to him inimical to Christianity and central to personal flourishing.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 309.

be a kind of drive-aristocracy, in which the totality of a person's drives are directed by a group of "governing drives."²¹¹

The ideas of personal abundance, individual difference and development over time, the central themes of this thesis, also play a central role in Parkes' interpretation. He considers the drives, whether positive or negative, to be the source of an individual's energy. The abundance of the individual depends on how harmoniously their drives are arranged.²¹² For him the differentiation of multiple drives within the individual is essential to their health, and, conversely, the tyranny of a single drive is the sign of an individual in decline.²¹³ He sees the individual's development as the confluence of drives shaping and directing an individual's life over time.²¹⁴ He also sees this development over time through the lens of self-cultivation,²¹⁵ which he refers to as a form of contest, quoting unpublished note from 1881 in which Nietzsche writes "Constant *transformation*—you must pass through many individuals in a short period of time. The means is *constant struggle*."²¹⁶

Parkes sees the Nietzschean individual as ontologically composed by their relationships with others. He does this because, in his view, if, there is nothing else in the individual but a multiplicity of drives ungoverned by a 'self,' then the individual does not, in fact, exist. It is the drives themselves that interact with the outside world—they are stimulated, nourished or deprived of their nutriment strictly because of the events of the external world.²¹⁷ Therefore, the ego is constituted by others²¹⁸ and:

²¹¹ Ibid., 354.

²¹² Ibid., 357-58.

²¹³ Ibid., 280-82.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 124-26.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 164.

²¹⁶ KSA 9:11 [197], 1881

²¹⁷ Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, 360.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 289-90.

As Aristotle said, the soul is in a way all things, and so the boundaries between the inner and outer are dissolved.²¹⁹

Parkes's great individual, then, is a multiplicity of drives that are brought into order by governing drives, forming an internal aristocracy, the result of which is interaction with the external world, unmediated by a self. For Parkes, it is this permeability of the concept of selfhood that explains the ethical actions of Nietzsche's great individual. For example, it results in generosity, a thought captured in metaphors of lakes, rivers, oceans and their overflowing:

[...] the hydrodynamics of Zarathustrian generosity depend on keeping the boundaries of the self permeable and the channels clear for a continuous influx and outflow.²²⁰

The result is a picture of the multiple soul in a social context, in which the drives, through a process of internal contest called self-cultivation, together create high culture, premised on social relations characterised simultaneously by contest and generosity.²²¹

Thiele, in his *Politics of the Soul*, develops a thematic study of heroic individualism in Nietzsche's corpus that also emphasises the inner world of the individual as a multiplicity.²²² With Parkes, he emphasises the integration of an individual's various drives as the signature feature of Nietzsche's great individual. Thiele conceives the multiplicity of the soul through the metaphor of the *polis*, drawing on Homeric, Platonic and other ancient influences. For him Nietzsche's great individual is able to create an internal aristocracy from the contest between their drives in which the dominant drives are able to bring of order and yet maintain the productive action of contest:

²¹⁹ Ibid., 359.

²²⁰ Ibid., 153.

²²¹ Ibid., 159.

²²² Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*.

The higher man, in short, is the man with an aristocratically ordered soul
[...] The good of the whole through the rule of the best is the aim of
aristocratic society. To this end hierarchy provides the condition for
harmony *and* the stimulus for struggle. Thus the soul remains both
ordered and active.²²³

Thiele accounts for the drives in terms that are thoroughly naturalistic and explicitly non-teleological; and he models Nietzsche's depiction of the internal contest on the Homeric hero. Further, he recognises some of the key themes of Homeric contest such as the importance of individual difference,²²⁴ combined with what he sees as a Heraclitean emphasis on becoming and development.²²⁵

In contrast to Parkes, Thiele claims that Nietzsche's great individual has no interest in, or even engagement with, their social context. Instead, Thiele proposes a radical individualism in which social relations are a threat to the great individual because they require them to behave according to norms and they encourage dependence on others.²²⁶ In contrast, he claims that Nietzsche's great individuals refuse to act according to externally imposed behavioural norms. They are absolutely autonomous and self-possessed:

The self-enclosure of the individual is complete [...] Apart from the herd,
all that exists are individuals, each enclosed in his own world, each a
world unto himself [...] To be an individual is to be autonomous is to be
supramoral.²²⁷

²²³ Ibid., 66-67.

²²⁴ Ibid., 42-44, 51, 106-08.

²²⁵ Ibid., 99-100, 86, 200-01.

²²⁶ Ibid., 30-36.

²²⁷ Ibid., 37-40.

Therefore, the Nietzschean great individual shuns community²²⁸ and they consider political engagement a threat to their individuality:

The higher man [...] has no particular cause to which he devotes himself [...] He fights, but under his own rules, for himself, and, paradoxically, against himself. Rather than prove his courage by sacrificing himself for a transcendent ideal or god, the modern individual's courage is evidenced in his capacity to live in its absence [...] bearing the isolation of his own individuality is his greatest challenge [...] The aim is to turn the curse of individuation into the blessing of autonomy [...] Human relations in general are seen as a threat to his allotted task [...] Politics [...] constitutes a threat to the individual.²²⁹

The result is a theory of the individual in which the individual, even as an educator, has little or no interest in others except to put them on the path to their own solitude.²³⁰ Yet, they are forced by circumstance to engage with others. The expectation of the great individual in this circumstance is not to win broad acceptance but rather to expect, at best, that only a very small group of equally individualistic geniuses will understand them.²³¹ Yet Thiele equivocates even on this minimal form of social engagement. For him, ultimately the heroic struggle of self-overcoming has no audience but the individual themselves and is not attended in any way by even the simplest recognition from others, let alone acceptance, affirmation or agreement.²³²

Despite this extreme position on the existential isolation of the individual, Thiele does leave a small opening for social engagement in his discussion of the eternal return of the same. Here the notion of eternal recurrence is thought to create a moment of self-awareness in the

²²⁸ Ibid., 180.

²²⁹ Ibid., 44-47.

²³⁰ Ibid., 172-74.

²³¹ Ibid., 220-24.

²³² Ibid., 20-21.

individual in which they are forced either to accept their lives and their selves absolutely or to fall into resentment and self-loathing:

The terror and meaninglessness of an eternally recurring life, without justification or purpose, is borne because of a moment's ecstasy, a moment in which one feels strong enough to justify life *tout court*.²³³

The result of this moment of absolute acceptance provides the basis for ethics: every action now bears the "heaviest weight," one asks whether this is an action is one that a person would wish repeated eternally.²³⁴ Thus, the great individual, despite their absolute isolation from all others, is in fact involved in social outcomes. These social outcomes depend on the egoism and self-love of the individual:

The selfishness of the parts is to be encouraged and exploited for the benefit of the whole.²³⁵

The crucial point, for Thiele, is that the usual relationship between the self and society, when thought in terms of betterment and development, is reversed. Rather than seeing the development of a new and better world through politics and morality as the basis for improving the individuals within that world, for Nietzsche the development of better individuals through self-mastery is the basis for improving the world of politics and social relations:

[...] new and better human beings are the means to changed world views and moral regimes.²³⁶

Thus, in terms of the internal composition of the individual, we see in Parkes and Thiele a similar understanding of the individual as a plurality in which drives compete with one another

²³³ Ibid., 204.

²³⁴ Ibid., 204-05.

²³⁵ Ibid., 211.

²³⁶ Ibid., 207-08.

for ascendancy. For both, the well-ordered individual is organised internally along the lines of an aristocracy: certain drives achieve dominance in such a way that they bring order and harmony to the other drives.

There, however, two important ways in which they differ. For Parkes, much of the function and activity of the drives is conceived in cognitive terms:

Drives are understood by Nietzsche to interpret patterns of neural stimulation through the medium of imagination.²³⁷

For Thiele, the operation of the drives is largely preconscious:

With reason and intellect out of contention as motive forces, the entire spectrum of human action and thought must be accounted for in terms of instincts or drives and their (political) relations. This is made possible by their essentially agonal character. Each has its will to dominate and exploit its competitors.²³⁸

This is a vital issue for several reasons. On the one hand, if bringing competing drives into some kind of order is the way to become a great individual, it would be useful understand the way in which this ordering happens. For Parkes, it is possible to see this ordering agent in terms of an individual's cognition. Thiele, however, cannot construe the individual as a cognitive agent making decisions about their drives because for him there is nothing but drives. Decisions about which drives to feed and which to starve are not possible because decisions themselves are merely the mental outworking of something predetermined by a dominant drive. This is the

²³⁷ Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, 250.

²³⁸ Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*, 57.

first issue I will explore in detail below under the rubric of drives and their relation to the Homeric theme of difference.

The second issue is about how this conception of the individual does or does not permit a discussion of ethical social relations. Parkes explicitly recognises the relationship between the well-ordered individual and their social context, where Thiele denies the importance of this relationship while at the same time, however grudgingly, admitting its possibility. In construing the great individual as one who participates in social relations, Parkes makes the somewhat metaphysical claim that the boundaries of the self have to be porous. As we saw in Chapter 2, this notion of a person constituted by its relationships has its roots in Christian theology, and it is difficult to see how it might be compatible with Nietzsche's naturalist-materialist tendencies, as argued in Chapter 4.

Thiele, in eschewing social relations, makes the opposite claim: the individual is absolutely self-contained, self-sufficient, self-sustaining and self-absorbed. Social relations are not necessary for the great individual to flourish; indeed, relationships are a threat to their strength and wellbeing. It is, however, hard to see what this claim means in a pragmatic, naturalist interpretation of human existence in which human beings as biological entities are clearly highly interdependent on their environment and on the people in that environment. To that extent, Thiele's claim is also somewhat metaphysical.

However, Thiele and Parkes also share significant common ground in conceiving Nietzsche's great individual as internally differentiated and able to develop over time. The key difference lies in the way in which they describe the relationship between personal abundance and this internal contest. Parkes allows for the theme of personal abundance, but it can only be externalised by what is effectively the annihilation of the individual. Thiele allows for personal

abundance but in a strictly internalised way. The outward expression of personal abundance is, at best, a marginal consideration.

Christa Acampora, whose work emphasises the Homeric contest in Nietzsche's thought, provides a possibility for resolving these issues. In describing how an individual's personal superabundance is premised on their composite identity,²³⁹ she emphasises the Nietzschean idea of 'becoming what you are.' For her, this is a process of becoming that takes place through self-cultivation. She also relies on the idea of integrating the drives into a unity, a unity in which the productive tension between them is maintained. When the drives are not able to be sustained in productive tension, the result is a decline of the individual's productive and creative energies. Thus we see a conception of the productive internal contest that sustains the abundance of the great individual.

For her, Nietzsche sees Wagner as the ultimate example of someone who failed to harness their drives in this way:

Wagner nearly but ultimately failed to achieve a dynamic and productive synthesis harnessing and preserving the variety of human cultural and physiological inheritances.²⁴⁰

She analyses how Nietzsche contrasts himself with Wagner. In doing so, she returns to many ethical themes also important to Parkes and Thiele: love and self-seeking, style, fatalism and self-creation, and the problem of directing and organising the drives. However, in contrast to them, she is able to develop a stronger understanding of the Homeric themes of abundance and overflow. In my view, it is this return to the Homeric ethos of contest and its idea of personal

²³⁹ Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*, 151ff.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

abundance and individual difference that allows for this more integrated and unified description of Nietzsche's ethics.

The development of personal abundance begins with the familiar problem of conscious versus preconscious reflection. She asserts that Nietzsche proposes both: he considers the drives to operate in subterranean fashion, beneath or behind conscious awareness, and he also considers the individual as a person able to reflect on and even determine their own future on the basis of their internal and self-generating creative energies. The way forward, she proposes, revolves around ideas of innocence and necessity:

[...] *becoming (Werden)* of the sort Nietzsche finds interesting requires that one *not have the slightest idea what one is*. This opens a complicated set of concerns about how Nietzsche thinks about what constitutes becoming and how one goes about it or how it occurs. It is also relevant to a significant disagreement in the scholarly literature as to whether he is a fatalist or an advocate of self-creation. Examining his later account of himself, particularly in light of his agon with Wagner, we find crucial clues about what Nietzsche has in mind, for becoming what one is appears to turn, at least in part, on *making oneself necessary*.²⁴¹

The idea seems to be that by achieving a unity of the drives that maintains their productive tension with each other, the individual becomes free to act simply according to their nature, according to their inner necessities, thus eliminating the ponderous need to weigh up options and make choices. Instead, the great individual simply attends to the basic nutritional requirements of their drives, and then leaves nature to take its course:

²⁴¹ Ibid., 154.

Looking after the “basic concerns of life” [quoting *EH*] turns out to be crucially important because we otherwise find ourselves expending immense amounts of energy *fighting off* harmful conditions. Any ruling thought that directed our attention away from such concerns, denigrated them as unimportant or inconsequential, would have potentially quite harmful effects. Thus, an important dimension of how one becomes what one is is by nurturing oneself, looking after what nourishes and facilitates self-recovery and avoiding counter-productive resistance. Though our constitutions may be determined to a certain extent by the drives we happen to have [...] self-cultivation, *Selbstucht*, development, is nevertheless possible by virtue of taking care of ourselves in very basic ways. These greatly affect our capacities to maximise our resources and become integrated rather than disintegrated.²⁴²

This kind of innocent self-directed attention, what I call self-concern, provides the basis for social relations by way of its capacity to generate personal abundance. Acampora discusses this by contrasting different forms of love. On the one hand, there is love that arises from the internal abundance of the individual who has become unselfconscious through rigorous and exacting self-care, and on the other hand there is love that is premised on self-denial and other-person-centeredness. This mirrors the discussion of Nietzsche against *agape* love and against compassion in earlier chapters. Acampora neatly summarises:

While love as *fatality* is fecund, love as selflessness is sterile, “chaste.”²⁴³

Acampora provides an elegant, naturalistic account of abundance, difference and development over time that retains the possibility to provide us with an ethics of social relationships. The

²⁴² Ibid., 168.

²⁴³ Ibid., 158.

individual is a composite self whose drives require integration, this integration is achieved through a form of self-development focused on attending to the basic requirements of the body that allows the individual to focus energy on higher order concerns, and these higher order concerns include questions of social engagement as, for example, in relationships of love.

As elegant as this solution might be, it may strike many interpreters of Nietzsche as difficult to sustain exegetically. For example, one might reflect on Nietzsche's oft-expressed disdain for love relationships (e.g. *D* §§151-152, 415; *GS* §§ 72, 263), the complexity of the problems that arise given his minimisation of the role of free will and conscious choice (e.g. *D* §130; *GS* §127), and the seeming contradiction between the individual's focus on themselves and social outcomes. In what follows I aim to show how, at least in the period under consideration, these concerns can be addressed and Nietzsche's understanding of the individual as an internal contest of drives can be further developed.

Internal Contest and the Drives

It is difficult to select a manageable set of texts to describe Nietzsche's theory of the drives. On the one hand because the idea is ever-present, particularly in *Daybreak* and *the Gay Science*, and on the other because texts that provide in-depth and systematic descriptions of the drives are, somewhat paradoxically, exceedingly rare. For the purpose of this chapter, I have identified several texts that I think could form the basis for a coherent description of his understanding of the drives in the context of Homeric contest.

First, I will explore texts that touch on the relationship between the drives and the question of conscious choice. Second, I explore texts that discuss the relationship between this presentation of choice and Nietzsche's idea of development over time, captured in the notion of self-cultivation. Finally, I show how these two come together in Nietzsche's thought so that the great

individual's personal abundance and unique personal identity arise from their particular configuration of internally differentiated and competing drives.

The Drives and Choice

We begin by looking at how Nietzsche presents the drives as a sub- or pre-conscious power that influences—and even determines—the choices that individuals make. *Daybreak* §109, a text about self-mastery, is written as a physician's manual for "combating the vehemence of a drive." Nietzsche proffers six methods: avoidance, regulation, indulgence, negative association, distraction and self-harm. Whatever a contemporary reader might think of these methods, what is relevant here is that way that Nietzsche concludes this curative meditation with a reflection on the whole process of "combating the vehemence of a drive." He writes:

[...] *that one desires* to combat the vehemence of a drive at all, however, does not stand within our power; nor does the choice of any particular method; nor does the success or failure of this method. What is clearly the case is that in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of *another drive* which is a *rival* of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us [...]

