

NIETZSCHE'S AGONISTIC ETHICS OF FRIENDSHIP

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In this essay, I argue that Nietzsche's account of friendship must be understood as part of his therapeutic philosophy that promotes shared self-overcoming. Previous accounts of Nietzschean friendship give a strong foundation, but concentrate on his middle works and overlook the role of agon in higher friendship. In order to grasp the ethical connections that Nietzsche makes between friendship, agon, and self-overcoming, I argue that we must turn to Nietzsche's writing on friendship in Thus Spoke Zarathustra and Beyond Good and Evil, as well as in the middle works. Nietzsche brings enmity into friendship not to deny the possibility of friendship, but instead to transform friendship into an exercise of therapeutics that promotes free-spiritedness and, in doing so, challenges the life-denying practices of nihilism.

In one's friend one should have one's best enemy. You should be closest to him in your heart when you strive against him.
— Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "On the Friend"

Friendship is, for Nietzsche, a significant philosophical topic because he believes in the diverse capacities of intimate relationships to effect change. This essay illustrates how to understand friendship as part of Nietzsche's therapeutic philosophy that promotes shared self-overcoming in the interest of individual and collective health.¹ Nie-

¹ My reading of Nietzsche as a therapeutic thinker is indebted to Horst Hutter. See Hutter, *Shaping The Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006) and H. Hutter and E. Friedland (eds.), *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching: For Individuals and Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). I would also like to thank the blind reviewers for their excellent comments which have helped me improve this essay. For additional accounts of Nietzsche's therapeutics, see also Patrick Wotling, *Nietzsche et le problème de la civilisation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2015); Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Beyond compassion: on Nietzsche's moral therapy in Dawn," *Continental Philosophy Review*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2011): 179–204; and Paul van Tongeren, *Reinterpreting Modern Culture* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2000).

tzschean friendship is an expression of what Pierre Hadot describes as the philosophical "art of living" in which philosophy is an "exercise" in which "the whole of existence is engaged."²

Nietzsche emphasizes bringing an agonistic ethics into one's life praxis and friendships, cultivating a severity to the self in which contest is praised. In order to transform friendship into an exercise of therapeutics that promotes free-spiritedness and, in doing so, challenges the life-denying practices of the last human, friendship requires some enmity. The kind of struggle that Nietzsche's agonistic ethics speaks of is taken from what he conceives to be a Homeric model. For Nietzsche, Homeric *agon* differs from the Socratic dialectic which attempts to extinguish its opponent through humiliation or making the other helpless to respond.³ *Agon* has a reciprocal and constructive quality because it functions through a co-operative mechanism of struggle and, in doing so, promotes mutual co-constitution.⁴

The practice of agonistics in "Homer on Competition"⁵ is described as providing a controlled release for the same kind of drives

² Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, (ed.) A. Davidson, (tr.) M. Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 83. See also Hutter, *Shaping The Future*, 2–3.

³ Christa Davis Acampora, "Nietzsche Contra Homer, Socrates, and Paul." *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, vol. 24 (Fall 2002): 25–53, here 30.

⁴ In her most recent work on *agon*, *Contesting Nietzsche*, Acampora explains different descriptions of competition found in *Homer's Wettkampf* and other early works of Nietzsche: one form of competition attempts to win through the destruction of the opponent and the other aims to win "by excelling what opposes (i.e., it engages the activity of elevating above [*erheben*] opposition)." Nietzsche's notion of *agon* relates to this second kind which can be understood as good because it supports general and individual welfare. The elevating approach to *agon*, if it seeks out "a relevant goal," can "promote meaningful excellence." Christa Davis Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 22.

