

2018-04-23

Amor Fati: Nietzsche's formula for human greatness (A philosophical guide to saying Yes to life)

Hulbert-Smith, Shelley Ann

Hulbert-Smith, S. A. (2018). Amor Fati: Nietzsche's formula for human greatness (A philosophical guide to saying Yes to life) (Doctoral thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada). Retrieved from <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>. doi:10.11575/PRISM/31843

<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/106557>

Downloaded from PRISM Repository, University of Calgary

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Amor Fati: Nietzsche's formula for human greatness
(A philosophical guide to saying Yes to life)

by

Shelley Ann Hulbert-Smith

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

APRIL, 2018

© Shelley Ann Hulbert-Smith 2018

Abstract

This dissertation might be described as a philosophical biography of an idea —Nietzsche’s idea of ‘*amor fati*’, ‘love of fate’. First introduced in 1882, *amor fati* marks a renewed affirmation of life for Nietzsche, a new understanding of what it means to say *Yes* to life. In this thesis I show how loving fate informs both Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity, and proposed replacement of traditional values with life-affirming values. For such an important idea, Nietzsche’s published references to *amor fati* are not frequent — four occurrences in his published works. In fact, the importance of the idea to Nietzsche is highlighted, not cast into doubt, by a close look at how and when he discusses it in his published works. After he introduces the notion in 1882 as a very important new year’s resolution urging himself to love fate, he returns to it in the final three occurrences at the end of his productive life. I argue that the ambition of loving fate acted as a type of lighthouse – his beacon drawing him back from the dangerous waters of philosophical exploration and the dark clouds of personal suffering. Ultimately, he calls *amor fati* his “greatest love” and as his “formula for human greatness in a human being”.

Acknowledgements

A PhD thesis is the culmination of a long, and at times arduous, journey. Nietzsche once likened the activity of intellectual inquiry to tunneling deep underground alone in the dark, and at times this is how my journey has felt, with unanticipated personal and professional twists and turns.

I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for their financial support of my doctoral research, and the University of Calgary Department of Philosophy for their help and guidance, especially graduate administrator Denise Retzlaff. I am grateful to Professor John Richardson of New York University for being so generous with his time and engaging in insightful conversation that helped me steer my research in a new direction.

Thank you to my advisory committee members, David Dick and Chris Framarin for agreeing to work with me on this project and for your support and encouragement. I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Mark Migotti who not only inspired my love for Nietzsche's philosophy but also taught me what it means to be a professional philosopher. His expertise and creativity guided every step I took through this process, and I am a better philosopher for it.

I owe so much to all my friends and family who helped me, encouraged me, distracted me when needed, and who listened so patiently while I talked on and on about Nietzsche and philosophy. A special thank you to my brother, Robert Arthur Smith, who reminded me time and time again to keep at it and write every day. And finally, I'm not sure this journey would have been possible at all without the love and support of Andrew Hulbert. It is difficult to find the words to express my deep appreciation.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late father, Arthur Ryan Smith (1919-2008)
who taught me anything is possible if you work hard enough.
He remains my inspiration to live well with integrity, generosity, and humour.
He'd be so happy to see me finish something!

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Abbreviations and citations of Friedrich Nietzsche’s work.....	vii
Abbreviations for titles of published works cited in this thesis.....	vii
Abbreviations for other frequently cited private publications, authorized manuscripts, etc.....	vii
Introduction: <i>Amor fati</i> and the affirmation of life	1
I – The idea	3
II - The philosophical biography of the idea	8
III – Roadmap.....	10
PART ONE: Ideas taking shape.....	16
Chapter 1 Schulpforta: First Thoughts — Fate and Freedom.....	17
1.1 Schulpforta	19
1.2 Early Influences: Hölderlin, Byron, Emerson	22
1.3 “Fate and History: Thoughts”.....	32
1.4 “Freedom of Will and Fate”	41
1.5 Lessons learned: the foundations of a new tower	46
Chapter 2 Pessimism: On second thought.....	49
2.1 Leipzig	51
2.2 Nietzsche’s Schopenhauerianism: 1865-1869.....	55
2.3 Pessimism and fate	61
2.4 Schopenhauer’s pessimism	65
2.5 Nietzsche educated.....	67
2.6 <i>Schopenhauer as Educator</i>	72
PART TWO: <i>Amor Fati</i> by name	76
Chapter 3 A New Year’s resolution: 1882.....	77
3.1 Genoa	78
3.2 <i>Amor Fati</i> : Loving fate	83
3.3 Strong and weak pessimism.....	90
3.4 Suffering and Pity.....	95
3.5 Love and affirmation.....	99
3.6 Eternal recurrence.....	105

PART THREE: A destiny realized	111
Chapter 4 A formula for greatness: 1888.....	112
4.1 Turin	114
4.2 <i>Amor fati</i> : Nietzsche's destiny	116
4.3 The first <i>immoralist</i>	125
4.4 The first <i>tragic philosopher</i>	130
4.5 How to love (your own) fate.....	133
4.6 The puzzle of fate, <i>amor fati</i> , and greatness	134
Chapter 5 <i>Envoi</i>: Future of saying Yes!	137
5.1 Overcoming the 'good' man	137
5.2 The eternal return of the same	143
Appendix I What the scholars have said	151
Appendix II Poetry	161
"Abendphantasie"	161
"Legensgebet"	162
"Liebeserklärung (bei der aber der Dichter in eine Grube fiel —)"	163
Bibliography.....	164

Abbreviations and citations of Friedrich Nietzsche's work

Abbreviations for titles of published works cited in this thesis¹

- *BGE* = *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*; translated as *Beyond Good and Evil*
- *BT* = *Die Geburt der Tragödie*; translated as *The Birth of Tragedy*
- *CW* = *Der Fall Wagner*; translated as *The Case of Wagner*
- *D* = *Morgenröthe*; frequently translated as *Daybreak* or *Dawn*
- *GM* = *Zur Genealogie der Moral*; frequently translated as *On the Genealogy of Morals* or *On the Genealogy of Morality*
- *GS* = *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*; frequently translated as *The Gay Science* or *The Joyful Wisdom*
- *HH* = *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*; translated as *Human, All Too Human*
- *SE* = *Schopenhauer als Erzieher (Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen III)*; translated as *Schopenhauer as Educator*
- *TI* = *Götzen-Dämmerung*; translated as *Twilight of the Idols*; references to this work also include an abbreviated section name
- *UM* = *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*; frequently translated as *Untimely Meditations*, *Unmodern Observations*, or *Unfashionable Observations*
- *Z* = *Also sprach Zarathustra* (part IV originally published privately); translated as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; references to this work also include an abbreviated section name

Abbreviations for other frequently cited private publications, authorized manuscripts, etc.

- *A* = *Der Antichrist*; frequently translated as *The Antichrist* or *The Antichristian*
- *DW* = "Die dionysische Weltanschauung"; translated as "The Dionysian Worldview"
- *EH* = *Ecce Homo*; references to this work also include an abbreviated section name
- *NCW* = *Nietzsche contra Wagner*

¹ *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Hunter College, CUNY

Introduction: *Amor fati* and the affirmation of life

This dissertation might be described as a philosophical biography of an idea —Nietzsche’s idea of ‘*amor fati*’, ‘love of fate’. First introduced at the beginning of *The Gay Science* book IV “*Sanctus Januarius*”, *amor fati* marked a renewed affirmation of life for Nietzsche, a new understanding of what it meant to say *yes* to life. As I will argue, loving fate is fundamental to both his critique of Christianity, and his positive philosophy wherein he envisioned the replacement of traditional values with post-Christian values for affirming life. The idea of ‘*amor fati*’ understood as intimately connected to the affirmation of life takes on *philosophical* significance when we note that it appeared later in the same book in which Nietzsche’s most notorious proclamation is found.

“Have you not heard”, we read in *The Gay Science* §125 of that madman running through the market in the early morning, provoking laughter and stares from the assembled villagers. “Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as of yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.” (GS, III, §125) Of course it would take a madman to say such outrageous things, offensive to both the pious and to the village atheists: the first on theological grounds, the second on rhetorical/aesthetic grounds. This aphorism provides the overarching framework for Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity, the ascetic ideal, and civilization as traditionally conceived. In brief, the death of God sets the stage for a radical revaluation of values. But by the time Nietzsche wrote *The Gay Science* in 1882, he had already been exploring his own personal loss of faith for at least two decades, his earliest attempts to articulate a searching

critique of Christianity and Christian doctrine having occurred while he was a student at Schulpforta, outside Naumburg.

As we will see in two essays written in 1862 Nietzsche developed a reasoned justification for a critical inquiry into Christianity and also considered the unsettling question of what it might mean for us in a post-Christian world if we no longer had reason to maintain our belief in the Christian God. He wondered what other important associated beliefs and values might we lose? Nietzsche wanted to resist the devastating result that without God and Christian faith our lives would lose all meaning and purpose. Such difficult questions regarding the value of life were the natural domain of philosophy, but Nietzsche claimed that philosophical inquiry itself had been ‘infected’ by shaky theological foundations, such as ‘otherworldly’ metaphysics and the metaphysical concept of personal freedom that underpins a human’s moral responsibility. Grounding genuine inquiry on a more stable foundation, Nietzsche believed, we could explore important ideas such as naturalistic metaphysics, the concept of human agency incorporating both free will and fate, and the revaluation of meaning in life to be *affirming* — not life denying. From this time early in his life to the end, Nietzsche never stopped thinking about these important themes.

Though Nietzsche mentions *amor fati* infrequently (a total of only four textual references in his published works), as I will show, the idea of adopting this particular attitude of ‘loving fate’ is at the core of many of his most cherished philosophical themes: affirmation of life, revaluation of values, the Will to Power, and, of course, eternal recurrence. And in fact, when he did write of *amor fati*, it was often during times of

upheaval or personal and intellectual transformation such as when he introduced the idea in *The Gay Science* (1882). It was as if the idea of loving fate acted as a type of lighthouse – his beacon drawing him back from the dangerous waters of philosophical exploration and the dark clouds of personal suffering.² In *The Gay Science*, he presented *amor fati* as his “greatest love” (IV, §276), and in *Ecce Homo* (1888), as his “formula for human greatness in a human being” (II,§10).

I – The idea

When we first encounter *amor fati* in *The Gay Science* we are unsure what to expect. Nietzsche pledges to love fate as part of a new year’s resolution, yet there is no further explicit mention of it throughout the remainder of the book. It is not until six years later, in 1888, during Nietzsche’s final productive year that we, and indeed Nietzsche himself, begin to understand the full force of what he meant.³ In *Ecce Homo* he wrote, “My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity... “ (“Why I Am So Clever”, §10). According to this, *amor fati* amounts to the desire for your life to be exactly how it is, how it was, and indeed how it is yet to be. And if this is what Nietzsche envisioned, yet left unexpressed, in his

² It is difficult to ignore Nietzsche’s literary imagery of stormy waters, dark solitude, ancient mythology and heroism.

³ *Ecce Homo*, written in 1888 but published posthumous in 1907, is his most personal book — partly autobiographical with chapters such as “Why I am So Wise”, “Why I am so Clever”, “Why I write such good books”, and “Why I am a Destiny”, and partly self-critical reflection with respect to his previously published books.

earlier work, it is especially interesting in the intellectual context with which he finishes book IV: the idea of *eternal recurrence* and the introduction of Zarathustra.⁴

The overriding theme of GS IV is transformation — Nietzsche shows us what changes are needed for personal renewal once one accepts the death of God. ‘*Sanctus Januarius*’ sets the stage for what he finds unhealthy in terms of our attitudes towards life — and his prescription for its cure. A valuable life is one that is transformed from unhealthy controlling factors and promotes its own health. The strong imagery in the poem foreshadows the transformation from illness to health – in fact, his personal transformation from illness to health. In a letter dated September 1882 to his friend Franz Overbeck, Nietzsche writes, “If you have read the “*Sanctus Januarius*” you will have remarked that I have crossed a tropic. Everything that lies before me is new, and it will not be long before I catch sight also of the *terrifying* face of my more distant life task.” (Middleton, 193)

When Nietzsche introduced *amor fati* he was approaching the age at which his father had died. In *Ecce Homo* he tells us how important this was to him. “My father died at the age of thirty-six.... In the same year in which his life went downward, mine, too, went downward: at thirty-six, I reached the lowest point of my vitality — I still lived, but without being able to see three steps ahead.” (EH, “Why I Am So Wise”, §1)⁵ So in the first instance then *amor fati* is an attempt to come to terms with very personal circumstances; it is in effect a method, or strategy, of coping with the vicissitudes of his life in his middle thirties.

⁴ The first edition of *The Gay Science* (1882) ends with the fourth book. A later edition (1887) includes a new preface, a fifth book, and an appendix of poems.

⁵ It is interesting to compare the significance of Nietzsche’s early (1863) reflection of his father’s illness from the perspective of losing his father; and in the late (1888) reflection of the same time where, as an adult, he most acutely fears the same fate.

By the end of his productive life *amor fati* will have taken on a central role in his philosophy.

Indeed, *amor fati* is arguably at the very root of Nietzsche's positive philosophy; it is, I am prepared to argue, the best expression we have of what it means to say Yes! to life. Nietzsche is of course: the philosopher of eternal recurrence, the Dionysian, and the Will to Power; the first immoralist and the first tragic philosopher; the thinker who urged us to become who we are and affirm life. Each of these strands in the Nietzschean fabric are brought into vivid relief by regarding them from the perspective of *amor fati*. I don't claim in this dissertation to carry out this ambitious task in anything like the detail that would be required; but I hope to have said enough to lend some support to the idea.

To indicate briefly what I have in mind let me remark on the connection of *amor fati* to the affirmation of life, the notion of a Dionysian exemplar, the Will to Power, and especially eternal recurrence. In my view, the affirmation of life is above all an antidote to pessimistic worldviews. Nietzsche came to see theological pessimism (Christianity in particular) as weak (for example, GM III §15 onwards); its ultimate motivations lie in assuaging the suffering of the ill-constituted masses. And eventually he comes to see even Schopenhauer's intellectual version of a morality of compassion as succumbing to weak pessimism despite the stark contrast with the elitist attitudes held by Schopenhauer himself. Nietzsche believed that at the core of weak pessimism was humanity's experience of suffering — leading to attempts to alleviate or escape its negative effects. The affirmation of life, for Nietzsche, was the best alternative to traditional pessimism and he gave us a

number of ways to get to it.⁶ Three of the most prominent approaches to affirmation in his published works were: the Dionysian exemplar, the Will to Power, and eternal recurrence.

The Dionysian exemplar draws on Nietzsche's understanding of the ancient Greek way of life — which as a philologist he studied closely. In his first book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) Nietzsche wrote of the life affirming value of Greek tragedy and the merits of *agon*, or struggle.⁷ The lesson to be learned from tragedy, he believed, was that life is beautiful and awe-inspiring, despite its suffering. This is life-affirming because it means not being overcome by despair and the denial of life.⁸ Nietzsche says of Sophocles' that "the undeservedness of a terrible fate seemed sublime to him, the truly insoluble puzzles of human existence were his tragic muse. Suffering undergoes transfiguration in his work; it is understood as something sanctifying."(BT, §3)⁹ For Nietzsche, this transformative attitude towards suffering was an effective tool against the Schopenhauerian nihilism (or the willing to a Buddhist nothingness) that his affirmative view sought as its target. Dionysus, as exemplar, represented the process of creative destruction and rebuilding that Nietzsche believed was necessary for his philosophical project.

Nietzsche's doctrine of The Will to Power has been understood in a number of different ways in the secondary literature. Common themes associated with power

⁶ I will in this thesis be contrasting pessimism and affirmation (not pessimism and optimism as is the colloquial norm).

⁷ See Christa Davis Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche* (2013) for an excellent exploration of *agon* in Nietzsche's work.

⁸ Contrast with Plato's rejection of tragic plays as corrupting of the soul (*Republic*, book 10).

⁹ In *The Birth of Tragedy* and other writings, p131.

included the domination or mastery of drives, growth and enhancement, and overcoming.¹⁰ In all cases, power was, for Nietzsche an inward directed opportunity for self-determination or self-mastery. Bernard Reginster's interpretation of power as specifically overcoming resistance, a second order desire to overcome resistance to another first order desire is helpful. (Reginster, 132) Power, understood this way, as a response to Schopenhauer's pessimistic will to life, sought to demonstrate that life-affirming attitudes contribute to a valuable, indeed admirable, existence.

And finally, Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence is life-affirming in terms of the psychological commitment necessary to validate the truth of the cyclical nature of existence – in which our lives repeat eternally. Initially introduced as a narrative at the end of *The Gay Science*, book III, "*The Greatest Weight*" (§341), the idea of eternal recurrence was further expounded as a core theme of his poetic work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885). There is wide disagreement amongst scholars as to how to understand eternal recurrence: is it to be taken as a serious scientific thesis, as a thought experiment, or mythological narrative? Regardless of which interpretation one favours, the idea is meant as an alternative to what Nietzsche saw as Judeo-Christian views of an 'otherworldly' afterlife, or to what he saw as Eastern transcendental view of reincarnation, which he considered to be grounded in a distinctly ancient cosmology. Nietzsche's doctrine is affirmative in the sense that it encourages us to make the most out of this life — because it's the only one we are going to have.

¹⁰ In *Nietzsche's System* (1996), John Richardson interprets power primarily in terms of power as the mastery over individual drives, and in *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (1950), Walter Kaufman interprets of power as self-determination.

These major pathways to understanding and achieving the affirmation of life are deeply and richly explored in the secondary literature, but *amor fati* has been largely neglected by scholars. Given the ringing tones with which Nietzsche mentions *amor fati*, it is surprising that interpreters have not given it the attention it deserves.¹¹ *Amor fati* for all that it occurs infrequently in his published works is crucial to all Nietzsche's ways of elaborating what it means to affirm life.

II - The philosophical biography of the idea

The recent publication of Daniel Blue's *The Making of Friedrich Nietzsche: The Quest for Identity, 1844-1869* not only marked an important advance in Nietzsche scholarship but was also timely for my work, given its biographical orientation. Blue's intent is to present a biographical exploration of Nietzsche's formative scholarly years (age thirteen to twenty-four), a period in time that Blue credits as being highly significant. "From at least the age of thirteen [Nietzsche] sought to direct his own development, and he did so with a steadiness of purpose and flexibility of intellectual insight which might be difficult to believe if it were not documented by texts." (Blue, 1) The texts in question — Nietzsche was, thankfully, a prolific writer even in his early student years — comprised a number of autobiographical

¹¹ Although commentators routinely make reference to *amor fati* when they are attempting to expound Nietzsche's positive philosophy and the affirmation of life, very few have undertaken a sustained and focused exploration of the motto. In my Appendix I "What the scholars have said", I discuss the small secondary literature explicitly devoted to interpreting *amor fati*. To my knowledge the only full length study on the topic is another PhD thesis defended three weeks ago. Hedwig Gaasterland, a PhD candidate at Leiden University in The Netherlands defended a thesis focused on *amor fati* March 1, 2018. In the brief abstract that I've read, she takes a very different approach to the idea than I do, but it shows that perhaps this important Nietzschean idea will finally get the scholarly attention I argue it deserves.

essays and works of philosophical analysis. Blue recognizes the small amount of scholarly literature focusing directly on this time period, and using the young Nietzsche's own narrative, fashions a biographical account he hopes is nearer the mark of what Nietzsche might write himself, while avoiding the more familiar, but also largely inaccurate, account presented by Nietzsche's sister, Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche. (Blue, 8)¹²

However, Blue rightly recognizes that no author's words can truly be understood without also understanding the context and environment of their lives — and Nietzsche is no exception. Blue conscientiously details “the historical world which Nietzsche inhabited and the customs, attitudes, and constraints operative when he lived.” (Blue, 9) He continues, “He did not grow up in a vacuum; and if he sought to disengage himself from local attitudes, it is important to know what these were and why they might oppress him.” (Blue, 9) This context adds to our understanding of what gives rise to Nietzsche's nascent ideas, which in turn provide the foundation for his mature philosophy. As Blue notes, it is important for the reader to appreciate, in biographical works, the almost dualistic nature of seeing both the private person and the writer. To see how “the boy and youth encountered puzzles in his life that he took to creative means to resolve; and how the writer and composer produced works with implications which were then carried back to his life away from the desk”. (Blue, 9)

My approach to *amor fati* aligns with Blue's emphasis on the interplay between Nietzsche the man and Nietzsche the writer (what Blue calls “the double aspect of Friedrich

¹² Blue writes, “If [the book's] first goal is to reframe his biography in Nietzsche's own image, its second is to seize control of the narrative from Förster-Nietzsche's hands and to restore it to the custody of her brother, using his autobiographies for guidance.” (Blue, 8)

Nietzsche” (Blue, 9)) and thus I owe a debt to Blue’s scholarship, especially in Part I (chapters 1 and 2) in which I cover roughly the same time period. However, whereas Blue’s project consists of a comprehensive reimagining of Nietzsche’s biography from 1844-1869, my work takes as its focus the emergence and development of one philosophical idea (*amor fati*) over three distinct time periods that I consider to be turning points in both his personal life, and as writer: early, mid-life, and final year. In all three periods, I endeavour to approach my work in the same way that Blue approaches his — to breathe new life into understanding a piece of Nietzsche, his life, and his work.

In starting with his earliest philosophical essays we see a first stirring of the seeds of his ideas. While still a student at Schulpforta, the young man Nietzsche explores his thoughts concerning a critique of Christianity and the resulting need to figure out what the consequences will be, and how relevant concepts such as freedom of will and fate will be understood in the future. He views these concepts as tightly interconnected and endeavours to show that outside of the typical conceptual framework of Christianity, they take on a life-affirming quality.

III – Roadmap

This thesis is divided into three main parts corresponding to significant periods in Nietzsche’s life and five chapters that correspond to different themes or ideas titled for the cities he lived in at the time. Part One focuses on work written in Nietzsche’s youth and school years; chapter 1 while he was a student at Schulpforta searching for his intellectual independence in the work of Hölderlin and Emerson, and in chapter 2 while he attended

university in Leipzig and discovered Schopenhauer and pessimism. Part Two is comprised of one stand-alone chapter focused on middle age and mature writing where he introduces *amor fati* by name. And in Part Three I focus on his final productive years and legacy; chapter 4 focuses on his autobiographical reflections in *Ecce Homo*, and chapter 5, an *Envoi*, explores two core ideas associated with the affirmation of life, of Yes-saying!

Specifically in chapter 1, I set the stage for a reading of Nietzsche's student essays by highlighting the importance of his thought by using Hölderlin and Emerson. My intention here is to demonstrate that even at a young age Nietzsche was concerned with independent thought and intellectual growth and chose, as exemplars, two very unorthodox scholars. In Hölderlin, Nietzsche found a kindred spirit. A talented poet who had suffered a similar difficult childhood, Hölderlin was influenced by ancient Greek life, and not deterred from expressing a critical view of contemporary German culture. In Emerson, Nietzsche saw a positive, indeed almost cheerful, precursor to post-Christian values. And in fact, throughout Nietzsche's life, Emerson's work was some of the most reread and revisited in Nietzsche's library.

Nietzsche's 1862 student essay "Freedom of Will and Fate" follows very closely to Emerson's 1860 essay "On Fate". In Emerson's "On Fate" as well as his earlier (1841) essay "Self-Reliance", fate is understood in one crucial way as 'laws of being' (parallel to 'laws of nature'). (Bode, 146) This differs importantly from the theological understanding of fate as divine providence – something given and to be endured (i.e. God's will). Even during this earliest time period, Nietzsche reflects on his own fate in very different terms. In the 1863

essay “My Life”, and without saying explicitly that he loves his fate, the young man Nietzsche seems aware that life’s fated circumstances — or laws of being — serve a more life-affirming purpose.

In chapter 2 I trace the influence of his greatest intellectual mentor, Arthur Schopenhauer. It is a difficult task to fully fathom the full ‘Schopenhauerian effect’ on Nietzsche’s work, and I seek only to demonstrate how and why his pessimistic philosophy had such a significant influence, and how it served to shape Nietzsche’s developing views regarding fate. The work of Schopenhauer is of particular significance to the emerging scholar, especially his pessimistic worldview and thoughts on music (as an escape from the suffering of life) which all came together when he met the composer Richard Wagner who also read Schopenhauer. Nietzsche’s rejection of both theological otherworldly metaphysics, and Schopenhauer’s somewhat eastern nihilistic position sets up nicely the foundation for his own life-affirming alternative. Though Nietzsche moves beyond his philosophical views quite quickly, the influence of Schopenhauer as an intellectual exemplar lasts much longer. In Nietzsche’s third *Untimely Meditation, Schopenhauer as Educator* (1874), he clearly admires his philosophical predecessor’s willingness to challenge the scholarly status quo.

In Part Two I jump from Nietzsche’s youth to the first mention of *amor fati* in his published works. Following a prolonged period of ill health, professional disappointments, and emotional turmoil, he presents the idea of distinctly loving (your) fate as a path to being a “Yes-Sayer” and affirming life, and suggests that this is achieved by cultivating certain psychological traits and attitudes. The primary goal of this chapter is to elucidate

amor fati by bringing it into dialogue with Nietzsche's developing views regarding such crucially pertinent themes such as suffering, pity, pessimism, love, affirmation, and (of course) eternal recurrence. I do this by closely examining a number of relevant aphorisms from the rest of GS IV.

In Part Three I concentrate on Nietzsche's texts in his final productive year (1888), especially *Ecce Homo*. During this year, there are three explicit references to *amor fati* in various texts (*Ecce Homo*, *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, and his notes in *The Will to Power*). Crucially, the context of these textual references to *amor fati* has changed from a personal resolution of how Nietzsche hopes to live his own life — loving fate as distinctly aspirational — to that of his 'formula for human greatness' — loving fate as a human achievement. I view *Ecce Homo* as a reflection on, and affirmation of, an intellectual life in which *amor fati* plays an important role.

My focus in chapter 4 is to clearly draw out Nietzsche's mature views of *amor fati* and show the transformation from personal aspiration to a philosophical idea of human achievement. Adopting the strategy followed in chapter 3 of a close reading of selected aphorisms to elucidate the meaning of *amor fati*, here I undertake a sustained exploration of relevant aphorisms from three sections of *Ecce Homo*: the first two entitled "Why I Am So Clever", "Why I Am So Wise", and the final "Why I Am A Destiny". These autobiographical reflections serve to show how Nietzsche views his own successes, and, as I will argue, how *amor fati* remains in the foreground. Looking through the lens of loving fate gives guidance for practical intelligence ('cleverness'), philosophical intelligence ('wisdom'), and intellectual legacy. I then consider Nietzsche's views of connecting *amor fati* to his idea of

'yes-saying'. The end of chapter 4 signals the end of my main project tracing the biography of Nietzsche's idea of *amor fati*.

In the final chapter, the *Envoi*, I change gears and try to show the philosophical interest in exploring a key Nietzschean theme through the lens of *amor fati*. I expand the idea of *amor fati* and yes-saying more broadly to Nietzsche's central theme of the affirmation of life by focusing on how loving fate is a sign of a new life-affirming attitude and undertaking a preliminary case with respect to eternal recurrence. My main goal is to show how looking through the lens of *amor fati*, now that we have a fuller picture of it and its development, contributes to the understanding of core Nietzschean themes. Of central interest to me is the fact that an idea he celebrates in his last somewhat self-congratulatory work, *Ecce Homo*, not only makes its first appearance by name at a crucial time in his midlife, but also that the ideas of fate and freedom are the focus of his very first philosophical efforts as a student.

Evidently my project is extremely broad and ambitious, attempting as it does to follow Nietzsche's thinking from his first student thoughts on fate and freedom in 1862 to his final works in 1888. Accordingly I've had to severely limit my discussion and leave many promissory notes for future projects. Moreover, given the biographical approach I take, and given the lack of sustained focus on *amor fati* in the scholarly literature, I have left my discussion of other interpretations of loving fate to an appendix. My hope is that I have shown Nietzsche's idea of *amor fati* to be worthy of more scholarly attention with respect

to Nietzschean themes of affirmation, power, the revaluation of values. Now that the groundwork has been set, the real work can begin.

PART ONE: Ideas taking shape

A spring-like garden blooms in the evening sky,
The countless roses blossom, and peaceful seems
The Golden world; O take me with you,
Lavender clouds, and up there then may in

The light and air my bliss and my grief dissolve! —
But as if frightened off by my foolish plea,
The spell is gone; it's dark; and lonely
Under the heavens I stand, as always.

So come to me, soft slumber; my heart has wished
Too much; but someday, youth, you will lose your glow,
You restless youth, forever dreaming.
Peaceful and cheerful are then the aged.

“Evening Fantasy” (“*Abendphantasie*”)¹³
Friedrich Hölderlin (1799)

¹³ Poem presented in part – the last 3 stanzas of a 6 stanza poem. Translation: Kenneth Negus (Browning, 93-94) – see Appendix II for entire poem in German.

Chapter 1 Schulpforta: First Thoughts — Fate and Freedom

Right through the middle of my heart. Storm and Rain!
Thunder and Lightening! Right through the middle! And a
voice rang out: 'Become new!'
"On Moods" (1864)

Nietzsche's earliest philosophical efforts of any consequence were a pair of student essays written in 1862: "Fate and History: Thoughts" and "Freedom of Will and Fate". These essays, written around the time of his Easter break from school were not school assignments, but written for presentation to his small peer-centered literary club "Germania". As the titles indicate, Nietzsche was grappling with ideas of fate, history, freedom of will, and their relations — unlikely topics for someone his age, however ideas not entirely new to him as he had begun making reference to fate in the context of his own life as early as 1858.¹⁴ Of course we don't find *amor fati* referred to by name in these early essays; nevertheless it is striking that when Nietzsche began to think seriously about philosophy, these are the ideas he turned his attention to.

In these early student essays, Nietzsche's interest was two-fold. He identified the value of, and indeed need for, an objective critique of Christianity and its associated values; and further, how these values might be understood divorced from Christian doctrine. Given his focus on the dominant framework outside Christian dogma - it is quite remarkable that he was thinking about fate, an idea strongly associated with theological

¹⁴ Autobiographical essay "From My Life: The Years of My Youth 1844-1858" (August/September 1858).

notions of destiny or divine guidance. These early attempts to articulate his thoughts belied his own internal struggles to perhaps reconcile the deep religious commitment he felt as a child, and his new burgeoning views on the progression of culture, post-Christian values, personal growth, and the prevalence of fate on character and life. He was not only concerned with what the possible consequences of such a progression might be — that a desolate resignation may replace Christian values — but also, more optimistically, what new values might be freed to emerge. As I quote in the epigraph above from an autobiographical essay written the same year as the philosophical ones, the young Nietzsche is already at twenty years old striving to “become new”.

In this chapter, I identify the earliest roots of Nietzsche’s broad project regarding the revaluation of post-Christian values, specifically values associated with the power to overcome nihilism — the affirmation of (this) life, the proper role of suffering in personal growth, and ultimately the idea of loving fate. The revaluation of these values crucially involved the exploration of various entwined themes such as the critique of Christianity, intellectual independence, creativity, and societal nonconformity. These themes began to emerge in Nietzsche’s earliest writing and personal reflections. In the first subsection I present biographical context of Nietzsche’s life during his childhood and formative years at Schulpforta. In the second subsection I explore the early scholarly influence of Hölderlin, Byron, and Emerson, before turning attention to Nietzsche’s student essays in the third and fourth subsections. I end the chapter with an analysis of the young Nietzsche’s burgeoning philosophical views as he heads off to university.