This text offers an insight into Nietzsche's understanding of the internal composition of the individual. For him the intellect is the "blind instrument" of our drives. Understanding the intellect in this way contrasts with an understanding of the intellect as a rational arbiter between drives, as the 'site' of free will and decision-making in the psyche. Nietzsche claims that it has no such function: somehow—this 'somehow' remaining unspecified—one drive is able to take over the function of the intellect and use it against a 'vehement' drive in order to conquer it. Just in case we were left in any doubt, he goes on:

While 'we' believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive,
at bottom it is one drive *which is complaining about another*.

This is a significant move with far-reaching consequences. For Nietzsche, the intellect is not free to choose between the underlying drives that compose an individual. For him, conscious choice and decision-making are an illusion. Seeing these as an illusion suggests that, for Nietzsche, concepts of moral responsibility and personal accountability are problematic at best. On this account, there is nothing within a person that stands, as it were, apart from the drives in order to direct the behaviour of a person in response to them. There is only an undirected contest between drives and the outcome of the contest, rather than the outcome of a rational choice-making process, will determine the person's behaviour.

The concluding sentences of the text describe how it is that the intellect becomes the "blind instrument" of a vehement drive:

[...] for us to become aware that we are suffering from the *vehemence* of a drive presupposes the existence of another equally vehement or even more vehement drive, and that a *struggle* [*Kampf*] is in prospect in which our intellect is going to have to take sides [*Partie nehmen muss*].

This text might be taken to suggest that there is, in fact, an independent intellectual arbiter between drives. Here the intellect seems to stand apart from the drives, deciding between them, 'taking sides.' The phrase *Partie nehmen muss*, however, admits a different translation. We could understand this to say that the intellect is part of this struggle and implicated in it, not simply standing on the sidelines and discriminating between them. The nature of this 'taking sides' Nietzsche has already described: the intellect is co-opted to one side rather than the other, for unspecified reasons. The whole person, intellect included, is constituted by their drives. Their

behaviour is determined by the struggle or contest (*Kampf*) between them, noting the allusion to Homeric contest normally described using the term *Wettkampf*.

In *D* §115 Nietzsche goes further. Here it is not merely the intellect that works in with the drives to determine a person's behaviour, it is the entire 'ego,' described as a "co-worker" in the formation of a person's "character and destiny:"

We are none of us that which we appear to be in accordance with the states for which alone we have consciousness and words, and consequently praise and blame: those cruder outbursts of which alone we are aware make us misunderstand ourselves [...] Our opinion of ourself, however, which we have arrived at by this erroneous path, the so-called 'ego', is thenceforth a fellow worker in the construction of our character and our destiny.

Further, he suggests here that conscious awareness is an unreliable narrator, particularly with regard to our sense of self (*GS* §11). In *D* §119, a lengthy and important text on this subject, Nietzsche details his understanding of the relationship between consciousness and the drives. The text is a meditation on dream-states and waking-states, and their relationship to conscious awareness and the drives. Here it is the drives that interpret experience by positing imaginative explanations for sensory ("nervous") stimuli. The result, for him, is that "there is no *essential* difference between waking and dreaming." He writes:

[...] interpretations of nervous stimuli we receive while we are asleep, *very free*, very arbitrary interpretations of the motions of the blood and intestines, of the pressure of the arm and the bedclothes, of the sounds made by church bells, weather cocks, night revelers and other things of the kind.

Dreams are an internal projection built on inputs from the outside world. Wakefulness, he argues, is essentially the same as dreaming because it relies on the same interpretive function of the drives. Before we are aware of it our drives have interpreted the world around us “according to their requirements.”

This understanding of the drives and their operation implies that conscious interpretation of sensory input, insofar as it occurs at all, occurs within an interpretive framework pre-determined by the drives. This understanding is consistent with what we have seen so far: conscious reflection is not free. He writes in *D* §125:

Our thinking is superficial and content with the surface, indeed, it does not notice that it is the surface.

Nietzsche concludes by extending the discussion of conscious reflection (and of consciousness itself) to morality. As for waking and dreaming, it is the physiological processes of the drives that stand behind moral judgement and evaluation:

[...] our moral judgements and evaluations too are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us, a kind of acquired language for designating certain nervous stimuli [...] all our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, but felt text. [...] What then are our experiences? Much *more* than that which we put into them than that which they already contain! Or must we go so far as to say in themselves they contain nothing? To experience is to invent?

Nietzsche, then, subjugates conscious thought to the internal contest of the drives; he connects the operation of the drives with physiological processes of stimulation; and he credits the configuration of a person's drives with the interpretation of their experience. The drives react

to a person's experiential world and, in doing so, they create a person's internal experiences and responses to that world.

This understanding of the drives in *Daybreak* lays the conceptual foundation for Nietzsche's descriptions of the drives in *The Gay Science*. Here he introduces ideas from evolutionary science to support this understanding of the individual, the result of which is the sublimation of oral judgement to aesthetics. Given that the drives determine a person's experience prior to the intervention of intellect or conscious thought, Nietzsche now begins to argue that moral judgements are built into a person's taste by their evolutionary history.

The argument unfolds as follows. In *GS* §23 Nietzsche refers to the "ancient" ideal of Homeric contest—war and athletic competition—to describe the operation of the drives. However, he describes how, in contemporary times, this contest has been transposed into the internal arena of the passions:

[...] the ancient civil energy and passion, which received magnificent visibility through war and competitive games, has now transformed itself into countless private passions and has merely become less visible.

We see in this text that, for Nietzsche, this process of internalising Homeric contest is an extension of evolutionary themes.²⁴⁴ Here the individual human being develops those internal characteristics that are relevant to their preservation, including a particular set of drives that then inevitably and inexorably discharge themselves. This means, for Nietzsche, that choice is exercised significantly in advance of an event in which a drive is discharged. Choices are made

²⁴⁴ Nietzsche presents an individual human being as constituted in such a way as to discharge its drives (*der Trieb*), and, relatedly, to express its passions (*die Leidenschaft, die Begierde*) and act on its instincts (*der Instinct*). This vocabulary presents a naturalistic explanation for human behaviour.

when an individual decides which drives to cultivate and which to stultify. The externalisation of those drives in behaviours is the inevitable consequence of those choices, made much earlier.

This evolutionary theme is especially prominent in *GS* §1 and §4. There Nietzsche argues that the evolutionary processes that preserve the human species work, in part, because of this necessity for human beings to discharge their drives, whatever the moral evaluation of those drives might be. In *GS* §1 he writes:

Whether I regard human beings with a good or with an evil eye, I always find them engaged in a single task, each and every one of them: to do what benefits the preservation of the human race. Not from a feeling of love for the race, but simply because within them nothing is older, stronger, more inexorable and invincible than this instinct [*Instinct*] – because this instinct constitutes *the essence* of our species [...] Even the most harmful person may actually be the most useful when it comes to the preservation of the species; for he nurtures in himself or through his effects on others drives [*Triebe*] without which humanity would long since have become feeble or rotten. Hatred, delight in the misfortunes of others, the lust to rob and rule, and whatever else is called evil: all belong to the amazing economy of the preservation of the species, an economy which is certainly costly, wasteful, and on the whole foolish – but still *proven* to have preserved our race so far. I no longer know whether you, my dear fellow man and neighbour, are even *capable* of living in a way which is damaging to the species, i.e. ‘unreasonably’ and ‘badly’. [...] Pursue your best or your worst desires [*Begierden*], and above all, perish! In both cases you are probably still in some way a promoter and benefactor of humanity [...]

Here Nietzsche puts together an evolutionary 'economy:' the instinct for preservation of the species has led people to nurture their drives in such a way that even if they were to pursue their worst passions, the species stands to benefit. In *GS* §4 he continues:

The strongest and most evil spirits have so far done the most to advance humanity: time and again they rekindled the dozing passions [*Leidenschaften*] – every ordered society puts the passions to sleep – , time and again they reawakened the sense of comparison, of contradiction, of delight in what is new, daring, unattempted [...] What is new, however, is under all circumstances *evil*, being that which wants to conquer, to overthrow old boundary stones and pieties; and only what is old is good! In every age the good men are those who bury the old thoughts deeply and make them bear fruit – the farmers of the spirit. But that land is eventually exhausted, and the ploughshare of evil must come time and again. [...] In truth, however, the evil drives [*Triebe*] are just as expedient, species-preserving, and indispensable as the good ones - they just have a different function.

Here we see clearly expressed the evolutionary thrust of Nietzsche's thought applied to morality. The strengthening of the species through innovation, such as that which takes place biologically through natural selection, here takes place morally through the discharge of drives and the awakening of the passions. This understanding of moral innovation is expressed here in terms of the select few who "delight in what is new, daring, unattempted." These new behaviours are necessarily called 'evil' by the moralists, the "good men." For Nietzsche, these 'evil' behaviours are simply one part of the economy of human evolution.

Finally, we see in *GS* §39 that the mechanism for the development of the species through ethical and moral innovation is the great individual:

Change in common taste is more important than that in opinions; opinions along with proofs, refutations, and the whole intellectual masquerade are only symptoms of a changed taste and most certainly *not* what they are so often taken to be, its causes. How does common taste change? Through individuals – powerful, influential, and without any sense of shame – who announce and tyrannically enforce [...] the judgement of their taste and disgust: thus they put many under pressure, which gradually turns into a habit among even more and finally becomes *a need of everyone*.

Here the kinds of things that make for the preservation of the species are discovered through the discharge of drives, and, when successful, are incorporated as a new taste, i.e. non-cognitively. Thus the general taste changes over time (*GS* §9), so that the species as a whole develops a taste for these successful strategies. In this context, it is important to Nietzsche that human beings have the freedom to discharge their drives, irrespective of a prevailing moral opinion (see also *GS* §§ 19, 35, 294, 305). For Nietzsche, moral innovation requires great individuals who can act against taste, ‘evilly,’ in order to continue to enhance and strengthen the species by establishing new excellences. The great individual brings moral innovation to society by contesting an established set of aesthetic evaluations, disguised as moral judgement.

Nietzsche goes further in describing this great individual. Not only must they be capable of acting evilly, against the prevailing judgements of the time, they must also be capable of acting erroneously. In *GS* §110 Nietzsche reflects further on the problematic relationship between consciousness and the development of moral judgement. One issue that Nietzsche highlights is

the idea that conscious thought seems to strive for knowledge of the truth. This seeking for the truth has become morally determined: it has come to seem right that the human quest is a quest for the truth, along with an assumption that knowing the truth will somehow always turn out to be 'good' for human beings both individually and as a species.

This assumption is problematic for Nietzsche for several reasons. He argues that errors might be as important to human flourishing as truths:

Through immense periods of time, the intellect produced nothing but errors; some of them turned out to be useful and species-preserving; those who hit upon or inherited them fought their fight for themselves and their progeny with greater luck. Such erroneous articles of faith, which were passed on by inheritance further and further, and finally almost became part of the basic endowment of the species, are for example: that there are enduring things; that there are identical things; that there are things, kinds of material, bodies; that a thing is what it appears to be; that our will is free; that what is good for me is also good in and for itself.

This text describes not simply an interesting list of epistemological, metaphysical and moral problems that Nietzsche argues are useful errors. Most important here is the idea that useful errors are incorporated over evolutionary time into human beings both as individuals and as societies, so that they become "articles of faith." Nietzsche's epistemology is not the subject of this chapter – the important point is simply that he is applying his evolutionary model about the origin of moral judgements to the question of truth. For him, it is important that the things that evolution selects to remain embedded in human beings are not therefore 'truths' about the world, they are merely the next set of errors upon which human flourishing can be sustained.

He goes on to make the further claim that this will to discover the truth is a late-arriving phenomenon associated with the emergence of conscious thought. This will-to-truth is represented by the figure of 'the thinker' and the internal contest of the drives:

Gradually the human brain filled itself with such judgements and convictions; and ferment, struggle, and lust for power developed in this tangle. Not only utility and delight, but also every kind of drive took part in the fight about the 'truths'; the intellectual fight became an occupation, attraction, profession, duty, dignity—knowledge and the striving for the true finally took their place as a need among the other needs. Henceforth, not only faith and conviction, but also scrutiny, denial, suspicion, and contradiction were a *power*, all 'evil' instincts were subordinated to knowledge and put in its service and took on the lustre of the permitted, honoured, useful and finally the eye and the innocence of the *good*. Thus knowledge became a part of life and, as life, a continually growing power, until finally knowledge and the ancient basic errors struck against each other, both as life, both as power, both in the same person. The thinker - that is now the being in whom the drive to truth and those life-preserving errors are fighting their first battle, after the drive to truth has proven itself to be a life-preserving power, too.

Thus we find in the thinker that the will to truth has itself become a drive. This drive is contested by other drives that have been founded on useful errors and supported by the evolutionary drive, the will to life. For Nietzsche, this battle between the will to truth and the will to life is of ultimate significance:

In relation to the significance of this battle, everything else is a matter of indifference: the ultimate question about the condition of life is posed here, and the first attempt is made here to answer the question through experiment. To what extent can truth stand to be incorporated? — that is the question; that is the experiment.

The “thinker” in which this struggle (*Kampf* is here translated as “battle”) takes place participates in an experiment of ultimate significance. This experiment is not conducted as an internal contest between conscious thought and the drives as one might expect. Rather, consciousness, as the mechanism by which we experience the process of decision-making and choice, becomes the means by which an underlying struggle between competing drives rises to awareness. He summarises in *GS* §111:

The course of logical thoughts and inferences in our brains today corresponds to a process and battle of drives that taken separately are all very illogical and unjust; we usually experience only the outcome of the battle: that is how quickly and covertly this ancient mechanism runs its course in us.

This interpretation of consciousness is expressed paradigmatically in *GS* §127. Here Nietzsche addresses the question of will directly, in this context where the individual is the site of sublimated drive-contests:

Every thoughtless person believes that the will is effective, that willing is something simple, absolutely given, underivable, and intelligible in itself. When he does something, e.g. strikes something, he is convinced that it is *he* who is striking, and that he did the striking because he *wanted* to strike. He does not notice a problem here; the feeling of *will* suffices for

him to assume cause and effect, but also to believe that he *understands* their relation. He knows nothing of the mechanism of what happened and the hundredfold delicate work that has to be done to bring about the strike, or of the incapacity of the will as such to do even the slightest part of this work.

Choice is derived from an underlying, and often unknown, contest between drives. *GS* §333, reinforces this idea. For Nietzsche, knowledge is merely the coming-to-consciousness of taste, also derived from an often-unknown contest between drives:

Before knowledge is possible, each of these impulses [to laugh, lament or curse] must first have presented its one-sided view of the thing or event; then comes the fight [*Kampf*] between these one-sided views, and occasionally out of it a mean, an appeasement, a concession to all three sides, a kind of justice and contract [...] Since only the ultimate reconciliation scenes and final accounts of this long process rise to consciousness, we suppose that *intelligere* must be something conciliatory, just, and good, something essentially opposed to the instincts, when in fact *it is only a certain behaviour of the drives towards one another*. For the longest time, conscious thought was considered thought itself; only now does the truth dawn on us that by far the greatest part of our mind's activity proceeds unconscious and unfelt [...]

Thus we have several strands of thought on a related theme. Nietzsche conceives the individual as composed of underlying drives. These drives contest one another, striving for supremacy. The outcome of this contest determines the choices they will make, their knowledge of the world and their experience of the world. Further, this process takes place over evolutionary

time as individuals incorporate the outcomes of innumerable contests into their moral judgements. For Nietzsche, this process has resulted in the contest between truth and taste in “the thinker,” the outcome of which is of enormous significance. All of this centres on the great individual, who is able to bring this contest onto the public stage, is able to act evilly and erroneously in order to conduct an experiment, the outcome of which seems to have something to do with establishing new values, a new appreciation for excellence to support human flourishing. The question then emerges as to the character and composition of this great individual. What is it that allows them the freedom of action to contest norms, to become actors within this experiment? The answer to that question seems to have something to do with their capacity to find an alignment between their drives, to moderate their ebb and flow to the point of harmony, an equilibrium that provides the personal abundance necessary for the contest of values.