⁵ When quoting from Nietzsche's works, I use the following translations: Carol Diethe for both "Homer on Competition" and "On the Genealogy of Morality," in *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, (ed.) K. Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Walter Kaufman for *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage, 1974), *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Vintage, 1966), and *Ecce Homo* (New York: Vintage, 1967), hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as GS, BGE, and EC; R.J. Hollingdale for Volume 1 of *Human All Too Human*, hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text respectively as HAH, as well as "Assorted Opinions and Maxims" and "The Wanderer and His Shadow," in Volume 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and *Daybreak* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Graham Parkes for *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as Z. In references to Nietzsche's translated works,

(cruelty, enmity) that Nietzsche later states in *Beyond Good and Evil* are spiritualized to allow for greater rigour in learning, psychological health, and creative development. (See BGE, §§229, 230)⁶ In addition to the prevention of savagery and violence through sublimation, Nietzsche writes about *agon* in antiquity being performed by those who had a strong bond with their community and with each other.⁷

In order to grasp the ethical connections that Nietzsche makes between friendship, *agon*, and self-overcoming, we must turn to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil* as well as the free spirits trilogy (*Human All Too Human*, *Daybreak*, and *The Gay Science*). These texts show that Nietzsche's emphasis on the need for enemies to test out one's "intellectual conscience"⁸ is connected to, rather than opposed to, his concept of friendship. Nietzsche's voice becomes more confrontational and more severe in *Zarathustra* and *Beyond* because he wants to puncture the escapism of the last human who represents Nietzsche's concept of weak nihilism.⁹ To every question posed, the last human's only response is to blink. (Z P, §5) He has given up on pursuing life challenges; he seeks small comforts

Roman numerals denote the volume number of a set of collected works or standard subdivision within a single work and Arabic numerals preceded by § the relevant section number. In cases in which Nietzsche's prefaces are cited, the letter P is used followed by the relevant section number. The letter P is also used for the prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The essay "Homer on Competition" is cited with page numbers.

⁶ As Yunus Tuncel points out, "for Nietzsche there is wisdom in cruelty" when it is disciplined and allowed a just space in which to be expressed. Yunus Tuncel, *Agon in Nietzsche* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2013), 74. See also Siemens's observations about the transformation of natural drives into agonistic ones: "In HC, Nietzsche is at pains throughout to show how excessive natural drives such as hatred, revenge, etc. are transformed from destructive forces into constructive agonal affects such as envy and ambition which stimulate cultural production." Herman Siemens, "Agonal Communities of Taste: Law and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy of Transvaluation," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, vol. 24 (Fall 2002): 83–112, here 100.

⁷ "It was not a boundless and indeterminate ambition like most modern ambition: the youth thought of the good of his native city when he ran a race or threw or sang; he wanted to increase its reputation through his own...in this his selfishness was lit, as well as curbed and restricted" ("Homer on Competition," 179).

⁸ For an explanation of the intellectual conscience see GS, §§2, 319, 335, and 344.

⁹ The nihilism of last human in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is weak and reactive as opposed to a strong active nihilism that destroys in order to create. Nietzsche turns to the figure of the lion to represent active nihilism (Z I, "On the Three Transformations") which occurs when one's highest values turn against oneself so that new values can emerge.

and safety; apathy is his all-pervasive *choix de vie*. Zarathustra is the one who reveals to us and teaches us about, as Heidegger states, the one "who it behooves us to overcome."¹⁰

Nietzsche turns to Zarathustra to communicate his philosophy because he believes Zarathustra, the Persian prophet, was the first person to consider the fundamental struggle between good and evil and to transform these concepts into a morality; as such, the figure of Zarathustra must return to question and re-evaluate them. (EH, "Why I am a Destiny," §3) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is not only a teaching of Nietzsche's methods for transforming moral values: it contains the most fundamental concepts of Nietzsche's philosophy, such as the Overhuman and the will to power, as well as key writings vital for a study on Nietzschean friendship. It is also in this text that we find the clearest representation of Nietzsche's thought as therapeutic philosophy.