1.1 Schulpforta

Nietzsche's childhood was difficult and unstable, yet from an early age he showed an incontrovertible drive for independence expressed in the writing of no less than three autobiographical essays prior to adulthood.¹⁵ In September 1863 at the age of 18, Nietzsche wrote "My Life" in which he reflected on his most significant childhood memories. "The earliest event which happened to me as I awakened to consciousness was the illness of my father." (Hollingdale, 7) He recalled the suffering his father experienced, the anxiety of doctors, the pain expressed by his mother, and the "incautious remarks of the people in the village" to his father's medical condition. These recollections, Nietzsche wrote, "led me to fear that misfortune threatened. And this misfortune in fact appeared. My father died. I was not yet four years old." (Hollingdale, 7) Only months later, his brother, who Nietzsche described as a "lively and gifted child" died suddenly, necessitating a dramatic domestic upheaval. "... On the evening of the last day I was still playing with several other children, and then had to bid farewell to them, as I did to all the places I loved." (Hollingdale, 7)

The Nietzsche family (consisting of Friedrich, his mother Franziska, and his sister Elisabeth) moved to Naumburg to live with his paternal grandmother (Erdmuthe) and her sisters (Auguste and Rosalie). There, as has been often commented on, he enjoyed a sheltered childhood with exclusively feminine influence. At home he seemed to have taken

¹⁵ Nietzsche seemed concerned to commit the early details of his life to paper not only because he feared the transience of memory, but also presumably he believed the early details of his life had importance (a rarity for most young people).

to heart the venerable pieties to which he was inculcated to the point that at school he was known by the nickname ‘the little pastor’, following his late father’s spiritual calling and his prodigious ability to quote from memory long passages from the Bible. (Brobjer, 43) In Naumburg he made two close and enduring friendships, Wilhelm Pinder and Gustav Krug, both from prominent local families. Nietzsche attended the local Burgher School — a public institution focused on primarily religious studies, German, and practical subjects — not one that typically prepared students for university. (Blue, 38) During these early years, Nietzsche was not reported to have been a particularly strong or committed student, and indeed his mother tirelessly worked her many social connections to get him accepted into the more prestigious Schulpforta. [Blue, 38]

By the age of thirteen Nietzsche had suffered further great losses. In addition to the deaths of his father and his brother, he lost a favourite aunt, Auguste, and his grandmother Erdmuthe in close succession. Importantly, the family losses he experienced were all family members he lived with, making the grief more acute. It is easy to imagine the sense of loss Nietzsche faced at such a young age, both in terms of family and familiar environment — surely an *unlovable fate* by anyone’s standards.¹⁶ Nonetheless, through this time Nietzsche, at least outwardly, maintained his strong Christian faith. In his first autobiographical essay “From My Life: The Years of My Youth 1844-1858” (1858) he wrote:

By now I have already experienced so many joyful and sorrowful, cheering and depressing things, but in everything God has safely led me like a father leads his weak little child. He had already inflicted upon me much pain, but in everything I acknowledge with reverence his power on high, which

¹⁶ The problem of ‘unlovable’ fate (that some things that happen to us are painful, difficult, etc. and are not the kinds of things we can endorse or adopt a positive attitude towards) is introduced by Béatrice Han-Pile (2009). I discuss the problem she raised in Appendix I.

carries out everything so magnificently. I have firmly resolved within me to devote myself forever to his service...

It is remarkable that despite the losses Nietzsche experienced at such a young age, that he took such a reflective and devout position while at the same time accepting his future fate understood in terms of the will of God.

I will joyfully accept all that he gives, happiness and unhappiness, poverty and wealth and boldly look even death in the face, who will some day unite us all in eternal joy and bliss. (Nietzsche Channel, 28)

In these early autobiographical writings, though Nietzsche certainly lived up to his nickname 'the little pastor', he began to show signs of interest in school and subjects other than religious studies. "It was certainly time for one to emerge from the home circle and finally to break free from the endlessly impractical courses one was accustomed to...". (Hollingdale, 8)

In 1858 Nietzsche was admitted on a scholarship to the prestigious Schulpforta where he began his intellectual awakening in earnest. In "My Life" (1863) he recounted that it was "beneficial in many ways as a boarder at Landesschule Pforta to devote oneself for six years to a greater concentration of one's forces and to directing them to firm goals." (Hollingdale, 9) These firm goals, at the time, were quite simply to attend university. Waking early at 5am, and committing to long days in lessons and studies, prepared him for this scholarly life to follow. The routine instilled at Pforta was almost monastic in character (in fact the school grounds had previously functioned as a monastery) — a routine that ultimately gave him great discipline in his intellectual endeavours even after the

institutional control was outgrown.¹⁷ However, it is not implausible to think that even at this young age he recognized how, on the other hand, the formal discipline and regimented schedule might serve to constrain the intellectual freedom he admired, and desired, so he sought to familiarize himself with writers and scholars outside the core curriculum.

1.2 Early Influences: Hölderlin, Byron, Emerson

Against the backdrop of formal education at Pforta, Nietzsche came into contact with the work of the German poet, Friedrich Hölderlin, English poet Lord Byron, and the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, and he was deeply influenced by all three writers. Daniel Blue refers to this time in Nietzsche's scholarly curiosity, as "the underworld of Pforta", writing in *The Making of Friedrich Nietzsche*, "Limited as Nietzsche was by the strictures of Schulpforta, which did not teach authors regarded as politically suspect or bad for morals, he would have had difficulty discovering an alternative canon on his own." (Blue, 144)¹⁸ However, Nietzsche's curiosity and emerging desire for independence drove him from the standard canon and we find abiding themes in their work that loom large in Nietzsche's views both in these earliest stages, and as they mature.

Hölderlin and Emerson both in their own ways forecasted aspects of post-Christian culture or society, without ever taking direct aim at either Christianity or Christian

¹⁷ One need only think of the nomadic, solitary nature of Nietzsche's later productive years to appreciate the legacy of the Schulpforta years.

¹⁸ This is certainly the case with Hölderlin. The young Nietzsche likely became familiar with Hölderlin through a social acquaintance, Ernst Ortlepp (a former promising student of Schulpforta who had fallen on difficult times and was ridiculed as a drunk), and Nietzsche's close peers Krug and Pinder also had an interest in the poet and gave talks in the Germania Club. (Blue, 144) In contrast, his introduction to Emerson (and also Byron) is likely due to the influence of a new, young, professor at Schulpforta named Diederich Volkmann hired to teach English privately. (Blue, 152)

doctrine. What Nietzsche must have seen — and indeed must have been attracted to — in these like-minded thinkers was the potential for independent thought and true critical inquiry. However, right from the start, he moved beyond the scope of his exemplars and engaged much more critically, and more openly, with what he took to be the problematic aspects of Christianity and Christian values to genuine inquiry.

* * *

The earliest signpost of Nietzsche's burgeoning intellectual independence emerged from the influence of his "favourite poet" Hölderlin¹⁹. In a fictitious letter written in October 1861, Nietzsche defended the work of Hölderlin against what he presented as a friendly challenge.²⁰ Nietzsche praised the poet's artistic command of rhythm and mood. "These poems (to consider their form alone) spring from the purest, most susceptible sensibility; ...these poems, now moving with the most sublime rhythms of the ode, now fading into the most delicate sounds of sorrow...". (Middleton, 4) For Nietzsche to feel so connected to such deeply expressive prose reflected his own sense of loss and longing and perhaps he felt a kindred spirit in Hölderlin. However, it was not merely the tone of Hölderlin's poetry

¹⁹ The number of parallels between the lives of Hölderlin and Nietzsche is almost uncanny: the loss of their fathers early in life; struggles with their mothers over pursuing theology; nomadic lives (popular, but on the outskirts of civil society); professional failures (lack of critical recognition); abrupt end to intense love affairs; and descent into mental illness. See Santner, Eric L. *Hyperion and Selected Poems* for details of Hölderlin's life.

²⁰ Christopher Middleton writes in a footnote to the letter that it may be a response to an argument with one of Nietzsche's friends Deussen or Gersdorff. (4) Other scholars attribute this letter to a dispute with a teacher at school. Daniel Blue writes that the letter is actually a school assignment, and Nietzsche's choice (and manner) of defending Hölderlin displeases his teacher, Buddensieg, who responds with rather disparaging remarks. (Blue, 151).

that attracted Nietzsche, but also the critical content, and in this the focus is contemporary Germany.

The imagined criticism expressed in the letter, and Nietzsche's response, were indicative of his nascent ideas regarding contemporary German culture. "I shall repeat to you your hard and even unjust words", he wrote to his imaginary interlocutor:

... these vague half-mad utterances of a disrupted, broken mind made only a sad and at times repulsive impression. Unclear talk, sometimes the ideas of a lunatic, violent outbreaks against Germany, deification of the pagan world, now naturalism, now pantheism, now polytheism, all confused ...
(Middleton, 4)

The criticisms that Nietzsche drew attention to in this passage were targeted towards Hölderlin's attacks on German culture and his confused theological views, both associated with, and dismissed as, the mere ranting of a mad man. Nietzsche wrote of the "fullness" of Hölderlin's ideas, drawing particular attention to a series of poems in which the poet revealed the "German bitter truths" that Nietzsche believed were "unfortunately, only too firmly grounded". (Middleton, 5) Though he never explained in the letter what these bitter truths were, we are left with the impression that it may refer to theological assumptions underlying contemporary culture — that once fully examined would reveal the undesirable nature of our commitments. Though admittedly there was some truth to the criticism in terms of Hölderlin's fragile mental health, emphasizing that fact for the purpose of discrediting his challenge of the status quo obscured the potential significance of his artistic expression.

The misinterpretation of Hölderlin's significance, Nietzsche thought, was attributable to common cultural prejudices and preconceptions. "These contemptuous words show me, first, that you are caught up in the common inane prejudice against

Hölderlin, and, second, that you have nothing but a vague notion of his work..." (Middleton, 4-5) Nietzsche must have been sensitive to the possibility that Hölderlin's work remained largely unknown and in fact maligned because of its deeply critical stance on the aspects of life that brought comfort to people. In his writing he held ancient Greek culture in high esteem, and considered German culture weak in comparison. He urged his "friend", in this imaginary exchange, to take Hölderlin's work seriously and be open to such critical engagement.

The development of Nietzsche's own views regarding the culture of the time mirrored this critical influence. The main themes in Hölderlin's work that we can most easily recognize in Nietzsche's work is the deep influence of Greek life contrasted with German culture, the thought that ancient values are compatible (or precursors for) Christianity, a theoretical focus on the relationship between opposites, and his affinity for artistic expression (especially poetry and music). What Nietzsche took from Hölderlin is the broad idea of getting at what type of culture is in store for us as the old foundations begin to crumble. Studying the ancient ways of life, and admirable exemplars of the time, was one way to envision post-Christian values.²¹

* * *

²¹ The influence on Nietzsche of Hölderlin's work, and Greek culture more generally, is best exemplified, I think, in Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* (1872). The importance of ancient ways of life, and especially the admirable exemplar in the character of Dionysus, will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

Another way of exploring the possibilities of renewed culture was to more directly critically evaluate the existing foundations. Whereas Nietzsche was introduced to the work of Hölderlin outside of school, he was introduced to English thinkers by a new, young professor at Schulpforta hired to teach English privately (Diedrich Volkman). Attending extracurricular lectures by Volkman, Nietzsche was introduced to the work of Shakespeare, Byron, and Emerson. Though Byron's poetry spoke deeply to the young Nietzsche (as Hölderlin did!)²², it was the writings of Emerson that Nietzsche maintained an enduring commitment to throughout his productive life.²³ In Emerson, the young Nietzsche seemed to find a sense of cheeriness — an uplifting counterbalance, perhaps, to the more melancholy and stoic tone of Hölderlin and indeed Byron.

Emerson's lectures and essays were highly influential in *antibellum* America. Following the death of his young wife in 1831, Emerson suffered a loss of faith and left the Unitarian ministry. Critical of what he took to be human lethargy, he came to see himself as the 'prophet' (so to speak) of a new transcendentalist religion and began to set out the basic principles in his first book *Nature* (1836).²⁴ Two years later, in 1838, Emerson gave

²² Blue writes of Nietzsche's admiration for Byron "Nietzsche seems particularly to have valued Byron's melancholy and his celebration of the darkness of life — he describes "Manfred" as "really an accumulation of thoughts of despair" — and this would have encouraged and validated his own tendency to melancholy and distrust of good cheer." (Blue, 153) Nietzsche also writes an essay "On the dramatic works of Byron" in 1861.

²³ According to Brobjer (2008), Nietzsche read, reread, and annotated Emerson's works more than any other author — "With the possible exception of the period 1869 to 1873" Brobjer writes, "Nietzsche appears to have read Emerson almost every year from 1862 to his mental collapse in 1889." (23) In fact, Brobjer speculates that Emerson's influence on Nietzsche is equal to that of Schopenhauer's (24) — a very strong statement given the known enormity of Schopenhauer's influence (see chapter 2 for a focused discussion of Schopenhauer).

²⁴ Four main principles: 1. Dualistic cosmology (nature and individual soul); 2. Material world inferior copy of spiritual world; 3. Alternation is a basic fact of existence (polarity – 2 halves to

the Divinity School Address at Harvard where he was critical of religious formalities (even the more modest forms of Christianity such as Unitarianism). The response to his lecture was mixed. Local Unitarians reacted with anger, but more generally his message was well received (Bode, xv). Emerson's philosophical legacy (relevant to this dissertation) was in proposing a new way of life to his readers and listeners — one that was, in important respects, an alternative to dominant Christian lifestyles.

Though *Essays* was an earlier work of Emerson's, there is evidence that Nietzsche actually read *The Conduct of Life* first. *The Conduct of Life* (1860) was translated into German (*Die Führung des Lebens*) quite quickly (1862), and it was likely that Nietzsche read it early that year, given that the first essay in the book, "Fate", was addressed directly by Nietzsche in his student essays written in April of that year. (Brobjer, 24) Nietzsche did not read Emerson's earlier book *Essays* (1841), translated into German (*Versuche*) in 1858, until 1864 or later (Brobjer, 23).²⁵ Nietzsche paraphrased Emerson's famous essay "Nature" (published in the second part of *Essays*) in a letter dated 1866, and referred to it in his notebooks dated 1867 or early 1868. (Brobjer, 23) Most significantly, Nietzsche had a copy of *Essays* with him while writing and revising *Schopenhauer as Educator* in 1874 (third *Untimely Meditation*), and he included important references to Emerson at the beginning and end of that essay.²⁶

everything); and 4. "Reason" is the proper label for intuition (vs. understanding as the label of intuition). (Bode, xxiii) *The Portable Emerson*.

²⁵ It is interesting that Emerson's *The Conduct of Life* was translated so quickly (2 years) compared to *Essays* (17 years).

²⁶ See my discussion of Schopenhauer in chapter 2.

Three of Emerson's essays in particular are worth noting in terms of how his work influenced the young man Nietzsche. "Compensation" and "Self Reliance" included in the 1841 *Essays*, and "Fate" in the latter 1860 *The Conduct of Life*. "Compensation" began, "Ever since I was a boy, I have wished to write a discourse on Compensation: for, it seemed to me when very young, that, on this subject, Life was ahead of theology, and the people knew more than the preachers taught." (Emerson, 95). The ways of understanding compensation important to Emerson, are thus in line with everyday common life, such as monetary exchanges, restitution for wrongs, give and take, etc. He wanted to get at the idea that we as readers all understand the idea of compensation, so that when he applied it more broadly to things such a human nature, personal character, the relation between the natural and the spiritual, we can see it working the same way.

A crucial element of Emerson's notion of 'compensation' was the principle of 'polarity' — the idea that nature comprised pairings, either opposites or compliments, and completion requires both halves, such as, spirit/matter, man/woman, odd/even, etc. (Bode, xxiv) In terms of human nature, the pairings counterbalance — there is a deficiency for every privilege. Emerson wrote, "The good are befriended even by weakness and defect. As no man had ever a point of pride that was not injurious to him, so no man had ever a defect that was not somewhere made useful to him." (Emerson, 118) Suffering, understood in this context was paired with improvement (or progress, perhaps). He insisted that people respond to the suffering inflicted on them by becoming better persons. (Bode, xxiv)²⁷ "The

²⁷ Like Emerson, Nietzsche believes that a person's suffering has beneficial consequences (everything turns out for the best). However, Emerson retains the view that suffering is *bad*, but the

death of a dear friend, wife, brother, lover,” he writes, “which seemed nothing but privation, somewhat later assumes the aspect of a guide or genius; for it commonly operates revolutions in our way of life...and allows the formation of new ones more friendly to the growth of character.” (Emerson, 128) Though suffering hardship in the short-term is often a constraining force working against personal progress, for example physical or mental barriers, in the long term it can be an enabling force.

Though there are many themes in Emerson’s writing that gave rise to deep reflection by Nietzsche, and that influenced his own philosophical views, the most significant for my purposes are the ideas contained in the 1860 essay “Fate”.²⁸ Emerson emphasized the connection between fate, character, and temperament. “Men are what their mothers made them. You may as well ask a loom which weaves huckabuck why it does not make cashmere...” (Bode, 351). Emerson’s view was that physiological — hereditary — constraints counted for the defining force on individual character. His point was that what we now know as genetic make up defined character, and not the influence of early environment and education.

When each comes forth from his mother’s womb, the gate of gifts closes behind him... So he has but one future, and that is already predetermined... All the privilege and all the legislation of the world cannot meddle or help to make a poet or a prince of him. (Bode, 351)

matching half is it brings something *good*. Nietzsche does not consider suffering as one half of a dualistic relation but that – closer to a Schopenhauerian reading – that suffering is an inevitable part of the human condition.

²⁸ See Owen/Ridley “On Fate” (2003) for a great discussion defending Nietzsche’s view of fate as Emersonian, in disagreement with Leiter’s interpretation in “Paradox of Fatalism and Self-Creation” (1998). I briefly outline these scholarly views in “Appendix I: What the scholars have said”.

In suggesting “the gate of gifts closes” upon birth, Emerson seemed to be promoting a deterministic view of human character and agency — a view that was strengthened by the corresponding dismissal of the importance of early environment and education. Taken together, this suggested that his view was uncompromisingly deterministic. However, this is not the full story. Emerson drew an important distinction between potentiality and actuality.

In science, according to Emerson, there are two things to consider: power and circumstance. Circumstance is nature, and nature is what you *may* do (your potential). Power refers what you *actually* do (your life). “We have two things, - the circumstance, and the life. Once we thought positive power was all. Now we learn that negative power, or circumstance, is half.” (Bode, 353) The idea here was that freedom of the will was unlimited — man could be, or do, anything he chose. Free will given by God made man responsible for who he was, and what he did. Emerson was proposing that this unlimited — positive — power is actually counterbalanced in nature by negative power — the fact that the circumstances of our potentiality are constrained. “A man’s power is hooped in by a necessity which, by many experiments, he touches on every side until he learns its arc.” (Bode, 356) The point here is that individuals learn their natural limitations (the breadth of their character, and indeed the extent of their physical/intellectual/spiritual talents) by actively living (striving) to achieve goals.

The negative freedom that Emerson draws attention to is, for him, the fated circumstances most broadly, of life.²⁹ Fate is limitation. And it takes various forms. “The element running through entire nature, which we popularly call Fate, is known to us as limitation, *whatever limits us we call Fate.*” (Bode, 356) (emphasis added) Fate, then, can be biological, physical, physiological, intellectual, or spiritual (moral), exemplified perhaps as gender, height, athletic ability, disposition for philosophical thought, or compassion. Fate also manifests differently depending on what aspect of Fate is limiting. “If we are brute and barbarous, the fate takes a brute and dreadful shape. As we refine, our checks become finer. If we rise to spiritual culture, the antagonism takes a spiritual form.” (Bode, 356) Always a limit, though, always something setting a limit. “And last of all, high over thought, in the world of morals, Fate appears as vindicator, leveling the high, lifting the low, requiring justice in man, and always striking soon or late when justice is not done.” (Bode, 357) This notion of moral fate understood in terms of justice furthered the idea of counterbalancing freedom and fate — it was seen as a force that limits the excesses of power — essentially drawing human experience towards an (Aristotelian) mean.

An example of the counterbalancing effect of fate is in terms of how we view, or react, to circumstances as presented. Fate could be used to teach courage. When faced with fated circumstances, intellect can turn “threatening chaos into wholesome force” (Bode, 363). It is the idea that it is possible to reinterpret circumstances that initially seem troubling or difficult as actually providing positive opportunities. For example (Emerson’s

²⁹ It is important to note that the ‘negative’ freedom Emerson discusses is not the same notion of ‘negative’ freedom advanced by Isaiah Berlin in “Two Concepts of Liberty” (1959).

example), cold can cause discomfort and pain (indeed freeze a person) — but learning to skate gives you graceful poetic motion. (Bode, 363) This, I think is a way that fate can be seen as providing opportunity in terms of positive freedom. Nietzsche does not yet start to articulate this idea in his short essays, but given Emerson’s influence on his views (which should be quite clear), it is natural to think he also had this positive use for fate in mind.

1.3 “Fate and History: Thoughts”

This essay was Nietzsche’s earliest attempt to grapple with what he took to be a tension between history and the natural sciences on one hand, and philosophy and theology on the other hand — in short, the nexus between his intellectual and spiritual lives. When I associate philosophy (and theology) with *spiritual* lives, I do not mean to suggest that Nietzsche excludes philosophical inquiry as an intellectual endeavour — he most certainly did not. But by placing philosophy and theology in opposition to history and natural science, he was making an important point. Philosophy had become, Nietzsche thought, caught up in misplaced ambitions. Whereas the aim of theology was the *attainment* of God; philosophy, under the influence of Kant (the ‘cunning Christian’), placed a *focus* on God. Nietzsche’s interest was to cleanse philosophy of having the same problems as theology, and allowing philosophical inquiry to be driven by the same impartial approach as history and natural science.³⁰

³⁰ However, philosophical inquiry is at the same time part of *both* our intellectual and spiritual lives. While I argue that Nietzsche does not *exclude* philosophy from intellectual inquiry (and actually aims to integrate it more strongly in the intellectual) he also does not deny its spiritual aspect. Questions concerning how to live the best life, the value of life, life’s meaning, etc. are all deeply personal spiritual questions. A main concern that drives Nietzsche’s whole career is identifying the

The tension Nietzsche perceived between theology and intellectual inquiry was immediately apparent in this first philosophical effort. He began the essay, “If we could look upon Christian doctrines and church-history in a free and impartial way, we would have to express several views that oppose those that are generally accepted.” (Pearson/Large, 12) This tension, he thought, originated from the almost subversive nature of treating Christianity in this way³¹; the view that those expressing aspirations to undertake an impartial exploration were committing treacherous acts. A main point of opposition, for Nietzsche, was the driving force of religious faith in an afterlife — the focus on, and belief in, an eternal existence beyond the physical world. Perhaps it was the early losses he suffered as a child that brought him, as a young adult, to question the truth, or indeed meaning, of such a system of belief. He wrote of these beliefs as “an endless confusion of thought in the people [as] the bleak result” (Pearson/Large, 13)³².

However, these beliefs in God and a metaphysical afterlife were so deeply entrenched in our personal identities and the culture of the time, that not only was undertaking such a critique personally difficult, but also culturally unacceptable.

But confined as we are from our earliest days under the yoke of custom and prejudice and inhibited in the natural development of our spirit, determined in the formation of our temperament by the impressions of our childhood, we believe ourselves compelled to

value and meaning of life outside of the Christian framework – not the nihilist position that there is none.

³¹ Subversive in the sense that anyone who undertakes such an impartial critique of Christianity is viewed/shunned as a traitor.

³² It is interesting that Nietzsche follows the mention of “a tower of Babel” with a comment about the resulting confused thoughts of humanity (Christian faithful). According to Brent Strawn’s biblical interpretation, that the city in question is named “Babel” (*Heb Bābel*) is a play on word on the verb typically interpreted as meaning confusing, or confounding (*Heb Bālal*). Nietzsche often uses such literary plays on words in his work.

view it virtually as a transgression if we adopt a freer standpoint from which to make a judgment on religion and Christianity that is impartial and appropriate for our time. (Pearson/Large, 12)

Common throughout this essay is Nietzsche's distinction between the individual and the collective. Personally, we are hindered in undertaking a critical evaluation of Christianity due to our established psychological identities (the prevailing influence of family, community, custom crucial in the development of our individual settled views, beliefs, preferences); while those same influences create and develop collective cultural and societal norms and customs (a homogenous communal identity that discourages dissent). Because of the strength of these influences, not only is it a difficult task to challenge our personal commitments, it is also a process that is publicly discouraged.³³

Philosophical inquiry, he thought, was infected by the overwhelming influence of theology on philosophers; the problem being that theological foundations were mired in questionable presuppositions — most crucially otherworldly metaphysics. “How often has our entire previous philosophy seemed to me a tower of Babel. The goal of all great aspirations is to attain heaven, and “the kingdom of heaven on earth” means almost the same thing.” (Pearson/Large, 12) Both biblical references: The Tower of Babel story from the Old Testament (Genesis 11:1-9); and the New Testament idea of a ‘kingdom of heaven on earth’, at their cores refer to the relationship of humanity to God and an eternal afterlife (heaven). In the first instance, humanity's desire to attain, attack, or conquer the heavenly

³³ This insight of the young Nietzsche is consistent with his mature views that true, or pure, philosophical inquiry is the solitary and dangerous work of the few. Repeated imagery of tunneling underground (i.e. *Daybreak* preface) or launching into stormy seas, is invoked for those embarking on the process (in contrast with the safety of stable land). Continuing on – the imagery of flying above represents the successful achievement of the brave souls (i.e. the birds of prey and lambs (sky and land) of GM I, §13).

realm of God; and in the second instance to somehow recreate the environment of heavenly bliss on earth following early Christian doctrines.

It is Nietzsche's comparison of the history of philosophical inquiry to "a tower of babel" that is of most interest. Genesis 11:4 reads, "Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."³⁴ Using Brent Strawn's biblical interpretation ("Holes in the Tower of Babel"), two points stand out — and these points bear a strong resemblance to themes Nietzsche developed in his texts. The first is the idea that humanity aspires to reach the level of God (in heaven), and be acknowledged for having done so ("let us make a name for ourselves"). This display of "excessive pride" — a term Nietzsche used much later in life in a famous passage in *Beyond Good and Evil* (§19)³⁵ — exemplified the human desire to freely attain eternal rewards. A goal that Nietzsche himself was starting to question. The second point refers to God's displeasure in such humanly goals, and our fear of his forewarned punishment ("we shall be scattered abroad"). A community that goes against the wishes of God face the consequence of being separated – physically and linguistically.

Nietzsche foresaw a time of great change; that there would be a movement towards a critical, intellectual evaluation of Christian influence. "There will be great revolutions once the masses finally realize that the totality of Christianity is grounded in presuppositions;..."

³⁴ New Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament, quoted from *Oxford Biblical Studies Online*, "Holes in the Tower of Babel", Brent A. Strawn.

³⁵ The "excessive pride" of *Beyond Good and Evil* §19 is man's desire to be ultimately responsible for himself – to excuse God, world, heredity, etc. of any formative influence. This aphorism is commonly used in support of Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysical (libertarian) free will.

However, he predicted, “the existence of God, immortality, Biblical authority, inspiration, and other doctrines will always remain problems.” (Pearson/Large, 13) These problematic doctrines he identified almost certainly refer back to, or bear striking resemblance to, Hölderlin’s “bitter German truths”. He predicted the lingering theological “problems” on account of how difficult it would be to replace the foundational structure of Christianity. “Oh, pulling down is easy; but rebuilding!” he writes, “And pulling down seems easier than it is” he concedes (Pearson/Large, 13). The question of what would replace Christianity, or more so what meaning life would retain outside of a Christian framework, began to occupy Nietzsche’s thoughts.³⁶

A more promising framework for intellectual inquiry (more promising than Christianity), according to Nietzsche, was one built on history and natural science, “the wonderful legacies of our past, the harbingers of our future: They alone are the secure foundation upon which we can build the *tower of our speculation*” (Pearson/Large, 12, emphasis added). It is interesting that he referred to intellectual inquiry here not as a biblical reference (as he had before) but now as a “tower of speculation” — the higher realm no longer an otherworldly realm of the Christian God (or Hellenistic Gods) — but higher humanity, or higher truth. History, for Nietzsche, represented the linear progress of nature and humanity, a progression that is in an important sense cyclical, but always forward moving — similar to a clock.³⁷ “From hour to hour the hand moves ahead; at

³⁶ It is another 20 years before Nietzsche explicitly writes of the death of God in *The Gay Science* book III – but when he does it is at a particularly significant and transformative time in his life. It is the time he can be identified as beginning to envision and articulate his own positive ethical view (the affirmation of life – and crucially *amor fati*).

³⁷ The hands of a clock repeat a cyclical pattern, but time is forward – linear.

twelve o'clock its course begins anew: a new world-period dawns." (Pearson/Large, 13) And what drives (or powers) the clock, he asks. What is the "mainspring" of history? "And could one not call immanent humanity each mainspring?..... Or do higher considerations guide the whole? Is man only the means, or is he the end?" (Pearson/Large, 13)³⁸

Nietzsche's early cosmological view of the world and humanity was one of concentric circles. One of the innermost circles represented man, and circles further out represented world history. When man wanted to investigate the common core of all circles (the infinitely small circle), that is the domain of natural science. "Because man looks for the center in and for himself, we now know what a unique meaning history and natural science must have for us." (Pearson/Large, 13) Nietzsche's point here was that the most basic foundation (the innermost circle) of the world was known through nature, and the most basic foundation of man was known through culture. When man wanted to explore outer circles it required man to abstract away from his own circle and those nearest to his own.

This endeavour of abstraction was, for Nietzsche, the domain of philosophy and when this inquiry was founded in theology (not natural science and history), it was as wrong-headed as pure theological speculation. His main point was essentially a criticism of the direction of fit. The further away from the natural core of existence, the more abstract ideas become, and the harder it became to establish the evidential framework. Theology

³⁸ Nietzsche's discussion of history as the progress of humanity (compared with a clock) foreshadows his intellectual interest in time, and physics (being and becoming). Though outside the scope of this thesis, it is interesting to see that these topics, too, have their beginnings in these earliest essays.

used the most abstract, ethereal, concepts (God) to provide evidence for more natural phenomenon. He proposed, by contrast, using the inner natural core to work outwards. “The highest comprehension of universal history is impossible for man.” (Pearson/Large, 14) To know the eternal, required using outermost circle to justify the intermediary circles, and what Nietzsche proposed is that we should use the stronger inner foundations to abstract away each further circle from man. He saw this process as a battle between “individual will” and “general will”. This conflict introduced the main point of the essay, “Here lies every important, unending problem: the question of justifying the individual to the people, the people to mankind, and of mankind to the world.” (Pearson/Large, 14) Nietzsche wanted to shift the conversational focus from the relationship between *humanity and God* (the focus of theology, and Christianity in particular) to the relationship between *the individual self and the world*.

It was at this point in Nietzsche’s essay, in the context of individual and general wills, that he introduced the ideas of *fate* and *free will* understood individually and collectively. In this context, individual fates meant something like a settled psychological character (temperament) formed by influences beyond our control, such as heredity, and early childhood environment. Temperament, Nietzsche thought (following closely the work of Emerson), determines our worldview — how happy we are, the value we take our lives to have. But he does not mean this in an entirely fatalist sense (despite his use of the word ‘fate’). It is not the case that our temperaments *and our lives* are determined; it is the case that how we see events and how we respond to them is to some extent (strongly or weakly) set by forces beyond our control. “Is not our temperament, as it were, the coloration of

events?" he asks, "Do we not encounter everything in the mirror of our personality? And do not events provide, as it were, only the key of our history while the strength or weakness with which it affects us depends merely on our temperament?" (Pearson/Large, 14)³⁹

According to Nietzsche, the strength of such influencing forces was a powerful obstacle to critical inquiry.

A fatalistic structure of skull and spine; the condition and nature of their parents; the triviality of their relationships; the commonest of their environment; even the monotony of their homeland. We have been influenced. And we lack the strength to react against this influence or even to recognize that we have been influenced. (Pearson/Large, 14)

Nietzsche makes a very powerful point, here. Not only is everyone subject to the same categories of influence, we fail to recognize or acknowledge that we have been influenced — and the powerful role such influence plays in how we see the world. The failure to acknowledge the force of individual fate is to a large extent due to a common desire to be free — free in the positive, unlimited, sense that Emerson criticizes in his own work.⁴⁰

Collective fate, in this context, acknowledges that similar events may influence groups of people, but do so in a diversity of ways. Nietzsche's point here was a complex one. Given the diversity of personal (individual) influences as basic as time and place of birth, similar events that shape history will do so in different ways depending on the responsiveness of

³⁹ Nietzsche's views of fate quite clearly follow those of Emerson (see section 1.3), but what is also interesting is how closely his views of temperament and action align with Schopenhauer's moral philosophy (and we know Nietzsche had not yet read Schopenhauer at this time).