The Drives and Self-Development

The great individual, then, seems to have a capacity for self-development, which, according to Nietzsche’s logic, must be based on the outcome of an internal contest between drives in which particular drives gain ascendancy. The way in which a drive gains this ascendancy is addressed in both *Daybreak* and *The Gay Science* as a question of a person’s environment. The ‘environment’ is broadly construed and includes everything from diet through to social relations and moral context (see, for example, *GS* §7).

In that text Nietzsche longs for the construction of ‘cyclops-buildings,’ by which he seems to mean the construction of appropriate methods for analysing human behaviour. Notwithstanding that these ‘cyclops-buildings’ are perhaps represented in the disciplines of the social sciences, this text, together with his general theory of the drives described above, might give us pause to wonder how he understands choice from this proto-scientific perspective. As we saw above, his proposal is one where action is determined through the outcome of an

internal and often unrecognised contest between an individual's drives. This outcome is itself determined by the relative strength of drives based on their environment, broadly construed. This conflict between determinism and freedom in Nietzsche's proposal for understanding the drives is thrown into sharp relief by his seemingly contradictory assertion the great individual is able to contest social norms on the basis of their own freedom as an individual.

In my view, Nietzsche does not back away from this kind of determinism in his presentation of the great individual. Rather, he relies on the idea of chance and a subtle treatment of self-cultivation in the context of chance. For him, in part derived from his understanding of evolutionary theory, natural processes operate on the basis of chance in such a way that the human desire for purpose – for a teleologically construed goal – is untenable. We can see this in texts such as *GS* §1 and *GS* §109. In these texts, Nietzsche expresses his view that natural processes have no intentionality, directionality or referentiality. Human beings have become accustomed to seeing the world as oriented with reference to themselves, for good or for ill and he seeks to disabuse his readers of this idea. Instead, he presents nature as blind with regard to the human being and blank with regard to intention. Human beings are one small part of a natural system and the actions of human beings are as blind and as blank as the actions of any other part of that natural system. To the extent that a theory of conscious choice and agency disturbs this stochastic, naturalist visions of the world, Nietzsche unequivocally rejects it.

This idea is explored at length in an earlier text, *D* §130. Here we see human action presented as on par with any act of nature, that is, as the chance coming together of ingredients to produce an outcome in such a way that the illusion of purpose is shattered. In this aphorism Nietzsche directly addresses the problems of teleology and of choice as two sides of the same problem. Here he depicts two realms. The one realm, that of purpose and will, is where people live consciously and build for themselves the "spider's web of purposes." The other realm is one that hangs above us, the realm of chance. We fear it for its ability to destroy the spider's web

that we have laboured to create. The realm of chance, “the great cosmic stupidity,” at times breaks into our lives to do just that:

This belief in the two realms is a primeval romance and fable: we clever dwarfs, with our will and purposes, are oppressed by those stupid, arch-stupid giants, chance accidents, overwhelmed and often trampled to death by them – but in spite of all that we would not like to be without the harrowing poetry of their proximity, for these monsters often arrive when our life, involved as it is in the spider web of purposes, has become too tedious or too filled with anxiety, and provide us with a sublime diversion by for once *breaking* the web — not that these irrational creatures would do so intentionally! Or even notice they had done so! But their coarse bony hands tear through our net as if it were air.

He goes on to discuss how, in his view, different cultures and religions have used metaphysics to describe the realm of chance and its capacity for breaking into the human world of purposes and will, and in doing so to disrupt it. For him, the distinction between the human world of will and purpose and the metaphysical world of chance and chaos is flawed. It implicitly rejects his naturalistic assertion that human action is just as much by chance, with just the same destructive effects. In other words, it assumes that conscious choice and purposeful action is available to us as a way of shielding us from an underlying metaphysical menace of seemingly random disruption. Nietzsche rejects this construction – the ideas of will are just as much an invention as the fabled dwarves and giants:

Let us therefore *learn* [...] in our supposed realm of purposes and reason the giants are likewise the rulers! And our purposes and our reasons are not dwarves but giants! And our nets are just as often and just as roughly

broken *by us ourselves* as they are by slates from the roof! And all is not purpose that is called purpose, and even less is all will that is called will!

He also discounts the possibility of purpose and will. For him, the illusion of purpose and will is created by random activity when considered over infinite periods of time. From this perspective, random activity will necessarily coincide with the kind of activity one would expect if purpose and will were at play at particular points in time. For him human action is like this: it is not that some random acts of divine beings break in to disrupt the world of purpose and choice, it is that human acts of purpose and will are themselves random acts of chance, not the product of some considered, rational choice-making being:

And if you want to conclude from this: ‘so there is only one realm, that of chance accidents and stupidity?’ – one will have to add: yes, perhaps there is only one realm, perhaps there exists neither will nor purposes, and we have only imagined them. Those iron hands of necessity which shake the dice-box of chance play their game for an infinite length of time: so that there *have* to be throws which exactly resemble purposiveness and rationality of every degree. *Perhaps* our acts of will and our purposes are nothing but just such throws – and we are only too limited and too vain to comprehend our extreme limitedness: which consists in the fact that we ourselves shake the dice-box with iron hands, that we ourselves in our most intentional actions do no more than play the game of necessity.

This “game of necessity” in human action can be understood by drawing on the analysis of the relationship between the drives and choice described above. The decision to act in this way or in that way, is not so much a decision as the inevitable outcome of the contest of drives. It is a

necessity because the particular drive that must act in that way has gained its ascendancy within the individual.

The great individual, then, is as much a piece of fate as any other. In order to understand how the great individual becomes someone who can challenge social norms, acting 'evilily' and experimentally, Nietzsche turns to the idea of self-cultivation. In *D* §560, entitled *What we are at liberty to do*, drawing perhaps on Epicurean imagery, Nietzsche pictures a person cultivating their drives as one might cultivate a garden:

One can dispose of one's drives like a gardener and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis.

This includes both cultivation and deliberate neglect:

[...] one can also let nature rule and only attend to a little embellishment and tidying-up here and there; one can, finally, without paying any attention to them at all, let the plants grow up and fight their fight out among themselves – indeed, one can take delight in such a wilderness and desire precisely this delight, though it gives one some trouble, too.

The point of the text is not to recommend either cultivation or neglect, but to claim that few people realise their ability to perform these acts of self-cultivation. This lack of awareness is fostered by a philosophy that emphasises the individual as incapable of development over time:

All this we are at liberty to do: but how many know we are at liberty to do it? Do the majority not *believe* in *themselves* as in complete *fully-developed facts*? Have the great philosophers not put their seal on this prejudice with the doctrine of the unchangeability of character?

At first glance this idea of self-cultivation seems incompatible with his notion of the individual as a fatality, a piece of fate. On the one hand he seems to be saying that the individual does not include a choosing intellect or ego that can arbitrate between competing drives, and on the other he seems to be saying that conscious, deliberative self-development over time is possible.

However, these can be integrated if we consider acts of self-cultivation to be the outcome not so much of conscious reflection and decision-making but as the inevitable development of an instinctive aesthetic sense over time. This aesthetic sense is directed towards the person one would like to become and leads to a process of self-cultivation, whether extreme as in the case of the attentive gardener, or minimal as in the case of the person who delights in their inner wilderness. This aesthetic sense can be distinguished from intellect: it seems emerge out of the particular combination of drives that form a specific person. The great individual, then, is the rare case of someone who understands this possibility for self-cultivation and realises it.

If we are to read these texts together and attempt to bring all of these ideas into one integrated notion of the individual, this picture would, I think, be something as follows. Individuals are composed of many drives competing with each other for ascendancy. Over time, due to the interaction of their natural constitution with their environment, certain drives gain ascendancy and, in the best case, these bring the other drives into some kind of subordinated alignment.²⁴⁵ This combination of ascendant and subordinate drives implies the development of a taste, the sense of an individual's preferred style of life. This taste is then able to select the environment in which it finds the greatest satisfaction, and thereby continues the harmonisation of the drives in keeping with these developing aesthetically motivated self-directed preferences.²⁴⁶ For the great individual, this becomes a virtuous cycle of alignment and strengthening. Further, this

²⁴⁵ Similar to Thiele's notion of a drive 'aristocracy' discussed above.

²⁴⁶ Similar to Parkes' account of the drives as a musical harmony discussed above.

individual can be thought of as both fully determined—as constantly developing over time—and as acting as a natural agent in a stochastic system.

This is the case of the great individual. The case of the lesser individual is one in which this self-organising and alignment of drives is not possible. They remain inwardly chaotic, their taste for themselves and their world is never defined according to a particular alignment of drives and therefore cannot be refined over time. They are as much the outcome of inner necessity as the strong individual, it is simply that this inner necessity does not lead to strength, harmony and increasing refinement. It leads to weakness, chaos and the impossibility of personal development over time.

The Drives and Individuality

The effect of this self-reinforcing internal system is the development of increasingly unique characteristics within the individual. The great individual emerges as someone who, through happenstance and breeding, both of which are random from the perspective of the individual concerned, has managed to create integration and unity within their person. This is the result of an internal contest between the drives that constitute them.

This integration is particularly emphasised in *The Gay Science*. In *GS* §113, the integration of drives is described in terms of scientific enquiry where the success of the enquiry depends on the alignment of several drives at once. In *GS* §288 it is described as a single elevated mood. The most potent idea, however, is the idea of a singular value standard, an idea that repeats in several important texts in which Nietzsche focuses on the idea of nobility. In *GS* §3 Nietzsche links his notion of a great individual with idea of a noble person, described as having a “higher nature,” with the idea of internal drives that coalesce into a singular value standard (*singuläres Werthmaas*). His argument is that in the noble person “several feelings of pleasure and displeasure” unite to create an overwhelming passion. The noble submit to this passion, which

is the outcome of otherwise conflicting drives coalescing into a defined aesthetic taste (*der Geschmack*). He describes this result, the taste of the noble person, as follows:

The higher nature's taste is for exceptions, for things that leave most people cold and seem to lack sweetness; the higher nature has a singular value standard. Moreover, it usually believes that the idiosyncrasy of its taste is not a singular value standard; rather it posits its values and disvalues as generally valid and so becomes incomprehensible and impractical.

Nietzsche goes on to argue that in taking her idiosyncratic moral taste to be generally valid, the noble person perpetrates an injustice on others. To be 'just' in this situation, presumably, is to recognise that this set of values is idiosyncratic to that individual's taste and is therefore *not* generally valid. In any case, Nietzsche's emphasis is on the singularity and idiosyncrasy of morality when considered from the point of view of the great individual.

This thought is expanded in *GS* §55, *The ultimate noble-mindedness*. Here we see again the noble person as some overcome by a "single" passion, which results in a singular value standard that they relentlessly pursue:

So what makes a person 'noble'? Certainly not making sacrifices; even those burning with lust make sacrifices. Certainly not following some passion; for there are contemptible passions. Certainly not that one does something or others without selfishness: perhaps no one is more consistently selfish than the noble one. – Rather, the passion that overcomes the noble one is a singularity [*eine Sonderheit*], and he fails to realize this: the use of a rare and singular standard [*singulären Maassstabes*] and almost a madness [...] hitting upon values the scale for

which has not yet been invented; a sacrifice on altars made for an unknown god; a courage without any desire for honours; a self-sufficiency that overflows [*Überfluss*] and communicates to men and things.

We see here that the idea of difference, captured by this idea of the singularity and particularity of the great individual, is connected to the ideas of self-sufficiency and abundance. The great individual, as a result of their single-minded pursuit of their own bespoke values, become able to give out of their abundance to others, captured in the metaphor of overflow.

To conclude this text, Nietzsche offers an unusually democratic prospect:

Note, however, that by means of this standard everything usual, near, and indispensable, in short, that which most preserved the species, and in general the rule of humanity hitherto, was inequitably judged and on the whole slandered in favour of the exceptions. To become the advocate of the rule – that might be the ultimate form and refinement in which noblemindedness manifests itself on earth.

By introducing the idea that the noble individual advocates for ‘the rule,’ Nietzsche creates a complexity for the interpreter. On the one hand, it seems self-evident that Nietzsche is in favour of the rare type, the noble, higher person. On the other hand, he seems to argue here for the extension of nobility so that it comes to embrace not just the exception but also the rule, and that noblemindedness might manifest itself in advocacy for the general rule rather than the exception.

The resolution to this conundrum can perhaps be found by drawing together the threads of Nietzsche’s understanding of the individual as previously discussed. On the one hand we have the idea of the great individual as the site of contesting drives that form an integrated

impassioned interiority, and on the other the idea of absolute singularity, the difference between one great individual and another that generates their overflowing personal abundance. Perhaps the 'rule' that Nietzsche here subscribes to is that each individual develops the peculiar environment—moral, social, and physical—that is suited to their particularity. This at least, would be consistent with the idea of self-cultivation he has developed elsewhere, described above. The great individual, whether rare or common, is someone who has experienced self-overcoming so that their passions are not unruly, their internal world is integrated and aligned, which enables them to refine their unique personal identity, to fashion themselves into a living work of art.

The singularity of Nietzsche's ideal type is given further expression in, for example, *GS* §117, *Herd pangs of conscience*. Here Nietzsche describes the history of the emergence of the concept of individuality, a concept that has been associated with bad conscience. He applauds the late arrival of a good conscience for individuality:

Today one feels responsible only for what one wants and does, and finds one's pride in oneself: all our teachers of justice start from this feeling of self and pleasure in the individual, as if the spring of justice had always arisen here. But for the longest period of humanity's existence there was nothing more frightful than feeling alone. To be alone, to experience things by oneself, to neither obey nor rule, to represent an individual – that was no pleasure back then, but a punishment; one was sentenced 'to be an individual.' Freedom of thought was considered discomfort itself. While we experience law and conformity as compulsion and loss, one formerly experienced egoism as a painful thing, as an actual affliction. To be a self, to estimate oneself according to one's own measure and weight – that was contrary to taste in those days.

Here we see further discussion of a more universal notion of the great individual and her singularity. Nietzsche appears to be arguing, positively, that his contemporary society was organised in such a way as to recognise the value of each individual and their capacity to “estimate [themselves] according to one’s own measure and weight.”

The idea that values are created according to the idiosyncrasies of the great individual that posits them animates Nietzsche’s understanding of the great individual. These value standards do not emerge merely from the ratiocination of an individual over their lifespan but emerge as drives that, when integrated with one another, give strength—abundance—to the individual they constitute. The idea of integrated drives that make the individual unique and the idea of self-overcoming by cultivating preferred environments come together so that the great individual becomes self-sufficient, self-reliant and self-defining. As a result of this, she has personal abundance which can be shared with others.

We see here an important result for Nietzsche’s ethics. The independent constitution of the individual is not dissolution, solipsism or narcissism. It is self-overcoming; the taming and cultivation of passions, instincts and inclinations into self-creating drives. In *GS* §290 Nietzsche describes how self-overcoming by submitting to the peculiarity of one’s own values is an artistic act of self-creation:

To ‘give style’ to one’s character – a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses that their nature has to offer and then fit them into an artistic plan until each appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye!

It is clear in this text that the great individual is not free of rules or constraints. Rather, they are able to develop constraints appropriate to their own peculiar characteristics, and then cheerfully submit themselves to them:

In the end, when the [artistic] work is complete, it becomes clear how it was the force of a single taste [*des selben Geschmacks*] that ruled and shaped everything great and small – whether the taste was good or bad means less than one may think; it's enough that it was one taste! It will be the strong and domineering natures who experience their most exquisite pleasure under such coercion, in being bound by but also perfected under their own law; the passion of their tremendous will becomes less intense in the face of all stylized nature, all conquered and serving nature; even when they have palaces to build and gardens to design, they resist giving nature free rein.