Nietzsche makes a strong connection between himself and Zarathustra suggesting that in the text of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* we can find Nietzsche's most essential thoughts.¹¹ In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche states that he shares many of the same goals and interests of Zarathustra: "I have not said anything that I would not have said five years ago through the mouth of Zarathustra." (EH, "Why I am a Destiny," §8) *Zarathustra* is a text in which Nietzsche communicates his philosophical ideas shrouded in complex stylistic devices, yet it is a text at the centre of Nietzsche's thought exemplifying a character who attempts to perform his positive philosophy. Zarathustra is representative of a human type who has the "great health." (EH, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," §2)¹² He emphasizes the importance of struggle in self-becoming and is one to be studied, but not copied because there is not one health, it is different for everyone (GS, §120); the great health is "a health that one doesn't only have, but also acquires continually and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up." (EH, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," §2) Through the adventures of Zarathustra, Nietzsche aims to push free spirits to begin the process of self-overcoming that he thinks is

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. II, (tr.) D. F. Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 33.

¹¹ Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 5.

¹² See GS, §382 for a description of the great health.

necessary for individual and cultural transformation, and the health of future generations.¹³

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche describes friendship as involving “a shared higher thirst for an ideal above.” (GS, §14) Like Aristotle, Kant, and others writing about friendship in the history of philosophy, Nietzsche has a hierarchical understanding of friendship.¹⁴ He believes in its lesser and greater forms and praises those relationships that develop excellence which, for Nietzsche, involves the flourishing of the will to power through striving. Nietzsche expresses dislike about relationships that may limit overcoming and is especially suspicious of friendships that are repressive of individual creativity. The supposition that Nietzsche is an autarkic individualist or a misanthrope is often founded on such remarks.

One example of what appears to be misanthropy occurs in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* when Nietzsche writes, “Our belief in others betrays wherein we should like to believe in ourselves. Our yearning for a friend is our betrayer.” (Z I, “On the Friend”) What Nietzsche expresses in this statement, however, is his concern for the distractions that can be part of friendship, more precisely he is referring to friendships that encourage escapism, herd behavior, and, in doing so, contribute to the last human mentality. Nietzsche does not want his readers to relinquish their goals and desires for those of the friend or the group. Instead of making friendship seem impossible, as may be supposed, Nietzsche is attempting to provoke therapeutic reflection and open his readers up to other friendship possibilities that involve *agon*. By encouraging self-concern and competition between friends, he encourages opposition to qualities of the last human such as inactivity and hopelessness.

In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes, “For the worthier enemy, O my friends, shall you save yourselves [*aufsparen*]: therefore you must pass many things by.” (Z III, “On Old and New Tablets,” §21) This

¹³ This interpretation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is inspired by Hutter’s reading of Nietzsche in *Shaping The Future*.

¹⁴ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd (ed. and tr.) T. Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999), Books VIII and IX. Kant discusses friendship in his *Lectures on Ethics*, (ed. and tr.) P. Heath, (ed.) J.B. Schneewind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and in *The Metaphysics of Morals, in Practical Philosophy*, (ed. and tr.) M. J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Other hierarchical interpretations of friendship include Cicero, *On Friendship and the Dream of Scipio (Laelius de Amicitia and Somnium Scipionis)*, (ed. and tr.) J.G.F. Powerll, (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1990) and Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, (tr.) M.A. Screech (London: Penguin Books, 1991), Book 1, Chapter 28, “*De l’amitié*” or “On Friendship.”

statement emphasizes the importance of spending time alone and avoiding relationships that limit growth. In the *Third Part of Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes about the experience of feeling lonelier when among others than when in solitude. (Z III, "The Return Home") The implication being made is that human relationships should be approached with discretion and questioned in order to determine whether they support one's own health and free-spiritedness.

Nietzsche states that one of the characteristics of a free spirit is that he does not want to be served and he finds his happiness is this. (HAH, §432) Nietzsche's notion of the free spirit is a concept from *Human All Too Human* that remains important to him throughout his oeuvre, providing a foundation for understanding the vital role that knowledge-seeking plays in his agonistic ethics of friendship. Nietzsche distinguishes the free spirit from the fettered spirit whose beliefs are based on habit instead of reason. (HAH, §226) The fettered spirit has faith whereas the free spirit questions and seeks out knowledge in contrast to the "dominant view of the age" and what is expected from him (HAH, §225) and in doing so engages his intellectual conscience. (GS, §335) The free spirit is a "relative concept" (HAH, §225) because free-spiritedness is actualized with great variance depending upon one's position in the world and how one distinguishes oneself from it. Free spirits practice honesty (*Redlichkeit*) (BGE, §227), the relinquishment of certitude (GS, §347), and the destruction of habituated beliefs. (HAH, §225) Nietzsche values the pursuit of one's "own source of experience" (HAH, §292) instead of following others or attempting to control their experiences.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes that a tyrant cannot have friends and that a slave cannot be a friend. The unrestrained compulsion to have control or be controlled infringes upon one's ability to experience friendship. Nietzsche claims that women are incapable of friendship because they embody the two oppositional place-holders of slave and tyrant, struggling with the power dynamics of love without knowing friendship. (Z I, "On the Friend") Nietzsche also writes that women love as if it is a faith (GS, §363) and, in doing so, move too close to the other; this makes them unable to keep the distance that he thinks is important for friendship.¹⁵