⁴⁰ This ties in nicely with the points from the Tower of Babel story. Humans want to be the architects of themselves and their lives (in other words, godlike). However, the controlling influence (God) dictates how that freedom ought to be exercised, using the threat of eternal reward and punishment (or dispersal).

the temperaments involved. This may be as simple as a routine event affecting the individual members of a community differently; or it may be larger events affecting various homogenous communities differently. This is what Nietzsche is getting at when he introduced the conflict of individual to many, many to mankind, etc. The even more significant point Nietzsche made is in regards to human history. Given the differing more basic influences, events that repeat throughout history will never affect humanity in the same way twice. This is a truth of history that Nietzsche took seriously (remember the analogy of history to a clock).

Nietzsche's main concern here seemed to be the consequences of lacking this fated structure (individual and collective). If our individual wills were strong enough, free enough, to change our personal histories — (easily) eradicate what influences we didn't like (and presumably adopt those we do) — whenever we like, we would effectively lose our personal histories (or our personal histories would be worthless). The same on a collective scale: the history of humanity becomes worthless if it can be changed at will. "If it became possible completely to demolish the entire past through a strong will, we would immediately be transported into the realm of autonomous gods, and world history would suddenly be for us nothing but a dreamy self-deception." (Pearson/Large, 14) World history, and indeed our own personal histories, become 'dreamy self-deceptions' when they no longer play a role in constraining present or future opportunities. Unlimited free will would allow us to move in any direction at any time — past circumstances would essentially be meaningless.

Fate, now taken as an abstract concept, is necessary to preserve personal and collective histories from the boundless power of free will. "Free will appears as unfettered, deliberate; it is boundlessly free, wandering, the spirit." He writes, "But fate" on the other hand "is a necessity: unless we believe that world-history is a dream-error, the unspeakable sorrows of mankind fantasies, and that we ourselves are but the toys of our fantasies." (Pearson/Large, 14) The role that fate seems to play in history is to maintain some sense of continuity that allows for progression (rather than the chaos of unlimited positive freedom). According to Nietzsche's view, fate and freedom are not strictly dichotomous in the sense of either/or, but work together like weights on a scale (both are needed for balance). "Fate is the boundless force of opposition against free will. Free will without fate is just as unthinkable as spirit without reality, good without evil. Only antithesis creates the quality." (Pearson/Large, 14)

It should be fairly undeniable that the ideas Nietzsche expressed in this first philosophical essay follow very closely in line with those of Emerson. He was calling for the need to disassociate the ideas of freedom and fate (free will understood in its positive and negative forms) from their prevailing theological foundations. He was appealing to a very natural counterbalance that showed the conceptual importance of both, understandable outside a framework of Christian values.

1.4 "Freedom of Will and Fate"

Nietzsche's second student essay, "Freedom of Will and Fate" was shorter than the first, exploring the theoretical relationship between freedom and fate in more detail. At the end

of the earlier essay, he claimed that the antithesis between freedom of will and fate was what “creates the quality” (Pearson/Large, 14). By this he meant neither idea, and certainly neither idea in its most extreme form, has value in itself. Unrestrained (or unlimited) free will is chaotic; invariable fate is mechanical. What gives life, and lives, individuality and unpredictability is the interplay between the two — the interplay creates the quality.

“Freedom of Will and Fate” began with Nietzsche’s attempt to define freedom of will analogously to freedom of thought, which he explained as abstractly limited by the circle of ideas. (Pearson/Large, 16) The circle of ideas may shrink or expand depending on circumstances or intellectual activity (or atrophy), but never expand past a certain capacity of the brain. (Pearson/Large, 16) For example, a young child has a very small circle of ideas and her thoughts are limited to the ideas and concepts she possesses, but as she grows older, is educated, and is introduced to a wide variety of views and experiences, her circle of ideas grows, and her thoughts can freely develop amongst the much larger circle of ideas. However, the forces of genetics, brain chemistry, or physiology serve as an outer limit of just how much larger the circle of idea can possibly grow. Freedom of will, according to Nietzsche, works the same way, but rather than being concerned with thoughts and ideas, is concerned with action (what we do) and reaction (or attitudes towards events). In this case, the formative influences that Nietzsche discussed in the first essay, serve to limit our freedom of will. We may, similar to our freedom of thought, expand the circle of possible actions/reactions, but ultimately not past outer limits.

However, in both cases (freedom of thought and freedom of will) the discussion above speaks to the potential for freedom, and its ultimate limits, but nothing of actually

exercising such freedoms — that belongs to the realm of action theory, and Nietzsche's nascent theory as explored in this essay, unsurprisingly attempts to reconcile freedom of will and fate. "Likewise, freedom of will is capable of enhancement within the limits of some farthest point. It is another matter to put the will to work. The capacity for this is dispensed to us in a fatalistic way." (Pearson/Large, 16) This is an interesting point. Nietzsche's proposal assumed two ways that 'fate' limits the exercise of free will. The first fatalistic influence is the limit on the extent of our *capacity to will* (act, react) freely (boundaries); the second fatalistic influence is the extent to which *we will will* (act, react). This suggests that Nietzsche thinks, perhaps, that motivation is a natural talent (or one formed in early childhood).⁴¹ Fate and free will interact in terms of potential, and action.

Exercising free will in terms of action is for Nietzsche a question of strength of will, and strength of will in turn depends on a person's attitude towards their individual fate. Those with strong wills believe in fate, acknowledge the formative role of biological and early socio-economic influences, and use this information as a tool for personal growth – an idea closely reminiscent to Emerson's views on circumstance and power. Though fate plays an important role in defining the limits of freedom, and our ability to act, there is also an existentialist counterbalance in Nietzsche's views. If we think of a person's life like a path with many branches (and each branch have many branches), fate determines the paths available to us at any one time, but we are free to choose which path we take from available paths. Each path we choose will have future branching out points — with some path

⁴¹ This has the ability of explaining situations such as someone with an otherwise privileged background, squandering opportunity; or someone with a difficult background, making the best of what they have (indeed excelling in some sense – within natural limits).

available to us, and some not (dependent on our personal fates), but each time we choose a path, Nietzsche sees this as us determining our own future fates.⁴² “... that man, as soon as he acts, creates his own events, determines his own fate; that in general, events, insofar as they affect him, are, consciously or unconsciously, brought about by himself and must suit him.” (Pearson/Large, 16)

In connection with his theory of action, Nietzsche also proposed a very basic theory of mind.⁴³ Conscious acts are straightforwardly those choices we are aware of making (or that we make deliberately); while unconscious acts are those with an origin in earlier impressions (almost, I think, akin to acting from instinct, where instinctual drives are determined by physiology and the natural environment). “...free will is only an abstraction indicating the capacity to act consciously; whereas by fate we understand the principle that we are under the sway of unconscious acts.” (Pearson/Large, 17) But whereas we lack awareness if our actions are unconscious (they will present as our choice?), the distinction between unconscious and conscious acts collapses, and we tend to fail to appreciate or even recognize, the affect of fate in our lives. In fact this point runs even deeper — a point Nietzsche will later criticize explicitly in *Beyond Good and Evil* (§19) — that man’s *desire* to be free, and not under any fated influence, that belies a common weakness in contemporary culture.

If those with strong wills embrace and utilize personal fates in crafting their lives, according to Nietzsche’s early views, those with weak wills adopt a much different attitude

⁴² Leiter’s ‘causal essentialism’ may have relevant explanatory power here. See Appendix I.

⁴³ Questions central in the philosophy of mind remain important to Nietzsche throughout his intellectual career (as a interest in psychology and psychological identity).

towards fate — one of acquiescence or resignation. In these latter cases of weak will, individuals accept the dominion of external forces over their identities and lives. An expression of strength for them is willful (free) acceptance of their powerlessness.⁴⁴ Nietzsche writes, “In general, “Surrender to the will of God” and “humility” are often only a cloak for the timid cowardice to confront destiny with decisiveness.” (Pearson/Large, 16)

This idea of the duality of nature follows closely to Emerson’s idea. “For though Fate is immense, so is Power, which is the other fact in the dual world, immense. If Fate follows and limits Power, Power attends and antagonizes Fate.” (Bode, 357) And likewise, it is the same idea regarding the duality of human agency of fate and freedom of the will. “Forever wills up the impulse of choosing and acting in the soul. Intellect annuls Fate. So far as man thinks, he is free.” (Bode, 357) How, then, does man react to the circumstance of fate? Who Emerson refers to as “heroic believers in destiny”, those individuals who are strong enough not to let their intellect annul fate, “conspire with it [fate]” and maintain “a loving resignation with the event”⁴⁵. (Bode, 357) However when held by a weaker individual (“weak and lazy” in Emerson’s words) then the impression of fate is one of accusation and, perhaps, resentment. “[I]t is weak and vicious people who cast the blame on Fate.” (Bode, 358)

The final paragraph of the second essay is a statement regarding the relationship between fate and free will similar to the statement Nietzsche makes in the first essay

⁴⁴ A natural comparison with this idea is the creative revaluation of the slave moralists in *On the Genealogy of Morality* – the interpretation of weakness as strength.

⁴⁵ Sounds a lot like Nietzsche’s *amor fati!*

(antithetical abstract concepts), but this time in more detail, and in the context of personal identity. It is useful to consider the paragraph in its entirety:

In freedom of will lies, for the individual, the principle of emancipation, the separation from the whole, absolute limitlessness. But fate places man once more in an organic relation to the total development and requires him, insofar as it seeks to dominate him, to a free counteractive development. Absolute freedom of will, absent fate, would make a man into a god; the fatalistic principle would make him an automaton. (Pearson/Large, 17)

The main point that I want to take away from these early essays written by Nietzsche as a schoolboy at Pforta is that the first examples of him exploring his intellectual awakening (indeed his intellectual independence) was his struggling with questions of human action and the countervailing forces of freedom and fate in a context independent of Christian doctrine. Following closely the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nietzsche worked to explain the balanced relationship between these two concepts he learned to be in conflict (a strict dichotomy).

1.5 Lessons learned: the foundations of a new tower

Although Nietzsche wrote these essays a couple years before discovering the work of Arthur Schopenhauer, his nascent views were in line with the older philosopher's. From *The World as Will and Representation* vol.2 "On Man's Need for Metaphysics", Schopenhauer wrote "...we find that the interest inspired by philosophical and also religious systems has its strongest and essential point absolutely in the dogma of some future existence after death." He continued, "For if we could guarantee their dogma of immortality to them in some other way, the lively ardour for their gods would at once cool..." (WWR II, 161) The point being, perhaps, that it is not in God as a deity that humanity remains faithful and

devoted, but what humanity desires they can ultimately receive from God — immortality. If there are alternative paths to the same ultimate goal, humans will be indifferent as to which path is taken. Nietzsche's goal of an impartial critique of Christianity, was at least in part, driven by a similar idea — that of questioning our reasons for maintaining our faith in the Christian God, and what life might look like without the Christian foundation.

In 1864, Nietzsche wrote an essay at Schulpforta entitled "On the Relationship of Alcibiades' Speech to the Rest of the Speeches in Plato's *Symposium*" where he once again drew on the prominent theme in the Tower of Babel story — the idea of ascending to a higher realm — in an historical philosophical context. Plato's *Symposium* was a Socratic exploration of love (*Eros*, a *daimon*) as recounted by many interlocutors. Nietzsche interpreted the various attempts to explain *eros*, not as conflicting or independent accounts of one thing, but as different aspects of a whole – aspects that built on each other. "In this ladder to the highest *Eros* proposed by Socrates" he wrote, "I notice the peculiarity of the various standpoints of the other speakers can be found again..." (Davis, 103) Interestingly, for Nietzsche, the highest account was not that of Socrates, an account based in ideas and ideals, but that of the drunk Alcibiades' who arrived late to the party and spoke of *eros* in a practical and straightforward way. Nietzsche was drawn to the duality of ideas/facts.

Through the opposition of Socrates and Alcibiades, the daimonic double nature of *Eros* itself finally comes into view, the being-in-between divine and human, spiritual and sensuous.... The wondrous union of philosophical speeches with the pleasures of wine reminds us of this as well. (Davis, 105)⁴⁶

⁴⁶ This 'double nature' of *Eros* that Nietzsche identified mirrors that of Appoline and Dionysian nature of art in his "Dionysian World View" (1870) and *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) – explored in more detail in chapter 2.

Similar to the difficult childhood Hölderlin experienced, Nietzsche also suffered deep personal grief, and we could easily understand if he had adopted a negative attitude toward his life — indeed as Hölderlin himself did. Yet he did not. At a surprisingly young age he took his sorrows and suffering and used them (ultimately) as motivation to develop a spiritual and intellectual life that embraced his fate — the first tentative steps towards adopting the life affirming attitude of *amor fati*. In his 1863 essay “My Life”, Nietzsche acknowledged the struggles of his early years, writing “Thus I can look back with gratitude upon almost everything, whether it be joy or sorrow, that has happened to me, and events have up to now led me along like a child. Perhaps it is time to seize the reins of events oneself and step out into life.” (Pearson/Large, 20) This remarkable insight of an 18-year-old student foreshadowed the two crucial aspects of *amor fati*: not only passively accepting, but embracing, difficult life circumstances (“looking back with gratitude”); and affirming life (“seizing the reins”).

Chapter 2 Pessimism: On second thought...

“Here every line screamed renunciation, denial, resignation, here I saw a mirror in which I caught sight of the world, life and my own heart and soul in terrible grandeur.”

“Retrospect on My Two Years at Leipzig” (1868)

Nietzsche left Schulpforta with a sense of optimism. His autobiographical essays gave voice to a young man who, undeterred by the circumstances of his life, reconciled himself to the loss and grief of his childhood and youth, and believed that he had a bright future. In “My Life” (1864)⁴⁷ he wrote of the effect on him of losing his father, “I am convinced that the death of such a splendid father, on the one hand, really deprived me of paternal help and guidance for later on in life, while on the other planted the seeds of seriousness and contemplation in my soul.” (120)⁴⁸ It must have been difficult to recognize the significant foundations arising from such trying circumstances. Without explicitly saying so, Nietzsche was in some sense crediting his drive for intellectual development to the unnatural void in his life; to his lack of paternal guidance.⁴⁹ He displayed an extraordinary sense of self-awareness for someone so young.

⁴⁷ Nietzsche wrote two autobiographical essays entitled “My Life”, one in 1863 and the second in 1864.

⁴⁸ The page numbers cited for the two autobiographical essays “My Life” (1864) and “Retrospect on My Two Years at Leipzig” (1868) are from *Nietzsche’s Writings as a Student* on “The Nietzsche Channel” website. <http://www.thenietzschechannel.com>

⁴⁹ Guidance, which it is worth noting, would have most likely been in the direction of theology rather than philology or philosophy. If Nietzsche’s father had not died at such a young age, Nietzsche’s life may well have (most likely have) developed along a much different path, so Nietzsche’s point in hindsight is even stronger. Nietzsche in some way owed his philosophical life to the death of his father.

Nietzsche's main purpose in writing, "My Life"⁵⁰ was to record the positive influences on his intellectual development at Schulpforta, and to look forward to his time as a university student in Bonn.

I owe the greatest and most characteristic part of my intellectual education, a picture of precisely this intellectual education; written at the time when I'm about to — by leaving an old, familiar organization and through the acclimatization of my mind to wider and higher educational circles — prescribe new trails and, with them, to begin a new development. (120)

At the time Nietzsche wrote these words, between July and August of 1864, he was eager to embark on, and expand, the education he'd received at Schulpforta. His journey over the next five years however would prove to be as turbulent as they were enriching. He would spend a year in Bonn, two in Leipzig, undergo military training in 1867, and ultimately, in 1869, take up an academic chair in philology in Basel.

This chapter focuses on Nietzsche's personal and intellectual growth during the period 1865-1869 and specifically his embracing of Schopenhauerian pessimism. Though in this period Nietzsche did not write explicitly on the topic of fate, or a critique of Christianity (as he had while a student at Schulpforta), his engagement with Schopenhauer's philosophy and his philological studies of ancient Greek life, include many themes central to his conception of fate and pertinent to what will become *amor fati*. These include signally: character, suffering, and the value of *this* life. After providing some biographical context of Nietzsche's life during this period in the first subsection, in subsection two I consider how reading Schopenhauer not only was a consolation to Nietzsche, but also informed his views on fate. In subsections three and four I explore the

⁵⁰ The 1864 version.

themes of fate, character, and pessimism (suffering) in Schopenhauer's work. I close with Nietzsche's definitive dismissal of Schopenhauerianism, an advance in his thinking that in his view was fully compatible with respect for Schopenhauer as an exemplar of independent thought.

2.1 Leipzig

The buoyant optimism Nietzsche expressed in "My Life" was not to last. In the fall of 1864 he entered the University of Bonn studying theology but never really settled in. In an autobiographical essay, "Retrospect on My Two Years at Leipzig" (1868), Nietzsche described his year in Bonn as painful and disappointing. The boisterous camaraderie did not suit his quiet, reflective, nature. "Everything was imposed on me, and I did not understand how to be master over that which surrounded me" (122), he wrote, recalling his sense of alienation from his peer group who spent their leisure time drinking and cavorting. "I withdrew more and more from these empty pleasures" he continued, "preferring the quiet joys given by nature or art studies done in common, I always felt more alien to these circles from which escape was not yet possible." (122) In addition to this sense of alienation, Nietzsche complained of rheumatic pain, a lack of intellectual stimulation, and growing financial debt. Against this difficult background, Nietzsche "left Bonn like a fugitive". (122)

A year later, in October 1865, he followed a scholarly mentor — classical philologist Friedrich Ritschl — to Leipzig. Once there, Nietzsche focused on overcoming the disappointment he'd felt in Bonn.

Young people are readily wont to adopt a general character of disgruntlement and irritation of a personal nature if they are prone to [dyskolia]⁵¹. At that time, I was alone, just hovering in the air with some painful experiences and disappointments, without any help, without principles, without hopes and without any pleasant memories. To construct a fitting life of my own was my endeavour from morning til night; that's why I severed the last mainstay that bound me to my past at Bonn; I broke the bond between myself and that fraternity. (128)

The intellectual alienation Nietzsche felt in Bonn had done nothing to help him grow in the way he'd believed attending university would. He felt a sense of rejuvenation upon his arrival in Leipzig, and his focus quickly shifted to his future, and on creating a life for himself that he found agreeable and rewarding.⁵²

Things picked up for Nietzsche at Leipzig. He joined three other young scholars to found a philological club, and spoke to the club for the first time January 18, 1866 presenting a revised version of his final assignment at Pforta "On Theognis of Megara". His presentation was well received, and he gave a copy of the essay to his mentor Ritschl, who provided encouraging and complementary feedback. This left Nietzsche delighted, and indeed intellectually bolstered. "For some time I wandered about in a whirlwind, it was the time when I was born into philology, when I felt the sting of praise that made me pick this career." (127) This moment significantly marked Nietzsche's scholarly commitment to philology — and his growing confidence in his intellectual abilities.

⁵¹ In the text, Nietzsche uses the Greek spelling. It translates to 'increased sensitivity to pain'.

⁵² This pattern of suffering, disappointment, and illness, followed by rejuvenation and renewal happens in this first instance as he arrives in Leipzig. The second explicit occurrence happens in 1882 as he wrote *The Gay Science* (discussed in detail in chapter 3). It is this attempt by Nietzsche to reconcile suffering and hardship with growth and cultivating a meaningful life that I argue, gives rise to the idea of *amor fati* and its role as a life-affirming attitude.

In June 1866 Nietzsche wrote to his mother and sister about the growing political unrest in the German states.

Today a state of war was declared throughout Saxony. [i.e. the beginning of the Austro-Prussian war] Gradually it comes to be living on an island, for telegraphic and postal communications and the railways are constantly upset. Communication with Naumburg, as with anywhere in Prussia, is of course normal. But it is hardly possible to send a letter, for example, to Deussen in Tübingen. (Middleton, 14)

Nietzsche's attention turned to the question of his joining the Prussian military efforts. "I am always conscious that the day is close on which I shall be drafted. Moreover, it is now dishonourable to sit at home while the father-land is beginning a life-and-death struggle." (Middleton, 14) He asked his mother and sister to make some inquiries regarding when one-year volunteers would be drafted. The letter ends in a mix of pleasantries and a pointed reminder. "So, keep well; when Lama⁵³ celebrates her birthday, I hope to come to Naumburg. But please write first about the draft question." (Middleton, 15)

By early 1867, Nietzsche's disillusionment with the methods and scope of formal education had begun to take hold. In a letter to von Gersdorff dated April 6, 1867, he writes of the obstacles to independent thinking and development. "Our whole way of working is quite horrible. The hundred books on the table in front of me are so many tongs which pinch on the nerve of independent thought." (Middleton, 22) And later he wrote, "In brief, my friend, one cannot go one's own way independently enough. Truth seldom dwells where people have built temples for it and have ordained priests." (Middleton, 23) Nietzsche's negative opinion of formal education, and indeed, educators, i.e. professors (the

⁵³ "Lama" was Nietzsche's pet name for his sister Elisabeth.

'ordained priests' of education) unsurprisingly follows that of Schopenhauer who himself was critical of educational institutions and formalities.

Nietzsche was drafted into a mounted artillery regiment in October 1867, and underwent training in Naumburg. In a letter to Rohde dated Nov 3, 1867 he expressed appreciation to his friend for keeping him up to date on the health of his mentor, Ritschl, and the goings on of the Classical Society. He wrote of his tiring daily routine caring for the horses, riding, and tending to canons. Yet thoughts of Schopenhauer are never far from his mind.

My philosophy now has the chance to be of practical use to me. Until now I have not felt a moment's depression, but have very often smiled as at something fairytale-like. Sometimes hidden under the horse's belly I murmur, "Schopenhauer, help!"; and if I come home exhausted and covered with sweat, then a glance at the picture on my desk soothes me, or I open the *Parerga*, which, with Byron, I find more congenial than ever before. (Middleton, 27)

Despite his commitment to military service, Nietzsche found the time away from Leipzig lonely and isolating. "I am fairly lonely in Naumburg" he wrote in the same letter to Rohde. "I have neither a philologist nor a friend of Schopenhauer among my acquaintances; and even these are seldom together with me, because my duties claim much of my time." (Middleton, 28) The tone of his letter was somewhat melancholy, toward an inclination to reminiscing. "Thus I often need to chew over the past and to make the present digestible by adding that spice to it." (Middleton, 28) Interestingly, he referred to 'fate' twice in this letter. "Fate has with a sudden wrench torn the Leipzig page out of my life, and what I see next in the sibylline book is covered from top to bottom with an inkblot." He idealized Leipzig, calling it a "life of free self-determination, in the Epicurean pleasure of knowledge and the arts" (Middleton, 27), an interesting turn of events given his expressions of

disillusionment written to von Gersdorff earlier in the year. The letter ended with sentiments of fondness to his friend, "Who knows when changeful fate will bring our paths together again: may it be very soon..." (Middleton, 28)

2.2 Nietzsche's Schopenhauerianism: 1865-1869

Nietzsche discovered Schopenhauer's main work, *The World as Will and Representation* (1819), in his landlord's Antiquary and felt an immediate connection. Going against his habit of not buying books in haste, he recalled thinking that this situation was different. "I do not know what demon whispered to me: "Take this book home with you."" (125) He wrote in "My Two Years at Leipzig" that he devoured the work, reading with little sleep for two straight weeks.

Thus I forced myself for 14 straight days to go to bed at 2 o'clock in the morning and to get up at exactly 6 o'clock. A nervous excitability took hold of me and who knows to what degree of foolishness I would have advanced had not the seductions of life, of vanity, and the compulsion for regular studies worked against it. (129)

Nietzsche had discovered Schopenhauer at a time in his life when it rang true, and the pessimism in particular, was gripping.

At home I threw myself into the corner of the sofa with the treasure I had found and began to let that energetic, gloomy genius take effect on me. Here every line screamed renunciation, denial, resignation, here I saw a mirror in which I caught sight of the world, life and my own heart and soul in terrible grandeur. (129)

Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche was especially strong between the years of 1865 – 1869 and during that period the young man Nietzsche went through a number of distinctive stages. Initially, he was in a sense, personally consoled by Schopenhauer's pessimism and views on fate and suffering. By about 1866, Nietzsche was more focused on

putting Schopenhauer's philosophy into practice. And in fact, he'd already taken to heart personal denial and resignation by pushing himself beyond physical limits staying up all night reading the chief work! By the time Nietzsche started writing more formally about Schopenhauer, his focus had changed again to one more critical of some of Schopenhauer's core philosophical ideas. In an 1868 essay entitled "On Schopenhauer", Nietzsche worked through a fairly methodical critique of Schopenhauer's metaphysics — in particular his understanding of Kant's 'thing-in-itself' — ultimately concluding that Schopenhauer's metaphysical theory was untenable.⁵⁴ Finally, by 1874 when the third *Untimely Meditation, Schopenhauer as Educator*, was published, Nietzsche had distanced himself from Schopenhauer's philosophical theories but still admired the thinker as an important exemplar outside of established academia.

Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Schopenhauer's philosophy was shared by his friends von Gersdorff and Rohde. He wrote to his like-minded friends, often mentioning his enduring commitment to Schopenhauerian philosophy. In a letter dated April 7, 1866 to von Gersdorff he wrote of the comfort he took in Schopenhauer's views. "Three things are my relaxations, but infrequent ones: my Schopenhauer, Schumann's music, and then solitary walks." (Middleton, 12).⁵⁵ What must have gripped Nietzsche in reading Schopenhauer, and what must have provided some comfort for the struggles he felt in life

⁵⁴ Nietzsche's criticisms of Schopenhauer's metaphysics are beyond the scope of this dissertation, though clearly the rejection of all theological and philosophical 'otherworldly' metaphysics is at the heart of Nietzsche's views on loving fate.

⁵⁵ Additionally, August 1866 to von Gersdorff "Finally Schopenhauer must be mentioned, for whom I still have every sympathy" (Middleton, 18), and in November 1867 to Rohde while undergoing military training "... if I come home exhausted and covered in sweat, then a glance at the picture on my desk [of Schopenhauer] soothes me". (Middleton, 27) – Rohde had given Nietzsche a picture of Schopenhauer.

was the pessimistic view that life is hard for everyone. Indeed that suffering is true for everyone. The point is put nicely in Schopenhauer's second volume of *World as Will and Representation* (1844), "happiness lies always in the future, or else in the past, and the present may be compared to a small dark cloud driven by the wind over the sunny plain...". (WWR II, §46) And further, "... all good things are empty and fleeting, that the world on all sides is bankrupt, and that life is a business that does not cover the costs...". (WWR II, §46) The consolation comes from the understanding the nature of life *as* suffering.

However, it is not simply contemplation (for the sake of itself) that interests Nietzsche, but also putting into practice Schopenhauer's philosophy. And by 'in practice' I mean both in interpreting his own emerging views in a Schopenhauerian light — but also using those insights to guide his own life. "At the same time it is of course extremely vexing for us to restrain our still young and strong Schopenhauerian thoughts, to leave them only half-expressed, and to have always on our hearts the burden of this unhappy difference between theory and practice." (Middleton, 13)⁵⁶

Two examples in particular bring to light Nietzsche's attempt to put Schopenhauer's views to work in his own life. The first is in the context of grief, and the second on the question of suicide. In chapter 1 I discussed the significant number of close family members who died when Nietzsche was very young, and his recollections of the personal pain and suffering he had endured. In those early autobiographical works, Nietzsche took a very

⁵⁶ This anxiety with respect to theory and practice is expressed following a discussion of a brief conversation with a Christian missionary to India, and a sermon given by Friedrich Wenkel on Christianity. Nietzsche criticizes an apparent equivocation on the term "Christianity" – in one sense "belief in an historical event or in an historical person" (which he rejects) and in the other sense "a need for redemption" which, interpreted in Schopenhauerian terms, he can accept. (Middleton, 12-13)

accepting approach to loss — acknowledging how suffering was a part of life, but from an optimistic (quasi-theistic) approach (accepting fate as divinely given).

Years later, in January 1867, Nietzsche wrote a letter of consolation to von Gersdorff following the death of von Gersdorff's brother Ernst (Nietzsche's (favourite) aunt Rosalie had also recently passed).

Now, dear friend, you have experienced at first hand — I notice this from the tone of your letter — why our Schopenhauer exalts suffering and sorrows as a glorious fate, as the [deuteros plous] to the negation of the will. You have experienced and felt also the purifying, inwardly tranquilizing and strengthening power of grief. This is a time in which you can test for yourself what truth there is in Schopenhauer's doctrine. If the fourth book of his chief work makes on you now an ugly, dark, burdensome impression, if it does *not* have the power to raise you up and lead you through and beyond the outward violent grief, to that sad but happy mood which takes hold of us too when we hear noble music, to that mood in which one sees the earthly veils pull away from oneself — then I too want to have nothing more to do with this philosophy. He alone who is himself filled with grief can decide on such things: we others in the midst of the stream of things and of life, merely longing for that negation of the will as an isle of the blessed, cannot judge whether the solace of such philosophy is enough also for times of deep mourning. (Middleton, 20)

It is perhaps odd to consider that someone mired in the depths of grief might find consolation in the words of a philosopher who saw only fleeting escape from suffering. However *not escaping* is precisely the point Schopenhauer is making in WWR I, §68, and it is the endurance of suffering that reveals the true nature of self and world.

Every suffering that comes to him from outside through chance or the wickedness of others is welcome to him; every injury, every ignominy, every outrage,. He gladly accepts them as the opportunity for giving himself the certainty that he no longer affirms the will.... (WWR I, §68)

According to Schopenhauer, the blind striving of the will for satisfaction, for pleasure, for health is also to will the end of suffering, of frustration, of pain; this willing is in the

Schopenhauerian sense *life-affirming*.⁵⁷ To accept suffering (or even *moreso*, to embrace suffering) is to no longer will its end, and thus represents the negation of the will and it is through this negation of will that Schopenhauer claims we gain the knowledge of our own inner being and the true nature of the world (part of this being the renunciation of individuation, of individual identity).⁵⁸

As Nietzsche wrote to his mourning friend, von Gersdorff, Schopenhauer's words should provide consolation in that they lend purpose and meaning to deeply acknowledge the pain of grief and loss, and to allow it to give rise to insights. What Nietzsche perhaps found personally comforting was the way in which Schopenhauer's philosophy gave meaning to painful experience without relying on God. And for the young scholar, trying to reconcile his own pain, Schopenhauer's views were the first he'd encountered that made explicit these ideas he'd begun exploring in his student essays. And indeed he felt so confident in the consolation of Schopenhauer's views that he believed they could also console a friend in need.

The second example of putting Schopenhauer's views into practice occurred late in November/December 1867, when in a letter to von Gersdorff he discussed the suicide of a student at Schulpforta, revealing a very Schopenhauerian assessment.

⁵⁷ There are important differences between Schopenhauer's use of (understanding of) 'life-affirming' and Nietzsche's. For Schopenhauer it is primarily the natural instinct to the continuation of *life* (procreation, species survival), not so much *individual lives* which are of much less worth. For Nietzsche, as I hope to show in this dissertation, 'life-affirming' is in opposition to Schopenhauer – it is embracing the unique worth of certain individual lives.

⁵⁸ I will not be discussing Schopenhauer's views of asceticism in this dissertation, though it should be obvious that the ascetic is the primary exemplar for the ultimate negation of willing. The ascetic exemplar also figures prominently in Nietzsche's work (for example GM book III §15 onwards).

I will tell you of an event with which Schopenhauer is also remotely connected, even if he is not, as well-paid schoolmasters assert, the cause of it. That is the unfortunate suicide of Kretzschmer in Schulpforta. The reasons are really unknown, or are being well hushed up. There is something enigmatic about the fact that this excellent and conscientious man had become engaged three months before and so has made a young girl unhappy too. You know that he was a follower of Schopenhauer; and the last time he and I were together in Almrich, we discussed Schopenhauer's attitude to suicide. (Middleton, 30)

Though as Nietzsche explicitly noted, the cause of the suicide is not publicly disclosed, the fact that the student was familiar with Schopenhauer might have been considered relevant. Surely there is no clearer path to the denial of the will than to end one's own life. And given Schopenhauer's views which do not rely on God, or otherworldly punishment, ie. absent the threat of going against God's design or commandments, there seems no immediate or obvious reason to disapprove of Kretzschmer's action. But Nietzsche also explicitly mentioned speaking to Kretzschmer about Schopenhauer's attitudes towards suicide so there must have been good reason for Nietzsche doing so.