Here Nietzsche's great individual has the freedom to live as a self-determined, self-referential and uniquely constituted being not because of an excess of self-indulgence but in the severity of self-imposed restraint is an important one. Nietzsche's self-sufficient individual is able to harness the energy of their internal contest, to "stylise" it in order to develop it as an artwork, that is, according to an aesthetic taste. The weak character is one who is ruled by their passions, unruly and wild, only able to satisfy themselves in the absence of constraint but, ironically, ultimately the victim of their own passions and, as a consequence, victimising others with their lack of artistry with respect to themselves:

Conversely, it is the weak characters with no power over themselves who *hate* the constraint of style: they feel that if this bitterly evil compulsion were to be imposed on them, they would have to become *commonplace* under it – they become slaves as soon as they serve; they hate to serve. Such minds – and they may be of the first rank – are always out to shape or interpret their environment as *free* nature – wild, arbitrary, fantastic, disorderly, and surprising – and they are well advised to do so, because

only thus do they please themselves! For one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself – be it through this or that poetry or art; only then is a human being at all tolerable to behold! Whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually prepared to avenge himself for this, and we others will be his victims if only by having to endure his sight. For the sight of something ugly makes one bad and gloomy.

Conclusions

Thus we find that the self-concern of the great individual, enacted as self-overcoming by bringing their drives into alignment and integration, results in a form of magnanimous generosity towards others. The surprising dynamics of this generosity will be the subject of the following chapter when I look more closely at social relations. By way of anticipation and conclusion, we can consider several texts in which the personal abundance of the great individual is tied to their ability to give generously to others. This connection between abundance and generosity is characterised in various ways in his published works, particularly after 1882. The themes of abundance (*der Überschuss, überschütten*) and overflow (*der Überfluss, überfluten*) are more pronounced in, for example, *The Gay Science* book 5 (1887) than in either *Daybreak* (1881) or *The Gay Science* books 1-4 (1882).

The Gay Science book four concludes with a description of the overflowing abundance of his great individuals (*GS* §342).²⁴⁷ This text is thematically connected with other texts (e.g. *GS* §289) where Nietzsche characterises the great individuals as able to create his or her own sun, by which he means his or her own bespoke moral, social and personal climate. In *GS* §342 we

²⁴⁷ This text is presented twice in Nietzsche's work: the first time as the final text of book four of *The Gay Science* (1882 edition) and also as the first text of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, published in 1883.

encounter Zarathustra musing on his relationship to the sun. In this musing, we learn that Zarathustra is weighed down by the personal abundance that this affords him, and he feels the need to go 'down' from his mountain in order to engage with others. He does this to unburden himself of his abundance by giving generously to others:

But at last his heart changed – and one morning he arose with rosy dawn,
stepped before the sun, and spoke to it thus: 'You great heavenly body!
What would your happiness be if you did not have those for whom you
shine! For ten years you have climbed up to my cave; without me, my
eagle, and my snake, you would have become tired of your light and of
this road; but we awaited you every morning, relieved you of your
overabundance, and blessed you for it. Behold, I am sick of my wisdom,
like a bee that has collected too much honey; I need outstretched hands;
I would like to give away and distribute until the wise among humans
once again enjoy their folly and the poor once again their riches.

The idea that the personal abundance of the great individual flows outwards towards others is here presented as the unburdening of the great individual, but it can also be seen in other texts with a more positive formulation. In *GS §382, The great health*, he writes

Another ideal runs before us, a peculiar, seductive, dangerous ideal to
which we wouldn't want to persuade anyone, since we don't readily
concede *the right to it* to anyone: the ideal of a spirit that plays naively,
i.e. not deliberately but from overflowing abundance and power, with
everything that was hitherto called holy, good, untouchable, divine; a
spirit which has gone so far that the highest thing which the common
people quite understandably accepts as its measure of value would

signify for it danger, decay, debasement, or at any rate recreation, blindness, temporary self-oblivion: the ideal of a human, superhuman well-being and benevolence that will often enough appear inhuman — for example, when it places itself next to all earthly seriousness heretofore, all forms of solemnity in gesture, word, tone, look, morality, and task as if it were their most incarnate and involuntary parody [...]

In this description of the overwhelming superabundance of Nietzsche's great individual, we find the ideas of naïve play and of human-superhuman benevolence (*menschlich-übermenschlichen Wohlseins und Wohlwollens*). Here we see that the personal superabundance of the great individual can be directed towards others as benevolence, in keeping with Zarathustra's musings but not merely as a personal unburdening. Here great well-being (*Wohlsein*) and great benevolence (*Wohlwollen*) go together.

The ability of the great individual to engage productively and generously with others is, then, intimately connected to the agonistic contest that takes place within them. Nietzsche here applied Homeric contest to a new domain, the internal life of his great individual. The twin themes of difference (here expressed as the particularity of the individual) and abundance (here expressed as overflow) are of decisive significance. By overcoming themselves, submitting themselves to the discipline of self-creation and by focusing on themselves in all their singularity and peculiarity, the great individual becomes able to give to others in their social relations. This is not the self-sacrificial love of the Christian, nor is it concern for the suffering of others along Schopenhauerian lines. It is something else entirely – as we will see in the following chapter, Nietzsche's use of Homeric ideals to describe the individual is extended to develop a distinctively Nietzschean approach to ethics in social relationships. This is also a reinvented Homeric ideal, the ideal of higher friendship.

Chapter 7: The Friend As Contestant

In the preceding chapters I have argued that Nietzsche's ethics emerges in response to (at least) three important influences—Christianity, Schopenhauer's philosophy and evolutionary biology. Further, I have shown that his response to these influences is shaped by the Homeric ideal of heroic contest. As we have seen, Nietzsche implies that these intellectual forces, for all their significant differences, share common features that contrast with this Homeric impulse. In particular, he claims that they share a negative stance towards the natural world and towards human beings within it, a stance that emphasises privation and deficit. Nietzsche saw in the Homeric tradition a positive attitude towards the natural world that celebrated abundance. I have shown how Nietzsche developed his understanding of great individuals as personally abundant in the same way that he considered the natural world to be abundant: in this respect human beings are natural beings. I have also demonstrated how Nietzsche comes to this understanding by applying Homeric contest to a person's internal life, conceiving the self as a 'battlefield' of competing drives (e.g. *GS* §333). Nietzsche suggests that personal abundance can arise as the outcome of this internal contest.

A second feature of Nietzsche's adaptation of Homeric heroism is his emphasis on difference. For Nietzsche, Christianity's monotheism and Schopenhauer's monistic metaphysics of the will to life are oppressively reductionistic. Against these monistic perspectives, he turns to Homeric contest to conceptualise an ethics that acknowledges and cultivates individual difference. For him, an appreciation of difference is essential for forming ethical judgements, at least if those judgements are about what is best for each individual to flourish in their particular circumstances. In sharp contrast, he observes, Christianity and Schopenhauer do not value individual difference, and so its function as a mechanism for developing excellence is lost. On the other hand, Nietzsche sees how evolutionary theories identify natural mechanisms for generating difference in the ideas of natural selection and of random mutation. The result of his

attempt to integrate these ideas from natural science into his Homeric ethos is an emphasis on the specificity of each individual person. Nietzsche understands this individual specificity in terms of the drives: it is a specific set of drives and their interrelations that defines each individual against every other individual. For his great individuals, the outcome of their self-overcoming is that these drives become integrated over time. Further, Nietzsche claims, this process of internal contest generates personal abundance.

This is the argument of the preceding chapters. I turn now to consider how Nietzsche understands these great individuals in social contexts. I have noted above that some scholars consider Nietzsche to promote an arch-individualism in which concern for others plays little to no part. This view is magnified when we consider Nietzsche's critical stance to ethical norms such as compassion and love. However, I have argued against these interpretations by claiming that Nietzsche does not propose this kind of narcissistic individualism, at least in the period from 1881 to 1887. We saw in the previous chapter one protection against this charge: for him the great individual does not simply give herself over to her passions at the expense of others. Rather, she engages in the task of self-overcoming, which requires self-discipline in order to achieve a desired internal alignment of drives. In this chapter, I will show how this process of self-overcoming extends into social relationships. Nietzsche's view is that if we conceive individuals as unique compositions of drives, who are on their own particular pathway to self-overcoming, we can also see how they can develop positive social relationships. Nietzsche suggests that this takes the shape of 'higher' friendship. Nietzsche distinguishes higher friendship from other forms of social interaction such as those between enemies or neighbours, where contest also plays a role. For him, higher friendship is the form of contest in which what he calls 'great' love plays a critical role. His understanding of great love as the hallmark of higher friendship means that in this relationship individuals find not only a means to self-overcoming but they also benefit others. In particular, they benefit their friends by promoting their self-

overcoming. As we shall see, this means that the great love that distinguishes higher friendship from other social relationships includes emotions and practices that are incompatible with agapic love or Schopenhauerian compassion.

In this chapter I will demonstrate how Nietzsche conceptualises and argues for higher friendship as an expression of this kind of great love. Firstly, I explain how Nietzsche broadens the concept of contest to include the positive value of adversity in general and shapes his ethics to include adversarial experiences between friends. I then consider some alternative approaches to this topic in Nietzsche studies, which, for all their strengths, ultimately do not fully accommodate Nietzsche's interest in the connection between adversity and human flourishing. Secondly, I compare friendship, enmity and neighbourliness as forms of social relationship that also incorporate adversarial components. I demonstrate that, for Nietzsche, while each of these has its 'higher' and 'lower' forms, higher friendship stands alone because of its capacity to fully embrace the signature features of Homeric contest, namely, individual difference and personal abundance.

Contest and Adversity

Throughout this thesis I have emphasised the role of the great individual in Nietzsche's ethics. It must be acknowledged, however, that Nietzsche also described what he considered to be lower forms of social relations that obtain between 'decadent' individuals.²⁴⁸ Nietzsche describes their social interactions with those he identifies as higher or healthier individuals. Two famous metaphors that he uses are those of master/slave (*GM* §1.10) and eagle/sheep (*GM* §1.13). The moral problems that emerge from these descriptions are manifold. Nietzsche seems to presuppose, for example, that the higher type should be free to instrumentalise the lower type for their own purposes. Further, he also seems to endorse their contempt for, or

²⁴⁸ 'Decadent' is here used in its Nietzschean sense: people trapped in a cycle of decay.

indifference towards, the 'lower' type's experience of resentment and animosity. These judgements raise significant moral questions that I do not propose to address here. It is sufficient to indicate that, at least in my view, these themes emerge most forcefully in Nietzsche's later writings. Many of his earlier texts present a more balanced, moderate and integrated form of Nietzsche's philosophy in general and of his ethics in particular. While the seeds of these ideas are no doubt present throughout his writing, it is in the later texts that we find an increasingly strident emphasis on an anti-egalitarian order of rank between human types, resulting in social relationships construed in hierarchical terms²⁴⁹ and culminating in his so-called 'aristocratic radicalism.'²⁵⁰ Noting these problems, in this chapter I limit my analysis to Nietzsche's presentation of his ideal individuals in their highest forms social interaction; I do not attempt to scale this up to a social or political level nor do I consider, except where absolutely necessary, how this might apply to those who fall short of his Homeric ideal. I will, however, briefly address some of these questions from a more critical perspective in the concluding chapter.

Limiting the analysis in this way is important because, as we will see, Nietzsche's concept of higher friendship includes the ability of the participants to withstand and profit from adversity, even in their intimate relationships. For him, this response to adversity is a possibility that is strictly limited to his 'higher' types as they interact with each other. However, even for these types, we can see in his development of the idea that intimate relationships are relationships of heroic contest that the concept of contest itself needed to be further developed. We have already seen in the preceding chapter how Nietzsche transforms the performative notion of Homeric contest by internalising it. In addition to this transformation, Nietzsche further adapts

²⁴⁹ Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period*; Paul Franco, *Nietzsche's Enlightenment: The Free-Spirit Trilogy of the Middle Period* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Michael Ure, *Nietzsche's 'The Gay Science': An Introduction*, Cambridge Introductions to Key Philosophical Texts (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

²⁵⁰ This term was coined by Georg Brandes in 1887 and approved of by Nietzsche in personal correspondence. See Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Christopher Middleton (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 279; see also Bruce Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

the concept to include a general understanding of the optimal conditions for human flourishing as adverse conditions. These include danger, pain, tension and opposition (e.g. *D* §§172, 460, 477, 542; *GS* §§ 1, 19, 23, 26, 48, 106, 119, 120, 159, 268, 283, 297, 302, 371). In contrast to Christian love and Schopenhauer's morality of compassion, Nietzsche formulates his morality of great love within higher friendship so that he can reject the idea that one should always or necessarily alleviate the suffering generated by adverse conditions. Rather, Nietzsche suggests that it is the virtue of higher friendship that it encourages or even intensifies these experiences because it is through adverse conditions that individuals find their greatest opportunities for self-overcoming. We can then see how the Homeric ideal of contest shapes Nietzsche's own ideal of friendship, which is centred on the value of adversity in general.

Let us consider the relationship Nietzsche sees between adversity and a certain kind of happiness before seeing how he applies it to understand friendship. In *GS* §302 Nietzsche writes about Homeric happiness as the outcome of adversity. He first argues that Homeric happiness involves developing a refined taste, which includes the capacity to experience suffering and pain *exquisitely*. The text ends, however, with the critique that this extreme refinement made Homer unable to endure the slightest failure:

To have refined senses and a refined taste; to be accustomed to the exquisite and most excellent things of the spirit as one is to the proper and most usual food, to enjoy a strong, bold, audacious soul; to go through life with a calm eye and a firm step, prepared for the most extreme situations – as for a feast and full of yearning for undiscovered worlds and seas, people, and gods; to hearken to all cheerful music as if brave men, seafarers, were perhaps seeking a short rest and merriment there – and in the deepest pleasure of the moment to be overcome by tears and all the whole crimson melancholy of the happy: who would not

like all of this to be *his* possession, his state! It was the *happiness of Homer!* The happiness of the one who invented their gods for the Greeks – I mean, *his* gods for himself! But don't disregard the fact that with this Homeric happiness in one's soul one is also more capable of suffering than any other creature under the sun! Only at this price can one buy the most precious shell hitherto washed ashore by the waves of existence! As its owner, one becomes ever more refined in pain and eventually too refined; in the end, any slight discontentment and disgust was enough to spoil life for Homer. He had been unable to solve a silly little riddle posed to him by some young fishermen! Yes, the little riddles are the danger for those who are happiest!

Here we see how Nietzsche's contest transcends Homeric contest. For Nietzsche, an adverse circumstance—great or small—presents an opportunity for the individual to progress. Nietzsche's contest is not specific to people, times and places, but is a general condition of existence. The ability to find a sublime experience in suffering is desirable because it presents new possibilities for flourishing.

We can develop this point further by briefly sketching Reginster's account of Nietzsche's concept of the will to power.²⁵¹ For him, this is an understanding of will that develops in contrast to Schopenhauer's understanding of the will to life. Reginster argues that Nietzsche replaces Schopenhauer's will to life with the will conceived of as the exercise of power. For him, Nietzsche conceives this will to power as both the desire to obtain a particular outcome *and* the desire to go through the process of overcoming resistance in order to obtain it. For Reginster, the Nietzschean person must not only want the object of their desire and obtain it by exerting

²⁵¹ Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*.

power, they must also want to overcome resistance in the process.²⁵² An apt metaphor might be that of an elite athlete: not only does an elite runner, for example, want to achieve results (victories, records, personal best times and the like), she also desires the physical discomfort of the regimen that is required to achieve them.

This capacity to desire adversity is important for Nietzsche's concept of higher friendship because it implies that great individuals will court adversity in their social relationships and even in their intimate lives. Given that adverse conditions are generally desirable for human flourishing, and that our social relations are one of the most significant environmental conditions in which we exist, we can see that it will be important for Nietzsche to integrate aversive emotional affects and adversarial behaviours into his ethics of contest. His idea of higher friendship is designed to include these possibilities and rejects traditional foundations for ethics such as love and compassion, as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3. The result is that higher friendship emerges as an extraordinarily productive form of social relationship because it is able to incorporate aversive emotions and oppositional behaviours along with more cooperative and supportive components. In Nietzsche's understanding of higher friendship, agapic and compassionate love give way to great love. In this ethics, a person's flourishing is enhanced by overcoming resistance—the greater the resistance, the greater the achievement in overcoming it, and the greater result in terms of individual flourishing.