In *Human All Too Human*, Nietzsche writes that a free spirit does not want to be served immediately after writing that women want to serve. (HAH, §423) In both *Human* and *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche makes

¹⁵ See "Assorted Opinions and Maxims," §241.

it clear that women are not free spirits nor are they capable of friendship *yet*.

A good friendship originates when one party has great respect for the other, more indeed than for himself, when one party likewise loves the other, though not so much as he does himself, and when, finally one party knows how to facilitate the association by adding to it a delicate tinge of intimacy while at the same time prudently withholding actual and genuine intimacy and the confounding of I and Thou.¹⁶

Women are unable to take part in Nietzsche's formula of "good friendship" because they lack respect for the other, while loving the other more. Women love the other more in a double sense: they love the other, as man, more, because they are willing to sacrifice so much to him in love (GS, §363), and they love the other of themselves more, namely the image of 'woman' that has been created by man. "For it is man who creates for himself the image of woman, and woman forms herself according to this image." (GS, §68) Luce Irigaray calls this doubling of love that lacks autonomy a "love of the same" and describes it as "undifferentiated attraction to the archaic, as love of that which does not and will not know itself as different."¹⁷

Nietzsche does not limit his critique to women: he writes that men lack generosity¹⁸ because they inhibit the abilities of women to become friends by failing to behave as friends themselves. (Z I, "On the Friend") Jacques Derrida assigns political importance to Nietzsche's reflection on the relationship between men and women, attributing the following to him: "Incapable of friendship, enmity, justice, war, respect for the other, whether friend or enemy, woman is not man; she is not even part of humanity."¹⁹ But, is it the case that Derrida reads Nietzsche too strongly? Although Nietzsche views woman as being unable to have friendship, he also suggests that women are especially capable of fighting and taking part in enmity driven activities such as revenge. (GS, §69) The insight to be gained from Derrida is that Nietzsche acknowledges how the exclusion of women from friendship is related to an absence of female autonomy and this predicament is connected more fundamentally to the fact

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, (tr.) C. Burke and G. C. Gill (London: Continuum, 2004), 83.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, (tr.) G. Collins (London: Verso, 1997), 283.

that female identity apart from male appropriation is largely unknown. As Simone de Beauvoir notices when she quotes Nietzsche in *The Second Sex*, Nietzsche is aware of the difficult predicament that women face in their relationships with men.²⁰ Nietzsche writes that whereas a woman loves with “total devotion” as if it was her “faith” and “gives herself away, man acquires more.” (GS, §363) In Nietzsche’s writings, women do not have access to the fraternity that shapes the values of friendship, but are instead caught up in the power vacillations that he associates with love and greed (*Habsucht*). (GS, §14)

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra is challenged by his encounters with people who have nothing to offer, who suffer from greed and weakness. During the narrative of *Zarathustra*, after making the mistake of giving to those who are unable to bestow anything themselves, Zarathustra becomes more cautious in his interactions with people. Among these characters we find Zarathustra’s first friend, the corpse, whom he takes on as a heavy burden and who is literally nothing but a dead weight on his shoulder. Then there is the jester, who ridicules Zarathustra and seems ready to deceive him any moment, and also the audience of people at the town who are incapable of listening to Zarathustra without turning him into an object of entertainment. (Z P, §6–9) Zarathustra concludes that he must look for “living companions...who will follow me because they want to follow themselves” (Z P, §9), namely people who will appreciate his teachings yet maintain their abilities to think critically, and in doing so, have some contest to contribute to the relationship.