In fact, Schopenhauer would criticize suicide for two reasons. The first is that suicide might be seen as the ultimate expression of individuation — the statement that *my* suffering is so bad that I choose to end my experience of it. On one hand, Schopenhauer was unlikely to challenge such a personal decision, but on the other hand, ending one's own life does not bear on the negation of the will as life-denying. Remember, when Schopenhauer talks of the affirmation of life he means just that, affirmation of *life*, not the affirmation of *individual lives*. Typically these two go together, animals affirm life by affirming their lives. But in the case of suicide they come apart. Even if the suicide ceases to

affirm *his life* his death has no impact on the continuation of life in general.⁵⁹ The more significant Schopenhauerian criticism is at the core of his ethics. For Schopenhauer, suicide is prohibited in large part because it causes pain and suffering for others (friends, family, colleagues), and his ethic, is grounded in compassion — in seeing the pain of others as our own pain. It is the recognition of the unity of will. And in fact, Nietzsche noted this fact in the discussion with reference to the pain Kretzschmer had caused his fiancé. Though Nietzsche said little else of the matter in the letter to von Gersdorff, it obviously had been worth bringing up. He must have been disappointed that someone who, like him, admired Schopenhauer's philosophy would act so contrary to his views.⁶⁰ Nietzsche's letters discussing the themes of grief and suicide in a Schopenhauerian context lay an important foundation for understanding the influence of Schopenhauer's pessimism on his own developing views of fate and the affirmation of life.

2.3 Pessimism and fate

In order to understand Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche's views, we need to start with an overview of Schopenhauer's metaphysical system. This system begins with the Kantian distinction between the empirical world and the conditions of its possibility. But where Kant has room for noumenal conditions of the possibility of empirical phenomenon,

⁵⁹ However, ending one's life is sure to be the ultimate example of not enduring pain/suffering, and affirming its escape. So though it may have no or neutral effect on the affirmation of life (in the general sense) it does also exemplify affirming one's own willing – the desire to be free of pain.

⁶⁰ This brief discussion of suicide is especially interesting in light of the fact that in later a writing Nietzsche reflects on the idea of suicide. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) he writes in a short epigraph "The thought of suicide is a powerful comfort: it helps one through many a dreadful night". ("Epigrams and Interludes" §157).

only in his moral philosophy does Schopenhauer argue for a more traditional dualism between the essence of the universe, the will, and its expression in material form in space and time, the world as representation.

Within this system all events within the empirical world are rigorously determined by the law of cause and effect. In one sense of the term Schopenhauer uses 'fate' to mean determinism in the empirical realm: "Although everything can be regarded as irrevocably predetermined by fate, it is only by means of the chain of causes." (WWR I, §55) Fate, then, must be understood as a regress — or as Schopenhauer refers to it, a "chain of causes" — every effect has a cause, which was itself the effect of a previous cause, which was itself the effect of a previous cause, and so on. This same idea is applicable to human beings. "Just as events always come about in accordance with fate, in other words, according to the endless concatenation of causes, so do our deeds always come about according to our intelligible character." (WWR I, §55) In Schopenhauer's view, therefore, the physical (and psychological) characters that we are born with are in an important sense fated to us — or determined — by circumstances and forces beyond our control.⁶¹

In fact Schopenhauer thinks that human character can be empirical, intelligible, or acquired. Empirical character as we've seen is determined, as we might say now by our genetics, or in any case by our traits and talents, our preferences and motivations. While our empirical character is responsible for our actions and choices; we (and others) come to

⁶¹ Note the parallels with Emerson's view of 'fated' or determined character. Obviously Schopenhauer was writing earlier than Emerson, and there is no reason to think Emerson was influenced by Schopenhauer, but merely that they articulate similar ideas regarding character – ideas that are by no means novel – the connections between character and fate go back to ancient times.

know our character *through* these actions and choices.⁶² Character in this empirical sense is the character Schopenhauer thought to be “unalterable”. (*On the Basis of Morality*, 122) Intelligible character, by contrast is our ‘true nature’. Like the Will it cannot be located in time and space. But also like the Will it is also somehow responsible for empirical character; as the Will gives rise to the whole world as representation a human being’s intelligible character gives rise to the empirical character that is responsible for action in the world.

Somewhat confusingly Schopenhauer argues that intelligible character is both perfectly unified and perfectly free. (*On the Basis of Morality*, 190) Exactly how a single unified freely chosen character can be responsible for a plurality of individual human agents and their characters in the empirical world is left mysterious. Beyond this, if Schopenhauer had no room for anything beyond the rigorously determined empirical character and mysterious intelligible character we would seem to be deprived of any intelligible agency.⁶³

But Schopenhauer does recognize a third type of character, *acquired* character; and with this a reasonable sense of agency can enter the picture. The key point is “... although a man is always the same, he does not always understand himself, but often fails to recognize

⁶² In *On the Basis of Morality*, Schopenhauer discusses the three aspects of character that motivate moral action: compassion, malice, and ego. All three are present in every person, but in differing ratios. For example, a person with a predominantly malicious character will always act with the aim of harming someone else; a person with a predominantly compassionate character will always act to help others. (134)

⁶³ The argument Schopenhauer has to offer is a sort of transcendental argument based on our feeling of moral responsibility. Schopenhauer claims that our common disposition to feeling morally responsible for our actions is meant to provide evidence that we are somehow responsible for how we are (if we truly had no control – presumably we would not feel morally responsible for anything). See *On the Basis of Morality* (appendix).

himself until he has acquired some degree of real self-knowledge.” (WWR I, §55) Whereas empirical character alone might be zombie like, the addition of self-knowledge in expressing acquired character serves to impart a sense of agency, a sense of identity and purposeful action. Acquired character is developed through interactions with the surrounding environment, life experience, and self-awareness.⁶⁴ “We obtain this in life, through contact with the world, and it is this we speak of when anyone is praised as a person who has character, or censured as one without character.” (WWR I, §55) Acquired character for Schopenhauer was thus the link he needed to ground agency and, most importantly, moral responsibility — the key element in his epistemological position regarding the connection between empirical and intelligible worlds.⁶⁵ Thus, he was able to avoid the more disagreeable aspects of hard determinism by proposing an important role for self-knowledge and self-understanding — essentially, making the best of what you’ve got.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ The comparisons in terms of (personal) fate and character between Emerson, Schopenhauer, and later Nietzsche are quite striking – and given the influence of Emerson and Schopenhauer in his early scholarship – it is easy to see the origins of his ideas. Emerson takes a theistic, hereditary approach; Schopenhauer an atheist, almost Eastern cosmological approach; and Nietzsche much more naturalistic. The parallels between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are interesting, but an important difference may be that for Schopenhauer it is open for everyone to acquire character (good or bad), while for Nietzsche, the *Übermensch* is a case of extraordinary achievement. Most people, Nietzsche may argue, according to Schopenhauer’s theory never truly ‘acquire’ their character – they lack the critical self-awareness. Emerson does not expand on his notion of character to the extent Schopenhauer and Nietzsche do — at least not in the essays I focus on in this dissertation.

⁶⁵ A deeper analysis of Schopenhauer’s metaphysical (and ethical) position reveals that it is not much more tenable than that of Kant’s. He may go some distance in resolving epistemological questions, but falls far short of explaining *how* such a metaphysical connection is possible.

⁶⁶ Interestingly, Emerson also makes a similar point regarding fated character and agency when discussing how to react to the circumstances of life – seeing ice as a danger or opportunity for skating (see chapter 1).

Schopenhauer's views on character were important to his pessimistic worldview. 'Will' (the subjective aspect of our true nature individuated) was understood to be a blind, irrational, striving that could never be satisfied. Accordingly, we experience life as constant, unrelenting struggle and suffering individuals.

No satisfaction, however, is lasting; on the contrary, it is always merely the starting-point of a fresh striving. We see striving everywhere impeded in many ways, everywhere struggling and fighting, and hence always as suffering. Thus that there is no ultimate aim of striving means that there is no measure of end of suffering. (WWR I, §56)

The only way to overcome (escape) the suffering of life was to understand Will as blind individual striving, and to recognize the true nature of Will as unity. Recognizing Will as unity eliminated the desire to continue affirming individual existence — the goal became to deny life — an inherently pessimistic, indeed nihilistic, worldview.⁶⁷ "Essentially, *all life is suffering.*" (WWR I, §56)

2.4 Schopenhauer's pessimism

One way in which Nietzsche felt affinity for Schopenhauer's philosophy was the similarity in their views regarding the place of Christianity in modern culture. As early as 1862, in his student writings, Nietzsche believed that the time had come to subject theological dogma and ensuing values to deep critical inquiry and he recognized those views in Schopenhauer's work. Schopenhauer himself had written twelve years earlier in 1850 about the declining role for Christian faith in a society that had begun to favour scientific inquiry (PP II, 353) — such "fables" were "disappearing further every day" (PP I, 121).

⁶⁷ This is obviously an extremely simplified account of a complex view — intended to emphasize important elements of Schopenhauer's view that are relevant to Nietzsche.

Otherworldly metaphysical doctrines, of which Christianity is one, give people ways of understanding suffering in a way that justifies its existence and gives people hope for release from suffering through salvation. The faithful take comfort in ideas such as eternal reward, heaven, nirvana, etc. This religious approach uses 'mythical vehicles' such as God, or transcendental peace, to convince people of the value of enduring the suffering of life. The Christianity of specifically the New Testament gave believers hope.

However, Schopenhauer believed that though Christian salvation myths were at their core allegorically true, they were not literally true. The literal truth of the salvation from suffering was to be found in his philosophy. "... the great fundamental truth contained in Christianity as well as in Brahmanism and Buddhism, the need for salvation from an existence given up to suffering and death, and its attainability through the negation of the will, hence by a decided opposition to nature..." (WWR II, 628) Whereas salvation consoles the masses through mythological stories, Schopenhauer's view does not rely on God, but a change in consciousness — indeed a deliberately chosen change in consciousness.

If suffering consists in the natural, individual, blind striving of the will to satisfy desires, needs, etc., then according to Schopenhauer, salvation is through the negation of this will. It is through the denial of individuality, and the recognition of a holistic metaphysics. The core of Schopenhauer's ethic is the motive of compassion — of recognizing your will as the will of others. So, for him, salvation from suffering is intimately tied to not only denying self-focused striving, but also seeing an internal oneness.

Though Schopenhauer took himself to be making an important distinction between religious approaches to salvation and intellectual truth (also between the usefulness of

Christianity and its truth), and believing his philosophy to be espousing truth; the values he endorsed — especially compassion — can be seen to be the same as those espoused in the Christian New Testament.

Therefore that great fundamental truth contained in Christianity as well as in Brahmanism and Buddhism, the need for salvation from an existence given up to suffering and death, and its attainability through the denial of the will, hence by a decided opposition to nature, is beyond all comparison the most important truth there can be. (WWR II, §48)

In both Christian theology and Schopenhauer's philosophy, the pessimistic responses relate to the physical reality of our lives – as we experience them. It is important to note here, that Nietzsche rejected the complicated metaphysical picture – that there are distinct realms of existence (appearance and reality). For him, appearance and reality are the same. The theological response is that our mortal lives are worth living only insofar as they are the pathways to something far better (or perhaps even something far worse!) in eternity. The value of life, for Christians is its underlying reality in God and eternity – and indeed that may mean a life of suffering — but it is important to remember that the value of suffering is in the service of a greater good, it is to be *endured*.

2.5 Nietzsche educated

Schopenhauer's influence looms large for Nietzsche during his years at Leipzig. Initially, the young man Nietzsche is consumed by Schopenhauer's provocative philosophical views and scholarly character. He feels personally connected to the atheist leaning pessimism that denies life, having read Schopenhauer at a time of personal turmoil. However, this type of

pessimism (he will soon refer to it as ‘weak’ pessimism for its life-denying focus)⁶⁸ stands in tension with the ancient Greek views he admires and it is not many years before he breaks completely with Schopenhauer’s philosophy. The influence that lasts much longer is Schopenhauer as educator. As I mentioned in the previous section, Nietzsche admires Schopenhauer’s radical independence and sees it as an effective challenge to the scholarly status quo. Schopenhauer is brash, willing to criticize, and content to go his own way.

At the same time that Nietzsche remains under the influence of Schopenhauer, he takes his own unconventional approach to education. In the lecture halls at Leipzig he rarely writes in his notebook, and in fact, pays little attention to the intellectual content of the professor’s lectures. Instead he pays close attention to how lectures are presented — how different scholars approach teaching their students. (“Leipzig Retrospect”, 125) The education that he sought at Leipzig was more focused on how he would become an effective educator himself, and the approach he envisions would be one that encourages students not merely to absorb and repeat the prominent views of the time, but to think critically and to question everything. “The aim that lies before me” he writes in his autobiographical essay, “is to become a really practical teacher and above all to awaken the necessary self-possession and reflection among young people that enables them to keep the Why? the What? and the How? of their scholarship in mind.” (125) It is plain to see that by this stage in Nietzsche’s life he values independent scholarship and public education

⁶⁸ Compared to ‘strong’ pessimism of the ancient Greeks he discusses in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1870). I will discuss ‘strong’ pessimism — the type of pessimism Nietzsche ultimately favours (and the pessimism most relevant to *amor fati*) — in chapter 3.

that resists intellectual complacency and embraces challenging settled conventions and prevailing views.

Though this unconventional approach caused Nietzsche some anxiety from time to time, he wrote that it became clear to him as time passed, and he gained the confidence to continue on his path. "I was consciously aware that I would never again lack the knowledge that was required by an academician, and that relied upon my unique character, by means of its own drive and according to its own system, to bring together what was worth knowing." (125) The confidence Nietzsche expressed in this section of the essay is somewhat remarkable. He'd only recently left Bonn in a state of personal turmoil (unsure of his life's path) and now, after reading Schopenhauer, he thought formal education was of little use to him any more. And indeed he credited Schopenhauer for this achievement. (125) He even took the opportunity to offer his advice to students. When they got to a point in their studies where life became a series of puzzles, when perhaps it became unclear what life is all about (like he felt on his arrival in Leipzig), that they should "hold fast to what is knowable, and in accordance with his abilities, select from this vast domain." (125)

Nietzsche's Leipzig essay opened with a statement that almost serves as a disclaimer. Although the subject of the essay was to present his recollections of the time he spent in Leipzig, and the influence of the people around him, he was quick to show that in his own mind, he had already moved past this stage in his life — and was once again focused on moving forward. "My future is very unclear to me", he began "but I am not concerned on account of it. I behave in a similar fashion regarding my past; on the whole, I forget it very quickly, and only changes in and strengthening of character shows me, now

and then, that I have experienced it.” (121) As the optimistic tone of “My Life” (1863) signaled Nietzsche’s transition from student to young scholar; this optimistic tone of “Retrospect on My Two Years at Leipzig” (1868) signaled his transition from young scholar to philosopher of the future. The influence of Schopenhauer’s pessimism was not to last.

Nietzsche experienced good fortune in his early scholarly career. In 1869, at the age of 24 (and without a completed doctorate)⁶⁹ he was awarded a professorship in classical philology at the University of Basel, and began visiting Richard Wagner’s residence in Tribschen.⁷⁰ At this time it seemed the world was his oyster, and he was in tremendous spirits. In 1870 he wrote “The Dionysiac World View” a precursor essay to his first book *The Birth of Tragedy* published in 1872. In a letter to his mother Franziska, dated October 1, 1872, he wrote, “You will laugh this time, for here comes a long letter, with travel description and all kinds of jollities... How successful I have been you can guess perhaps from the hotel address printed above” (Middleton, 100).⁷¹ However, it was not to last. Ill health had begun to affect his quality of life, and the book received devastating reviews in the philological scholarly community.

Nietzsche’s first book *The Birth of Tragedy* an unconventional treatise for Greek Tragedy published early in 1872 received devastating reviews (in particular, a young

⁶⁹ The doctorate was soon after conferred without dissertation.

⁷⁰ Though Nietzsche’s relationship with the Wagners is a very important part of Nietzsche’s life and intellectual development (they both admired Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche wrote texts about the composer – the fourth *Untimely Meditation, Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876), and two short books in his last productive year 1888 *The Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, a sustained discussion of this relationship is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Wagner, though important to Nietzsche’s personal life, contributed little (or anything at all) directly to the philosophical themes connected to *amor fati*.

⁷¹ Letterhead from Hotel Bodenhaus, Splügen, Switzerland.

upstart philologist named Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff), tarnishing his scholarly reputation amongst philologists who criticized his work for departing from accepted views and presenting a misleading, if not entirely false, interpretation of Greek life. Even worse, after having sent his mentor Ritschl an advance copy in late 1871, his letters go unanswered. (Middleton, 93) On January 30, 1872 Nietzsche wrote to Ritschl inquiring about the lack of correspondence. “You will not grudge me my astonishment that I have not heard a word from you about my recently published book, and I hope you will also not grudge me my frankness in expressing this astonishment to you.” (Middleton, 93) Ritschl apparently never answered Nietzsche, holding a quite critical opinion of Nietzsche, and the published work.⁷²

However, Wagner loved *The Birth of Tragedy* — no doubt due to the effusive dedication in the Preface (first edition) and wrote a reply to Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (as did Nietzsche’s friend Rohde in May 1872).⁷³ Wagner’s response did little to restore Nietzsche’s scholarly reputation, representing him more as being under the composer’s intellectual wing than an independent scholar. In a letter to Wagner dated mid-November 1872, Nietzsche was quite clearly unsettled by the negative response to his book despite the support of his friends. “To you, beloved master, I tell it because you should know all. The fact is, indeed, so easy to explain — I have suddenly acquired such a bad name in my field that our small university suffers from it!” (Middleton, 110) He wrote that he

⁷² Middleton cites in a footnote (#76, 93) several journal entries written by Ritschl between December 1871 and February 1872 where he describes the book as “intelligent rakish dissoluteness” and Nietzsche’s January letter as “megalomania”.

⁷³ In a later edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche writes a new Preface, one that is highly self-critical of the work.

“agonizes” over the negative scholarly reaction, claiming that he had no students, and that students were not entering philology at Basel because of him. “A professor of classical philology at Bonn, whom I highly regard, has simply told his students that my book is “sheer nonsense” and is quite useless: a person who writes such things is dead to scholarship.” (Middleton, 110)

2.6 Schopenhauer as Educator

As will become commonplace in Nietzsche’s writings, the four books that comprise the *Untimely Meditations* are strikingly polemical — crossing a wide range of themes important to him. His criticisms of Christianity, modern human nature, popular culture, the German state, and education are pointed. If we concentrate exclusively on the polemical nature of Nietzsche’s thoughts we can easily adopt the opinion that his philosophy is predominantly negative — in fact, casual readers and indeed some scholars, interpret him in a dim light. But equally important are the positive views he hopes will eventually replace what it is he criticizes; so though Nietzsche’s critical work is certainly engaging, his intent is much more ambitious. In the third and fourth books — *Schopenhauer as Educator* (1874) and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876) — Nietzsche undertakes two character studies of influential figures in his life at the time. Both men, Nietzsche believes, are ‘untimely’ exemplars of the character types needed to move beyond contemporary German culture (contemporary to Nietzsche) — a culture Nietzsche thinks has become lazy and illusory.

People, Nietzsche observes in the opening section of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, are prone to laziness, hiding behind facades and bound to customs and convention. He asks,

“what is it that constrains the individual to fear his neighbour, to think and act like a member of the herd, and to have no joy in himself?” (SE, §1) Laziness, and the fear of the consequences and hardships of individuality are the traits characterizing the modern man of Nietzsche’s time. Artists and ‘great thinkers’ take exception to such individuals, and typically do so openly. “When the great thinker despises mankind, he despises its laziness: for it is on account of their laziness that men seem like factory products, things of no consequence and unworthy to be associated with or instructed.” (SE, §1) The artist alone, Nietzsche claims, understands that “[man] is uniquely himself to every last movement of his muscles, more, that in being thus strictly consistent in uniqueness he is beautiful, and worth regarding, and in no way tedious”. (SE, §1) For him, Schopenhauer is the exemplar of the ‘great thinker’, and Wagner the ‘artist’, both men having achieved a high degree of independence from the ill effects of modern culture and education.⁷⁴

Genuine culture is, for Nietzsche, the promotion of genius — ensuring that the optimal conditions of society exist to nurture individuals to attain intellectual or artistic excellence. Nietzsche’s view is elitist. Not everyone has the ability to be a genius (and indeed most do not want to be), however he thinks, and hopes, that in the future there will be more examples of individual excellence than there are in his time. What inhibits the emergence of genius is both engrained human traits of the time (laziness and fear noted above) and systematic oppressions that promote such human traits. Among the systematic oppressors are: Christian doctrine, the German state, and scholarly education. Individual

⁷⁴ Though I make an effort in this dissertation to discuss Schopenhauer’s influence as an ‘intellectual exemplar’ to Nietzsche, I am unable to discuss Wagner’s influence (though it is a very interesting and important topic in understanding Nietzsche’s developing philosophical ideas).

greed, state greed, and illusory facades (lack of content shielded behind beautiful façade) all influence common man to adopt deceptive facades (popular culture), while scholarly education discourages the search for truth in its emphasis on pure science.

How does a man, who no longer wishes to be part of the herd, find himself — find his individuality? This question is the organizing theme of *Schopenhauer as Educator*. Nietzsche criticizes the forces that perpetuate human laziness and fear, and then moves beyond the polemic to explore the conditions necessary for the (re)discovery of a future notion of a 'true' self ("find[ing] ourselves again"). "Your true nature lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you usually take yourself to be." (SE, §1) The proper role of a true educator is not to develop existing talent(s) according to prevailing convention; it is to act as a *liberator* — to remove the many internal and external hindrances. The process for self-discovery is, according to Nietzsche, "a painful and dangerous undertaking". Nietzsche diagnoses the illness of mankind as attributed to a moral tension between antiquity and Christianity. The morality of the ancient world was replaced by Christianity, which in turn is suffering in decline. When the (metaphysical) ideals of Christianity prove unattainable, Nietzsche claims that man begins to seek an alternative. However, Nietzsche writes,

...the fear of what is natural [man] has inherited and the renewed attraction of this naturalness, the desire for a firm footing somewhere, the impotence of his knowledge that reels back and forth between the good and the better, all this engenders a restlessness, a disorder in the modern soul which condemns it to a joyless unfruitfulness. (SE, §2)

Man has become complex and deceitful. What Nietzsche seeks is a philosophical educator who can teach him to "again [...] be *simple* and *honest* in thought and life". (SE, §2)

Schopenhauer, Nietzsche describes, is “honest because he speaks and writes to himself and for himself, cheerful because he has conquered the hardest task by thinking, and steadfast because he has had to be”. (SE, §2) These three traits: honesty, cheerfulness, and steadfastness set Schopenhauer apart from contemporary German philosophers allowing him to live a philosophical life, which according to Nietzsche is an important and unique ability — one that he seeks in a philosophical exemplar. “I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example... But this example must be supplied by his own outward life and not merely in his books...” (SE, §3) It is perhaps interesting that Nietzsche stresses the importance of Schopenhauer’s life, not merely his scholarship, as Nietzsche *only* knew Schopenhauer through his scholarship. “I am describing nothing but the first, as it were physiological, impression Schopenhauer produced upon me...I had discovered him only in the form of a book...” (SE, §2) Nietzsche’s characterization of Schopenhauer’s philosophical life is therefore drawn from his own imagination of what he thinks someone who writes like him must be like — Nietzsche’s own idealization of a ‘great thinker’. But what is true is that Schopenhauer’s writing had a deeply emotional effect on the young Nietzsche that left him inspired.

PART TWO: *Amor Fati* by name

As truly as I'd love a friend,
I have loved you, riddle of life,
whether I've rejoiced with you or wept,
whether you've brought me contentment or strife.

Even when you hurt I love you,
and, when you must scatter me through space,
I will tear myself away from your arms
as if from a dear friend's embrace.

With all my strength I cling to you;
let all your fire enkindle me.
Even in the heat of battle
let me unravel your mysteries.

A thousand years to live and think!
Deep in your arms I long to remain.
When you have no more joy to give —
very well — you still have your pain.

"A Prayer to Life" ("*Lebensgebet*"),
Lou Andreas-Salomé (1880)⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Translation Frank Beck, <http://translations.die horen.com/2015/03/a-prayer-to-life-lebensgebet.html>. See Appendix II for poem in German.

Chapter 3 A New Year's resolution: 1882

Amor fati: let that be my love from now on!
The Gay Science, §276

Following a long period of gestation, Nietzsche finally introduced *amor fati* explicitly in the context of making a personal New Year's resolution in 1882. There are no mentions of '*amor fati*' — love of fate — prior to its introduction midway through the first aphorism of *The Gay Science*, Book IV.⁷⁶ When the directive quoted in the epigraph is taken with the closing sentence of the aphorism, "And, all in all and on the whole: some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer!", it is hard to ignore Nietzsche's enthusiasm, or perhaps more precisely, his sense of resolve. His words are aspirational —affirmative — indicative of a new lease on life. The pessimism that he had been grappling with, and the last bits of Schopenhauerian influence, is finally starting to wane. His renewed sense of vigour comes with the discovery of an alternative to Schopenhauerian resignation, which he desperately needed at that time.

In the first subsection of this chapter I will recount the situation in 1882 when Nietzsche writes *The Gay Science*, and the years leading up to it. I focus on the years 1874-1882 when Nietzsche was in his mature middle age (30-38). These years were particularly

⁷⁶ A fifth book, "We Fearless Ones" is added in a second edition of *The Gay Science* five years later in 1887 (along with a Preface, and an Appendix of poems). Notably, the two editions of *The Gay Science* bookend two highly significant works, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885), and *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886).

trying for Nietzsche — distinguished by a number of breaks with previously important relationships. It was also a time of personal transformation. In this context, and at this time, it is especially interesting that he undertakes to 'love fate'.

3.1 Genoa

It is perhaps sad to think, upon reflection that the years we normally think of as mid-life were, for Nietzsche, nearer the end of his sane life. If life truly does 'begin at 50' we could say that Nietzsche's life, like Mozart's, never truly began, but Nietzsche did not really die young either. As his friends began getting married and having children, Nietzsche's life took a different direction and was notably marked by poor health and self-doubt. During this time Nietzsche was feeling intellectually unsettled, alternating between productivity and feeling frustrated. He wrote to von Gersdorff in April 1874 regarding such feelings. "There can be no talk of real productivity as long as one is still to a large extent confined in unfreedom, in the suffering and burdensome feeling of constraint — shall I ever be really productive?" (Middleton, 125)

In a letter to Rohde March 19, 1874 Nietzsche complained that he hadn't heard from Ritschl at all and seemed to take great satisfaction that his latest work (the second *Untimely Meditation*) would not be well received. "[Ritschl] does not write to me, and I take delight in thinking how little he will understand when he reads my "History". This nonunderstanding protects him from being annoyed, and that is the best of it." (Middleton, 123) Nietzsche's bitterness towards the estranged relationship is obvious. At the same time normal life progressed for some of his friends. In 1875 von Gersdorff became engaged, and a childhood

friend, Krug, became a father. In 1876 Rohde became engaged and Nietzsche himself proposed marriage that year to Mathilde Trampedach in a letter dated April 11, 1876, but she declined his offer. He seemed to rebound quickly, and wrote to von Gersdorff the next month claiming he was grateful, ultimately, not to be tied down. "I am not getting married. In the last analysis I hate limitation and being tied into the whole 'civilized' order of things so much that there can hardly be a woman who be of generous enough mind to follow me." (Middleton, ft 207, 141).⁷⁷

In August 1876 he wrote to his sister of "continuous headaches". "Things are not right with me, I can see that!" (Middleton, 146) The next month he wrote to Wagner of being granted a long period of sick leave from Basel. "The authorities know what they are doing in giving me leave of absence for a whole year.... They would lose me one way or another, if they did not give me this way out." He continued, "Thanks to the patience of my temperament, I have put up with torment after torment, as if I were born for that and for nothing else." (Middleton, 148) Later that year, in November, Nietzsche met with Wagner for the last time in Sorrento, Italy and was apparently "appalled" by Wagner's "religious tone", prompting his critical comments on Wagner's *Parsifal*. (Middleton, ft. 224, 149) This episode in Sorrento was the beginning of the break with the influential composer and fellow Schopenhauerian.

⁷⁷ Years later, Nietzsche will reiterate in *On the Genealogy of Morality* of the incompatibility of marriage and philosophy. "Thus the philosopher abhors *marriage*, together with that which might persuade to it — marriage being a hindrance and calamity on his path to the optimum. What great philosopher hitherto has been married? Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer — they were not; more, one cannot even *imagine* them married." (III, §7)

The break with Wagner became final when, in 1878, Nietzsche sent him a copy of *Human, All Too Human* and it was received poorly by the composer. Nietzsche wrote to Peter Gast in May 1878 that the book “ha[d] been practically banned in Bayreuth” and continued “what is more, the grand excommunication seems to have been pronounced against its author too... Wagner has failed to use a great opportunity for showing greatness of character.” (Middleton, 167) Finally, in 1879 Nietzsche’s health forced him to resign his scholarly chair in Basel, suffering almost 118 days of migraine headaches that year. (Middleton, 153) Following the break with Wagner and resignation from Basel, Nietzsche was freed in important ways. He became virtually nomadic, chasing the seasonal climates most agreeable to his physical health, and intellectually independent allowing him to write and publish the books most important to him.

It is from within this difficult personal and intellectual context that Nietzsche wrote *The Gay Science* — a book widely considered a significant early contribution to his life-affirming positive ethic. In the preface to the second edition, written five years later in 1887, Nietzsche characterized the book as a personal “reawakening”:

This whole book is nothing but a bit of merry-making after long privation and powerlessness, the rejoicing of strength that is returning, of a reawakened faith in a tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, of a sudden sense and anticipation of a future, of impending adventures, of seas that are open again, of goals that are permitted again, believed again. (Preface, §1)

Once again, the recurring cycle of personal hardship, deep reflection, and renewed optimism is made explicit in Nietzsche’s autobiographical commentary. Indeed, much of what he wrote in this work was aspirational; he had not yet emerged through the fire.

It is thus very interesting that he began *The Gay Science* book IV with a poem invoking imagery of fire and ice entitled "*Sanctus Januarius*":

With a flaming spear you crushed
All its ice until my soul
Roaring toward the ocean rushed
Of its highest hope and goal.
Ever healthier it swells,
Lovingly compelled but free:
Thus it lauds your miracles,
Fairest month of January!
-Genoa, January 1882⁷⁸ (Emphasis added)

The title itself is significant, not only on account of the obvious connection between "*Januarius*", the first month of the Roman civil calendar, and the fact Nietzsche wrote it in January (in Italy); but also for its connection to a central theme recurrent in his works: renewal and rejuvenation. The dried blood of the Christian martyr "St. Januarius" was said to miraculously become fluid again (on certain days of feast). Nietzsche encouraged imagery of comparison: the transformation from matter to liquid — ice to water, and dried blood to liquid — one transformation routinely physical, the other symbolically miraculous; in both cases, the dry, static, solid form is transformed into something more

⁷⁸ Walter Kaufmann translation. Vintage Books edition (1974).

Alternative translation "St. Januarius":

"You who with your lances burning
Melt the ice sheets of my soul,
Speed it toward the ocean yearning
For its highest hope and goal:
Even healthier it rises,
Free in fate most amorous: -
Thus your miracle it prizes
Fairest Januarius!"

Genoa, January 1882 (emphasis added). (Josefine Nauckhoff, translation, Bernard Williams editor)

symbolic of life — rushing water, flowing blood. This rejuvenation restores animation, indeed restores health.

This process of becoming fluid and active, Nietzsche wrote, also embraced contrast. Though the transformation is in some sense either a matter of nature (ice melting into water with heat) or divine providence (a miraculous transformation), Nietzsche allowed that the process was not entirely one of physics or theology (both processes entirely beyond our control), but also in an important sense *free*. “Ever healthier it swells, lovingly compelled but free”. Most commonly, we think any form of compulsion — even when loving or well intentioned — is at odds with free will and/or free action (to be free is specifically *not* to be compelled).⁷⁹ As I discussed in chapter 1, Nietzsche meant to challenge specifically, the notion that fate and freedom are at odds, or more generally his criticism of all dichotomous thinking.⁸⁰ In terms of a psychological rejuvenation (of health) it foreshadows the need to break free of conventional thinking.