In higher friendship this ethic is put into practice. On this account, friends—people who are interested in each other's flourishing—will actively produce adverse conditions for one another. This is not done from a position of need or of deficit; it does not arise from a desire to destroy the other or to instrumentalise the other for self-fulfilment. We have seen in Chapter 6 that the great individual, the person capable of higher friendship, has a degree of self-sufficiency and personal autonomy that eliminates or minimises these motivations. For him, in higher

²⁵²Ibid., 134.

friendship we see the deliberate production of adverse conditions but with a positive intent for the other. I propose this interpretation of Nietzsche's ethics as an intriguing possibility for an account of sociability that problematises the usual requirement for love and compassion, for mutual concern and reciprocity. The contradictory desires of the friend as contestant—both to oppose and to sustain their adversaries—can be understood as a shared commitment to the strengthening value of the contest itself. Thus, applying Reginster's insights to social relations, we will see that Nietzsche's great individual might not only endure adversaries and aversive emotions but *actively seek them out*. A great individual involved in higher friendships sees that, win or lose, the contest provides a pathway to self-overcoming that is otherwise unavailable to them.

In what follows I will demonstrate these features of Nietzschean higher friendship: through friendship a person hopes to promote another's flourishing by contributing to their self-overcoming; they do this on the basis of an intimate personal knowledge of the other in which they comprehend their friend's specificity, the internal network of drives that constitute them and the best ways to promote desirable drives and stultify undesirable ones. In order to better understand how this works in higher friendship we will also consider two other forms of social relationship as conceived by Nietzsche: higher neighbourliness and higher enmity. We will see that a positive intention towards the other is only available in higher friendship: in neighbourliness the desire to benefit the other is ambiguous and in enmity it is denied. For Nietzsche, it is in higher friendship that intimate knowledge of the other, the desire to see them flourish through self-overcoming, and the commitment to provide the necessary context, are inherent in the form of the relationship itself.

The relationship in Nietzsche's thought between the capability that each person possesses for conscious reflection on their own (and another's) drives, and the subconscious operation of those drives, is not straightforward. Mitcheson offers the suggestion that solitude plays a

critical role in this relationship for Nietzsche.²⁵³ She argues that while there a great deal about the self that escapes conscious reflection as a mental process, the remain for Nietzsche techniques of self-knowledge. These are more than simply mental processes – they are processes interpretation and translation in which the entire person is brought to bear on the problem of interpreting and translating subconscious drives and, thereby, becoming able to develop self-knowledge.²⁵⁴ For Nietzsche, this includes both solitude, which enables disconnection and direct self-reflection, and ‘lived-in’ engagement with the drives expressed and embedded in their context as a means of indirect self-reflection.²⁵⁵

This tension between the conscious and the subconscious, between the direct and indirect perception of the drives, and between the different techniques of the self that might bring the drives into conscious reflection, should not, in my view, obscure the essential point that, for Nietzsche, self-knowledge is possible, albeit in a contingent and emergent context.

Against Shared Goals, Shared Joy

The question before us, then, is how Nietzsche conceives friendship as the realisation of great love and its ethics of power. We can begin to answer this question by understanding that friendship is a significant theme for Nietzsche.²⁵⁶ In developing this theme, he places himself within a tradition of philosophical reflection that begins with Plato and Aristotle²⁵⁷ and continues into contemporary philosophy.²⁵⁸ Understanding Nietzsche’s debt to these sources

²⁵³ Katrina Mitcheson, "Techniques of Self-Knowledge in Nietzsche and Freud," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 46, no. 3 (2015).

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 334-35.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 336-37.

²⁵⁶ Substantive references to ‘friend’ [*Freund*] and ‘friendship’ [*Freundschaft*] and related forms can be found in *D* §§69, 102, 174, 287, 313, 369, 437, 485, 489, 503, 566; *GS* §§ 7, 14, 16, 30, 61, 98, 168, 279; *TSZ* ‘On the Friend’, ‘On the Thousand and One Goals’, ‘On Love of the Neighbour’, ‘On the Bestowing Virtue’.3, ‘Before Sunrise’; and *BGE* §§27, 40, 217.

²⁵⁷ Julia Annas, "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism," *Mind* 86, no. 344 (1977); Philip Bashor, "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 2, no. 4 (1968); Lorraine Smith Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); A. W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1989); Andra Striowski, "Plato and Aristotle on Philia" (Masters Thesis, Dalhousie University, 2008); von Heyking, *Aristotle and Plato on Friendship*.

²⁵⁸ e.g. Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*; Hutter, "The Virtue of Solitude."; Mark Vernon, *The Philosophy of Friendship* (Abingdon, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); David Webb, "On Friendship: Derrida, Foucault, and the Practice of Becoming," *Research in Phenomenology* 33, no. 1 (2003).

has been the subject of significant academic endeavour and the importance of this theme for his own work has been extensively commented on.²⁵⁹ One feature of this literature is the understanding that friendship holds a unique place in Nietzsche's ethics as the paradigm case of great individuals in a social context. It is widely recognised in this literature that this is due at least in part to Nietzsche's conception of friendship in terms of contest.²⁶⁰ In particular, scholars have noted that Nietzschean higher friendship includes the possibility of enmity.²⁶¹

What is not always clear in these discussions, however, is how the conflicting impulses of a friend who also acts as an enemy can be understood as an integrated and coherent experience for both parties. In my view, it is not sufficient to simply assert or assume that the friend's intention to benefit the other through adversarial behaviour resolves the conflicting impulses of enmity and friendship. If both parties realise that beneficence underlies the relationship despite a contemporaneous experience of enmity, then the experience of enmity loses its power. Enmity cannot simply be one of a number of instruments a friend might use to benefit another. To have the desired effect, enmity must be truly experienced, by both parties, as enmity.

One option discussed in the literature for integrating enmity into higher friendship is a teleological approach. Several scholars have proposed a variety of goals for higher friendship in order to render this collocation of enmity and friendship coherent. Miner proposes that the goal of friendship is truth. While the oppositional character of higher friendship eschews pity, it embraces sympathy because of a shared commitment to truth, even if the contemporaneous

²⁵⁹ Abbey, "Circles, Ladders and Stars."; Allman, "Ancient Friends, Modern Enemies."; Appel, *Nietzsche Contra Democracy*; Coker, "Spectres of Friends and Friendship."; Freibach-Heifetz, "Nietzsche's Conception of Friendship."; Gauthier, "In Honour of Friendship."; Harris, "Friendship as Shared Joy in Nietzsche."; "Friendship as Shared Joy in Nietzsche."; *ibid.*; Harris, "Nietzsche and Aristotle."; Hutter, "The Virtue of Solitude."; Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*; Miner, "Nietzsche on Friendship."; Small, *Nietzsche and Rée: A Star Friendship*; van Tongeren, "Politics, Friendship and Solitude."; "Idealization of Friendship into Nihilism."; Verkerk, "Nietzsche's Goal of Friendship."; "Nietzsche's Agonistic Ethics of Friendship."; "On Love, Women, and Friendship: Reading Nietzsche with Irigaray," *Nietzsche-Studien* 46, no. 1 (2017); *Nietzsche and Friendship*; Williams, "Aristotle, Hegel, and Nietzsche on Friendship."; Zavatta, "Nietzsche and Emerson on Friendship."

²⁶⁰ Daniel I. Harris, "Nietzsche and Virtue," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 49, no. 3 (2015): 216; Verkerk, "Nietzsche's Agonistic Ethics of Friendship," 24.

²⁶¹ Miner, "Nietzsche on Friendship," 64-65; Verkerk, "Nietzsche's Agonistic Ethics of Friendship," 281.

experience of the individuals is that of opposition.²⁶² Verkerk proposes self-cultivation as a shared goal that brings enmity into higher friendship. Self-cultivation here includes self-overcoming that is expressed in shared joy, ultimately leading to creative self-expression and knowledge of the truth.²⁶³ Common to both of these proposals is the idea that contest is important for achieving goals because it recognises that the path to attaining them includes adversity. Friends will not, therefore, necessarily alleviate difficult experiences and may be called on to create them, in the context of a beneficent desire to assist each other in achieving their life's goals.

One key text for understanding Nietzsche's approach to the goals of higher friendship is *GS* §14, *The things people call love*. In it Nietzsche describes different kinds of love, including neighbour-love and romantic love, and it concludes with a definition of higher friendship as an evolution of these lower forms of love. He builds to this conclusion with the argument that many kinds of love, while often thought of as selfless, are better understood as greed; as the desire of one party to appropriate the other:

Greed and love [...] could be the same instinct, named twice [...] Our love of our neighbours – is it not a craving for new *property*? And likewise our love of knowledge, of truth, and altogether any craving for what is new? [...] When we see someone suffering, we like to use this opportunity to take possession of him; that is for example what those who become his benefactors and those who have compassion for him do, and they call the lust for new possessions that is awakened in them 'love,' and their delight is like that aroused by the prospect of a new conquest. Sexual love, however, is what most clearly reveals itself as a craving for new property.

²⁶² Miner, "Nietzsche on Friendship."

²⁶³ Verkerk, "Nietzsche's Goal of Friendship."; "Nietzsche's Agonistic Ethics of Friendship."

The lover wants unconditional and sole possession of the longed-for person [...] If one considers that this means *excluding* the whole world from a precious good, from joy and enjoyment [and] that the lover aims at the impoverishment and deprivation of all the competitors [...] as the most inconsiderate and selfish of all of all 'conquerors' [and] that to the lover himself the rest of the world appears indifferent, pale, and worthless and that he is prepared to make any sacrifice [...] then one is indeed amazed that this wild greed and injustice of sexual love has furnished the concept of love as the opposite of egoism when it may in fact be the most candid expression of egoism [...] Here and there on earth there is probably a kind of continuation of love in which this greedy desire of two people for each other gives way to a new desire and greed, a *shared* higher thirst [*einen gemeinsamen höheren Durste*] for an ideal above them [*nach einem über ihnen stehenden Ideale*]. But who knows such love? Who has experienced it? Its true name is *friendship*.

Nietzsche's claim is that by transforming sexual love into higher friendship lovers are able to deflect their passion away from each other and towards an ideal 'above' them. The greed that characterises sexual love is transformed into something other than greed, that is, into friendship. In the total context of this passage he includes compassionate love and neighbour love alongside sexual love as lower forms of love that could undergo this transformation into friendship. Importantly, to transform these into higher love a third element—the ideal that stands above them—is required.

A teleological interpretation of this text, along the lines of Miner and Verkerk discussed above, is that the ideal is understood as a shared goal. On this view the lovers desire the same goal. It is the ideal 'above' them for which they strive, and which renders oppositional behaviours

intelligible in their relationship. There are two main issues with this approach. The first is that the text indicates that what is shared between friends is not a shared ideal but a shared thirst (*gemeinsamen höheren Durste*). While it is true that the ideal is grammatically singular, what Nietzsche emphasises is not sharing in a singular ideal but sharing in the desire for an ideal.²⁶⁴ The individuals may have quite different ideals based, for example, on their own unique composition as individuals. What they share is the desire for each to achieve their own ideal.

Further, even if the ideal is shared, it is not obvious that it stands 'above' them as a goal in the sense of a purpose, a *telos*. Truth,²⁶⁵ overcoming,²⁶⁶ and self-overcoming²⁶⁷ all feature in the literature as candidates for an overarching goal or purpose that might bind friends together and resolve the internal contradictions within higher friendship. Yet, teleology is problematic for Nietzsche in general. To claim a *telos* as the basis for higher friendship and even as the basis of Nietzsche's ethics ignores the way he problematises goals and purposes (e.g. *D* §130, *GS* §1). Small, Siemens and Thiele are examples of scholars who convincingly attribute to Nietzsche a profoundly anti-teleological stance.²⁶⁸

While it can be shown that Nietzsche thinks agonistic friendship can lead to the discovery of truth, to overcoming obstacles, to the experience of (self-)overcoming and to self-knowledge, it is not clear that these are best thought of as purposes or goals. In my view, it is more fitting to interpret the ideal that stands above friends as a standard of value that acts as a foundation for the passionate life than it is to think of it as a common goal or purpose for each individual's life. On this interpretation, the desire for one another that characterises sexual love is redirected towards this higher standard. The picture is of two people living their lives filled with a shared passion that enables each to progress towards their own ideal. This is the foundation, the

²⁶⁴ Gauthier, "In Honour of Friendship," 42.

²⁶⁵ Miner, "Nietzsche on Friendship."

²⁶⁶ Verkerk, "Nietzsche's Goal of Friendship."

²⁶⁷ Freibach-Heifetz, "Nietzsche's Conception of Friendship."

²⁶⁸ Siemens, "Nietzsche's Agon with Ressentiment."; Small, *Nietzsche and Rée: A Star Friendship*; Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*.

standard of value, by which the relationship is evaluated. It does not matter whether the ideal is attained, unattained, or even unattainable; nor whether it gives their lives purpose.

The teleological approach to incorporate adversarial behaviours and aversive affects into the positive ideal of higher friendship is, therefore, unconvincing. A different way into this topic is to emphasise not shared goals but shared experiences, in particular, the experience of shared joy (*Mitfreude*). This idea, while noticed in passing by Miner,²⁶⁹ has been extensively developed by Harris.²⁷⁰ At the centre of Harris' approach is the combination of two texts: *GS* §14 and *GS* §338. We have seen above that *GS* §14 emphasises shared desire for attaining an ideal as the foundation for higher friendship. Harris amplifies this by incorporating the concept of shared joy from *GS* §338 where Nietzsche discusses the familiar problem of unthinking commitment to compassion. In this text Nietzsche sees a commitment to compassion as a mechanism to avoid adversity and in doing so to become distracted from one's own life-task. Nietzsche concludes the text by describing an alternative form of help offered to others, namely, help that promotes bravery rather than avoidance in the face of adversity. This kind of help is not cruel because it is a direct response to the unique constitution of the sufferer. Here it is not a shared thirst for an ideal but shared suffering, shared hope and shared joy that characterise friendship:

You will also want to help – but only those whose distress you properly *understand* because they share with you one suffering and one hope – your *friends* – and only in the way you help yourself: I want to make them braver, more persevering, simpler, more full of gaiety. I want to teach them what is today understood by so few, least of all by these preachers of compassion [*Mitleiden*]: to share not pain, but *joy* [*Mitfreude*]!

²⁶⁹ Miner, "Nietzsche on Friendship," 47.

²⁷⁰ Harris, "Friendship as Shared Joy in Nietzsche."; "Nietzsche and Virtue."; "Friendship as Shared Joy in Nietzsche."; "Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 48, no. 1 (2017); "Nietzsche and Aristotle."; Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy*.

Drawing from *GS* §14 the idea of shared desire and from this text the contrast between shared pain and shared joy, Harris argues that Nietzsche's concept of agonistic friendship centres on shared joy. The adversarial nature of higher friendship can be explained because the shared joy that great individuals experience is found in a common striving for excellence.²⁷¹

This interpretation of *Mitfreude*, shared joy, depends on how one understands *Freude*. The range of uses of this term, in particular its use as an antonym not to sadness but to pain or overwhelming passion, indicate that a simple translation of *Freude* as 'joy' will not suffice.²⁷² The text itself indicates several shared experiences including suffering (*Leid*), hope (*Hoffnung*) and joy (*Mitfreude*), and *GS* §14 emphasises desire (*Begierde*). To single out the experience of joy as the most important feature of higher friendship lacks justification. Further, while the idea of shared joy in striving for excellence through adversity may help to incorporate adversarial behaviour into higher friendship, it does not help us to understand how Nietzsche incorporates aversive emotional experiences. If the signature feature of higher friendship is this positive emotional experience of joy, emotions such as the feeling of enmity are difficult to explain.

These teleological and experiential explanations of higher friendship share one important feature. They base higher friendship on concepts of mutuality and reciprocity. In order to develop a mechanism for reconciling adverse experiences created by friends with the desire of each for the other's flourishing, both approaches propose mutually held beliefs or desires which lead to reciprocal action between the parties. On this basis adversity finds its place within the relationship, licensed by this underlying mutuality and reciprocity. In the case where one friend

²⁷¹ Harris, "Friendship as Shared Joy in Nietzsche," 9.