Later in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes of those who cannot give and who measure every interaction with the concern to receive the greatest advantage, thinking only of themselves. (Z I, “On the Bestowing Virtue,” §1) He states that they act like secretive thieves, trying to manipulate the situation for their benefit: “With the eye of a thief it looks at everything that shines; with the greed of hunger it measures him who has plenty to eat; and it is always skulking around the table of those who bestow.” (*Ibid.*) These are companions to be avoided because they suffer from degeneration, according to Zarathustra, and a “sick selfishness” (*Ibid.*) that does not consider others during decision making unless it is to determine how much can be taken from them.

²⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe* (Gallimard, 1949), 477, tr. by H.M. Parshley as *The Second Sex* (New York: Knopf, 1957), 642.

Nietzsche also writes about those whose circumstances make it such that they have nothing to give and become resentful in the reception of kindness from another. (Z II, "On Those Who Pity") He suggests that one should be wary of how one offers help in order to avoid offending the pride of the person who is suffering. In many instances, the deed of assistance cannot be forgotten and the one who was helped will look for a way to equalize what is perceived to be a debt.

The expression of *Schadenfreude* is one of the methods used to achieve equalization: one experiences pleasure in the misfortune of his friend because "the harm that befalls another makes him our equal, it appeases our envy."²¹ Nietzsche states that the feeling of *Schadenfreude* is a common reaction for one who lacks powers in a society that values equality. However, experiencing *Schadenfreude* does not necessarily make one a bad friend if one feels pleasure at the other's misfortune because it equalizes their power dynamics. If one additionally manipulates this new advantage enacting a "sick selfishness" to become further advantaged, then Nietzsche considers it problematic. Instead of seeking revenge, one can practice restraint and view equalization as an opportunity for friendship to emerge through a mutual striving in which peers raise each other up in competition rather than seeking to bring the other down through greed and weakness.

In the Preface to Volume I of *Human All Too Human*, Nietzsche states that he invented his free spirits to replace those friends he lacked and to keep him company "as brave companions and familiars." (HAH, P I, §2) In the story of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra seeks out friends with whom he can share joy and *agon*, but instead finds only disciples. Many attempts are made to help the disciples find themselves so that they may also shift from being followers to friends, but it is questionable whether any of them actually do this. At the end of the First Part, Zarathustra leaves his disciples because he believes that they need a push to seek out who they are apart from him. He abandons his companions because they have become believers in him instead of seeking themselves. (Z I, "On the Bestowing Virtue," §3)

Zarathustra is looking for companions to learn from and to share his ideas with, but comes to understand that those whom he has befriended have not done the self-searching necessary to change from being disciples to being friends. They have not discovered who they are. Zarathustra states, "Now I bid you lose me and find your-

²¹ "The Wanderer and His Shadow," §7.

selves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you." (Z I, "On the Bestowing Virtue," §3) As a mentor to his companions, Zarathustra considers it vital that he relinquishes his leadership so that his disciples can form their own experiences and beliefs based on the practices of free-spiritedness, such as self-questioning and honesty (*Redlichkeit*).

If one is too weary to seek out "genuine opponents" in his students or to struggle against his teachers, then the thinker has lost his strength.²² Nietzsche writes that many people, not only thinkers, require "open enemies." (GS, §169) Companions who cannot provide any opposition, who fail to think for themselves are not considered friends. In his letters, Nietzsche expresses frustration about his relationship with Paul Lanzky²³ because he could not engage in a philosophical discussion with him: he was seeking too often to admire or agree.