⁷⁹ We typically consider loving or well-intentioned compulsion as paternalistic – the treatment of anyone who’s agency we question (or who needs the direction of someone smarter or more accomplished).

⁸⁰ The dichotomy of ‘fate’ and ‘freedom’ that Nietzsche challenges, and indeed challenges from an early age (the 1862 student essays, see chapter 1 of this thesis) is what we now discuss broadly in the free will literature as ‘determinism’ and ‘libertarian freedom’ — human agency as either *free* or *unfree*. And given that his view of fate is importantly different from determinism, it is not accurate to merely conclude Nietzsche is what we call now, a compatibilist. An investigation of how and where Nietzsche’s view of fate and freedom fit in contemporary ethics is an interesting question but one that is outside the scope of this thesis. See *Human, All Too Human* (1878) ‘On the History of the Moral Sensations’, §39 “*On the Fable of Intelligible Freedom*” for an interesting discussion on the sense of human freedom advanced by Schopenhauer. With respect to Nietzsche’s criticism of ‘dichotomous thinking’ generally, see *Human, All Too Human* (‘Of First and Last Things’, §1) and *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) (‘On the Prejudices of Philosophers’, §2)

3.2 *Amor Fati*: Loving fate

The strong Christian themes at the core of *Sanctus Januarius*, of miraculous transformation and rejuvenation, come fairly shortly after the ‘death of God’ passage in *The Gay Science* book III. God is dead, Nietzsche wants us to break free of conventional thinking, and now he introduces at the beginning of book IV, the idea of *amor fati*. In the remainder of this chapter, I explore the central aphorism §276 “For the new year” (which introduces *amor fati* by name), and the five aphorisms immediately following §276 ending with §281 “Knowing how to end”. Next, in subsections three, four, and five, I consider three core themes associated with *amor fati*: strong and weak pessimism; suffering and pity; and finally, love and affirmation. I end the chapter with a discussion of eternal recurrence.

When we look closely at the structure of the opening aphorism, “*For the new year*” (§276) it is as interesting for what it reveals, as for what it does not. In a single paragraph less than a half page in length, Nietzsche: teases a play on Descartes’ famous ‘*cogito*’ (“I still live, I still think: I still have to live, for I still have to think.”)⁸¹, comments on the general nature of new years resolutions (“today everybody permits himself the expression of his wish and his dearest thought...”), ponders his own resolution (“... what thought shall be the reason, warranty, and sweetness of my life henceforth”), states emphatically his intention (“*Amor fati*”), and then makes significant comments on the concepts of necessity, beauty, negation, and affirmation. (“I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; ... I do not want to wage war against what is ugly...”). The aphorism

⁸¹ “*Sum, ergo cogito: cogito, ergo sum.*”

ends as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, with Nietzsche's aspiration to one day be a "Yes-Sayer" (to life).

The sheer density of this short passage makes interpretation rather tricky and there seems to be three distinct themes (or important messages): the Descartes variation; *amor fati* as an affirmation of life (new years resolution); and the relationship between necessity, beauty, and its negation. Given that *amor fati* is not mentioned again in this text, at least explicitly, is it perhaps easy to focus scholarly attention elsewhere. However, given the connection of loving fate to eternal recurrence introduced at the end of *The Gay Science* book IV, and emphasized at length in his next major work *Zarathustra*, it is worth taking a much closer look at what role *amor fati* plays in this important book (*The Gay Science*) and to Nietzsche's personal and intellectual life at the time.

Given his proclamation that *amor fati* be his love henceforth, it is equally interesting that Nietzsche does *not* comment on love, fate, what it is to love fate, or why he settles on this particular attitude towards life in the first place. Without taking into account careful consideration of his earliest philosophical efforts (the student essays discussed in chapter 1) and the influential thinkers who shaped his intellectual awakening through his years at Schulpforta and in Leipzig, these seemingly important omissions may indeed be considered perplexing. However, taking seriously the philosophical themes important to the young Nietzsche discussed in chapter 1, it is reasonable to surmise that this seemingly unexpected introduction is in fact the natural progression of his intellectual development — it is the *birth* of *amor fati* following a long period of gestation. Though the personal/intellectual context of the last ten years reliably suggests he is at a crossroads, these circumstances,

though difficult, do little to explain (or justify) a commitment to distinctly *love* (his) *fate*. A careful reading of the aphorisms immediately following §276 provides interesting insights.

When we consider these five aphorisms in their proximity to Nietzsche's central personal pledge, they lend some context to what he has in mind. §277-§279 advances an understanding of what Nietzsche means by 'fate' and its importance. He discusses the uncontrollable forces in our lives, fate and chance (§277); our universally shared fate of death (§278); and the value of relationships both in their endurance and transcendence (§279). He wants to move forward in his own life — personally, emotionally, and intellectually — on his own terms, free of the unhealthy (or unhelpful) influences thus far. Aphorisms §280 and §281 refer to post-Christian intellectual inquiry and that for some, the ability to let go of traditional scholarship has come. He seeks physical and psychological space free of the traditional binds of religious doctrine, in which to formulate and develop his own intellectual tradition in questions such as ethics, personal identity, the value of life, the role of culture.

Aphorism §277 entitled "*Personal providence*" ("*Persönliche Providenz*") is twice the length of §276, and focuses on certain aspects of fate, and its connections with freedom and chance. After having introduced the idea of *amor fati* as a crucial aspect of post-Christian affirmation of life (Yes-saying!), Nietzsche warns against understanding 'providence' in misleading context. The prevailing Christian framework had to have loving fate as part of the plan — but in that context the core idea is the providence of God, that God provides. To begin, he makes an ambitious claim that when one achieves a high point in life (that they consider themselves 'free') they realize their "spiritual unfreedom". When we realize that

we no longer have good reason to maintain our theological commitments, we must acknowledge the aspects of our lives beyond our control – fate (personal providence), and chance — are not part of a divine plan. Regardless, Nietzsche assures us “how palpably always everything that *happens to us* turns out for the best” (emphasis added). And indeed, most importantly, we must acknowledge that what is beyond our control is not to be feared, or resisted, but regarded as positive, beneficial.

After listing many mainly negative circumstances or situations beyond a person’s control, i.e. “bad weather or good, the loss of a friend, sickness, slander, the failure of some letter to arrive, the spraining of an ankle, ...” Nietzsche writes, “either immediately or very soon after it proves to be something that “must not be missing”; it has a profound significance and use precisely for *us*.” What happens to us in life (the aspects of experience beyond our direct control) is not only beneficial to us, but in some very important way is *necessary* for our lives. In this sense, perhaps providence is protective by presenting us with what we need to make our lives complete (although Nietzsche certainly is not advocating the *divine* providence of the Christian God). In the closing sentences of the aphorism, Nietzsche warns against feeling too confident, in either our ability to control circumstances (or even in interpreting events), that there is another force at work in our lives: chance. “Indeed, now and then someone plays with us — good old chance; now and then chance guides our hand, and the wisest providence could not think up a more beautiful music than that which our foolish hand produces then.”

A piece of fate common to us all is death, and it is interesting that Nietzsche follows an aphorism on providence and chance with an aphorism about death, “The thought of

death” (§278). He writes, “And yet silence will soon descend on all these noisy, living, life-thirsty people. How his shadow stands even now behind everyone as his dark fellow traveller.” The main point of the aphorism is to bring awareness to the danger of ‘wishing your life away’. People have a preference for, he believes, thinking about (or being distracted by) their lives in the near future — hopes, dreams, desires, aspirations, etc. — and not in their lives in the moment. In fact, society is structured in such a way that people are driven to be the first into the future. The danger is that for us death is fated, not freely chosen, so rushing forward is actually rushing our own deaths. “Everyone wants to be the first in this future — and yet death and deathly silence alone are certain and common to all in this future.”⁸² However, Nietzsche notes, death is silence, and people tend not to think of death (as their certain future) in this perhaps nihilistic way — the thought of death as the beginning of an eternal afterlife is to some a comfort. Once the death of God and the falsity of a spiritual afterlife is more widely accepted, he hopes his philosophy will one day motivate people to embrace life this same way.

The idea of a guiding force continues in §279 “Star friendship” — a seemingly personal evaluation of the degeneration of an important friendship. “We were friends and have become estranged. But this was right, and we do not want to conceal and obscure it from ourselves as if we had reason to feel ashamed.” Many Nietzsche scholars interpret this aphorism as referring to his relationship with Wagner (Walter Kaufman comments in a textual footnote that the relationship in question is not necessarily one with Wagner, and

⁸² Worth discussing/noting Nietzsche’s detail that death is silent – which to me suggests that there is no type of eternal afterlife (or even recurrence?). The death of God signals the death of a possible afterlife – we must acknowledge an eternal silence – so don’t wish away what you have.

may, in fact refer to Franz Overbeck. (Ft.8, p226)).⁸³ However, given that this aphorism follows closely behind the two aphorisms discussed above (“*For the new year*” and “*Personal providence*”), I remain unconvinced that Nietzsche is referring to the loss of any one particular friendship, but more generally of the losses he had suffered. The imagery of celestial illumination and navigation, paired with the nautical metaphor of ships at sea, provides a powerful analogy of regarding personal hardship as positive (or beneficial). Though the degeneration of an important friendship is personally devastating, we should recognize the good the friendship brought and not to dwell on the hurt. “That we have to become estranged is the law *above* us; by the same token we should also become more venerable for each other — and the memory of our former friendship more sacred.”

In §280 “*Architecture for the search of knowledge*”, Nietzsche writes, “The time is past when the church possessed a monopoly on reflection, when the *vita contemplativa* always had to be first of all a *vita religiosa*...” There should be room, indeed space and structure, for “we who are godless...” to pursue intellectual activity — that a life of contemplation should no longer be tied inextricably to the traditional domain (and locations) of religious spirituality.⁸⁴ “We wish to see *ourselves* translated into stone and

⁸³ Indeed my first thought upon reading this aphorism was of Lou Salomé – a friendship we know that was lost right around the time *The Gay Science* was published. There is a wistful tone to his words, which suggests to me a deeper loss (love or even mentor perhaps) than a friendship that has merely grown in different directions. We are more likely to feel lost at sea and look to the stars for navigation when we have suffering an anchoring loss. There is some evidence that it may perhaps be referring to Nietzsche’s break with Wagner. Nietzsche begins a letter to Wagner (mid-November 1872) “After everything that has recently happened to me, I truly have the least right to be in any way despondent, for I live in the midst of a *solar system of loving friendship*, consoling encouragement, and enlivening hopes.” (Emphasis added. Middleton, 110)

⁸⁴ Interesting though, how Nietzsche’s views of the ‘ascetic ideal’ square with this seeming rejection of the contemplative life as the religious life.

plants, we want to take walks in *ourselves* when we stroll around these buildings and gardens.” A perhaps tentative first step towards the affirmation of self, and life, Nietzsche points out that for those who have lost their Christian faith, they no longer see God in the world and their own spirits. What they seek is their *own* identities in the world and their inner lives.

The idea of being able to let go when the time is right, and indeed doing so well, is at the heart of the short transitional aphorism “*Knowing how to end.*” (§281). Nietzsche sees an important difference between those who know how to end well, and those who do not, and he preferences the abilities of the first group. “Masters of the first rank are revealed by the fact that in great as well as small matters they know how to end perfectly, whether it is a matter of ending a melody or a thought, or the fifth act of a tragedy or of an action of state.” In this context, following his emphasis on the ‘godless’ of the previous aphorism, these ‘masters of the first rank’ are those who recognize that the time has come to let go of the belief in god — to accept *god is dead* and do so decisively and gracefully. “The best of the second rank” as Nietzsche refers to the second group, are never sure of endings, and perhaps are inclined to hang on longer than is healthy, in uncertainty and fear. They “become restless as the end approaches and do not manage to slope into the sea in such a proud and calm harmony as, for example, the mountains at Portofino — where the bay of Genoa ends its melody.”

3.3 Strong and weak pessimism

Nietzsche's interest in fate is closely entwined with two important questions recurrent throughout his philosophy: Is life worth living?; and What is the (most) valuable life? When we talk of life being worth living, we generally mean that *our lives* are worth living *to us*.⁸⁵ To say that our life is not worth living can be caused by a lack of meaning in one's life (lack of purpose); and/or the existence of evil, of suffering. However, to simply have purpose, and not experience suffering, is not sufficient for Nietzsche. Not only does he value some lives (some meaning) more than others (an elitist, or perfectionist view), he also quite explicitly believes that suffering is itself valuable.

Early influences in Nietzsche's personal and intellectual life provide pessimistic responses to the first question, is life worth living. Growing up in a devout Christian family (his devout Christian upbringing), the young Nietzsche was taught that life is justified (and thus worth living) by the promise of eternal rewards in the afterlife. Suffering in this life is justified by something far greater (instrumental, not intrinsic, value). Nietzsche's early intellectual exemplar, Schopenhauer (discussed in chapter 2), proposed an equally pessimistic view of life – that all life is suffering and the only hope of escaping the suffering is by denying our will to live.

In both Christian theology and Schopenhauer's philosophy, the pessimistic responses relate to the physical reality of our lives – as we experience them. It is important to note here, that Nietzsche rejects the complicated metaphysical picture – that there are

⁸⁵ In a much more general sense, life is worth living to procreate and continue the existence of humanity. But this is not what we are typically talking about when we raise the question.

distinct realms of existence (appearance and reality). For him, appearance and reality are the same. The theological response is that our mortal lives are worth living only insofar as they are the pathways to something far better (or perhaps even something far worse!) in eternity. The value of life, for Christians is its underlying reality in God and eternity – and indeed that may mean a life of suffering — but it is important to remember that the value of suffering is in the service of a greater good, it is to be *endured*.

Nietzsche regards both forms of pessimism (Christian and Schopenhauerian) as “pessimism of weakness” (BT intro xxvi) – that the pessimism regarding the value of life results in its denial. In contrast, Nietzsche considers a “pessimism of strength” (as exemplified by the ancient Greeks) to be a positive force – a force necessary in cultivating an attitude that despite suffering in life, life is worth living (non-instrumentally). The combination of these two elements result in an *affirmation* of life (not a mere optimistic response)⁸⁶ – and in fact, I think, a much more powerful response (strength and power also important themes for Nietzsche).

To answer the second question (what is the most valuable life?), and in particular, the exemplar of the tragic hero (especially Homeric tragedy). Raymond Geuss explains in the introduction of *The Birth of Tragedy* that for Nietzsche, the role of Greek tragedy is to show the life-enhancing effects of tragedy (suffering). The struggle between Apollo (representative of individuation, drawing and respecting borders/limits) and Dionysos

⁸⁶ The distinction between optimism and affirmation must be made. Though the theological view may be pessimistic (suffering in our mortal lives), it would be reasonable to argue that when we take God and eternity into account, that moral suffering is valuable for our eternal souls. Nietzsche’s rejection of such metaphysical pictures blocks such an optimistic response – thus the, I think more powerful, affirmation of (mortal) life – suffering and all.

(representative of destruction of individuality, dissolution of boundaries) gives rise to this sense of affirmation. Audiences, rather than being adversely affected by the tragedy – or be demoralized (think Plato’s criticism of tragic poems in *The Republic*), tragedy will “energize audience members to go on living” (BT intro xxv).

Nietzsche refers to ‘fate’ in the context of the Greeks in aphorism §306 of *The Gay Science* “Stoics and Epicureans”.

For those with whom fate attempts improvisations — those who live in violent ages and depend on sudden and mercurial people — Stoicism may indeed be advisable. But anyone who foresees more or less that fate permits him to spin *a long thread* does well to make Epicurean arrangements.

Here Nietzsche equates fate with the time and place you are living in: either violent unstable times or an Epicurean garden of peace. Different strategies are required for different circumstances. Earlier remarks by Nietzsche (for example, §304 *By doing we forego*) suggests he feels himself to be the latter circumstance and in the fortunate position to “*spin a long thread*”. “I am well disposed toward those moralities which goad me to do something and do it again, from morning till evening, and then to dream of it at night, and to think of nothing except doing this *well*, as well as *I* alone can do it.” (§304) Nietzsche’s various illnesses freed him from formal professorial duties and teaching, and allowed him to carve out winters on the Mediterranean coast, and summers in the Alps. This freedom also allowed him the time for quiet contemplation and to write at his leisure.

In an aphorism entitled “Brief habits” (§295), Nietzsche describes a positive role for the hardships in his life, returning to the contrast introduced in “*Sanctus Januarius*” — that of the static versus the fluid. Brief habits, he seems to think, represent fluidity — promote progress and change without becoming aimless or chaotic. “I love brief habits and consider

them an inestimable means for getting to know *many* things and states, down to their sweetness and bitterness.”

Brief habits stand at a mid-point between *enduring* habits (lack of change) and no habits at all (lack of stability). “Enduring habits I hate” he declares, “... for example, [those] owing to an official position, constant association with the same people, a permanent domicile, or unique good health.”⁸⁷ What these *enduring* habits have in common is their traditional desirability for a good life: a steady career, long-term friendships, a permanent home, and good health — hallmarks of stability and contentment that Nietzsche considers to actually be hallmarks of laziness and lack of progress. For him, it seems that things going right in life leads to complacency and a lack of willingness to change – these lives, with their *enduring* habits – are static. The difficult experiences in his life, far from being undesirable, are actually helpful in breaking this monotony. “At the very bottom of my soul I feel grateful to all my misery and bouts of sickness and everything about me that is imperfect, because this sort of thing leaves me with a hundred backdoors through which I can escape from *enduring habits*.”⁸⁸

Not having any habits at all, however, is the worst situation that Nietzsche can conceive — a life of “perpetual improvisation”, with *no* stability (or continuity) at all. “That would be my exile and my Siberia.” When he refers to a “life of perpetual improvisation” as the worst life he can imagine, he has *total chaos* in mind, not episodes of chance or luck. For

⁸⁷ All the aspects in his life he lacked, or lost.

⁸⁸ Another strong reference to the usefulness of suffering is §303 “Two who are happy” “... and on the whole I do not know whether I do not have more reason to be grateful to my failures than to any success. [...] I know more about life because I have so often been on the verge of losing it; and precisely for that reason I get more out of life than any of you.”

Nietzsche, progress requires change and while change can be a result of chance or luck, prolonged (or eternal) chaos never brings a settled state. “Habits”, then, can be interpreted as settled conditions, such as societal, cultural, political, religious conditions, etc. (regardless of temporality). These settled conditions provide the means for our understanding of historical progression — humanity moves naturally from one settled state to the next. A total absence of habits (chaos), therefore, represents the lack of stability necessary for historical progression, while enduring habits represent a fixed condition resistant to change. Only ‘brief habits’ represent the optimal combination of stability and change.

In a similar vein to ‘enduring habits’ concerning the undesirable nature of a fixed life, is the equally undesirable nature of a settled character. In the very next aphorism (§296) “A firm reputation”, Nietzsche challenges the prevailing culture that views an unchanging character — being faithful to oneself, maintaining unchanging views and aspirations — as valuable. “Such esteem, which flourished everywhere alongside the morality of mores, breeds “character” and brings all change, all re-learning, all self-transformation into *ill repute*.” Nietzsche is explicitly criticizing the dominant view that stability and stasis are good, and advocating to breakdown this view to promote fluidity in life and self. The often quoted §290 “One thing is needful” emphasizes this point well. “To “give style” to one’s character — a great and rare art!” It is the strong character that

possesses the power and self-control to self-determine; the weak remain unable and grow to resent their powerlessness.⁸⁹

3.4 Suffering and Pity

Life inevitably *includes* suffering, or the more extreme Schopenhauerian thesis — life *is* suffering. Suffering, in this context, refers to enduring periods in our lives, or fleeting experiences, that affect us physically and/or psychologically in a negative way. The inevitability, or indeed necessity, of such difficult episodes belie the common acknowledgement that lives void of such experience — lives that are entirely painless (healthy), pleasing, and comfortable — simply do not occur. And even if these lives were possible, would they even be desirable, or meaningful? Without hardship, there is no achievement. Without distress, no elation; without pain, no pleasure. In an unpublished note dated 1870, Nietzsche writes, “There is no beautiful surface without a horrible depth.” (KSA, 7[91])⁹⁰

No stranger to his own suffering, a question that occupies Nietzsche’s thoughts is what we do with suffering — how we understand its role in our lives. Traditionally considered to be something intrinsically bad, suffering is akin to an illness best relieved, endured, or cured. “Preachers of morals and theologians” Nietzsche writes “share one bad habit; all of them try to con men into believing that they are in a very bad way and need

⁸⁹ An interesting contrast to §290 & §296 is §305 “*Self-control*” “Those moralists who command man first of all and above all to gain control of himself thus afflict him with a peculiar disease; namely, a constant irritability in the face of all natural stirrings and inclinations — as it were, a kind of itching. [...] Of course we can achieve greatness this way. [...] [But] one must be able to lose oneself occasionally if one wants to learn something from things different from oneself.”

⁹⁰ “Es giebt keine schöne Fläche ohne eine schreckliche Tiefe.”

some ultimate, hard, radical cure". (§326, *The physicians of the soul and pain*) He claims we have a tendency to *exaggerate* our pains and misfortunes, "as if it were a requirement of good manners", and that in doing so we remain silent regarding the many ways in which to relieve discomfort, in favour of the radical cure offered by morality. These preachers of morals — these 'physicians of the soul' — nurture the belief that 'evil' individuals (free-thinkers, artists, philosophers) suffer in "misery"; that happiness remains elusive while suffering endures. This belief disguises the truth as Nietzsche sees it, that those labeled 'evil' by the theologians in truth experience a life of "over-rich happiness". This 'truth' is silenced because it stands in contrast with the traditional theological/moral theory that "all happiness begins only after the annihilation of passion and the silencing of the will" (presumably in reference to Schopenhauer).

In the case of the 'moral theologians', and here I am including Christian theologians and moral philosophers (assuming the tight connection between Christian dogma and contemporary western morality), views about suffering are essentially *life-denying* — that suffering serves no valuable purpose in our natural (mortal) lives, and is to be somehow escaped. For Christians, who regard God as underlying all existence, the escape from suffering is in terms of eternal salvation of the soul. For Schopenhauer, escape is a metaphysical denial of the will to live. In *Beyond Good and Evil* §157, Nietzsche writes of his own thoughts of escaping suffering "The thought of suicide is a powerful comfort: it helps one through many a dreadful night." Written in 1886, it is reasonable to conclude that perhaps Nietzsche is, in this short aphorism (in the 'Epigrams and Interludes' section), recalling his own difficult nights around the time he wrote *The Gay Science* (in 1882).

The ancient Stoic view of suffering does not fare any better in Nietzsche's estimation. Stoics value the adoption of an attitude of indifference to suffering — that it is neither good nor bad, life-denying nor life-affirming. Ultimately, this indifference is considered by Nietzsche to be a static (attitudinal) state of life — hardened, without life force. In GS §326, Nietzsche asks “Is our life really painful and burdensome enough to make it advantageous to exchange it for a Stoic way of life and petrification? We are *not so badly off* that we have to be as badly off as Stoics.”

Greek tragedians, on the other hand, see suffering as thoroughly life-affirming, and this is the approach favoured by Nietzsche. The suffering that we experience has value making us not only who we are, but who we will be. In §335 “*Long live physics!*”, Nietzsche explores the origin of moral judgments, undertaking a deep polemic against Kant's moral philosophy, and introducing the revaluation of values (in this case ‘the right thing’ as *good*). “Let us stop brooding about the “moral value of our actions”!”. “We, however, want to become those we are — human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves.” It is interesting to note, that the final aphorism of GS IV (§342) is entitled “*Incipit tragoedia*” – The tragedy begins.⁹¹

Loving your fate is understanding the positive, and indeed formative, role that suffering plays in the lives of those strong enough to break with the moral theologians and see the truth within themselves. The notion of pity is of central importance in the

⁹¹ The thematic structure and flow of GS book IV should not be overlooked. Nietzsche begins with a personal resolution for change – discusses many important relevant themes – and ends with the beginning of a process – the beginning of the change he resolves to undertake. §342 is also, more recognizably tied to §1 in “Zarathustra's Prologue” – in fact, the two aphorisms are virtually the same – the end of GS begins Z.

connections Nietzsche makes between suffering and fate.⁹² In *The Gay Science* §338 “*The will to suffer and those who feel pity*”, he questions the prevailing attitude of *pity* towards those who suffer — and the virtuousness of helping alleviate the pain of another. He thinks this other-directed attitude ignores (neglects) the important and valuable role suffering has in every life. “... [T]hey wish to help and have no thought of the personal necessity of distress, although terrors, deprivations, impoverishments, midnights, adventures, risks, and blunders are as necessary for me and for you as are their opposites.” Nietzsche claims that those feeling pity towards those who suffer misunderstand the importance of fate in one’s life. “...[T]he intellectual frivolity with which those moved by pity assume the role of fate is for the most part outrageous...”. He continues, “It never occurs to them that, to put it mystically, the path to one’s own heaven always leads through *the voluptuousness of one’s own hell*.”⁹³ (emphasis added)

Turned inward, self-pity comprises both personal and interpersonal components. It represents the attitude of lamenting ones own suffering, with the interpersonal goal of attracting empathy and compassion from others. To wallow in your own pain, and desire help from others to relieve or escape the suffering is, to Nietzsche, a weakness of character — the willingness to settle for comfort rather than taking the more difficult or dangerous path.

If you refuse to let your own suffering lie upon you even for an hour and if you constantly try to prevent and forestall all possible distress way ahead of time; if you experience suffering and displeasure as evil, hateful, worthy of annihilation, and as a defect of existence, then it is

⁹² See, for example, Martha Nussbaum’s work on Nietzsche and pity.

⁹³ Epic! The German: “So nöthig sind, wie ihr Gegentheil, ja dass, um mich mystisch auszudrücken, der Pfad zum eigenen Himmel immer durch die Wollust der eigenen Hölle geht.”

clear that besides your religion of pity you also harbour another religion in your heart that is perhaps the mother of the religion of pity: *the religion of comfortableness*.

For those who settle for comfort, and elevate the value (indeed virtue) of pity (compassion for others)⁹⁴, Nietzsche only has critical words. “How little you know of human *happiness*, you comfortable and benevolent people, for happiness and unhappiness are sisters and even twins that either grow up together or, as in your case, *remain small* together.”

3.5 Love and affirmation

The more difficult and dangerous path, according to Nietzsche is the one that affirms life. When we reject pity and the desire for a comfortable life, we demonstrate our willingness to overcome (weak) pessimism and cultivate a Yes-Saying attitude towards life.

It is not surprising, given Nietzsche’s background in philology, that his approach is genealogical. When scholars claim that there are distinctly ‘Nietzschean’ ways of understanding key terms, especially terms that traditionally carry a heavy metaphysical burden such as fate or freedom, it is often said that he redefines, or revalues, the underlying concept. Though we may be able to accurately make that claim, I think it’s only half the picture. Certainly, Nietzsche often writes of a new, brighter, future, but he doesn’t mean an *ex nihilo* creation. He believes in the importance of historical development of words and ideas, and part of any historically complex concept, mistakes have been made and incorporated into our common understanding. What Nietzsche sets out to do is to show us where we have gone wrong, and where we may go once we unburden ourselves of the

⁹⁴ I wonder how much of Nietzsche’s critique of pity is directed at Schopenhauer’s compassion based ethic (moral view).

errors. He *is* proposing something new — a new understanding, a new way of looking at things — but it's new only for *us* (in our time).

Though we have only one word for 'love' in English, in ancient Greek there are two: *eros* and *agape*. The primary distinction between the two is essentially the relationship between love and value. *Eros*: the object is loved because we value it, desire it. Generally associated with Hellenistic views (particularly Plato), *eros* is a distinctly *human* form of love — the Gods have no need of *eros*, simply because they do not desire anything. *Agape*: the object has value because we love it. In contrast with *eros*, *agape* is the *divine* form of love most strongly associated with Christianity. God bestows value on sinful humans by loving them.

There is textual evidence within *The Gay Science* to suggest that Nietzsche interprets 'love' generally in an erotic way, connecting love understood as desire with its perhaps most extreme correlate, greed. The aphorism entitled "*The things people call love*" (§14) begins, "Greed and Love: such different feelings these terms evoke! And yet it could be the same instinct, named twice..." When we understand love in terms of desiring an object (person, experience, etc.) what we desire is the possession of that thing; what we value we want to be our own. However, the feeling of elation in acquiring what is desired, fades, according to Nietzsche, and so too, our love for it. "We slowly grow tired of the old, of what we safely possess, and we stretch out our hands again; even the most beautiful landscape is no longer sure of our love after we have lived in it for three months, and some more distant coast excites our greed..." On this reading, love is akin to an insatiable appetite, that we are always looking for something new — something different — to possess for ourselves. Not

surprisingly, Nietzsche considers sexual love to be the clearest example of this form of love: “the lover wants unconditional and sole possession of the longed-for person...”⁹⁵

This reading, however, is not unproblematic. The original problem of the motivational gap suggested that there is no (obvious) reason for us to love what we value.⁹⁶ If Nietzsche is suggesting a tight connection between love and greed, in terms of love as desiring something (or someone), then the connection is further broken as it seems we can (at least sometimes) desire things that lack value. So now we not only have the question of what reasons do we have to love what we value (in the context of *amor fati* the problem of ‘unlovable’ fate); we have the added question of whether what we love has any value. Distinct from ‘unlovable’ fate and ‘pointless’ fate, we can call this third problem ‘unhealthy’ fate: that we do love the necessity of pain, suffering, loss, but not as part of a meaningful whole, but in itself. Those who argue that the problem of unlovable fate is intractable must deny the possibility of this third problem. However, I see no good reason why we must deny it.

Returning to the critical passage regarding *amor fati* (GS §276), Nietzsche writes, “I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them — thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on.” Immediately, Nietzsche gives us good reason for pause. Being able to

⁹⁵ Power is also an important element of this understanding of love – possession of an object also reflects power over it (or them). Interestingly, Nietzsche finishes the aphorism with what he seems to consider a ‘higher, shared love’ where two people desire higher ideals together – what Nietzsche says is the love of friendship.

⁹⁶ The problem of the ‘motivational gap’ between distinctly ‘loving’ what we value is introduced by Béatrice Han-Pile. (2009) The main point is that we have no reason to ‘love’ what we value rather than, perhaps appreciate, endorse, approve of, etc.

love fate crucially involves seeing what is necessary in things as being beautiful, and it is something that must be *learned*. In this context, what is ‘necessary in things’ is what cannot be otherwise — aspects of things that are fated. But the relationship between fate and necessity is not metaphysical. What makes something necessary is not that it is ordained by God, or by a higher power; the relationship is natural. Nietzsche is highly critical of the metaphysical picture drawn by Kant and Schopenhauer, and he denies the possibility of ‘uncaused causes’ (*causa sui*). What are necessary in things, Nietzsche believes, are the natural aspects that we have no control over bringing about. Examples may be, physical attributes or characteristics, genetics, lifespan (death).

Nietzsche views learning to see “what is necessary in things as what is beautiful” as a challenging endeavour given that we typically consider what is necessary (what is beyond our control) with suspicion, or even resentment. The things we can’t control are the things something (or someone) else controls — we are merely chess pieces in someone else’s game. If we are mere chess pieces, with little autonomy, what meaning is there for us in our lives? We are soothed, he thinks, when we believe a benevolent God wills what is necessary; one who teaches that our faith will be rewarded in an afterlife. To lose such faith, or to see it as misguided, leaves us vulnerable to what we have no control over. We want things to be different; we want something that we can control. Wanting to be free of this indoctrinated response, Nietzsche aims to view what is necessary in a positive light — indeed to see it *as* beautiful. This requires that he *revalue* ‘necessity’.⁹⁷ Secondly, in

⁹⁷ What Nietzsche means by, or how he understands, ‘necessity’ and ‘beauty’ is also important, but will be dealt with elsewhere only as needed.

revaluing 'necessity' as beautiful, Nietzsche is then able to "make things beautiful", a creative process. Things previously disvalued, specifically those things disvalued because they are beyond our control, he bestows value upon.