²⁷² The term and cognates appear throughout the middle period in a number of different contexts. *GS* §12, for example, describes in its first half how science causes people to experience either pleasure (*Lust*) or displeasure (*Unlust*). The text transitions to a discussion of the "refined pleasures and joys" (*gekosteten Lüsten und Freude*) and concludes by contrasting "pain" (*Schmerz*) with "joy" (*Freude*). In *GS* §3 it is used to refer to the irrational pleasure a noble person takes in displaying magnanimity, and in *GS* §49 it is rendered as the "delight" a magnanimous person takes in their own generosity. In *TSZ* book 1, "On the Passions of Pleasure and Pain," *Freudenschaften* ("passions of pleasure") are opposed to passions *simpliciter* (*Leidenschaften*), which having once been regarded as "evil" (*Böse*) have flowered unto virtues (*Tugenden*), which in turn have ultimately become pleasures.

causes adversity for the other through opposition or enmity, this can be incorporated into an understanding of their friendship because the adversity arises out of a shared commitment to one another's ultimate flourishing and is understood by both in this way.

Friends, Enemies and Neighbours

It seems to me that Nietzsche's approach to higher friendship does not relate so easily to mutuality and reciprocity as foundational concepts. An alternative approach to understanding his ideal of higher friendship is to emphasise the structure of the relationship as an expression of contest based on the Homeric ideals of abundance and difference. Nietzsche's agonistic understanding of higher friendship goes further than merely acknowledging that higher friendship can include enmity. I propose that, for Nietzsche, opposition and enmity as well as the supposedly opposite experiences of fellow-feeling, cooperation and sympathy are *all* expressions of an underlying contest in the relationship. This contest is a consequence of personal abundance, it is an overflowing of each person's power into the relationship itself. It expresses difference: neither party seeks to appropriate nor to dominate the other. Through the inevitable contest that takes place as each expresses their own power in the relationship, they advance both their own life-task and the other's.

Higher Friendship

For Nietzsche, higher friendship is structured to invite each party to express themselves as abundant natural beings. Whether this involves opposition and enmity or support and sympathy is not important. The commitment of one to the other is a commitment to a full expression of their individuality. They are able to engage with each other in the full range of behaviours and emotions that separately constitute each of them because both parties are abundant and therefore unafraid of sustaining unrecoverable losses. The emphasis on 'separately' is deliberate: commitment to difference between one person and another, to the

unique personal-ness of the experiences of each, and the self-sufficiency of each person's abundance, are the signature features of higher friendship. It has these in common with Homeric contest. Here there is no need to appropriate, ingest, consume, dominate or tyrannise others, as might be the case in a lower form of friendship, which is not Homeric contest but a privative struggle, a downward-spiralling fight to the death.

This description of friendship in the terms of Homeric contest provides a consistent interpretation of a variety of texts, including *GS* §338. We saw above that Harris relies on this text to interpret higher friendship through the lens of shared joy. While shared joy is an important idea in the text, there are other themes that modify how we are to understand it. For example, Nietzsche argues that a person should only help her friends in the same way that she is prepared to help herself. Remembering from the previous chapter that Nietzsche's great individual helps themselves through the adversity of self-overcoming, we can understand that here helping a friend includes foregoing compassion and even reinforcing their suffering so as to enable their self-overcoming. Further, we see in this text the importance of appreciating the particularity of each person. The adversarial element of friendship is not a sociopathic desire to inflict suffering on another human being, nor is it the result of mere self-interest or extreme self-indulgence. Nietzsche argues instead that the decision to alleviate, prolong or even intensify a person's suffering can only be made on the basis of a profoundly personalised understanding of that person's path to self-overcoming and, therefore, to flourishing. He argues this point in the negative, asserting that a benefactor's offer to alleviate suffering is often done in ignorance of that person's particular requirements:

What we most deeply and most personally suffer from is incomprehensible and inaccessible to nearly everyone else; here we are hidden from our nearest, even if we eat from the same pot. But whenever we are *noticed* to be suffering, our suffering is superficially construed; it

is the essence of the feeling of compassion that it *strips* the suffering of what is truly personal: our 'benefactors' diminish our worth more than our enemies do. In most cases of beneficence toward those in distress there is something offensive in the intellectual frivolity with which the one who feels compassion plays the role of fate: he knows nothing of the whole inner sequence and interconnection that spells misfortune for *me* or for *you*! The entire economy of my soul and the balance effected by 'misfortune', the breaking open of new springs and needs, the healing of old wounds, the shedding of entire periods of the past – they want to *help* and have no thought that there is a personal necessity of misfortune; that terrors, deprivations, impoverishments, midnights, adventures, risks, and blunders are as necessary for me and you as their opposites; indeed, to express myself mystically, that the path to one's own heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one's own hell.

Here we see his interest in difference, expressed as an emphasis on the incommensurability of individuals' experiences. The sheer specificity of a person's experience makes it *almost* impossible for others to comprehend the dynamics and necessity of their suffering. Compassion, he argues, acts thoughtlessly towards others with a universalised understanding of suffering—that it should be alleviated—and in so doing obliterates the uniqueness of their experience. In the broader context, this response can be understood to diminish the otherness of the friend, hindering their journey towards self-overcoming and flourishing.

This emphasis on difference expressed as personal specificity continues in the next sections of the text, where he turns from the perspective of the sufferer to the perspective of the benefactor. Here compassion robs the benefactor of their uniqueness as well:

I know, there are a hundred decent and praiseworthy ways of losing myself *from my path*, and, verily, highly ‘moral’ ways! Yes, the moral teacher of compassion even goes so far as to hold that precisely this and only this is moral – to lose *one’s own way* like this in order to help a neighbour [...] Yes, there is a secret seduction even in all these things which arouse compassion and cry out for help, for our own way is so hard and demanding and far from love and gratitude of others that we are by no means reluctant to escape from it, from it and our ownmost conscience – and take refuge in the conscience of the others and in the lovely temple of the ‘religion of compassion.’

Nietzsche’s solution to this problem of losing oneself through the feeling of compassion for others is twofold: protect yourself by keeping people at a distance and/or surround yourself with friends:

And, although I will keep quiet here about some things, I do not wish to keep quiet about my morality, which tells me: Live in seclusion so that you *are able* to live for yourself! Live *in ignorance* of what seems most important to your age! [...] You will also want to help – but only those whose distress you properly *understand* because they share with you one suffering and one hope – your *friends* – and only in the way you help yourself.

Nietzsche is not here recommending complete personal isolation in a quest to “live for yourself.” Rather, he is discussing one remedy—avoidance—to escape the seduction of compassion, which arises from association with others and has the potential to divert a person from their path. His positive recommendation is to develop friendships where the specificity of each

person is respected and the commitment of one to the other is incorporated into each person's unique path to flourishing, including, where necessary, suffering. By surrounding themselves with people who "properly *understand*," great individuals are able to help their friends but without the universalising and depersonalising compulsion of compassion. The standard by which friends' actions towards one another are evaluated is not the alleviation of suffering. It is whether or not the specific requirements of each person in the context of their unique life task have been properly addressed. It is conceivable that this might involve non-mutual, non-reciprocal action on the part of one or both participants. The result of this is "shared joy":

I want to make them [my friends] braver, more persevering, simpler,
more full of gaiety. I want to teach them what is today understood by so
few, least of all by the preachers of compassion: to share not pain, but
joy!

Thus the context for shared joy in higher friendship is neither mutuality nor reciprocity. It is, rather, respect for the otherness of a person and the uniqueness of their pathway through life. The structure of higher friendship is such that it respects the differences between people and supports their individuality and specificity. This seems to me to narrow the sense in which Nietzsche means for this joy to be shared. I take it to mean that both parties experience the joy of overcoming adversity in order to flourish and to attain their own individually defined ideal. In short, it is the joy of 'becoming what you are.'

There is, however, a further complication to consider. One of the problems we are trying to solve in this picture of higher friendship is how adversarial behaviours and aversive emotions (such as enmity) might be incorporated into a concept of higher friendship without destroying the concept of friendship itself. This solution—the removal of mutuality and reciprocity and their replacement with abundance and difference—could be taken to imply another

contradiction. That is, now it seems that great individuals engaged in higher friendship share a commitment to the notion that there is nothing shared in their experience. To deeply understand another person's experience, on the understanding that that experience is incommensurate with your own, suggests a contradiction between knowing and not-knowing in higher friendship.

This problem is explored in the text '*On the Friend*' in *TSZ*. In this text Nietzsche uses a wide variety of metaphors and allusions to describe friendship. The sheer diversity of the text, and the sudden appearance of new metaphors one after another, can make this text difficult to interpret. However, we can see in it some of the key themes of higher friendship: the possibility of intimate opposition (here the friend is described as an enemy), the concept of shared striving towards an ideal (here described as the 'overman') and the issue of knowing and not-knowing (here described through metaphors of masking/mirroring and dreaming/waking). This text contributes to the picture of higher friendship, developed thus far primarily through *GS* §§14 and 338, by showing Nietzsche's capacity to adopt a highly nuanced understanding of the dynamics of friendship and the problems it involves. In particular, this text demonstrates Nietzsche's capacity to think about higher friendship not merely in absolute terms such as 'great' and 'decadent' and 'higher' and 'lower.' Here Nietzsche, through the voice of Zarathustra, demonstrates that the problems and possibilities of higher friendship can be understood as a matter of degree, construed in terms of each person's progress, however limited, towards their own ideals.

In *TSZ* '*On the Friend*' Nietzsche begins with a meditation on solitude and friendship, in which the friend appears as an interlocutor between "I" and "me," a circuit-breaker for an internal dialogue, and then he turns to consider friendship and enmity:

“At least be my enemy!” – Thus speaks true respect that does not dare to ask for friendship. If one wants a friend, then one must also want to wage war for him: and in order to wage war, one must *be able* to be an enemy. One should honor the enemy even in one’s friend. Can you step up to your friend without stepping over to him? In one’s friend one should have one’s best enemy. You should be closest to him in heart when you resist him.

As the interlocutor between “I” and “me” a true friend is willing also to be an enemy, to express opposition and resistance. Respect for the other means rejecting lower friendship, the longing for which he has described in the immediately preceding passages as self-betrayal. Rather, respect requires a different kind of friend who acts as the mediator in an internal conversation of self-discovery, and who is willing to “wage war” in doing so. In order to do so one friend not only steps “up” to other, they also step “over to him.” Here their experiences do not seem totally incommensurate.

Zarathustra goes on to develop metaphors of nakedness and dreaming to describe the intimate opposition that takes place in the semi-commensurable experiences of higher friendship. These metaphors emphasise the contradiction between knowing and unknowing in friendship, where deliberately artificial self-presentation—masking—is essential to intimacy:

You want to wear no garb before your friend? Is it supposed to be to your friend’s honor that you give yourself to him as you are? But for that he curses you to the devil! Whoever makes no secret of himself outrages others; so much reason do you have to fear nakedness! Indeed, if you were gods then you could be ashamed of your clothing! For your friend

you cannot groom yourself beautifully enough, for you should be his arrow and longing for the overman.

Here we see individuals who aspire to the overhuman, to 'become what they are,' and as a result of not having attained it they disguise themselves with careful "grooming" for the sake of their friends. This is part of a relationship designed to inspire the other on their own journey to self-overcoming. By presenting themselves in this way, the friend hopes to point the other, like an arrow, towards their superhumanity. By appearing beautiful to one another, even if this in some sense a deception, higher friends inspire one another in this ambition for self-overcoming and self-development. There is an interplay here between openness and pretence, authenticity and masking, in a person's intimate relationships. Given each person's shortcomings with respect to the ideal of the overman, artful self-presentation is required and so intimate knowledge of another person, a condition necessary for higher friendship, is problematised.

This problem is further discussed with the metaphor of wakefulness and dreaming:

Have you ever seen your friend sleeping – so that you discover how he really looks? What after all is the face of your friend? It is your own face, in a rough and imperfect mirror. Have you ever seen your friend sleeping? Weren't you startled that your friend looks as he does? Oh my friend, human being is something that must be overcome. The friend should be a master of guessing and keeping silent: you must not want to see everything. Your dream should reveal to you what your friend does while waking. Let your compassion be a guessing, so that you might first know whether your friend wants compassion. Perhaps what he loves in you is your unbroken eye and the look of eternity.

This problem of intimacy and incommensurability is expressed in several ways in this text. The first is in the issue of subjectivity. In seeking to know a friend, even when they are asleep and their artifice of self-presentation is dropped, one can only see oneself, albeit imperfectly. The second is the issue of certitude. Friends do not have direct access to knowledge of each other. They are asked instead to alternate between guesswork and silence. Guessing and dreaming are brought together – instead of “seeing” a friend directly and authentically, a person relies on creative guesswork and imaginative reconstruction, a state of mind not dissimilar to dreams or dream-like states. There are familiar ideas here: that the friend won’t necessarily express compassion but will first ‘guess’ at their friends’ real needs; and that a true friend’s uncompromising stance, their “unbroken eye,” is an essential component of the relationship.

Taken together, these texts from *GS* and *TSZ* offer complementary perspectives. The texts from *TSZ* express a more moderate presentation of the Homeric concepts of abundance than those from *GS*. Here the great individuals engaged in higher friendship clearly have not yet attained the ideal, the overman. This explains, in part, why they desire higher friendships. If the individuals involved were already overhuman, one might think that they would have no need or desire for one another. Their personal abundance would mean that they flow only outwards, shedding the superfluity of social engagements and not concerned to pay attention to the personal circumstances of the other. While this might be the implication of the texts from *GS*, in *TSZ* we see Nietzsche thinking not in absolute terms but in degrees. If the overman is an ideal, a destination for becoming-great individuals, then they involve themselves in higher friendships in order to become abundant enough so that they *can* flow outwards towards others, at least at times, giving of themselves but not losing their own path.

In *GS* §338 we also see a tempering of Nietzsche’s notion of difference, which he emphasises in *On the Friend*. Despite the problem of masking in higher friendship, we have already seen Nietzsche’s assertion that in higher friendship individuals are able to “share one suffering and

one hope” and to experience “shared joy.” This, of course, implies some basis on which people might each understand other’s experiences. Higher friendship is the rare circumstance where two people have become so aware of each other’s differences, their alternative perspectives and nuances of feeling, that they are able to project themselves into that experience and comprehend the specific requirements of that other person’s flourishing. The commitment to another person combines the complementary goals of self-development,²⁷³ self-overcoming²⁷⁴ and self-knowledge.²⁷⁵

Higher friendship, then, can be understood as a desire for another person that includes a desire for contest. This desire is both self- and other-directed. It is self-directed in the sense that contest produces personal flourishing through self-overcoming. It is other-directed in a similar sense: each individual is committed to developing a bespoke understanding of the other in order to support their flourishing through self-overcoming, even if the mechanism for this is imagination and guesswork. On the basis of this individualised perception of another person’s constitution and the mechanisms of their flourishing, a friend is able to contribute to that person’s flourishing in any way necessary. This can be seen as a virtuous circle: the stronger, more independent, more personally specified—the more self-concerned—one’s friends are, the more they have to give.

The understanding of higher friendship that we can develop from Nietzsche’s treatment of the theme is a form of social relationship structured around his adaptation of Homeric contest. As a form of contest, higher friendship is premised on personal abundance and difference between individuals. It is based on his understanding of the great individual’s internal contest, and so

²⁷³ Abbey, “Circles, Ladders and Stars,” 63.

²⁷⁴ Freibach-Heifetz, “Nietzsche’s Conception of Friendship,” 249.

²⁷⁵ Harris, “Nietzsche and Aristotle.”

avoids the problems of excessive or abusive self-interest because the great individual's life task is self-mastery, attained through the process of self-overcoming.

Higher Enmity

We gain further insight into Nietzsche's concept of higher friendship by considering other social relationships that he describes. Somewhat disconcertingly, one social relationship that Nietzsche describes positively is enmity. For some, it would be difficult to describe the relation of enmity between enemies as a social relationship, and certainly not as an ethical form of social relationship. Nietzsche, however, valorises the enemy relation, particularly when it takes place between great individuals.

We have seen above that enmity plays a role in higher friendship. In that analysis higher friendship is defined by intimate personal knowledge of a friend's personal requirements in order to accomplish their self-overcoming and flourishing. Using this knowledge, a great individual might act towards her friend with enmity, but ultimately this is for their flourishing. We also saw that individuals' knowledge of one another is limited, meaning that friends are bound together in an experimental exchange of imaginative guesswork. Sometimes supportive, at other times adversarial, friends discover the best way to keep one another on their own unique path.