People who use their companions as a means of escape or who provide others with a means of escape through a "contrived happiness" (Z P, §5) are also questioned by Nietzsche. Escapism is promoted, for example, through the concept of neighbourly love that dictates that consideration for the other has a higher moral value than consideration of the self. Nietzsche writes, "the Thou has been pronounced holy, but not yet the I: so the human being crowds toward the neighbour." (Z I, "On Love of One's Neighbour") Nietzsche suggests that these acquaintance-type relationships encourage complacency through shared manipulation. For example, this may occur when one convinces his neighbour of his own grandeur and then chooses to believe his neighbour's perspective rather than his own. One may also forget about his own life in the admiration of his neighbour. "One man runs to the neighbour because he seeks himself, and the other because he would like to lose himself. Your bad love of yourselves makes solitude a prison for you." (*Ibid.*)

Nietzsche indicates that relationships that perpetuate self-escape are spiritually stunting and should be limited. They should be recognized for what they are—namely "two immature persons neither of whom has learned to be alone or to make something of himself."²⁴

²² *Daybreak*, §542.

²³ In a letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, Nietzsche expresses frustration with Lanzky who was visiting him in Nice, calling him the "German who revered me." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Briefe*, in *Kritische Studienausgabe*, in 8 volumes, (ed.) G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter; Munich: dtv, 1986), III.3, 29–31.

²⁴ Walter Kaufmann. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 367.

Although this statement of Kaufmann's does not fully capture the spectrum of what occurs in relationships of escapism, it indicates what the solution to them might be, specifically greater solitude and energy given to self-reflection and the pursuit of those goals that are meaningful to oneself.

The common thread that runs through Nietzsche's critique of these lower or non-friendships is the need to avoid companionships that infringe upon one's ability to enact the values of the free-spirit such as honesty, the relinquishment of certitude, and the destruction of habituated beliefs. In order to determine whether one's current friendship is unhealthy in a Nietzschean sense, one might ask: does this relationship involve tyranny or prevent knowledge-seeking? Does it encourage will-less-ness, the comportment of the last human who avoids difficult questions and circumstances? Certainly if it invalidates the pursuit of one's "own source of experience" (HAH, §292) and the development of the intellectual conscience then it would be a relationship to be despised. Self-cultivation is not to be stifled in Nietzschean friendship.

Near the end of the Prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra states, "Companions [*Gefährten*] the creator seeks and not corpses, not herds or believers either. Fellow creators [*Mitschaffenden*] the creator seeks, those who inscribe new values on new tablets." (Z P, §9) In this section, Nietzsche writes about the types of people that Zarathustra seeks in order to disseminate his teachings and facilitate others in self-overcoming. These types, namely the creators (*Schaffenden*), harvesters (*Erntenden*), and celebrants (*Feiernden*), provide insight into those kinds of friendship that Nietzsche values. Zarathustra states that his companions will be called destroyers and "despisers of good and evil" because their actions will challenge values and provoke change, but they will also celebrate life. (Z P, §9) Zarathustra's words on his future companions suggest that they will embody the characteristics of the free spirit and exceed them. He wants to be friends with individuals who have the greatest capacities for joy, transformation, and creativity. These qualities correspond to three higher types of Nietzschean friendship: the joyful friendship, the agonistic friendship, and the bestowing friendship.

Nietzsche places importance on the sharing of joy between friends, especially in his free spirit texts. He writes that "Fellow rejoicing (*Mitfreude*), not fellow suffering (*Mitleiden*) makes the friend" (HAH, §499) and that friends should "*share not suffering but joy.*" (GS, §338) In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche expresses his thoughts on the experience of causing others to experience joy: "Why is making joyful the greatest of all joys?—Because we thereby give joy to our

fifty separate drives all at once. Individually they may be very little joys: but if we take them all into one hand, our hand is fuller than at any other time—and our heart too!”²⁵ For Nietzsche, celebrating with others involves a shared creative movement that allows the drives to express themselves more fully. Friends join together to share uplifting emotions, experience pleasure and play, and affirm each other.