Nietzsche is not insisting that everything is beautiful — that in revaluing necessity he longs to transform ugliness into beauty. For example, the pain of a migraine headache is not suddenly experienced as pleasurable, but that experiences of pain are recognized as a part of a valuable whole. In other words, suffering from migraine headaches are instances of ugliness in an otherwise beautiful life, and the beauty of the whole motivates Nietzsche to embrace, indeed say Yes!, to *all* the parts. It is the idea that everything — necessary, deliberate, contingent — has its place, and that we should see value in all of it. He writes, "I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers."⁹⁸ Let *looking away* be my only negation!" What Nietzsche can make beautiful, he loves; what he cannot make beautiful, he now desires to turn his head from without resentment. It is not so much an attitude of active indifference (perhaps understood in Stoic terms), it is the acceptance that the parts make a whole.

Two unpublished notes written during the same time period are instrumental in understanding how Nietzsche arrives at making this enlightened resolution. In the fall of 1881, *nachlass* 15[20]⁹⁹, he reasons from the initial claim that what is necessary/needed is

⁹⁸ Not wanting to 'accuse the accusers' may refer to his maturing views on the philosophy of Schopenhauer – from admiration, to criticism, and now beyond even that.

⁹⁹ Fall 1881, 15[20]: "Zuerst das Nöthige — und dies so schön und vollkommen als du kannst! "Liebe das, was nothwendig ist" — *amor fati* dies ware meine Moral, thue ihm alles Gute an und hebe es über seine schreckliche Herkunft hinauf zu dir." German text from TheNietzscheChannel.com.

beautiful, in fact “as perfect as you can get”, to the conclusion that, therefore, we ought to love what is necessary. The directive that we ought to love what is beautiful seems trivial; we are routinely attracted to beauty — in nature, in art, in people. However, it is unlikely that his reference to beauty is meant (exclusively) as aesthetic beauty, though I believe he does mean to evoke the same powerful emotion of *amour* that we feel in response to aesthetic beauty. Observing something beautiful is essentially, a means to our own pleasure, or happiness. Nietzsche’s claim is that what is *necessary*, is *itself* beautiful.¹⁰⁰ In this context, beauty is an attribute of value; what is beautiful is valuable in and of itself. It is possible, therefore, that something may lack aesthetic beauty — be it unattractive, unfortunate, or even painful — and yet be valuable. This seems to be what Nietzsche is getting at. Anything that occurs out of necessity, or necessarily is (i.e. things that cannot be any other way) has value, is beautiful – and ought to be loved with the same passion that we typically reserve for things of aesthetic beauty.

In a very brief reflection on Book IV of *The Gay Science* written in *Ecce Homo “The Gay Science”*, Nietzsche notes,

What here is called “highest hope”— who could have any doubt about that when he sees the diamond beauty of the first words of *Zarathustra* flashing at the end of the fourth book? — Or when at the end of the third book he reads the granite words in which a destiny finds for the first time a formula for itself, for *all time*?

“First what’s needed/necessary — and this as beautiful and perfect as you can! “Love that which is necessary” — *amor fati* would be my morality. Do it the best of favours, and lift it out of its horrific provenience/origins (where it came from) to you.” Translation, Mark Migotti.

¹⁰⁰ The distinction I’m hinting at is between purely aesthetic beauty as a means to pleasure, passion, happiness, etc. and beauty in itself as something of value in and of itself. The latter allows us to view as beautiful, things that are aesthetically unpleasing, or painful.

The 'highest hope' Nietzsche refers to in the fourth line of "*Sanctus Januarius*" ("Of its highest hope and goal") is to be understood as his aspirations for *amor fati*, that he believes are embodied in the character of Zarathustra and his first words to the sun (under the aphorism title "*Incipit Tragoedia*" – The Tragedy Begins). In the final eight short aphorisms of GS III (§268-§275), Nietzsche poses a number of questions and three stand out as particularly relevant to the important themes of GS IV. Facing the suffering of one's life, not trying to avoid it, is the primary driving force of *amor fati*, and is considered a heroic trait. The response to the question in §268 "*What makes one heroic? —*" reads, "Going out to meet at the same time one's highest suffering and one's highest hope." The heroic character type, particularly the tragic hero of Greek mythology, is viewed as someone strong enough to embrace his own fate. To love fate, with the inevitability of suffering, and replacing the prevailing belief that suffering is bad, requires a change in the settled belief. The response to §269, "*In what do you believe? —*" is "In this, that the weights of all things must be determined anew." And in §270, "*What does your conscience say? —*", Nietzsche responds, "You shall become the person you are" (mirroring the subtitle to the book *Ecce Homo*).

3.6 Eternal recurrence

Book IV, *The Gay Science* crucially opens and closes with the introduction of *amor fati* and eternal recurrence, respectively. The tight connection may not have been as obvious at the time, though. It was not until Nietzsche's more explicit description of *amor fati* in *Ecce Homo* "Why I am so Clever" §10 that Nietzsche's views were revealed more completely. Loving fate, he believes, is a way to the affirmation of life, and not wanting anything to be

different. "...[Y]ou do not want anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity." And, presumably, a natural consequence of this affirmation might be to acknowledge the possibility of living the same life again and again. (If you declare an enthusiastic 'yes' to this life, and don't want anything to be different, then the idea of living it again (and again) should be just fine).

With this in mind, returning to the penultimate aphorism of *The Gay Science*, book IV, §341 entitled "*The greatest weight*" draws our attention back full circle. The aphorism begins with what is often interpreted as a thought experiment. The reader is asked to consider how they might respond to the reality that their entire lives — down to the smallest detail — will repeat time, and time, and time again, an *eternal recurrence*. The thought experiment in its entirety is as follows:

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence — even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!"

Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence bears important differences from other theories of reincarnation. Plato's "Myth of *Er*" that ends book X of *The Republic* is a warning to readers of the way in which souls choose their new earthly incarnations. In Plato's version of recurrence, souls ultimately are free to choose their next lives (though it is not an easy task!) — lives are not predestined, and lives are not necessarily similar, let alone identical. In Buddhist reincarnation theories, souls return to earthly incarnations based on the balance of good or bad they brought about in their previous incarnations (karma). In

Buddhist versions of recurrence, souls lack the freedom to choose new lives (they are determined by past action/inaction), but they differ from previous lives according to new lessons to be learned. In both ancient Greek and Buddhist theories, the ultimate goal is to *escape* the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. According to Nietzsche's theory, there is no hope of escape from the cycle.¹⁰¹

In "The Makropulos case: reflections on the tedium of immortality" (1973), Bernard Williams addresses numerous issues and questions regarding immortality understood as an unending (physical) existence, immortality understood as an unending (spiritual) after life, and recurrent lives. The first two cases (of immortality) focus on how to stave off what he takes to be inevitable boredom. The finite nature of life — that it ends — can, in fact, be considered to bestow its meaning. "Immortality, or a state without death, would be meaningless, I shall suggest; so, in a sense, death gives the meaning to life." (1) Though this conclusion is, I think, most obviously true of physical immortality (Williams draws on the case of Elina Makropulos, but it is also common in the vampire stories of popular culture — the older the vampire becomes, the more they long for death), the same is also true of spiritual immortality. "What is it about the imaged activities of an eternal life" he asks, "which would stave off the principle hazard to which EM succumbed, boredom." (12) The point is to question the ease in which a model for what an unending, yet satisfied, life might look like. The "Don Juan in Hell" joke reinforces this point — an eternity in heaven is bound to be boring, but hell is much more amusing.

¹⁰¹ See Bernard Williams, "The Makropulos case: reflections on the tedium of immortality" *Problems of the Self*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1973.

The idea of *recurrent* lives fares somewhat better in Williams' estimation. Recurrent lives have the benefit of finite physical existence, thus may have meaning and avoid boredom, but still raise interesting questions of personal identity and continuity. On the one hand, if individuals do not know their lives recur (therefore lacking anticipation), and there is no continuity of memories or awareness of enduring character traits (elements of the self that define identity), then each life will reasonably be considered the only life and no real problems arise. On the other hand, knowing that lives recur raises the question of how to account for the continuity of identity across physical breaks. And indeed a common thread to most stories of recurrence, including Plato's "Myth of *Er*" and Buddhist reincarnation, is the ultimate aim *not* to recur — that the cycle of existence ends. "It is singular that those systems of belief that get closest to actually accepting recurrence of this sort seem, almost without exception, to look forward to the point when one will be released from it." (11) To reiterate the point in another way, he continues "Such systems seem less interested in continuing one's life than in *earning* one the right to a superior sort of death" (11-12, emphasis added). This idea of *earning* a "superior sort of death" makes Nietzsche's eternal recurrence even harder to accept: not only do our lives recur endlessly, we have no possibility of earning nor deserving, release.¹⁰²

¹⁰² An interesting question would be how Nietzsche might respond to the "objection from tedium" on his account. Though the demon tells us our lives will recur in their smallest details, he treats this declaration as a unfamiliar provocation which suggests we have no memory of the last time the demon visited us, so won't remember his words when our lives recur. Perhaps Nietzsche's new exemplar possesses unique character traits that serve to alleviate boredom. Some questions similar to those raised by Williams concerning the continuity of personal identity between life recurrences is discussed in Garry M. Brodsky's "Nietzsche's notion of *amor fati*" (1998) though he never references Williams' work.

Though many eschatological stories of reincarnation, salvation, and ultimate escape are meant to be in some sense comforting to believers, Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence is not. It is meant to terrify readers, to challenge their beliefs — a compelling reason to interpret the aphorism as a type of thought experiment. How would you react if the demon visited you one night, and what the demon had to say was true? On the one hand, Nietzsche asks, "Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus?" (GS IV, §342) The most terrifying thought, indeed the *greatest weight* in our lifetimes, would be the awareness that *each* action, *each* experience, *each* moment of pain would recur time and time again. This thought, Nietzsche believes, would be extremely difficult to accept. "The question in each and every thing, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight." (GS IV, §342)

On the other hand, Nietzsche considers that not everyone will react with terror gnashing their teeth, but that some individuals may even welcome the demon's proclamation. "Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine."" (GS IV, §342) This exuberant reaction, though, seems more a case of lucky timing than it does a settled belief. If the demon comes to you during a period of health, success, or even contentment, then the thought that that happiness will recur eternally would be comforting, not terrifying as it would be if the demon visits during a period of sorrow, pain, or hardship. However, given Nietzsche's commitment to the inevitability of suffering in life, and the

important role it plays, even if the demon catches you in a good moment, it is not merely the joyous that will repeat eternally.

Nietzsche's primary interest in the demon's proclamation of eternal recurrence is not, ultimately to scare us or delight us with the theory that our lives repeat in every detail for eternity — it is not a provocative thought experiment Nietzsche uses to unsettle his readers (though it may certainly have that effect!). Having begun *The Gay Science* book IV with his personal resolution to love fate, he is now, at the end of book IV asking what type of person (what psychological type of person) would be strong enough to love their fate enough to will it recur eternally. "How well disposed", he writes "would you have to become to yourself and to life to *crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?" (GS IV, §342) This interpretation of Nietzsche's interest in eternal recurrence is brought into sharper focus when we understand the significance of *amor fati* in this picture of life and suffering.

PART THREE: A destiny realized

Wonder! Does he still fly?
He soars, and yet his wings are still?
What buoys him up so high?
What are his goal, his way, his will?

Timeless now and starry,
He lives at heights that life seeks to avoid;
For envy he feels sorry —
And high soar all who merely see him buoyed.

O albatross, I'm swept
Up high, by an eternal impulse spurred:
I thought of you and wept
Tear upon tear — I love you, noble bird!

“Declaration of Love” (*Liebeserklärung*)
Friedrich Nietzsche (1887)¹⁰³

¹⁰³ The full title of the poem “Declaration of Love (In the course of which the poet fell into a pit)” included in the Appendix of the second edition of *The Gay Science*. The poem in German is included in Appendix II of this thesis.

Chapter 4 A formula for greatness: 1888

My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity...
- *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am So Clever" §10

The years following the publication of *The Gay Science* were particularly tumultuous and intense for Nietzsche. During the summer of 1882, his tone in correspondence remained positive, and in a letter to Overbeck he writes, "A mass of my vital secrets is involved in this *new* future, and I still have tasks to solve, which can only be solved by action. Also, I am in a mood of fatalistic "surrender to God" — I call it *amor fati* ..." (Middleton, 184) Nietzsche's juxtaposition of 'active solutions' with 'fatalistic surrender' — indeed, a 'surrender to God' — is striking; surely surrendering to God is the last thing we would expect from the philosopher who so vigorously proclaimed the death of God in that very same year. One way of understanding what may be going on is to remember a point noted already in Nietzsche's schoolboy essays: the fact that limitations may be either constraining or enabling. In order actively to move forward in and with his life, Nietzsche needs to accept his own personal fate, and that fate is manifestly bound up with the fate of the Christian God, whether He exists or not!

Yet as difficult as Nietzsche's personal circumstances were between 1883 and 1888, it was also a period of great intellectual productivity. To begin with he wrote and published what he himself thought to be his masterpiece *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885), followed with *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), widely agreed to be the best single volume

summation of Nietzsche's mature thought. In 1887 he wrote an extensive fifth book to *The Gay Science*, the work in which of course *amor fati* had been introduced, and wrote (in about two months) and published *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Perhaps surprisingly *amor fati* is not mentioned by name in any of these works. But in 1888, his last year of sanity, and a year of furious productivity — in these twelve month he wrote *The Case of Wagner*, *Twilight of the Idols* (Jun-Sep), *The Anti-Christ* (Sep), and *Ecce Homo* (Oct), and compiled excerpts from his previous works into a short volume called *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* (Nov) — *amor fati* returns to the page; and does so very prominently. No longer simply a personal resolution as it was in *The Gay Science* §276, *amor fati* is now emblematic of: Nietzsche's "innermost nature" (NCW "Epilogue", §1), "human greatness" (EH "Why I Am So Clever", §10) in general and perhaps the most tellingly "the highest state a philosopher can attain" (WP, §1041).

Whereas in 1882, *amor fati* represented, for Nietzsche, a personal aspiration — a way for him to deal with the difficult circumstances of his own life, to view the hardship and suffering as necessary components of his destiny as an innovative and brave thinker — in 1888 he raises *amor fati* to much greater heights. In this chapter I set out to chart the significance of this change in attitude in the way Nietzsche views himself, a change largely in part due to his adoption of loving (his) fate. In the first subsection I take a brief (much briefer than previous) look at the short five years between the publication of *The Gay Science* (and the introduction of *amor fati* by name) and the texts published in his last productive year (and indeed post-humously in the case of *Ecce Homo* and the collection of unpublished notes *The Will to Power*).

In the rest of this chapter, I examine in detail certain aphorisms from the first two books of *Ecce Homo* (“Why I Am So Clever” and “Why I Am So Wise”) and its final book (“Why I Am Destiny”). These aphorisms shed light on how Nietzsche has successfully used and incorporated loving fate into his philosophy. In line with ideas on Schopenhauer’s acquired character Nietzsche highlights the ways in which he has turned the circumstances of his life to advantage. In subsections three and four, I show the bearing of *amor fati* on Nietzsche’s claim to be the first immoralist, and the first tragic philosopher, and in subsections five and six I articulate what Nietzsche means when he says *amor fati* is his “formula for human greatness”.

4.1 Turin

Yet again, Nietzsche experiences poor health and low spirits. Almost immediately having published his commitment to *amor fati*, he experiences an extraordinary test of his ability to truly love his fate. In March 1882 his friend Paul Rée introduced him to Lou Andreas-Salomé, a Russian émigré artist and intellectual, and by May Nietzsche had proposed marriage to Lou. Once again he was spurned. In a letter dated mid-December 1882, addressed to them both, Nietzsche wrote, “Friend Rée, ask Lou to forgive me everything — she will give me an opportunity to forgive her too. For till now I have not forgiven her. It is harder to forgive one’s friends than one’s enemies”. (Middleton, 198)¹⁰⁴ Soon after,

¹⁰⁴ Middleton collection of letters, #108, p198. This version is a “fragment”. A more complete version of the letter is available on “The Nietzsche Source” (in German, dated Dec20/82) <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/BVN-1882,360>. Further, a questionable English translation is available on “The Nietzsche Channel”

Nietzsche expressed his deep emotional torment to Overbeck (dated December 25, 1882), “This last morsel of life was the hardest I have yet to chew, and it is still possible that I shall choke on it. I have suffered from the humiliating and tormenting memories of this summer as from a bout of madness...” (Middleton, 198-199) And finally, in a letter to Rée dated late in December, Nietzsche complained that Salomé had been deceitful and compromised his life’s work, describing her as a “superficial and immorally frivolous and soulless creature”.¹⁰⁵

A series of letters written to Overbeck between February 1883 and April 1884 are particularly telling. “I will not conceal it from you, I am in a bad way. It is night all around me again, I feel as if the lightning had flashed — I was for a short time completely in my element and in my light. And now it has passed.” He finished, “I think I shall inevitably go to pieces, unless something happens...” (Middleton, 206). Early 1883 was, of course, not long after the relationship breakup with Rée and Salomé — a time certain to challenge even the most resilient commitment to a new life path. It is a time of great hardship for Nietzsche, where no aspect of his life escapes his negative assessment. In March 1883 he wrote, “I forgo and suffer too much, and have come to comprehend, beyond all comprehension, the deficiency, the mistakes, and the real disasters of my whole past intellectual life.” (Middleton, 210) According to his correspondence, this bleak outlook stayed with Nietzsche throughout the next two years he wrote *Zarathustra* — the tone of his letters

<http://www.thenietzschechannel.com/correspondence/eng/nlett-1882.htm>. This last (translated) version includes Nietzsche’s questioning Lou’s credibility – and that she’d deceived his trust.

¹⁰⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Briefe Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA Briefe), Vol. 6. Berlin/New York: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag/deGruyter, 1986, 310. Translation, Mark Migotti.

expressing deep personal sadness and physical pain intermittently contrasted with nervous anticipation of how his latest project would be received. And in April 1884 he wrote, “I have decided to spend the next five years on an elaboration of my “philosophy,” the portico of which I have built in my *Zarathustra*”. (Middleton, 223)

4.2 Amor fati: Nietzsche’s destiny

In *Ecce Homo* (“EH”), the personal narrative is explicit. The tone is one of self-admiration. In §10 of “Why I am So Clever”, Nietzsche writes “My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that you do not want anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just to tolerate necessity, still less to conceal it — all idealism is hypocrisy towards necessity —, but to *love* it.”¹⁰⁶ Here, in EH, Nietzsche presented the idea of *amor fati* more clearly, more simplistically. To love your fate is to embrace the circumstances of your life *as it is*. Loving your fate means not wanting *any* aspect of your life to be different than how it is – or that anything in your history be any different. Not wanting your history to be any different is interesting in that this idea suggests (consistent with the student essays) that you acknowledge the influence of external forces on your character (psychological temperament) — that they have made you who you are, and this in turn plays a key role in how you react to the circumstances of your life.

¹⁰⁶ As opposed to, for example, merely “accepting it”, the contrast is famously illustrated by an exchange between the transcendentalist Margaret Fuller and Thomas Carlyle (contemporaries of Emerson): “I accept the universe; Gad, you’d better!” <https://www.enotes.com/topics/thomas-carlyle/quotes>

The focus of “Clever” (EH, II) is predominantly on the importance of the details in a life, such as nutrition (§1), climate (§2), and choice of personal recreation (§3) — in other words, what Nietzsche considers the application of practical intelligence to daily life. In all cases, these aspects of life can be either healthy or unhealthy, and his discourse is proudly autobiographical that his intellectual successes are mainly due to his ‘cleverness’ — his ability to see and understand the importance of these practical details – though he admits these insights had come to him later in life. “My experiences in this matter are as bad as possible; I am amazed how late I heard this question, how late I learned “reason” from these experiences”, he wrote in §1. Blaming his formal German education, he continued, “This “education” which teaches one from the start to ignore *realities* and to pursue so-called “ideal” goals...”.

Despite Nietzsche’s late lessons, the groundwork for being able to come to such realizations was laid early in life. ““God,” “immortality of the soul,” “redemption,” “beyond” — without exception, concepts to which I never devoted any attention, or time; not even as a child.” (EH, II, §1) As early as the 1864 student essays discussed in chapter 1 he wrote critically of such Christian ideals. “I am much more interested in a question on which the “salvation of humanity” depends far more than on any theologians’ curio: the question of nutrition.” What occupied the young scholar’s curiosity, was much more the conditions for human life, for human excellence — not the conditions for a spiritual afterlife. Even so, Nietzsche was not able to break away completely from the prevailing influences.

Indeed, till I reached a very mature age I always ate badly: morally speaking, “impersonally,” “selflessly,” “altruistically” — for the benefit of cooks and other fellow Christians. By means of Leipzig *cuisine*, for example, I very earnestly denied my “will to life” at the time when I first read Schopenhauer (1865).

Here Nietzsche is playing with the terms 'nutrition' and 'cuisine'. In the most practical sense, a healthy diet and nutrition is essential for life (in the same sense as blood being an essential life force). If we eat badly, or not at all, we physically die. But he is also writing about the ideas that feed intellectual curiosity — likewise, if you *eat* badly (if you dedicate your intellectual energy to false ideas, or entrenched prejudices), your intellectual life dies. Being 'clever' means knowing which foods promote health and life, or serve to hinder health and life.

The same goes for the geographical location and climate you live in, and your choice of recreational activities. Living in certain climates can not only harm your physical health, but also hinder intellectual growth. Likewise with recreation. Nietzsche described how reading books was for him, a recreation — not simply because it was a pastime he enjoyed, but because he kept it separate from his intellectual work of writing. "Reading is precisely my recreation from my own seriousness. During periods when I am hard at work you will not find me surrounded by books: I'd beware of letting anyone near me talk, much less think. And that's what reading would mean." (§3)¹⁰⁷

Nietzsche's focus on the details of life, and having the cleverness to know which options are healthy or unhealthy for life (physical and intellectual) ran through the entire book. It is significant that he ends the chapter with the point that *amor fati* is his formula for human greatness. There is an important distinction to be made here. These choices (regarding daily living) that Nietzsche claimed made him clever are distinct from his

¹⁰⁷ "Should I permit an alien thought to scale the wall secretly? — And that is what reading would mean." (§3)

personal fate (the fated aspects of his character) — akin to Schopenhauer's *acquired* character discussed in chapter 2. For Schopenhauer, self-knowledge allows an individual to more efficiently express their empirical (or determined) character, and for Nietzsche here the idea is similar. Nietzsche considers himself clever because he knows, and embraces, his personal fate, allowing him to make the best choices regarding how to live most powerfully (and freely) within the limitations of fate.¹⁰⁸

Nietzsche discussed the fatality of human existence in more detail in *Twilight of the Idols* "The Four Great Errors" §8. "What is the only teaching we can have? — That no one *gives* people their qualities, not God or society, parents or ancestors, not even *people themselves*." His denial of self-creation especially targets the notion of the 'intelligible character' common to Kant and Schopenhauer (and even possibly Plato's eschatological account). This denial is the same as his earlier rejection of metaphysical freedom in *Beyond Good and Evil* §19. Though the point is, as it was in the earlier text, the denial of moral responsibility — in *Beyond Good and Evil* our desire to relieve all influence but our selves from responsibility, and in this case, to reject the notion that anybody is responsible for anyone else's existence. And in *Twilight of the Idols*, we owe our existence, according to Nietzsche, to the existence of the whole. "The fatality of human existence cannot be extricated from the fatality of everything that was and will be. People are not the products of some special design, will, or purpose..." (TI, "Errors" §8)

¹⁰⁸ Also the recurring idea that limitation can be constraining or enabling (first seen in the context of the strict routine at Pforta (chapter 1)).

The view of fate presented in *Twilight* represents an interesting departure from his discussion of fate and character in his early student essays. Where then he took a very Emersonian approach to fate, now his view takes on an almost stoic tone. “A person is necessary, a person is a piece of fate, a person belongs to the whole, a person only is in the context of the whole....”¹⁰⁹ The unsettling message in these words, is that, outside of the Christian context, we have no individual or special purpose. But recalling the lessons from Schopenhauer’s *acquired* character, perhaps Nietzsche’s lesson to us is that this self-knowledge is somehow liberating.

Nietzsche returns to the point of the usefulness of difficult circumstances in the epilogue of *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, again emphasizing his personal story. In the first aphorism he wrote,

What my innermost nature tells me is that everything necessary, seen from above and in the sense of a *great* economy, is also useful in itself, — it should not just be tolerated, it should be loved ... *Amor fati*: that is my innermost nature. — *And as far as my long infirmity is concerned, isn't it the case that I am unspeakably more indebted to it than I am to my health?* (Emphasis added)

Here, Nietzsche is directly referring to his own life, and to his own achievement of loving his fate as playing a valuable role in his achievements. Due to his personal history (genetics, heredity, early lifestyle) he was fated with ill health. He suffered terrible migraines — a devastating affliction for someone who relied on clarity of thought to work. Rather than indulging in self-pity, or resenting colleagues for their good health, or the deep

¹⁰⁹ Nietzsche finishes the aphorism, “The concept of ‘God’ has been the biggest objection to existence so far ... We reject God, we reject the responsibility in God: this is how we begin to redeem the world. —” (TI “Errors” §8)

longing to overcome his illness (to be cured)¹¹⁰ — as those with weak wills might be inclined — Nietzsche, himself *strong-willed*, accepted the necessity of his dire circumstances and indeed credits them for his success. In the closing words of the cited passage, he acknowledged that he was “indebted” to his poor health — that his fate in fact made him who he was, and what he accomplished. I think the suggestion we can take Nietzsche to be making in this final thought is that had he been fated differently, had he been of good health instead, that he may have accepted his circumstances unreflectively and never been challenged to achieve the depth of thought that he clearly attributed to himself. He may in fact, have remained in the herd.

Nietzsche does seem to have thought that there is more to be gained by accepting hard, or negative, circumstances, for what they are and what they can bring, than acceptance of the good. “Only great pain is the final liberator of the spirit...” he wrote in the epilogue (*Nietzsche Contra Wagner*). The justification for Nietzsche, it seemed, was that when someone is in pain, is ill, is in dire circumstance, they have two choices: they can blame, resent, lament, rue their lot in life; or they can recognize the necessity of the circumstances and use it to achieve something much greater. Only those facing such a difficult fate have this choice to make. Nietzsche’s suggestion may have been that only those individuals have the opportunity for achieving the insight and strength required to succeed. Someone born with all the privileges in life simply has no reason to question their fate, or reflect on their circumstances. This is similar to the point discussed in chapter 2

¹¹⁰ Or a passive acceptance of circumstances as the will of God.

that only those in the depths of grief can truly put into practice Schopenhauer's pessimism.¹¹¹

The thread of this idea regarding character is also found in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, I, §13. In this important passage, Nietzsche drew a distinction between two character types: masters (nobles) and slaves, represented by birds of prey, and lambs. For Nietzsche, master, or noble, types exemplified strength and power, yet they did so unreflectively. They exercised power simply because they could, that it was just what they did. They commanded, they demanded obedience, but felt no ill will towards their inferiors — in fact they loved their inferiors. Because things just worked this way for them, they never had to deeply investigate or criticize their history, their fate, why would they? The slaves, lambs, on the other hand were resentful of the power of the masters, and their relative weakness (their badness). But the slaves had one thing the masters did not: they were clever. They were able to invert the prevailing values and reinterpret the relational dynamic. Rather than being weak, and bad, their characters, their fates, were good and the nobles become evil.¹¹²

I introduce the idea of cleverness in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, because it is perhaps of great interest that Nietzsche titles a chapter in EH “Why I am So Clever” in the first place.¹¹³ Nietzsche was clever, he thought, above all because he had learnt the importance of *amor fati*. Recall for Nietzsche, that *amor fati*, involved, importantly, the

¹¹¹ From the 1866 letter to von Gersdorff.

¹¹² The discussion of Nietzsche's ‘masters’ and ‘nobles’ in GM I, §13 is of deep philosophical interest and beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹¹³ ‘Clever’ in German ‘*klug*’ meaning perhaps more accurately ‘prudence’ or ‘practical intelligence’.

elevation of “hitherto denied” sides of existence. It is cleverness that enabled the slaves to use their resentment (their desire to be other? Or that they are not other?) to invert prevailing values of unreflective power. It is at least possible, I think, that in this final work of Nietzsche’s (as he reflected on an intellectual life slipping away), that *he* was clever in his acceptance, indeed love, of fate and the adoption of that new attitude towards life enabled *him* to invert (reinvert) the prevailing values of his time – those of the slaves (Christian morality). He wrote,

This is exactly where people have to start *re-educating* themselves. The things that humanity used to think seriously about are not even realities, just figments of the imagination or, to put it more strongly, *lies* from the bad instincts of sick natures who were harmful in the deepest sense — ... (EH, “Clever” §10)

I think that it may be the affects of, for example, guilt, envy, resentment, pity, ... etc. that Nietzsche considers as part of the ‘bad instincts of sick natures’ — the instincts and emotions that became prevalent as part of Christian doctrine.

In a different section of *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am So Wise” Nietzsche discussed the connection between resentment, illness, freedom, and fate. Aphorism six begins, “Freedom from *ressentiment*, lucidity about *ressentiment* — who knows how much I ultimately have to thank my long sickness for these as well!” Sickness, Nietzsche explained, is itself a form of resentment. The sick are weak, have lost their instinct for healing, and are bothered by all manner of intrusions. The only remedy, according to Nietzsche, is ‘Russian fatalism’ – an instinct for survival akin to hibernation. Nietzsche ends the aphorism describing his own experience,

At that time, I took mortal offence at any attempt to disturb me in this fatalism, to snap me out of it: — which would in fact have been mortally

dangerous as well. — To accept yourself as a fate, not to want to ‘change’ yourself — in situations like this, that is *reason par excellence*. (“Wise”, §6)

This train of thought regarding fate was echoed in *Twilight of the Idols* “Morality as Anti-Nature” (§6).

An individual is a piece of fate, from the front and from the back; an individual is one more law, one more necessity imposed on everything that is coming and going to be. To say to an individual: ‘change yourself’ mean demanding that everything change, even retroactively... And in fact there are been consistent moralists who wanted people to be different, namely, virtuous, who wanted to have people in their own image, which is that of an idiot: and to this end they negated the world!

Our personal natures, as fated, are beyond our control. This view of the tight connection between fate and character Nietzsche has held since his student days reading Emerson. Morality, specifically morality derived from Christian doctrine, he thought sought to make people responsible for their natures — and indeed punish them for not changing. However, to require change at such a fundamental level, is according to Nietzsche a demand to change entire personal histories. This is a point that goes all the way back to his first student essay “Fate and History: Thoughts”, and was also prominent in his doctrine of eternal recurrence. Nietzsche viewed nature holistically, as intricately entwined, and to change one piece was to essentially change the whole. He saw, then, morality as making demands inconsistent with human nature and the natural world.

If morality in some important sense ‘negates the world’ by demanding that people be responsible for changing their natures, Nietzsche saw himself as an “immoralist” — an individual who rejected the call for change (in the name of receiving an otherworldly reward). “But we who are different, we immoralists, have opened our hearts to all types of

understanding, comprehension, *approval*. We do not negate easily, we stake our honour on being *affirmative*.” (TI, “Morality as Anti-Nature”, §6)

4.3 The first *immoralist*

Nietzsche credits himself with being the first to recognize the important truths regarding the future immoralists and how they differ from the decadents of morality. Nietzsche began *Ecce Homo* with a self-dedication of sorts:

On this perfect day, when everything is ripening and not only the grape turns brown, the eye of the sun just fell upon my life: I looked back, I looked forward, and never saw so many and such good things at once. It was not for nothing that I buried my forty-fourth year today; I had the *right* to bury it; whatever was life in it has been saved, is immortal..... *How could I fail to be grateful to my whole life?* — and so I tell my life to myself.