We can learn more about higher friendship by considering the differences between enmity in this context and enmity between enemies. Surprisingly little has been written on enmity and enemies: Desmond notes that, in contrast with the significant tradition in the philosophy of friendship, Nietzsche and Schmitt are rare exceptions that explicitly approach the topic.²⁷⁶ His approach to Nietzsche, however, is religious and metaphysical in character and yields little for this analysis. Bergoffen's political analysis of the concept of the enemy in Nietzsche suggests a

²⁷⁶ William Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought?: Between Religion and Philosophy*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005), 289ff.

concept of higher enmity in which a worthy enemy offers an affirming experience in which reciprocity is at work.²⁷⁷ She does not, however, distinguish the enmity that works within higher friendship with this enmity between enemies *simpliciter*.

One way to approach this topic is to understand Nietzsche's enemy *simpliciter* through the lens of warrior-ethics, another theme borrowed to some degree from Homer. Consider, for example, *D* §135:

Being pitied. – To savages the idea of being pitied evokes a moral shudder: it divests one of all virtue. To offer pity is as good as to offer contempt: one does not want to see a contemptible creature suffer, there is no enjoyment in that. To see an enemy suffer, on the other hand, whom one recognises as one's equal in pride and who does not relinquish his pride under torture, and in general any creature who refuses to cry out for pity – cry out that is, for the most shameful and profoundest humiliation – this is an enjoyment of enjoyments, and beholding it the soul of the savage is elevated to *admiration*: in the end he kills such a valiant creature, if he has him in his power, and thus accords this *indomitable enemy* his last *honour*: if he had wept and wailed and the expression of cold defiance had vanished from his face, if he had shown himself contemptible – well, he would have been let live, like a dog – he would no longer have excited the pride of the spectator of his suffering, and admiration would have given place to pity.

This is an imagined situation where an enemy is held captive by a victor, who causes them to suffer through deliberate cruelty, through torture. Nietzsche's warrior ethics is applied to this

²⁷⁷ Debra Bergoffen, "On Nietzsche and the Enemy: Nietzsche's New Politics," in *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought*, ed. Herman Siemens and Vasti Roodt (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2008).

situation in terms of admiration, pride and honour. Here one warrior recognises another as an “equal in pride” who “does not relinquish his pride under torture.” The desire of each to retain their sense of honour and pride requires the refusal of pity: the captor won’t offer it, and the captive won’t ask for it. The distressing result is that the only way for the captor to retain the honour of his captive—something he is bound to by this warrior ethic—is to kill him.

The warrior archetype is also described in *TSZ ‘On War and Warriors.’* In this text Nietzsche writes positively of enmity within the warrior-relation. He goes so far as to include aversive emotional experiences such as hatred and envy:

We do not want to be spared by our best enemies, nor by those whom we love thoroughly [...] My brothers in war! I love you thoroughly, I am and I was like you. And I am also your best enemy [...] I know of the hate and envy of your heart. You are not great enough to not know hate and envy. So at least be great enough to not be ashamed of them! [...] You should be the kind of men whose eyes always seek an enemy – *your* enemy. And with some of you there is a hate at first sight. You should seek your enemy, wage your war and for your thoughts! And when your thought is defeated, then your honesty should cry out in triumph even for that! [...] I do not recommend work to you, but struggle [*Kampf*] instead. I do not recommend peace to you, but victory instead [...] War and courage have done more great things than love of one’s neighbour. Not your pity but your bravery has rescued the casualties so far! [...] You may have only those enemies whom you can hate, but not enemies to despise. You must be proud of your enemy: then the successes of your enemy are your successes too. Rebellion – that is the nobility of slaves. Let your nobility be obedience! [...] Let your love for life be love for your highest hope, and

let your highest hope be your highest thought of life! [...] So live your life
of obedience and war! What matters living long! Which warrior wants to
be spared! I spare you not, I love you thoroughly, my brothers in war!

The text is structured by an *inclusio* that combines kinship and war: “My brothers in war! I love you thoroughly” and “I love you thoroughly, my brothers in war!” This suggests an overarching theme for the text: the enemy against whom the warrior fights is also their ‘brother.’ “I love you thoroughly [...] I am also your best enemy.” Brothers in war here means not fellow soldiers on the same side, but opposing soldiers, enemies, whose ‘thorough’ and ‘brotherly’ love for one another is expressed in enmity, hatred and envy.

Integrating these contradictory elements is not straightforward. It seems to have something to do with the value of contest (*Kampf*), even when expressed as mortal enmity. Importantly, we see here with the enemy relation as with the friend relation the sublimation of Homeric contest into psychological and intellectual ‘warfare’: “wage your war and for your thoughts!” This kind of warfare, and the aversive emotional experiences that go with it, are such a positive feature of the enemy relation that Zarathustra encourages his listeners to actively seek them out. By attracting worthy enemies, even if defeated, the great individual stands to benefit: “be proud of your enemy: then the successes of your enemy are your successes too.”

This passage recalls the spirit of Greek warrior-ethics²⁷⁸ and transposes it into a Nietzschean contest of self-overcoming in intellectual and psychological terms.²⁷⁹ While discussing hatred, envy and warfare in positive terms may be confronting, there are elements here that help to shed light on higher friendship and the function of enmity within it. We can see in these passages that the enmity relation and higher friendship share similar features that arise

²⁷⁸ Joseph M. Bryant, *Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece: A Sociology of Greek Ethics from Homer to the Epicureans and Stoics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

²⁷⁹ See also Bradley C. S. Watson, “The Western Ethical Tradition and the Morality of the Warrior,” *Armed Forces & Society* 26, no. 1 (1999).

because both are forms of Homeric contest. Higher enmity, as with higher friendship, depends on the personal abundance of the individuals concerned, so as to minimise the possibility of a harmful result such as annihilation (noting the exceptional case of the captive discussed above). As with higher friendship, enmity emphasises personal specificity in the ability of a great individual to select an enemy that meets the requirements for her own flourishing. Further, along with higher friendship, enmity includes a higher value standard that allows the participants to combine otherwise contradictory impulses. This value standard, although described here in terms of honour, can also be understood as a variation on the same standard as that applied to friendship. The enemy relation is also characterised by self-overcoming, expressed here as the warrior's capacity for obedience.

While it is difficult to be categorical about the interpretation of such enigmatic passages, it seems to me that the choice to engage an enemy is conceived by Nietzsche not as a destructive impulse but as a desire, through contest, to pursue the value standard of the "highest hope for life." This is connected to the process of self-overcoming. It is not simply a violent lashing out, a nihilistic impulse for chaos, or a desire for vengeance. It is obedience with respect to this highest hope. We see here, albeit in a different context, the reapplication of Nietzsche's understanding of personal relationships as the desire to discover what a person *could* be, or what they are becoming.

The difference between enmity and friendship is that in friendship this operates for the benefit of both, whereas in enmity the contestants seek only to benefit themselves. In higher friendship the drive to self-overcoming in service of an elevated view of human possibility is directed towards the other and towards the self. A person develops higher friendships in order to achieve their own unique life-task, and also to support their friends in their own separate and distinct life task. Enmity within higher friendship is one method for achieving this, deployed selectively based on an individually specified understanding of the needs of the moment. Higher

enmity does not include consideration for the other. It does not inherently desire either their destruction or their improvement, although both may result. The important feature of higher enmity that distinguishes it from higher friendship is that it is a means only to enhancing one's own possibilities, it does not aim at the success of the enemy. This is the case even when one wants to strengthen the enemy: the purpose of this is simply to heighten the satisfaction derived from victory and, in so doing secure the victor against the inevitability of future defeat through the confidence they gain in their own abundance (*GS* §163):

After a great victory. – The best thing about a great victory is that it takes the fear of defeat out of the victor. ‘Why not be defeated once?’ he says to himself; ‘I’m rich enough for that now.’

In the unfortunate circumstance where the enemy is victorious, the vanquished can still benefit. However, the intention of enmity as an agonistic engagement is simple: to defeat the other and gain victory for oneself (*D* §571):

Field-dispensary of the soul. – What is the strongest cure? – Victory.

Higher enmity recognises the pride and strength of the other and accords it such respect as it commands. Higher friendship, however, concerns itself with the flourishing of the other.

Higher Love of Neighbour

A different type of social relationship that Nietzsche describes, which also sheds some light on higher friendship, is the relationship between neighbours or neighbour-love. We have seen in Chapter 2 that Nietzsche is critical of agapic love. We have also seen that higher friendship includes great love, an alternative to agapic love. Neighbour-love, like agapic love, has its roots in Christianity. The so-called ‘golden rule’ of Christian morality is “to love your neighbour as

yourself.”²⁸⁰ Nietzsche’s reflections on neighbour-love inform our understanding of higher friendship because in neighbour-love people who do not know one another personally are brought into a relationship by their sociocultural or geographical context. It is a relationship between strangers who do not know each other intimately and personally, who nevertheless form a community.

As a form of social relationship between strangers neighbour-love is unlike friendship or enmity in which the participants’ intentions are evident, either to benefit or to defeat the other. Here the parties here are unknown to each other and, in view of this, represent to each other the possibilities of friendship or enmity, of positive or destructive intentionality.²⁸¹ In the context of this ambiguity, the neighbour-relation also has both a higher and a lower form. In its lower form, neighbourly compassion expresses itself as flight from oneself, similar to compassion within lower friendship or lower enmity. In *D* §516, where only the title indicates that it describes a neighbour-relation, Nietzsche writes:

Do not let the devil enter into your neighbour! – Let us for the time being agree that benevolence and beneficence are constituents of the good man; only let us add: ‘presupposing he is benevolently and beneficently disposed towards himself!’ For without this – if he flees himself, hates himself, does harm to himself – he is certainly not a good man. For in this case all he is doing is rescuing himself from himself in others [...]

Thus in its lower form, neighbour-love has the same power for self-negating pity for otherwise strong people, with the potential to divert them from their own life-task.²⁸² This problem of neighbour-love is emphasised in the section ‘*On Love of the Neighbour [Von der Nächstenliebe]*’

²⁸⁰ Mark 12:30-31, Matthew 22:39.

²⁸¹ Coker, “Spectres of Friends and Friendship,” 12.

²⁸² See also *GS* §§21, 338 on the destructive possibilities of this form of neighbour-love.

of *TSZ*, a text that we considered in Chapter 2 to compare it to agapic love. Having now considered higher friendship, we can see not only that lower neighbour-love has elements in common with agapic love but we can also see that higher neighbour-love shares some of the features of higher friendship. In this text higher neighbour-love is similar to higher friendship in that it involves shared striving for something beyond both parties. As we have seen throughout this chapter, higher friendship includes great love for another individual that strives with that person so that they can ‘become what they are.’ It is love for their superhumanity; love, in a sense, for their future at the expense of their present.²⁸³ Neighbour-love shares this feature, described by the wordplay between neighbour/near [*Nächsten*] and future/far [*Fernsten*]:

Do I recommend love of the neighbour [*Nächstenliebe*] to you? I prefer instead to recommend flight from the neighbour [*Nächsten-Flucht*] and love of the farthest [*Fernsten-Liebe*]! Higher than love of the neighbour is love of the farthest [*Fernsten*] and the future [...]. One person goes to his neighbour because he seeks himself, and the other because he would like to lose himself. Your bad love of yourselves makes your loneliness into a prison [...] I do not teach you the neighbour but the friend [...] I teach you the friend and his overflowing heart [...] I teach you the friend in whom the world stands complete [...] the creating friend who always has a complete world to bestow [...] my brothers, I do not recommend love of the neighbour [*Nächstenliebe*] to you: I recommend love of the farthest [*Fernsten-Liebe*] to you.

²⁸³ It is interesting that here, in my view, Nietzsche has failed to escape the eschatological orientation of his Christian heritage.

On the surface this text presents opposition to neighbour-love in favour of higher friendship. In my view, however, we can distinguish between higher and lower forms of neighbour-love, with this text commenting on lower neighbour-love, which is characterised by flight from oneself through the subterfuge of the morality of selflessness. This is premised on “bad love” of oneself and a mistaken desire to find oneself in others. The play on words between ‘nearest’ [*nächsten*], neighbour [*Nächsten*] and furthest [*Fernsten*] demonstrates that lower neighbour-love diminishes the possibilities for self-overcoming and self-development by loving the here and now and ignoring future possibilities.

We can see the higher form of neighbour-love described in *D* §146 ‘*Out beyond our neighbour*’ and *D* §471 ‘*A different form of neighbour-love.*’ Together these texts describe Nietzsche’s antidote to the problems of the lower neighbour-love. In higher neighbour-love, as with higher friendship and higher enmity, the Homeric themes of abundance and difference come to the fore. *D* §146 can be read as an extended meditation on the biblical injunctions to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ and ‘to do to others as you would have them do to you.’²⁸⁴ Given that the great individual’s life-task includes self-overcoming, the injunction to love your neighbour as you love yourself is taken to include self-overcoming. Just as higher friendship includes committing to another’s self-overcoming, even if it requires adversarial behaviour, so too does higher neighbour-love. To love your neighbour as yourself means to apply the same ruthless attitude to self-overcoming to them as to oneself. The question of sacrificing either oneself or one’s neighbour is presented in *D* §146 as a question of the enhancement of power and happiness, not one of benefit or harm:

²⁸⁴ Matthew 22:37-40 “³⁷Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” also Mark 12:28-31; Matthew 7:12 “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets”, also Luke 6:31 (NIV).

Out beyond our neighbour [Nächsten] too. – What? Is the nature of the truly moral to lie in our keeping in view the most immediate and direct [*die nächsten*] consequences to others of our actions [...] this, though it be a morality, is a petty and bourgeois one: a higher and freer viewpoint [...] is to *look beyond* these immediate [*diese nächsten*] consequences to others and under certain circumstances to pursue more distant [*entferntere*] goals *even at the cost of the suffering of others* [...] May we not at least treat our neighbour [*Nächsten*] as ourselves? And if with regard to ourselves we take no such narrow and petty bourgeois thought [...] why do we *have* to take such thought in regard to our neighbour? Supposing we acted in the sense of self-sacrifice, what would forbid us from sacrificing our neighbour [*Nächsten*] as well? [...] Finally: we at the same time communicate to our neighbour [*Nächsten*] the point of view from which he can *feel himself to be a sacrifice*, we persuade him to the task for which we employ him. Are we then without pity? But if we also want to *transcend our own pity* and thus achieve victory over ourselves, is this not a higher and freer viewpoint and posture than that in which one feels secure when one has discovered whether an action *benefits or harms* our neighbour [*Nächsten*]? We, on the other hand, would, through sacrifice – in which *we and our neighbour* [*Nächsten*] are both included – strengthen and raise higher the general feeling of human *power*, even though we might not attain to more. But even this would be a positive enhancement of *happiness* [...]

Nietzsche again uses the wordplay of immediate/nearest (*nächsten*), neighbour [*Nächsten*] and furthest [*entferntere*] to develop the contrast between lower neighbour-love and the elevated

value standard of the higher type. To be too concerned with harm or benefit for the neighbour is to lose sight of this higher standard. In the higher form of neighbour-love individuals stand together underneath the compelling force of something that is distant from them and are prepared to sacrifice both themselves and their neighbours in pursuit of it. In the pursuit of this higher standard the neighbour is not a victim but a willing and convinced participant: “we persuade him to the task.”

In *D* §471 Nietzsche emphasises the importance of difference for agonistic neighbourliness:

A different kind of neighbour-love. – Behaviour that is excited, noisy, inconsistent, nervous constitutes the antithesis of *great passion*: the latter, dwelling within like a dark fire and there assembling all that is hot and ardent, leaves a man looking outwardly cold and indifferent and impresses upon his features a certain impassivity. Such men are, to be sure, occasionally capable of neighbour-love – but it is a kind different from that of the sociable and anxious to please: it is a gentle, reflective, relaxed friendliness: it is as though they were gazing out of the windows of their castle, which is their fortress and for that reason also their prison – to gaze into what is strange and free, into *what is different*, does them so much good!