Written during the last few months of mental health¹¹⁴, and not published until long after his death, *Ecce Homo* represented for Nietzsche the telling of his story — his own personal reflection of his life and his life’s work — what he took his achievements to be, his mature critiques of his texts, and how he hoped his work (his philosophical contributions) would be understood. “Have I been understood?” he asks in the closing sentence of the book “ — *Dionysus versus the Crucified* — “ (“Destiny” §9). One can only assume that this short, pithy statement, said it all. The focal point of Nietzsche’s life’s work can be reduced to the struggle between the creative destruction and affirmation of life in a Greek sense, and the settled life-denying doctrines inherent in Christianity. In §1052 of *The Will To Power*, entitled: *The two types: Dionysus and the Crucified* Nietzsche contemplated the ‘types’ of

¹¹⁴ I reject the critique that EH reveals declining mental health.

religious man and the meaning of suffering. The Christian meaning, suffering as the crucified (innocent), served as an objection to life; while the tragic meaning served as an affirmation. “The tragic man affirms even the harshest suffering... Dionysus cut to pieces is a *promise* of life.”

The final book of *Ecce Homo*, “Why I Am a Destiny” begins,

I know my fate. One day my name will be associated with the memory of something tremendous — a crisis without equal on earth, the most profound collision of conscience, a decision that was conjured up against everything that had been believed, demanded, hallowed so far. I am no man, I am dynamite.

Nietzsche’s use of the term ‘fate’ in this context “I know my fate” explicitly referred to (what he took to be) his intellectual legacy — that he was, and is, destined to be the first one to discover and embody an important truth; an important truth that he believed was revealed in his books, that would hopefully be understood by a select (few) readers. “...But my truth is terrible” he warned. “It is my fate that I have to be the first *decent* human being; that I know myself to stand in opposition to the mendaciousness of millennia. — I was the first to *discover* the truth by being the first to experience lies as lies...”.

The formula for such a man, Nietzsche wrote, is to be found in Zarathustra – Nietzsche’s exemplar for his Dionysian morality. “And whoever wants to be a creator in good and evil, must first be an annihilator and break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to the greatest goodness: but this is — being creative.” (EH, “Destiny”, §2)¹¹⁵ Nietzsche believed that *he himself* was the perfect exemplar of Zarathustra on earth.

I know the pleasure in destroying to a degree that accords with my powers to destroy — in both respects I obey my Dionysian nature which

¹¹⁵ In “*Zarathustra* II, “On Self-Overcoming”.

does not know how to separate doing No from saying Yes. I am the first immoralist: that makes me the annihilator *par excellence*.

Aphorism three ends with a question Nietzsche repeats throughout the “Destiny” section: “Am I understood? — The self-overcoming of morality, out of truthfulness; the self-overcoming of the moralist, into his opposite — into me — that is what the name of Zarathustra means in my mouth.”

The key aphorism in “Why I Am a Destiny” (§4) begins,

Fundamentally, my term immoralist involves two negations. For one, I negate a type of man that has so far been considered supreme: the good, the benevolent, the beneficent. And then I negate a type of morality that has become prevalent and predominant as morality itself — the morality of decadence or, more concretely, *Christian* morality.

Nietzsche’s call for the negation of the ‘good’ man was not directed at the commoners, or the herd, but at the moral exemplar, who had hitherto been upheld as the Christian ideal. Our ethical outlook is coloured by exemplars. We determine the moral value of an action in part by how well it agrees with what ‘saintly’ exemplars would do — how individual characters are expressed through traits such as altruism, compassion, pity, etc. And it’s not simply Christian ideals that Nietzsche was taking aim at — Schopenhauer’s morality of compassion was another example of the foundation Nietzsche believed needed to change. These moralists, Nietzsche thought, were lazy — that they could avoid following an independent (and possibly more difficult) path — these other-serving traits allowed people to hide behind serving others. By contrast, the immoralist exemplar was distinguished by individuality, creativity, and strength. To force a change in exemplars is to negate the prevailing morality (the second negation).

Of primary importance, Nietzsche believed, was the second contradiction (the type of *morality*) discussed above. The first contradiction, the traits of man to be overcome, such as “goodness” and “benevolence” were a mere consequence of prevailing morality — of a particularly *decadent* morality. These “supreme traits”, he believed, were a “symptom of weakness”, and “irreconcilable with an ascending, Yes-saying life: negating and destroying are conditions of saying Yes.”

The aphorism continued with a study of the psychology of the good human being (as traditionally understood). In order to determine the worth of psychological ‘types’, it was necessary to determine the conditions of existence.

The condition of the existence of the good is the *lie*: put differently, not wanting to see at any price how reality is constituted fundamentally — namely not in such a way as to elicit benevolent instincts at all times, and even less in such a way as to tolerate at all times the interference of those who are myopically good-natured.

Nietzsche continued to criticize the focus on the good,

To consider distress of all kinds as an objection, as something that must be abolished, is the *niaiserie par excellence* and, on a large scale, a veritable disaster in its consequences, a nemesis of stupidity — almost as stupid as would be the desire to abolish bad weather — say, from pity for poor people.

Nietzsche’s main point, one often-repeated, was that when the masses unreflectively accept suffering, distress, hardship as states of affairs to be alleviated, or eliminated (as seen for example with Christian directives towards pity and salvation), they are actually giving in to a nihilistic (or life-denying) view of reality. He taunted that this desire to do away with hardship (understood broadly) was ultimately silly, or even stupid — as would be the desire to eliminate bad weather (an unchangeable natural force) in situations where people suffered as a consequence.

Nietzsche was careful to contextualize our admiration of hardship not as good in itself, or beneficial in itself,¹¹⁶ but as a necessary part of something larger. “In the great economy of the whole, the terrible aspects of reality (in affects, in desires, in the will to power) are to an incalculable degree more necessary than the form of petty happiness which people call “goodness”....” He believed that the ability to overcome hardships, to acknowledge that perhaps experiences of suffering indeed builds strength of character, was simply part of what makes people who they are. The aphorism ends,

The good are unable to create; they are always the beginning of the end; they crucify him who writes new values on new tablets; they sacrifice the future to themselves — they sacrifice all man’s futures. “The good have always been the beginning of the end.

According to Nietzsche, the ‘good’ type of human being, by contrast, wanted to alleviate suffering in all forms, they failed to see how hardship builds character (self-overcoming), and were in that sense ‘uncreative’. The distinction that he was trying to draw out is that between different modes of suffering: the classical romantic suffering, the cliché of superficiality; and the deeper and more meaningful stoic suffering. The ‘good’ type desire comfort, and the absence of discomfort (in all forms) — preferring what I have described elsewhere (chapter 3) as a static way of living. Nietzsche’s assertion that the ‘good’ represent the ‘beginning of the end’ was indicative of a declining culture — that lack of fluidity, lack of creativity, leads to stagnation rather than progress. And in fact, the ‘death of God’ in *The Gay Science* was indicative of the beginning of a new rising up — a restorative time of letting go and preparing to move forward.

¹¹⁶ Nietzsche is critical of the ‘in itself’ in general – a metaphysical reality supported by German idealists (Kant and Schopenhauer in particular).

In the third aphorism of “Why I Write Such Good Books”, Nietzsche described what he considered were the traits of a perfect reader. “When I imagine a perfect reader, he always turns into a monster of courage and curiosity; moreover supple, cunning, cautious; a born adventurer and discoverer.” This description of a perfect reader stood in stark contrast to the traits of the ‘good’ (moral) character. A perfect reader understood Nietzsche. Understood that Nietzsche was calling for a new character type — the ‘*Übermensch*’. He thought, though, that he had been misunderstood on this point. That his readers had understood this new character type as an ‘idealistic’ man: ideally good, or a higher type. What he meant was the opposite — that the ‘*Übermensch*’ represented “the designation of a type of supreme achievement, as opposed to “modern” men, to “good” men, to Christians and other nihilists.” The ‘*Übermensch*’ was an immoralist, and Nietzsche thought himself to be the first exemplar. “Have I been understood?”, he asked repeatedly....

4.4 The first *tragic philosopher*

Nietzsche’s reflections on *The Birth of Tragedy* in *Ecce Homo* are significant to my discussion in two ways: looking back, he took himself to be an intellectual leader in seeing, for the first time, the “real opposition” with respect to the question of whether life was worth living; and as the champion of “tragic wisdom” in philosophy. Both insights bear directly on Nietzsche’s ideas of *amor fati* and eternal recurrence — in fact laying the intellectual framework for his practical philosophy introduced in *The Gay Science* (though it is not clear that he recognized the significance of this contribution until he was writing *Ecce Homo*).

The two insights to which Nietzsche attributed to himself in EH, “BT” §2 are “the phenomenon of the Dionysian” and “seeing morality itself as a symptom of decadence” (the surrender to unhealthy instincts). These insights, he believed, represented an important leap from the traditional opposition of pessimism vs optimism. For him, the real opposition was between the *denial of this life* (as represented by Christianity, and Schopenhauer) vs the *affirmation of this life* (as represented by Greek culture¹¹⁷).

I was the first to see the real opposition: the degenerating instinct that turns against life with subterranean vengefulness (Christianity, the philosophy of Schopenhauer, in a certain sense already the philosophy of Plato, and all of idealism as typical forms) versus a formula for the highest affirmation, born of fullness, of overfullness, a Yes-saying without reservation, even to suffering, even to guilt, *even to everything that is questionable and strange in existence*. (emphasis added) (EH, “BT” §2)

What Nietzsche had in mind when he wrote of the opposition between life-denying and life-affirming was essentially the rejection of metaphysical value in favour of the realities of life. Nay-saying (pessimism of weakness and nihilism — that life in itself is *not* worth living) involves the repudiation of many aspects of life traditionally devalued, in favour of otherworldly value (such as God, immortality, eternity, etc).

Nothing in existence may be subtracted, nothing is indispensable — those aspects of existence which Christians and other nihilists repudiate are actually on an infinitely higher level in the order of rank among values than that which the instinct of decadence could approve and call good. (EH, “BT” §2)

Being able to flip the order rank of values in this way, Nietzsche believed, required great courage and strength. “Knowledge, saying Yes to reality, is just as necessary for the

¹¹⁷ NB – not ALL Greek culture – Heraclitus, heros, tragedy, etc., not Platonic ideals or even Socratic dialogue.

strong as cowardice and the flight from reality — as the “ideal” is for the weak, who are inspired by weakness.” “They are not free to know: the decadents need the lie — it is one of the conditions of their preservation.”

This revaluation of values and understanding there to be a higher opposition than the traditional pessimism versus optimism, Nietzsche took to be reminiscent of ancient Greek tragedy – a Dionysian approach to the affirmation of life.

Saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life rejoicing over its own inexhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of its highest types — that is what I called Dionysian, that is what I understood as the bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet. (EH, “BT” §3)

This *tragic wisdom*, of comprehending the value of the Dionysian and its philosophical importance, Nietzsche believed to be lacking in his time. “In this sense I have the right to understand myself as the first *tragic philosopher* — that is the most extreme opposite and antipode of a pessimistic philosopher.” Embracing this intellectual opposition also put Nietzsche’s philosophy in direct opposition to Schopenhauer’s.

The origin of *tragic wisdom*, Nietzsche suggested, predated even the *great* Greeks (two centuries before Socrates). “The affirmation of passing away and destroying, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; saying Yes to opposition and war; becoming, along with a radical repudiation of the very concept of being — all this is clearly more closely related to me than anything else thought to date.” (EH, “BT” §3)

The doctrine of the “eternal recurrence,” that is, of the unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course of all things — this doctrine of Zarathustra *might* in the end have been taught already by Heraclitus. At least the Stoa has traces of it, and the Stoics inherited almost all of their principal notions from Heraclitus. (EH, “BT” §3)

4.5 How to love (your own) fate

In book IV of *The Will to Power* entitled “Discipline and Breeding”, Nietzsche made the grand claim that “The highest state a philosopher can attain: to stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence — my formula for this is *amor fati*.” (§1041, “*My new path to a “Yes”*”). The formula consisted in coming to terms with two main critical ideas. The first was perceiving the necessity of the opposing forces in life that have been “hitherto denied” and determining their desirability, not merely in relation to the forces that have been affirmed, but also on their own merit. Similar to Nietzsche’s criticism of strict opposition of values in the first section of *Beyond Good and Evil* “On the Prejudices of Philosophers” (§2), the point being made here was that in matched pairs such as good/evil, free/unfree, healthy/unhealthy, useful/harmful, ... etc. we (society) affirm the positive value — goodness and freedom — while devaluing, or denying, the oppositional value. Nietzsche believed that we have this backwards; that our human progression (development) depended on criticizing this deeply engrained tendency to deny the oppositional force he thought were necessary, and to embrace the significance of the “hitherto denied” which were valuable “for their own sake, as the more powerful, more fruitful, truer sides of existence, in which its will finds clearer expression”. (WP §1041)

If the first critical idea is the recognition of the intrinsic value of the marginalized side of existence, the second represents its rejuvenation, its elevation in society. This requires the depreciation of the affirmed side of existence, and undertaking a deeply critical analysis of the origin of associated values. Nietzsche was confident that when this analysis was completed, for those strong enough to stick to the formula (in this context we

seem to be thinking of philosophers in particular), that they would realize that this new standard of value was not obligated to maintaining the previously affirmed side of existence. Speculating on the end of this process, Nietzsche wrote,

Thus I have guessed to what extent a stronger type of man would necessarily have to conceive the elevation and enhancement of man as taking place in another direction: higher beings, beyond good and evil, beyond those values which cannot deny their origin in the sphere of suffering, the herd, and the majority. (WP §1041)

The relevance of this passage to my discussion of *amor fati* should now be clearer. If freedom and fate stand in strict opposition, and the value of freedom belongs in the affirmed side of existence — to live, to live a meaningful life, is to be free — then fate, as a limit on freedom, is one aspect of existence that Nietzsche claims has been ‘hitherto denied’. Further, we know from other texts (going back as far as Nietzsche’s student essays), that Nietzsche considered fate not just a contingently limiting concept, but a necessary one. From *The Will to Power* we can see how Nietzsche arrived at the formula for (the most) valuable life: *amor fati*. We, well at least the brave philosopher, not only recognize the value and power of fate, but also embrace it — in fact, they *love* their fate.

4.6 The puzzle of fate, *amor fati*, and greatness

There is, I think rather obviously, a tight connection in Nietzsche’s work between the concepts of fate, *amor fati*, eternal recurrence, Yes-saying, and human greatness. The connection, most broadly construed, is best understood with respect to the first negation of the immoralist (discussed in section 4.2 above): that the type of man hitherto considered ‘supreme’ is actually the consequence of *decadent* morality (the second negation of the immoralist). The ‘good’ man, the ‘benevolent’ man, the ‘beneficial’ man, is characterized by

traits of selflessness, pity, and the desire to alleviate/remedy suffering. Above all, these traits are driven by (a distinctly weak) pessimism, and the instinct to say 'No' to the range of human experience — the denial that pain and suffering has any value to life. The 'good' man of slave morality uses resentment cleverly to recast the 'bad' man, as evil, shifting the dialectic from good and bad, to good and evil. Evil, of course, must be driven out. 'Evil' men, those with power and strength, are vilified in modern culture. A driving focal point of Nietzsche's work is to challenge this portrayal (of the 'good' man) and its origin (Christian morality).

So. As in Nietzsche's portrayal of the two negations of the immoralist, there are two distinct approaches to achieving what Nietzsche considers human greatness. There is the transformation of what is considered the 'supreme' type of man — Nietzsche's "Übermensch", and there is the transformation from what is considered 'decadent' morality — to a morality (presumably) Dionysian in nature. In the first aphorism of *Ecce Homo* "Why I Write Such Good Books" Nietzsche reflected on how he thought he had been understood — or *not* understood (as the case was), and it is a driving question he returned to often in *Ecce Homo* as a whole. The "Übermensch", he thought had been misunderstood by his readers and critics. "The word "Übermensch" as the designation of a type of supreme achievement, as opposed to "modern" men, to "good" men, to Christians and other nihilists — a word that in the mouth of Zarathustra, the annihilator of morality, became a very pensive word — had been understood almost everywhere with the utmost innocence in the sense of those values whose opposite Zarathustra was meant to represent — that is, as an "idealistic" type of a higher kind of man, half "saint", half "genius"." Nietzsche's words here

are significant. The negation of the 'supreme' man will ultimately result in the superiority of the *Übermensch*.

The '*Übermensch*' stands in opposition to the 'good' man, and achieves human greatness, by saying Yes! to life, by embracing a Dionysian morality, by freeing himself from the unhealthy, and harmful, emotions of pity, and resentment. This is achieved by adopting *amor fati* as the driving attitude to life. *Amor fati* represented, for Nietzsche, the path to human greatness, because in recognizing the power of fate, and its vital importance to strength, man is able to overcome the decadent, stagnant influences of Christian morality. As I will discuss in the last chapter,, the consequences of the commitment to *amor fati* are the affirmation of life, and freedom from pity and resentment. Reflecting on his books in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche roughly delineated his two intertwined projects (Yes-saying, and the revaluation of values). In the first aphorism of "*Beyond Good and Evil*" he wrote,

The task for the years that followed now was indicated as clearly as possible. After the Yes-saying part of my task had been solved, the turn had come for the No-saying, No-doing part: the revaluation of our values so far, the great war — conjuring up a day of decision. (EH, "BGE" §1)

Accordingly, the Yes-saying texts included, *Daybreak (Dawn)*, *The Gay Science*, and *Zarathustra*; and the No-doing texts included, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Genealogy of Morality*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *The Case Against Wagner*.

Chapter 5 *Envoi*: Future of saying Yes!

But he is quite satisfied with the impression he makes on us: he wants to conceal from us his desire, his pride, his intention to soar *beyond* us. — Yes, he is cleverer than we thought and so polite to us — this man of affirmation.
The Gay Science, §27

Nietzsche's personal reflections on his books in *Ecce Homo*, all reveal which texts he himself considered focused on the affirmation of life, and Yes-saying. The focus on the affirmation gave a different perspective on Nietzsche's early-middle texts. *Human, All Too Human* was written in a time of crisis, and the books that followed represented both a personal and intellectual turning point. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche wrote, "The *Dawn* is a Yes-saying book, deep but bright and gracious. The same is true also and in the highest degree of the *gaya scienza*: in almost every sentence profundity and high spirits go tenderly hand in hand." (EH, "GS") And later, in his review of *Beyond Good and Evil*, he identified this text as the turning point thematically from Yes-saying, to No-doing (the revaluation of values). "The task for the years that followed now was indicated as cleverly as possible. After the Yes-saying part of my task had been solved, the turn had come for the No-saying, No-doing part: the revaluation of our values so far..." (EH, "BGE" §1)

5.1 Overcoming the 'good' man

In both cases Yes-saying and No-doing critically involve human action, indeed *creative* action: in the first case, of affirming life; and in the second undertaking a revaluation of value. Nietzsche the psychologist is primarily interested in what type of individual is

capable of carrying out such intellectual and creative work — the exemplars. Nietzsche the philologist seeks the origins of various character types and constructs genealogies of their evolution. And Nietzsche the philosopher explores, among many questions, the value and meaning of life for the various exemplars. Early living exemplars for him included: Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Goethe,¹¹⁸ but more often in his middle and late texts, Nietzsche looked to the future — to new exemplars and character types, such as the Sovereign Individual (GM), creative free spirits, and the Übermensch (Z).

In *Ecce Homo* “Destiny” §4, Nietzsche describes himself as the first *immoralist*. What he has in mind is a person who commits themselves to deep critical inquiry and who has the strength to reconceptualise (and embody) new values and who adopts a new attitude to life — a Yes-saying attitude. The transformation, for Nietzsche himself, began with *Human, All Too Human*, a book that he later describes as “the monument of a crisis” (EH, H, §1). Subtitled “A Book for Free Spirits”, he reflects on its personal significance in *Ecce Homo*

...almost every sentence marks some victory — here I liberated myself from what in my nature did not belong to me. Idealism, for example; the title means: “where you see ideal things, I see what is — human, alas all-too-human!” The term “free spirit” he describes simply as the spirit that has become free, “that has again taken possession of itself” (EH, H, §1).

The so called *crisis* within which *Human, All Too Human* is penned, coincides with the period in time that Nietzsche begins to realize that his creative, intellectual exemplars (Schopenhauer and Wagner) fail to be the exemplars he’d taken them to be. This begins the process of personal liberation.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ I discuss Schopenhauer as exemplar in chapter 2.

¹¹⁹ Though the process of intellectual liberation and deep critical inquiry begins with *Human, All Too Human*, I argue that the critical turning point for Nietzsche personally and intellectually is in

In the preface of *Daybreak*, Nietzsche describes the intellectual work as hazardous, and solitary. “In this book you will discover” he begins, “a ‘subterranean man’ at work, one who tunnels and mines and undermines.” (§1)¹²⁰ His work is tunneling deep to the foundations of Christian presuppositions, and beginning his critique of (distinctly) Christian morality. “Do not think for a moment that I intend to invite you to the same hazardous enterprise! Or even only to the same solitude!” he warns, “For he who proceeds on his own path in this fashion encounters no one: that is inherent in ‘proceeding on one’s own path’.... For his path is *his alone* —“ The path to liberation (*Human, All Too Human*) is a solitary one (*Daybreak*).¹²¹ And the liberation in question is from the prevailing values of Christian doctrine and Schopenhauer’s pessimism, and the life-denying attitudes they represent (the exemplars of *immoralist* and *free spirit*, respectively).

The term “immoralist”, according to Nietzsche, comprises two negations: the first is the negation of a character type —moral exemplar — the ‘good’ man; and the second is the negation of a type of morality — the morality of ‘decadence’ (EH, D, §4) “For one, I negate a type of man that has so far been considered supreme: the good, the benevolent, the beneficent. And then I negate a type of morality that has become prevalent and predominant as morality itself — the morality of decadence.” (EH, D, §4) These two ideas

1882 while writing *The Gay Science*. The turning point of GS represents, I believe, the beginning of Nietzsche’s positive philosophy towards life (*amor fati*, eternal recurrence, Dionysian morality).

¹²⁰ The aphorism ends, “Being silent is something one completely unlearns if, like him, one has been for so long a solitary mole ———“ I wonder if ‘unlearning’ silence is like breaking the silence once the truth has been discovered. I think that’s an interesting point.

¹²¹ *Human, All Too Human* is the rejection of the ‘ideal’ or ‘idealism’ in favour of reality – aspects of life as human (metaphysical rejection) – ‘free spirits’ are those who become free of idealism.

Daybreak is the rejection of Christian faith and uncritical presuppositions of Christian doctrine and values – the ‘immoralist’ will be the label for those who become free of Christianity.

are intimately connected. The type of morality in question (in this case Christian morality), through its core values, sets the conditions and guidelines for who is to be considered an exemplary role model. The moral exemplar, in turn, reinforces and maintains the values of the morality. What Nietzsche sets out to do is to undermine *both* the prevailing type of morality, and its exemplar. This predominantly critical project clears the way for the evolution of a new type of morality and new moral exemplar.

Moral exemplars, though, have a longer history than might seem immediately obvious. The traits of moral exemplars are those that successfully, and ideally effectively, nurture the achievement and embodiment of prevailing moral values. Nietzsche's first negation as an immoralist — that of overcoming the 'good' man — is in the style, essentially, of a Hegelian double negation (the negation of a negation). In the first instance, the affirmation of life is biological, the goal being survival. Character traits of this nascent moral exemplar are vitality, a distinctly (brute) strength, and an excess of power. These exemplars affirm life through their inherent (born) superiority. The 'nobles' of Nietzsche's 'master morality' explored in the first book of *The Genealogy of Morality* provide a relevant example of this first biologically driven stage of moral exemplars.

The first negation, in the Hegelian sense, occurs when the (common) man of resentment takes power from the nobles by cleverly masking weakness as strength. This slave revolt in morality essentially revalues the opposition of 'good and bad' to 'good and evil'. Where once noble power was valued 'good' to the 'bad' of slave weakness; the slaves determine themselves to be 'good' to the noble strength of 'evil'. Slave morality, in contrast with its predecessor, values selfless character traits such as compassion, pity, and the

alleviation of suffering — the values of Christian morality (and indeed more broadly, the western monotheistic Abrahamic tradition). The ideals of slave morality underpinning Christian theological tradition represent the *denial* of life (in stark contrast with the life affirming values of noble morality); exemplars *transcend* worldly suffering through their faith in God and God's divine providence.

Closely connected to this theological denial of life is Schopenhauer's intellectual basis for denial. In *World as Will and Representation*, he argues that life is suffering and the only escape from suffering is to deny the ever-striving will to live its purpose. Similar to the theological denial of life, for Schopenhauer worldly transcendence is the ultimate goal — both pictures rely on ambitious metaphysics — though for him it is an intellectual, rather than theological, transcendence. In fact, Schopenhauer goes to some length in his moral essay, *On the Basis of Morality*, to distance himself from a traditional Christian moral framework.¹²² However, it's questionable how far apart his own views are, given, according to his view, the only actions with moral value are those that are motivated by compassion.

The need for transcendence in both cases — theological and intellectual — seems to derive from suffering, and our desire to explain it, avoid it, alleviate it, relieve it, and/or escape it. Moral exemplars, in either case, exemplify traits that are selfless in term of showing compassion, pity, or mercy to those who suffer and it is commonly considered a virtue in those who devote themselves to the service of others. In terms of one's own suffering, exemplars differ. Most familiarly, an exemplar in the Christian tradition will

¹²² Approximately a third of Schopenhauer's moral essay is dedicated to a critique of his intellectual predecessor, Kant, and what he takes to be a lightly veiled divine command theory.

passively accept their own suffering in the service of others, and ultimately God, trusting in eternal reward. Indeed, the exemplars of slave morality think themselves praiseworthy for freely choosing such a path. An exemplar in the intellectual tradition, ultimately denies their will to live altogether. Unlike theological doctrine, there is no otherworldly reward for Schopenhauer (apart perhaps from an Eastern, Buddhist, nothingness). Though the ultimately metaphysical goal is different between theological and intellectual denial, they share the main quality of being particularly life denying, and it is this focus on denial that Nietzsche seeks to overcome.

The immoralist negation Nietzsche discusses in *Ecce Homo* has two focal points. The first is to overcome the entrenched views regarding the existence of suffering and our reaction to it, given the death of God. We are entering a post-Christian period of history, and though Nietzsche believes that the influence will linger in the hearts and minds of the common man for some time, he looks to the future. The weak pessimism that gives rise to the life denying attitudes takes on a far bleaker outlook without the metaphysical picture and there seems to be two options open to him: either take on a nihilist view regarding the value of life (a life of suffering has no value); or adopt new attitudes towards suffering. Though I think Nietzsche fully acknowledges the possible temptation towards nihilism, he rejects weak pessimism.

However, Nietzsche's view is not simply optimistic either — that life may have value, or can have value under ideal conditions. The moral exemplar he envisions does not merely have hope that life has value, or believe that a valuable life is possible, but actively and deeply affirms the truth that it does. This second focal point of Nietzsche's first

negation amounts to the psychological affirmation of life, the justification of a valuable life, including suffering. The character traits he envisions are those similar to the (Greek) tragic hero mold —strength, independence, and creativity. But whereas the strength of the first stage moral exemplar (the noble) is a natural brute strength, the strength of Nietzsche's future exemplar is a distinctly *psychological* strength. Whereas the noble exemplar was less likely to register suffering *at all*, the future exemplar recognizes the strength *in suffering*. So the noble and future exemplars differ in their expression of strength, they are united in overcoming life-denying weaknesses in favour of life affirming strength.

5.2 The eternal return of the same

In Chapter 3 (section 3.6) I suggested that Nietzsche intended the introduction of eternal recurrence (Book IV, GS) as a character study into the type of individual willing to accept the theoretical possibility, or truth, of the doctrine. Apart from his presentation of the thought experiment in *The Gay Science*, the only other sustained discussion of eternal recurrence (eternal return) in published texts occurs in the third part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* "*The convalescent*". Again, it is interesting to note that Nietzsche chooses a fantastical, imaginary scenario within which to explore this weighty idea: Zarathustra collapses following a type of psychotic episode¹²³ and wakes to hold a conversation with animals — repeating and reinforcing the important Nietzschean theme of sickness and rejuvenation. That Zarathustra explores eternal recurrence while *convalescing*, and not in

¹²³ Interesting to note that Nietzsche refers to Zarathustra acting like a madman prior to discuss eternal recurrence – similarity with the madman of GS §125 proclaiming the death of God.

the throes of illness, further reinforces that these ideas are part of the solution, not the problem.

Recall the penultimate aphorism in *The Gay Science* book IV (§341), “The greatest weight” warns the thought that each moment in our lives will repeat eternally is the greatest weight, or the toughest truth, we can face. Nevertheless Nietzsche, through Zarathustra, meets this daunting challenge directly, “I, Zarathustra, the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle — you I summon, my most abysmal thought!” (§1, “*The convalescent*”) Zarathustra proclaims himself the ‘advocate’ for life and suffering, connecting existence and temporality to circles, or cycles. In the next aphorism, he explains, “Everything goes, everything comes back; the wheel of being rolls eternally. Everything dies, everything blossoms again, the year of being runs eternally.” This thought of eternal recurrence is difficult in different ways, depending on your perspective.

For Nietzsche’s audience, the difficulty is due to the realization that, if true, Zarathustra’s lesson (proclamation) reinforces the impossibility of escape from suffering in life. Even if you undertake to end your physical life through suicide, there is no salvation of the soul, and your life will repeat exactly as it was. “‘Now I die and disappear,’ you would say, ‘and in an instant I will be nothing. Souls are as mortal as bodies. But the knot of causes in which I am entangled recurs — it will create me again! I myself belong to the causes of the eternal recurrence.’” (Z, §1)

For Nietzsche himself, the difficulty might be more complicated. Acknowledging the eternal return of his own life also means the eternal return of his intellectual struggle for a

different future — a future that will never permanently overcome weak and sick culture/society.... Zarathustra continues (in §2),

I will return, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this snake — *not* to a new life or a better life or a similar life: — I will return to this same and selfsame life, in what is greatest as well as in what is smallest, to once again teach the eternal recurrence of all things — to once again speak the word about the great earth of noon and human beings, to once again proclaim the overman to mankind.

If, in the character Zarathustra, Nietzsche is describing his own fate (destiny) as unearthing and bringing a new truth to humankind, the truth of eternal recurrence must be disheartening. Even if he succeeds, even if his readers learn to read him well, the cycle will repeat and he will once again endure being misunderstood. “I spoke my word, I break under my word: thus my eternal fate wills it — *as proclaimer I perish!*” (emphasis added) Zarathustra the prophet has foretold Nietzsche’s untimely demise.¹²⁴

Yet much of what we know of Nietzsche’s views of eternal recurrence comes from his unpublished notebooks (posthumously published as *The Will to Power*) spanning a number of years (1883-1888)¹²⁵ — interestingly, the same period of time he writes about *amor fati*. And in the notebook entries, it is not entirely clear whether Nietzsche intends to provide a proof for the doctrine of eternal recurrence (as a cosmological truth)¹²⁶ or whether he thinks it more a useful fiction to draw out the importance, or significance, of his various philosophical views (in particular, epistemological and cosmological). In *The Will to*

¹²⁴ It is interesting that Nietzsche often writes of the ‘untimely’. Untimely ideas, untimely exemplars. His own break with sanity, indeed, untimely.

¹²⁵ These notes are brought together in the final section of Kaufmann’s edition of *The Will to Power* (Book IV, “Discipline and Breeding”, Section III “The Eternal Recurrence”).

¹²⁶ See Paul Loeb “Eternal Recurrence” in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* for a defense of this interpretation.

Power §1053 (1884) Nietzsche writes, “My philosophy brings the triumphant idea of which all other modes of thought will ultimately perish. It is the great cultivating idea: the races that cannot bear it stand condemned; those who find it the greatest benefit are chosen to rule.”

Aphorism §1057, dated 1883-1888, is particularly telling of what Nietzsche had hoped to accomplish in his exploration of eternal recurrence. Kaufmann notes the aphorism was entitled “A Book of Prophecy” in the original manuscript, and represented the outline for a book. (Kaufmann, ft103, 544) If a published book was truly Nietzsche’s intention, it is critical to note that the second point of the outline reads “Proof of the doctrine”. This on its own suggests that even if, perhaps, Nietzsche didn’t intend to prove the cosmological truth of eternal recurrence, then he at least hoped he might be able to justify a belief (theoretical plausibility) in its truth. The longer aphorisms of the section, §1062 (1885), §1064 (1885), and §1066 (1888) stand in evidence of his attempt to prove the doctrine as a cosmological truth, focusing on Nietzsche’s views of being/becoming and temporality.

The rest of the outline is consistent with, and informative for, an understanding of eternal recurrence as a cosmological truth — *or* useful fiction. The first point of the outline (§1057) reads, “Presentation of the doctrine and its *theoretical* presuppositions and consequences”. This point suggests that at the very least, and regardless of his ultimate conclusion, Nietzsche was trying to present a cosmological truth and what the likely consequences of such a truth would mean in a post-Christian world.

The final point of the outline (§1057) focuses on the historical context within which the belief in eternal recurrence occurs, and what the historical significance is. “Its place in history as a *mid-point*. Period of greatest danger. Foundation of an oligarchy *above* peoples and their interests: education to a universally human politics. Counterpart of Jesuitism.”¹²⁷ This point suggests, rather than a cosmological truth, Nietzsche believes that the usefulness of (reliance on) the eternal return of the same is its role facilitating the transition from a Christian culture to what will ultimately replace it.

What seems most relevant in the outline to the views Nietzsche actually publishes is supportive of a ‘useful fiction’ interpretation. The third point in the outline (§1057) reads, “Probable consequences of its being *believed* (it makes everything *break open*”. a) Means of enduring it; b) Means of disposing of it.” The main point here is the simple questions we see in *The Gay Science* §341 “The Greatest Weight”: what happens if the demon is telling the truth? Who would be able to endure such a terrifying truth? Two aphorisms that follow the outline, written in 1884 (two years after *The Gay Science* aphorism) are revealing. In §1059 Nietzsche writes that the means of, specifically, *enduring* eternal recurrence is undertaking a revaluation of values (an important recurring theme in Nietzsche’s published works), “no longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty; no longer “cause and effect” but the continually creative; no longer will to preservation but to power; no longer the humble expression, “everything is *merely* subjective” but “it is also *our* work!”

¹²⁷ There are many textual references to the danger of modern times (Nietzsche’s time), but reading Zarathustra, it is hard not to think of the story of the tightrope walker in “Zarathustra’s Prologue” – the two towers that the rope spans represent animals and the *Übermensch*, the ‘herd’ below, the walker who falls to his death midway, but who is consoled by the words of Zarathustra (that the walker undertook a dangerous life).

The type of person who is able to endure the idea of eternal recurrence, and the necessary character traits are outlined in the second aphorism (§1060). “To *endure* the idea of the recurrence, one needs,” he writes

freedom from morality; new means against the fact of pain (pain conceived as a tool, as the father of pleasure; there is no cumulative consciousness of displeasure); the enjoyment of all kinds of uncertainty, experimentalism, as a counterweight to this extreme fatalism; abolition of the concept of necessity; abolition of the “will”; abolition of “knowledge-in-itself”.

These new traits/attitudes identified by Nietzsche serve to build strength and creation of the *Übermensch*. (§1061) It is interesting to note that though the first two points regarding freedom from morality and means against pain are consistent with published views regarding *amor fati* and human agency, the remainder of the list is somewhat surprising. It suggests that the character who can endure the truth of eternal recurrence is not who he considers the new exemplar of a new morality. This ties, I think with the related points in the outline §1057, that we must not only consider the means of *enduring* the belief in eternal recurrence, but also the means of *disposing* of it; and the final point that eternal recurrence represents a *mid-point* in history.

I think that if Nietzsche had been convinced of any of his “proofs” of eternal recurrence he would have published his results. Given that he clearly at various times wanted to provide proof, and indeed tried to provide a proof, I think it is doubtful that Nietzsche ever believed in the truth of eternal recurrence in a cosmological sense.

* * *

In the section of *Ecce Homo* where Nietzsche reflects on his book *Human, All Too Human*, he writes, almost prophetically, of his love for his own fate. Not many weeks before he collapsed in a square in Turin he gives a resounding Yes! to his life and all the suffering it had entailed.

Here it happened in a manner that I cannot admire sufficiently that, precisely at the right time, my father's *wicked* heritage came to my aid — at bottom, predestination to an early death. Sickness *detached me slowly*: it spared me any break, and violent and offensive step. Thus I did not lose any good will and actually gained not a little. My sickness also gave me the right to change all my habits completely; it permitted, it *commanded* me to forget; it bestowed on me the necessity of lying still, of leisure, of waiting and being patient.... (EH, "Human, All-Too-Human", §4)

Though Nietzsche does not mention *amor fati* by name in this passage, the idea of loving fate as the culmination of his life comes through clearly. Because of his sickness Nietzsche was forced to change his habits, and so forced to become who he was.

The paragraph in question ends,

Never have I felt happier with myself than in the sickest and most painful periods of my life: one only need look at *The Dawn* or perhaps *The Wanderer and His Shadow* to comprehend what this "return to myself" meant — a supreme kind of recovery. — The other kind merely followed from this. (EH, "Human, All-Too-Human", §4)

We would think at 44 Nietzsche was too young to indulge in a retrospective of his life and a commentary on his work to that point. Perhaps after the furious productivity of 1888, he merely wanted to take a breather — a pause — to slow down and take stock of what he'd accomplished in such a short period of time. But the intensity of the passage belies such a mild explanation and suggests something deeper: namely that he had some sort of premonition that his intellectual life was soon to be cut short, and that he needed to work fast to say what he wanted to say. Nietzsche knew his destiny; and he was clear the role

loving fate played in that destiny. "*Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on!" he had proclaimed in 1882; "Have I been understood?" he asked, closing *Ecce Homo* six years later. — Dionysus versus the Crucified. —

Appendix I What the scholars have said

At times, Nietzsche's proclamation to 'love fate' was taken as evidence for interpreting him more broadly as a fatalist, or determinist (or at least not precluding an existentialist interpretation). The former is the position most commonly attributed to Brian Leiter. In "The Paradox of Fatalism and Self-Creation" (1998), Leiter suggested *solving* the paradox in favour of attributing to Nietzsche a fatalist position based largely on Nietzsche's powerful critique of metaphysical freedom, and a few textual references to 'fate', ultimately rejecting any serious notion of human agency and freedom.

On the other hand, Robert C. Solomon, in a series of articles¹²⁸ argued that Nietzsche was most accurately interpreted as an existentialist, and that what he wrote about *amor fati* did not preclude, or cause serious problems for, such an interpretation. The paradox that Leiter 'solves' is for Solomon not a paradox at all. Leiter errs for a number of reasons, most prominently in his misinterpretation of what Nietzsche understands as 'fatalism'. According to Solomon, Leiter takes Nietzsche to understand fatalism in the same context as contemporary determinist theories, while Solomon argues, I think rightly, that Nietzsche understands fatalism in ancient terms (in particular Heraclitus' view of fate as tied to character.) While a strength of this approach is the possibility that fate and freedom are not *necessarily* in conflict (as they certainly are in Leiter's work), Solomon's interpretation fails to go far enough. On his account, *amor fati* need not be taken seriously or as philosophically interesting, the main point being that it just doesn't get in the way. The effect of this

¹²⁸ See, for example, "Nietzsche as Existentialist and as Fatalist: The Practical Paradoxes of Self-Making" (2002), "Nietzsche on Fatalism and "Free Will"" (2002), and *Living with Nietzsche: what the great immoralist has to teach us* (2003).

approach is that *amor fati* can legitimately be ignored or overlooked — it diminishes the value of considering *amor fati* in its own right. And Nietzsche himself, in the little he wrote of *amor fati*, certainly emphasized its value — it was his “innermost nature” and “the path to human greatness”.

Perhaps a reason for its lack of prominence, as Ridley writes in “Nietzsche, Nature, Nurture” (2016), is the idea that the broader themes of fate and self-creation are reconciled within the idea of *amor fati* is simply “disappointingly humdrum and common-sensical” (Ridley, 130) A similar point is made by Solomon in “Nietzsche as Existentialist and as Fatalist: The Practical Paradoxes of Self-Making” (2002), that we commonly see ourselves “as sometimes free, sometimes as fated” (Solomon, 45). We make decisions, and choices, yet we acknowledge the unchosen (fated) circumstances of our lives. Solomon suggests that Nietzsche views human character in this way: that we are given our natures, but cultivate our characters. (Solomon, 51) On this interpretation there is no problematic paradox or tension between fatalist and existentialist.

Indeed if the sole theoretical upshot of *amor fati* is in its subordinate role reconciling nature and character in such a way as to allow for human agency in a naturalistic ethic, then the claim that it is of no philosophical interest on its own might be accurate. But that is simply not the case, and this somewhat narrow interpretation certainly fails to account for the ringing tones of Nietzsche’s idea. When he wrote of *amor fati*, it was not in the context of moral agency and responsibility (which he *does* discuss in other places). It was not part of his critique of self-creation in *Beyond Good and Evil* (§21),

and it was not part of his discussion of the 'sovereign individual' in *The Genealogy of Morality* (II-2)¹²⁹, or moral responsibility (GM I-13).

Sometimes, even when a focus on *amor fati* is promised in the article title, it takes a secondary role to eternal recurrence. In "Nietzsche's notion of *amor fati*" (1998), Garry M Brodsky defines *amor fati* as "the project of becoming well-disposed to life and ourselves which is partially defined in terms of the ideal of loving fate and our respective fates" (Brodsky, 35), and argues that *amor fati* and eternal recurrence, taken together, represent a "project" and not a "metaphysical vision" (Brodsky, 57, endnote 18). "The doctrine [eternal recurrence] spells out the goal of giving meaning and vitality to human life in view of the character of life and of the complex ways people depend on their pasts and the environment in which they live." (Brodsky, 54) Where *amor fati* fits into this picture, then, is in adopting a favourable attitude to the aspects of our lives to which we have little, or no, control. "This project", Brodsky writes "is immensely important for Nietzsche because he believes that the usual ways in which people have tried to achieve this goal have and must fail" (Brodsky, 54). The "usual ways" according to Brodsky's argument are the "otherworldly" religious and metaphysical views, and the "socio-political" (in Nietzsche's terms, "modern culture") movements trying to replace the former.¹³⁰

While it seems to me that Brodsky's definition of *amor fati* is for the most part correct (I am tempted to use language stronger than "well-disposed"), and I agree with the

¹²⁹ Though there is an interesting reference to 'fate' – that the 'sovereign individual' is able to maintain his commitments (promises) even in the face of fate. Not the point I'm making here.

¹³⁰ I agree with Brodsky's assessment of the importance of this project to Nietzsche, and what he attributes to Nietzsche as being the 'usual ways'. Brodsky makes some important and interesting claims regarding *amor fati* and eternal recurrence.

interpretation as practical rather than theoretical, his main point is that being well-disposed to life is evidenced by answering the demon of GS §341 in the affirmative. In other words, saying yes to the question of eternal recurrence evidences being well disposed to (your) life. Brodsky's focus then turns to the practical problems of saying 'Yes!' to the demon — questions focused directly on eternal recurrence rather than *amor fati*.¹³¹ This interpretation is not too far from my own, but I reject the idea that eternal recurrence is an integral part of Nietzsche practical project. *Amor fati*, on the other hand, is the essential element (on its own) of the practical project.¹³²

Common to all of these scholarly views is the misuse of *amor fati* (as in Leiter's case) or its dismissive treatment of it as a secondary, or less important, theme. I mean merely to suggest that Nietzsche's views of *amor fati*, and its importance as indicative to the affirmation of life (in its own right) has been underappreciated in the secondary literature. This lack of sustained inquiry may seem justified by the small number of direct textual references that Nietzsche actually makes in relation to his treatment of the other themes¹³³, yet I believe he takes *amor fati* very seriously on its own.

In fact, there are only three (relatively) recent articles that truly do focus on *amor fati*: "Nietzsche and Amor Fati" by Béatrice Han-Pile in 2009, "Nietzsche, *Amor Fati* and The Gay Science" (in part a response to Han-Pile's article) by Tom Stern in 2013, and

¹³¹ Problems Brodsky raises include: temporality (the only time to say yes to a life is at the end – any other time you decide on incomplete information – but GS§341 does not read as a 'deathbed' visit...); identity (as Brodsky describes, the common desire to change small details of your life next time....); and the ability to cope with the bad (the problem of unlovable fate (and evil) – on individual and global levels).

¹³² I discuss Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence in chapters 3 and 5. .

¹³³ Having said that, the number of explicit references to 'eternal recurrence' and 'eternal return' [German!] in the published literature, is not much greater than that of *amor fati*.

“Nietzsche, Nature, Nurture” by Aaron Ridley in 2016. The first two discuss what they take to be serious problems for interpreting Nietzsche’s views; problems broadly categorized as ‘unlovable fate’, ‘pointless fate’, and ‘asymmetry’. Though interesting questions are raised, and their concerns have some validity, I think ultimately that they both miss the significance of *amor fati* to Nietzsche’s philosophy and underestimate its importance.

The problems raised primarily by Han-Pile address the question of what might it be to ‘love fate’ in the context of an attitude towards life? One plausible interpretation (and the one I defend in this thesis) suggests Nietzsche means to embrace whatever aspects of our lives we lack direct control over, presumably (and perhaps most importantly) the bad, the difficult, the painful, as well as the good (the easy, the pleasurable). Importantly, *amor fati* is a psychological thesis. It represents a change in attitude insofar as how we view, and react to, uncontrollable elements in life: that we see purpose and usefulness in past suffering; we actively endorse our present identity and experiences; and that we take the past and present together as necessary parts of our future. This interpretation depends on our understanding ‘fate’ as the uncontrollable elements of our lives — the situations and circumstances that befall us — not the ones we choose, or intentionally bring about ourselves.¹³⁴ It is important to note that the ‘fate’ Nietzsche has in mind is not *theological* fate, that the uncontrollable elements of our lives are due to some divine plan, i.e. God’s

¹³⁴ The Oxford dictionary defines ‘fate’ both as: “The development of events outside a person’s control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power” and “The course of someone’s life, or the outcome of a situation for someone or something, seen as outside their control”. The second definition is what I think Nietzsche intends. He will reject the theological understanding of a supernatural predetermination. See chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of Nietzsche’s views on fate.

will, but of *natural* necessity¹³⁵. For example, the socio-economic environment that we are born into; our physiological health; our psychological traits; and even the deeply engrained beliefs and values we inherit from our families and (religious and social) communities.

However, the idea of loving whatever befalls us raises the simple problem of ‘unlovable fate’. When we consider that we typically *love* things we desire, judge valuable or meaningful, it seems a strange directive to tell a person suffering from chronic illness/pain, or who is enduring poverty/war/enslavement, to *love* their circumstances. Illness, pain, poverty, war, enslavement, etc. are not the types of things people *love*; they are, in fact, the things people typically resent, or do their best to avoid. If this is indeed what Nietzsche intends, are his instructions reasonable? Or even possible?

Unlovable fate is the requirement of *amor fati* to, at times, love something you are not typically inclined to love, for example, instances of suffering, pain, loss. “Fate is bound to entail at least some suffering and unhappiness for each of us... In order to love fate, then, one would have to accept the paradoxical possibility of loving a repellent object...” (Han-Pile, 226) The problem here is actually twofold. It is not simply a question of bringing ourselves to love something repellent; it is also the wider question of whether we can *bring ourselves* to love anything at all! Love is an emotion that seems to strike us (indeed strikes us most forcefully) — whether we will it or not — not as a reaction to an object or circumstance that we consciously (or deliberately) invoke. If this is correct, then Nietzsche’s desire to bring himself to ‘love’ his own difficult circumstances is an impossible

¹³⁵ It may not be entirely (or distinctly) natural necessity (i.e. cause and effect, traditional ‘determinism’ – facts in world + laws of nature = all future events) §279 ‘Star friendship’ raises the possibility of a celestial necessity (Stoic cosmos).

task bound for failure. Nietzsche can't make himself love the hardships of his life any more than I can make myself love my migraine headaches, or you can make yourself love a tragic loss. In life, there are things that are simply unlovable – and this judgment seems intuitively strong, if not self-evident.¹³⁶

The paradox of *pointless* fate, on the other hand, concludes that even if it *were* possible to confer love on a repellent object – that our doing so would not be in any way transformative. In other words, our loving the hardships in our lives would not make them any easier — so why would we bother? Han-Pile explains, "...[B]y definition fate or necessity will unfold whether we love it or not, and it is not clear what difference our love could make. If this is the case, then amor fati would seem a rather futile form of love." (226) In this case, it may be *possible* for Nietzsche to bring himself to 'love' the painful circumstances of his life, but if this achievement makes no meaningful difference in his experience (or even no difference at all!), then it is difficult to see what the point of such an effort would be.

An easy interpretive answer, one that avoids the problem of unlovable fate, is that Nietzsche does *not* mean for his readers to take his instructions seriously; that he is using some literary or rhetorical tool to make a different point. Tom Stern favours this interpretation in "Nietzsche, *Amor Fati* and *The Gay Science*" (2013). Above all, Stern argues that it is wrong to interpret GS 276 literally; that a close reading of other passages in the

¹³⁶ I am going to let this objection of 'unlovable fate' retain its intuitive strength while I consider Han-Pile and Stern's analysis of Nietzsche's 'amor fati'. Believing unlovable fate to be an insurmountable problem for *amor fati*, is precisely an example of an entrenched prejudice (that conforms to the 'dogmatic pattern of thinking') Nietzsche criticizes. Nietzsche is able to bestow love upon instances of suffering and hardship because he has the strength of will to see those instances as part of a valuable whole.

text that provide deeper analysis of the related concepts (necessity, beauty, love) reveals that Nietzsche can not be encouraging his readers to love their own fates (especially those who suffer), nor find beauty in necessity. Why not, you may ask? He argues that the problem of unlovable fate is intractable. "Put simply: fate isn't lovable" (146). And that, he thinks, raises a problem that a literal translation of this central aphorism cannot solve, so Nietzsche must have something else in mind. His argument is interesting. In the end, he advocates for an understanding of *amor fati* that amounts to — not loving the unfortunate circumstances of your life — but in embracing the necessity of cognitive error as a human trait. "*Amor fati*, I would suggest on the basis of this reading, is not a personal theodicy — a demand to love thy cancer: it is, rather, the hope for a way of coming to terms with what is necessary for us, namely our error." (155) The connection with the acceptance of one's life circumstances is this acceptance itself is conditioned by the error in how you conceive of these circumstances. To understand *amor fati* in this way amounts to accepting that we are wrong about how we view our lives, and in accepting this error as part of human nature we are able to transcend the errors in search of truth. Stern's interpretation is an epistemological thesis.

Nietzsche's positive attitude towards life is encouraging, however there are some problems and puzzles his view must be able to explain (the problems of 'unlovable fate', 'pointless fate', asymmetry, and the puzzle of fate and freedom)¹³⁷. Firstly, the 'problem of

¹³⁷ The problems of 'unlovable fate' and 'pointless fate' were introduced by Beatrice Han-Pile, and discussed further by Tom Stern. Especially for Stern, 'unlovable fate' presents an intractable problem for Nietzsche and motivates Stern to look for an alternative (epistemological) explanation for *amor fati*. 'Pointless fate' arises specifically for Han-Pile in her argument that Nietzsche

unlovable fate' does seem a real problem. How can anyone bring themselves to love something that causes pain, suffering, sorrow, etc.? However, this is only a problem if 'fate' is understood to mean, specifically, the *unfortunate* circumstances (episodes, experiences), that happen to us, *and* are beyond our control. It is less of a problem, if it is a problem at all, when we understand 'fate' less restrictively, and more holistically. In the context of loving fate as a life-affirming attitude, it is, I think, fairly clear that Nietzsche intends the more holistic understanding of fate, though to be fair our attitudes towards our own suffering is emphasized, because these are the attitudes that need changing (no one has to be told to love the enjoyable circumstances of their lives).

We should not understand Nietzsche as setting himself the goal of *loving* the difficult situations in his life as they are (in isolation, i.e. "love thy illness"); he is setting himself the goal of embracing difficult instances within the context of a positive whole. Yet he is drawing on the power of 'love' deliberately, there is much in his writing to suggest that he means for his attitude to be powerful, be active. He does not mean graceful acquiescence or passive indifference — he does not pledge to *endure* fate, or *accept* fate; he pledges to *love* fate. This optimistic ideal pushes back against the established metaphysical pictures of both Christian doctrine (that we suffer in this life to be rewarded in the next), and the extreme pessimism of his philosophical predecessor, Schopenhauer (all life is suffering). Nietzsche is putting into praxis the insight that a meaningful natural life, one that is valuable,

interprets 'love' in a *agapic* sense – that bestowing love on painful experiences does not make them any less painful.

recognizes the predominance of the whole (a monist outlook) and the embracing of all elements (positive and negative) as contributing to the whole.

Secondly, Leaving aside for the moment the question of what exactly he intends by *loving* fate, it seems that 'loving' painful circumstances in life (as we commonly understand love) does not seem a requirement for a valuable life. This is the problem of asymmetry.¹³⁸ I could quite easily be accepting of, or acquiesce to, painful conditions while still understanding that they play a significant role in my life more generally.¹³⁹ Thirdly, if loving fate is the path to a meaningful life, there needs to be some discussion of what I call the 'puzzle of fate and freedom' —the idea that the notions of fate and freedom are necessarily at *odds* with one another, not necessarily connected. How we may take Nietzsche to solve the problem of unlovable fate, or how we understand him to reconcile fate and freedom, will hinge not only on how Nietzsche views 'fate', but also critically what he means by the closely associated terms 'necessity', 'beauty', 'love' (and indeed, 'freedom').

¹³⁸ Again, introduced by Han-Pile.

¹³⁹ A common, and simple, example of this is going to the dentist — a potentially painful experience that is part of a healthy life.

Appendix II Poetry

Part I Ideas taking shape

“Abendphantasie”

Vor seiner Hütte ruhig im Schatten sitzt
Der Pflüger, dem Genügsamen raucht sein Herd.
Gastfreundlich tönt dem Wanderer im
Friedlichen Dorfe die Abendglocke.

Wohl kehren itzt die Schiffer zum Hafen auch,
In fernen Städten, fröhlich verrauscht des Markts
Geschäftger Lärm; in stiller Laube
Glänzt das gesellige Mahl den Freunden.

Wohin denn ich? Es leben die Sterblichen
Von Lohn und Arbeit; wechselnd in Müh und Ruh
Ist alles freudig; warum schläft denn
Nimmer nur mir in der Brust der Stachel?

Am Abendhimmel blühet ein Frühling auf;
Unzählig blühn die Rosen und ruhig scheint
Die goldne Welt; o dorthin nimmt mich,
Purpurne Wolken! und möge droben

In Licht un Luft zerrinnen mir Lieb und Leid! —
Doch, wie verscheucht von töriger Bitte, flieht
Der Zauber; dunkel wirts und einsam
Unter dem Himmel, wie immer, bin ich —

Komm du nun, sanfter Schlummer! zu viel beehrt
Das Herz; doch endlich, Jugend! Verglühst du ja,
Du ruhelose, träumerische!
Friedlich und heiter ist dann das Alter.

Friedrich Hölderlin (1799) ¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Browning (94-95)

Part II – *Amor Fati* by name

“Legensgebet”

Gewiß, so liebt ein Freund den Freund,
Wie ich dich liebe, Rätselleben –
Ob ich in dir gejauchzt, geweint,
Ob du mir Glück, ob Schmerz gegeben.

Ich liebe dich samt deinem Harme;
Und wenn du mich vernichten mußt,
Entreiß mich deinem Arme
Wie Freund sich reißt von Freundesbrust.

Mit ganzer Kraft umfaß ich dich!
Laß deine Flammen mich entzünden,
Laß noch in Glut des Kampfes mich
Dein Rätsel tiefer nur ergründen.

Jahrtausende zu sein! zu denken!
Schließ mich in beide Arme ein:
Hast du kein Glück mehr mir zu schenken
Wohlan – noch hast du deine Pein.

Lou Salomé (1880)¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Translation Frank Beck, <http://translations.diehoren.com/2015/03/a-prayer-to-life-lebensgebet.html>.

Part III *A destiny realized*

“Liebeserklärung (bei der aber der Dichter in eine Grube fiel —)”

O Wunder! Fleigt er noch?
Er steigt empor, und seine Flügel ruhn?
Was hebt und trägt ihn doch?
Was ist ihm Ziel und Zug und Zügel nun?

Gleich Stern und Ewigkeit
Lebt er Höh'n jetzt, die das Leben flieht,
Mitleidig selbst dem Neid —:
Und hoch flog, wer ihn auch nur schweben sieht!

O Vogel Albatross!
Zur Höhe treibt's mit ew'gem Triebe mich.
Ich dachre dein: da floss
Mir Trän'um Träne, — ja, ich liebe dich!

Friedrich Nietzsche (1887)¹⁴²

¹⁴² Appendix, *The Gay Science* 2nd edition (1887)

Bibliography

- Alfano, M. (2015). How One Becomes What One is Called: On the Relation between Traits and Trait-Terms in Nietzsche. *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 46(2), 261-269.
- Ansell-Pearson, K. (1991). Translations from Nietzsche's Nachlass 1881-1884. *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 1, 5-14.
- Ansell-Pearson, K. a. D. L. (Ed.) (2006). *The Nietzsche Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Berry, J. (2013). Nietzsche and the Greeks. In K. G. a. J. Richardson (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Blue, D. (2016). *The Making of Friedrich Nietzsche: The Quest for Identity, 1844-1869*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Bode, C. (Ed.) (1946). *The Portable Emerson*. New York, NY: The Viking Press Inc.
- Brobjer, T. H. (1999). Nietzsche's Education at the Naumburg Domgymnasium. *Nietzsche-Studien*, 28, 302-322.
- Brobjer, T. H. (2001). A Discussion and Source of Hölderlin's Influence on Nietzsche. Nietzsche's Use of William Neumann's Hölderlin. *Nietzsche-Studien*, 30, 397-412.
- Brobjer, T. H. (2008). *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Brodsky, G. M. (1998). Nietzsche's notion of amor fati. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 31, 35-57.
- Browning, R. M. (Ed.) (1984). *German Poetry from 1750 to 1900* (Vol. 39). New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.

- Casey, M. A. (2008). Nietzsche on Love. *Culture and Society*, 45, 368-374.
- Domino, B. (2012). Nietzsche's Use of Amor Fati in Ecce Homo. *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 43(2), 283-303.
- Emerson, R. W. (1841). *Essays*. Boston: HM Caldwell Company.
- Grillaert, N. (2006). Determining One's Fate: A Delineation of Nietzsche's Conception of Free Will. *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 31, 42-60.
- Han-Pile, B. (2009). Nietzsche and Amor Fati. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 19(2), 224-261.
- Hollingdale, R. J. a. F. N. (1992). My Life. *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Spring(3), 5-9.
- Katsafanas, P. (2012). Nietzsche on Agency and Self-Ignorance. *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 43(1), 5-17.
- Kaufmann, W. (1950). *Nietzsche Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (First Princeton Classics ed.). Princeton: NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kronman, A. T. (1995). Amor Fati (The Love of Fate). *The University of Toronto Law Journal*, 45(2), 163-178.
- Leiter, B. (1998). The Paradox of Fatalism and Self Creation in Nietzsche. In C. Janaway (Ed.), *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's Educator* (pp. 217-257). Oxford, UK: Claredon Press.
- Loeb, P. (2013). Eternal Recurrence. In K. G. a. J. Richardson (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* (pp. 645-674). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Magnus, B. (1973). Nietzsche's Eternalistic Counter-Myth. *The Review of Metaphysics*, 26(4), 604-616.

- May, S. (2015). Nietzsche on Love and the Affirmation of Life. *The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly*, 64, 264-276.
- Middleton, C. (Ed.) (1996). *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company Inc.
- Nehamas, A. (1980). The Eternal Recurrence. *The Philosophical Review*, 89(3), 331-356.
- Nehamas, A. (1985). *Nietzsche Life as Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nietzsche, F. (1880). *Human, All Too Human* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (1996)
- Nietzsche, F. (1885). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (A. D. Caro, Trans. A. D. C. a. R. Pippin Ed. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. (2006)
- Nietzsche, F. (1886). *Beyond Good and Evil* (W. Kaufman, Trans. Vintage Books ed.). New York, NY: Random House, Inc. (1989)
- Nietzsche, F. (1886). *The Birth of Tragedy* (R. Speirs, Trans. R. G. a. R. Speirs Ed. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (1999)
- Nietzsche, F. (1886). *Untimely Meditations* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans. D. Breazeale Ed. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. (1997)
- Nietzsche, F. (1887). *The Gay Science* (W. Kaufmann, Trans. Vintage Books ed.). Toronto, ON: Random House of Canada Limited. (1974)

- Nietzsche, F. (1887). *On the Genealogy of Morals* (W. K. a. R. Hollingdale, Trans. Vintage Books ed.). New York, NY: Random House, Inc. (1989)
- Nietzsche, F. (1888). *Twilight of the Idols* (J. Norman, Trans. A. R. a. J. Norman Ed. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. (2005)
- Nietzsche, F. (1901). *The Will to Power* (W. K. a. R. J. Hollingdale, Trans. W. Kaufman Ed. Vintage Books ed.). New York, NY: Random House Inc. (1968)
- Nietzsche, F. (1907). *Ecce Homo* (W. Kaufman, Trans. W. Kaufman Ed. Vintage Books ed.). New York, NY: Random House, Inc. (1989)
- Nietzsche, F. (2016). On the Relationship of Alcibiades' Speech to the Rest of the Speeches in Plato's "Symposium". *S. Ph. Essays and Explorations*, 1.1.
- Owen, D. (2005). On Failing to Be Agents: Freedom, Servitude, and the Concept of "the Weak" in Nietzsche's Practical Philosophy. *Philosophical Topics*, 33(2), 139-159.
- Owen, D. a. A. R. (2003). On Fate. *International Studies in Philosophy*, 35(3), 63-78.
- Pippin, R. B. (2010). *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy*. Chicago, Il: University of Chicago Press.
- Reginster, B. (2006). *The Will to Power The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Reginster, B. (2006). *The Affirmation of Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Richardson, J. (1996). *Nietzsche's System*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Richardson, J. (2009). Nietzsche's Freedoms. In K. G. a. S. May (Ed.), *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy* (pp. 127-150). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Richardson, J. a. B. L. (Ed.) (2001). *Nietzsche*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Ridley, A. (1997). Nietzsche's Greatest Weight. *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 14(Autumn), 19-25.
- Ridley, A. (2016). Nietzsche, Nature, Nurture. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 25(1), 129-143.
- Risinger, J. (2014). Transatlantic Fate: Emerson, Cavell, and Beautiful Necessity. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 25(3), 357-364.
- Santner, E. L. (Ed.) (1990). *Friedrich Hölderlin Hyperion and Selected Poems* (Vol. 22). New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. (1819). *The World as Will and Representation volume 1*. (E.F.J. Payne, Trans.) Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc. (1966)
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. (1840). *On the Basis of Morality*. (E.F.J. Payne, Trans.) Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company. (1998)
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. (1844). *The World as Will and Representation volume 2*. (E.F.J. Payne, Trans.) Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc. (1966)
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. (1851). *Parerga and Paralipomena volume 2*. (E.F.J. Payne, Trans.) New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (1974)
- Solomon, R. C. (2002). Nietzsche on Fatalism and "Free Will". *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 23(Spring), 63-87.
- Solomon, R. C. (2003). Nietzsche as Existentialist and Fatalist: The Practical Paradoxes of Self-Making. *International Studies in Philosophy*, 34(3), 41-54.

- Solomon, R. C. (2004). Nietzsche's Existentialism *Living with Nietzsche: What the Great "Immoralist" has to Teach Us*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Stambaugh, J. (1972). *Nietzsche's Thought of Eternal Return*. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Stern, T. (2013). Nietzsche, Amor Fati and The Gay Science. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, CXIII*(Part 2).
- Strawn, B. A. Holes in the Tower of Babel. Retrieved from Oxford Biblical Studies Online website: https://global.oup.com/obso/focus/focus_on_towerbabel/
- Ulfers, F. a. M. D. C. (2007). Nietzsche's Amor Fati: The Embracing of an Undecided Fate.
- Williams, B. (1973). The Makropulos case: reflections on the tedium of immortality *Problems of the Self*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.