This text describes both higher and lower neighbour-love. It begins with two types of passion, the “excitable” form that contrasts with the “great” form, this latter being inwardly a “dark fire” and outwardly “cold and indifferent.” Both forms of passion can be expressed as neighbour-love. The lower form of neighbour-love that results from the excitable passion is “sociable and anxious to please.” The higher form of neighbour-love that results from great passion is “a

gentle, reflective, relaxed friendliness.”²⁸⁵ The association with friendliness (*Freundlichkeit*) is interesting in that it seems to describe a benevolent disposition towards the neighbour. This disposition is premised on difference: the great neighbour is separated from the other in an existential “castle,” both their “fortress” and their “prison.” From this elevated viewpoint, the great individual appreciates the sheer otherness of their neighbours. They gaze down from their windows onto “what is strange and free, into *what is different*.” It is this radical sense of difference between neighbours that here seems to function as the basis for higher neighbour-love realising its benefits: “[this] does them so much good!”²⁸⁶

For Nietzsche, then, higher neighbour-love has features in common with higher friendship. It emphasises difference, an interest in maintaining and enhancing an otherness that benefits both individuals. It contrasts with higher friendship in one crucial respect: difference between neighbours is premised on ignorance of the other person’s intimate life, of the constitution of their drives and, consequently, of their pathway to self-overcoming. It remains ambivalent about intent: neither person approaches the relationship with the intent to benefit the other party, at least in part because neither person knows how to benefit the other. The benefit that results for each person is, if anything, accidental. In higher friendship there is an intention to benefit the other because difference is not alienation but intimacy.

Conclusions

We have seen above that Nietzsche’s presentation of friendship, enmity and neighbourliness share common features. The higher forms of these relationships take place between (somewhat idealised) great individuals, who act towards one another out of personal abundance and who respect the differences between themselves. They see these social relations within the context

²⁸⁵ See also Coker, “Spectres of Friends and Friendship.”

²⁸⁶ See also Nietzsche’s discussion of hospitality towards strangers in *D* §174.

of a higher standard of value, which, while imprecisely defined, relates to self-overcoming as each individual pursues their unique life task. This life task has in view a higher standard, which is uniquely and personally identified for each participant as their superhumanity, their own vision of themselves re-articulated as the overhuman. Each is uniquely constituted as a set of internally competing drives so that the conditions for their personal self-overcoming and ultimate flourishing are also uniquely determined by the conditions under which desirable drives flourish, and undesirable ones stagnate. In the higher forms of these social relationships the Homeric ethos of contest is evident. The characteristics of abundance and difference are relevant for each in the way that Nietzsche describes and evaluates each type of relationship.

However, not all of these higher forms of social relationship have equal merit for the great individual. Of those that we have considered, friendship emerges as the most desirable and productive. In friendship the participants actively seek not only their own benefit but also the benefit of the other. Whether through opposition or cooperation, love or enmity, friends act for the benefit of both. Enmity is less desirable but still productive. A person can seek out enemies whose particular strengths are valuable for advancing their own life task. Neighbour-love, while perhaps not as desirable as higher enmity because of its ambiguity, still might offer the occasional opportunity for self-overcoming, for mutual or individual benefit.

We can summarise a Nietzschean perspective on these relationships as follows:

Neighbours intend neither harm nor benefit in their agonistic engagements, being ignorant of the other person's unique path to self-overcoming. Neighbour-love includes the possibility of accidental beneficence.

Enemies seek their own benefit in their agonistic engagement. They use the knowledge that they have about each other to gain an advantage for

themselves. Enmity includes transforming both victory and defeat into opportunities for self-overcoming.

Friends intend to benefit one another in their agonistic engagement. Friendship involves a commitment to each other's self-overcoming and an intimate knowledge of each person's internal constitution. Friends use this knowledge to provide optimal conditions for each other's self-overcoming.

The great love of higher friendship, this commitment to the other's flourishing, includes love and enmity, support and opposition, distance and intimacy, authenticity and masking, honesty and deception. The capacity of friends to incorporate a wide array of emotions and behaviours into the relationship and to express this as great love is one reason that higher friendship stands out as a central motif for Nietzsche's ethics of contest.

Throughout the preceding chapters I have presented a predominantly descriptive analysis of Nietzsche's understanding of social relationships. I have attempted to bring together a coherent picture of this ethics by identifying their features. I have argued these are the Homeric features of abundance and difference. In the following chapter I offer a summary of my argument and possibilities both for critical reflection and for contemporary application.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The argument that I have developed in this thesis rests on the idea that the ethos of Greek antiquity, and more specifically the Homeric ethos, was deeply influential in shaping Nietzsche's approach to ethics and sociability. Nietzsche arrived at this understanding by a circuitous path. Born and raised in a Lutheran household and a devout Christian in his early years, Nietzsche ultimately took a stand against Christianity. In particular, he rejected its claim that *agapic* (or self-sacrificing) love defines what is acceptable in social relationships. When he abandoned Christianity Nietzsche embraced aspects of Schopenhauer's anti-theological, anti-teleological metaphysical pessimism. Yet, after a brief period of passionate engagement with Schopenhauer's philosophical pessimism and ascetic life-denial, Nietzsche came to reject his claim that there is only one moral form of action, namely, the drive to alleviate the suffering of others. So we find that in the early stages of his philosophical career, Nietzsche took a stand against what are arguably two of the most important features of the Western or Judaeo-Christian moral code: love and compassion.

As we saw in Chapters 2 & 3, Nietzsche's refutation of these two moral codes included his rejection of their metaphysical bases. Rather than seeking to give morality a metaphysical groundwork, we saw in Chapter 4 that Nietzsche turned instead to the natural sciences in order to develop a naturalistic account of social relationships and ethical norms. In that chapter I argue that Nietzsche's engagement with evolutionary biology led to an ambivalent result. Positively, he appreciated the proposal within evolutionary science that species develop over long periods of time based on random variations and that in the struggle for existence the changes can improve or diminish their capacities for survival and reproduction. Yet on the other hand, he also saw evolutionary biology's conception of the survival of the fittest as a problem for his emerging Homeric ethics. Nietzsche resolves this problem (at least for himself) by interpreting the concept of the survival of the fittest by developing a moral, rather than a

purely scientific, account of evolution. Nietzsche claims that this concept implicitly imputes to nature a moral end, namely, the survival of the species rather than the flourishing of its highest types. Nietzsche suggests that despite their scientific pretensions, nineteenth century evolutionary biologists interpreted nature through the lens of the 'weakest' members of the species who aim at mere survival rather than the maximal expenditure of their energies. Nietzsche drew a radical opposition between the morality aimed at survival and his own Homeric morality focused on this kind of abundance and overflow. Nietzsche sought to develop an ethics that was able to accommodate loftier expectations for human experience, expectations that included, for example, the possibilities for genius, art, music and dance.

As we have seen throughout this thesis, Homeric contest provides an integrated set of ideas to motivate this trajectory for Nietzsche's ethics. Nietzsche saw in the agonistic competition that defined Homeric society an approach to social relationships that was centred on humanity's capacity for greatness. In Homeric culture, as Nietzsche conceived it, human beings can develop themselves towards greatness by testing themselves against others, by contest. Admittedly, Nietzsche recognised that the full realisation of this possibility might be limited to only a few individuals. However, by understanding the social dynamics and moral principles that made this possible for the few, Nietzsche sought to identify the general ingredients for greatness. In Chapter 5 we saw that the Homeric ingredients for greatness, two themes that underlie Nietzsche's ethics, are personal abundance and the desire to accept and enhance difference. In Homeric contest, as Nietzsche conceived it, contestants bring their personal vitality to bear on each other and they do not seek to appropriate or tyrannise the other. For Nietzsche, the contest is a process for establishing new values and standards of excellence. It is always undertaken with a view to the ways in which the current order might be overthrown and redefined by the next contestant.

We saw in Chapter 6 that, in order to develop this approach into an ethics, Nietzsche had to transform the Homeric concept of contest so that it developed from performative or externalised contests—warfare, competitive games and rhetorical sparring—towards an internalised and more personal arena, an aristocracy of the soul, so to speak. He develops an understanding of the individual as constituted by an internal contest between their drives. Drawing on other ancient influences, such as the Stoics and the Epicureans, he uses the idea of self-cultivation to propose that the development of the great individual, based on this contest of drives, is partly achieved through self-overcoming. In Nietzsche's approach, this self-overcoming involves creating an environment in which an individual's desirable drives flourish and their undesirable ones wither away, a process through which the great individual brings internal coherence and integration to their lives. This allows the great individual to organise and coordinate their internal world so that the contest of drives does not diminish their personal resources, but rather builds and develops them. Thus, on Nietzsche's account, the internal contest of drives provides the kind of personal abundance that characterises his idealised great individual.

Ultimately, Nietzsche turns this understanding of great individuals outwards and examines its implications for their relationships with others. As we saw in Chapter 7, Nietzsche captures this agonistic ethics in his idea of higher friendship. Again borrowing from antiquity, particularly Aristotle's distinctions between higher and lower friendship, Nietzsche developed his idea of higher friendship by integrating aspects of his idea of individual self-overcoming. In Chapter 7 we analysed Nietzsche's appraisal of a variety of social relationships, and discovered that for him, 'higher' friendship stands above the rest. Nietzsche grants higher friendship this status because he sees it as the only form of social relationship in which the participants have an intention to contribute to one another's self-overcoming or greatness and they realise this intention precisely by remaining bound together through contest. Nietzsche argues that in the

contest that defines higher friendship individuals require and develop a profoundly personal understanding of each other, of the particular drives that define them and the environment that best promotes each person's unique pathway to self-overcoming and flourishing.

Crucially, as we saw in Chapter 7, Nietzsche's concept of higher friendship entails the possibility that friends might defy or oppose one another. Nietzsche incorporates enmity—and a wide array of other adversarial behaviours and aversive emotions into higher friendship precisely because it is an important dimension of contest that contributes to the contestants self-overcoming. Nietzsche argues that adversity provides important opportunities for individuals to flourish. Based on a deep understanding of what each person needs in order to flourish, friends may be called upon to provide just those adverse conditions. Providing adverse conditions for others is true of many social interactions. Nietzsche considers enemies and neighbours as examples of such social interactions. However, as we saw, Nietzsche argues that in these social contexts the intention to benefit the other is absent. It is only higher friendship that provides this positive possibility to activate in each other in the process of becoming what they are. On the whole, then, this thesis demonstrates that in formulating his ethics of higher friendship Nietzsche draws on, but significantly transform the idea of contest that he discovered in Homeric culture, drawing from it the overarching themes of personal abundance and individual difference as the signature features of friendship that rises above the ordinary to inspire greatness.

Nietzsche's development of his ethics in this way has both strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps most significantly, Nietzsche's understanding of higher friendship provides an alternative to love and compassion that enables us to critically examine social relationships that emphasise these experiences. His presentation of the great individual in higher friendship, striving for greatness and spurring one another on in its pursuit, shows us that love and compassion can, at least in some forms, diminish rather than elevate lovers, friends and neighbours. Specifically,

he shows us that adversarial engagement—when friends becomes enemies—is a necessary constituent of human flourishing in the context of their social relationships. In this way Nietzsche incorporates a positive appreciation of adversity into human social relationships, which in turn provides us with a critical lens for evaluating those social relationships that avoid, minimise or extirpate difficulty.

Nietzsche's ethics, however, also leaves us with some unresolved issues for further investigation. Some of these I have discussed earlier. For example, in Chapter 6 I examined Nietzsche's psychology as one in which the individual is decomposed into their underlying drives. I alluded there to a problem inherent in this decompositional approach. At times, Nietzsche relies on the idea of a directing intelligence, an 'ego' that expresses some intention towards the drives – to stimulate some and stultify others. And yet he also claims that this is a fiction – the intelligence or 'ego' is merely an expression of another underlying drive vying for supremacy. This is an area for further investigation, perhaps by drawing on contemporary psychological or cognitive science.

Another issue that Nietzsche does not resolve relates to his emphasis on abundance. It seems that for Nietzsche it is possible only to enter into the ethical ideal of higher friendship on the basis of personal abundance, and yet higher friendship is necessary for developing this abundance. It might be possible to further develop this approach so that we can consider abundance and higher friendship as incrementally developing in a kind of virtuous circle. One avenue for further research would be to consider whether this would be supported or opposed by contemporary psychological or cognitive science.²⁸⁷ Another avenue might be to consider social exchange theory, an approach that draws on economics and behavioural psychology to

²⁸⁷ See, for example, Rex Welshon, *Nietzsche's Dynamic Metapsychology: This Uncanny Animal* (Abingdon, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

understand social interactions in which individuals do not diminish themselves when they enter into an exchange with others.²⁸⁸

Finally, we can also see that Nietzsche's ideal of personal abundance creates not only psychological dilemmas as above, but also ethical dilemmas. If Nietzsche's great individuals engage with each other based on absolute self-sufficiency—their personal, individual abundance—then a number of ethical ideas about social relationships become problematic. We have already seen how love and compassion are problematised at the beginning of this study. Now at its conclusion, we see also that generosity and, indeed, the whole idea of giving to others, is similarly problematic. Not only is it difficult to see why these individuals would be motivated to engage with one another, it is difficult to see why they would choose one action over another in that engagement. In Nietzsche's presentation, giving to another person in higher friendship is presented as a more or less inevitable outcome: a river in flood 'gives' itself to those on its banks. This is a very different understanding of giving in personal relationships, one in which there appears little intentionality and certainly no sacrifice.

By way of conclusion, I offer a thought about how one might take Nietzsche's approach to social relations neither as a cold bath, nor as an abrasive and brutal reality check, nor as an overly cynical and negative interpretation of human motives. It seems to me that Nietzsche's overhuman, the great superabundant individual engaged in contest relations of friendship, enmity, neighbourliness and love, finds their fulfilment in the concepts of mastery and play. Social relations are part of this. Nietzsche encourages us to take ourselves less seriously, to laugh and dance, that is, to experience the power of mastery, even in our social relations. The beliefs that everything is at stake, that mistakes can be lethal, that consequences are dire – these are the beliefs of someone not yet superabundant, someone too poor to afford to lose. There is

²⁸⁸ Ronald M. Sabatelli, "Social Exchange Theory," in *Encyclopedia of Human Relationships*, ed. Harry T. Reis and Susan Sprecher (SAGE Publications, Inc, 2009).

a compelling alternative here, the alternative of the great health (*GS* §382) where, overflowing with power and abundance, individuals are able to play at life:

Another ideal runs before us, a peculiar, seductive, dangerous ideal to which we wouldn't want to persuade anyone, since we don't readily concede *the right to it* to anyone: the ideal of a spirit that plays naively, i.e. not deliberately but from overflowing abundance and power, with everything that was hitherto called holy, good, untouchable, divine; a spirit which has gone so far that the highest thing which the common people quite understandably accepts as its measure of value would signify for it danger, decay, debasement, or at any rate recreation, blindness, temporary self-oblivion: the ideal of a human, superhuman well-being and benevolence that will often enough appear *inhuman* – for example, when it places itself next to all earthly seriousness heretofore, all forms of solemnity in gesture, word, tone, look, morality, and task as if it were their most incarnate and involuntary parody – and in spite of all this, it is perhaps only with it that *the great seriousness* really emerges; that the real question mark is posed for the first time; that the destiny of the soul changes; the hand of the clock moves forward; the tragedy begins.

I finish with a text that gives a powerfully poetic insight into way that these abundant, god-like and playful individuals might relate to one another. *D* §314 is the first in a series of prose poems (together with *D* §575 and *GS* §124) that centre on nautical imagery and the metaphor of seabirds. These texts are enigmatic and difficult to interpret, and yet they capture the spirit of the Nietzschean 'we,' an ideal community of great individuals involved higher relationships with one another:

From the company of thinkers. – In the midst of the ocean of becoming we awake on a little island no bigger than a boat, we adventurers and birds of passage, and look around us for a few moments: as sharply and as inquisitively as possible, for how soon may a wind not blow us away or a wave not sweep across the little island, so that nothing more is left of us! But here, on this little space, we find other birds of passage and hear of others still who have been here before – and thus we live a precarious minute of knowing and divining, amid joyful beating of wings and chirping with one another, and in spirit we adventure out over the ocean, no less proud than the ocean itself.

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