At many points in the free spirit texts Nietzsche indicates that joy is a central part of friendship and the above examples are reasons why it is easy to assume Nietzsche's notion of friendship is limited to these kinds of statements. Although the friendship of sharing joy is important to Nietzsche, its significance lies in its ability to act as a healing response to the negative consequences of pity (*Mitleid*) and provide a transformative outlet for the difficulties of life. What is important in Nietzsche's therapeutic scheme is that by giving expression to the many drives through shared joy, this kind of friendship turns its gaze away from suffering and pity. The friends refuse to “be made gloomy,”²⁶ refuse to burden each other with their lamentations and instead find repose from the difficulties of life through shared enjoyment. They celebrates life and the diversity of the human spirit: “What is love but understanding and rejoicing at the fact that another lives, feels and acts in a way different from and opposite to ours?”²⁷ The joyful friendship involves proximity and care, but often occurs without too much depth by concentrating on the beauty of the other and the fun the friends have together.²⁸

Nietzsche contends that “some people need open enemies if they are to rise to the level of their own virtue, virility and cheerfulness.” (GS, §169) Agonistic friendship is a technique of Nietzschean therapeutics that supports knowledge-seeking. Friends of *agon* incorporate spiritualized enmity into friendship so that they can provide each other with the opportunity for self-examination through cooperative competition. The practice of agonistic interactions devel-

²⁵ *Daybreak*, §422.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, §144.

²⁷ “Assorted Opinions and Maxims,” §75.

²⁸ In *Daybreak*, §309 Nietzsche discusses how love tends to focus on as much beauty as possible, even to the point of self-deception. See also HAH, P I, §1: “What I again and again needed most for my cure and self-restoration, however, was the belief that I was not thus isolated, not alone in seeing as I did—an enchanted surmising of relatedness and identity in eye and desires, a reposing in a trust of friendship, a blindness in concert with another without suspicion or question-marks, a pleasure in foregrounds, surfaces, things close and closest, in everything possessing colour, skin and apparitionality.”

ops the virtue of courage while testing out one's abilities through contest with peers. By focusing on a shared higher goal, agonistic friends transform their envy and personal frustrations into a competitive energy that strives against the other. (See GS, §§14 and 283; Z I "On the Friend")

Friends of *agon* ultimately seek out their own growth, but their potential to self-overcome is also connected to their friend's level of excellence. Attainment of the shared goal is a process that involves competitive reciprocity and is best experienced by well-matched equals who find each other admirable. Care for the friend is built on admiration for his character or some group of qualities which one hopes to achieve through struggle against him. Enmity is brought into friendship and transformed into a tool for growth. (Z I, "On the Friend"; see Z I, "On the Bestowing Virtue," §3 and Z II, "On the Tarrantulas")

Although Nietzsche acknowledges the importance of affirmative relationships (the joyful friendship), he views conflict and critique as part of a higher culture necessary for individual and societal health. (See GS, §§297 and 307) Those friendships that can grow through conflict are much more deeply affirmative than any playful celebratory friendship can be. This is because conflict and critique force a process of questioning and examination that allows the friends to gain a greater understanding of who they are and hope to become.

Agonistic friends nourish a return to spiritualized cruelty that Nietzsche considers to be a Greek wisdom in which envy and contest are associated with the good and virtue is exhibited instead of Christian sin.²⁹ In *Human*, Nietzsche writes, "there is a will to the tragic and to pessimism that is as much a sign of severity and of strength of intellect (taste, feeling, conscience)...Behind such a will there stands courage, pride, the longing for a *great* enemy." (HAH, P II, 7) This combined notion of intellectual strength and enmity is developed in Nietzsche's later texts and becomes an important tool to inspire self-overcoming in striving friendships.

"Almost everything we call 'higher culture' is based on the spiritualization (*Vergeistigung*) of *cruelty*, on its becoming more profound: this is my proposition" writes Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil* (§229). In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche states that in order to achieve greatness, one must be able to inflict suffering not only on oneself, but also on others, and to be able to endure their reactions to it. (GS,

²⁹ See Daybreak, §§38 and 39. Walter Kaufmann states that Nietzsche "renounced Christian love for the sake of Greek friendship" (Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 366).

§325; see also GS, §266) When cruelty is spiritualized and transfigured through the drive to love and learn in agonistic friendship, it allows for the sublimation of one's frustrations (such as feelings of resentment or the desire for revenge) into a competitive and potentially productive force.

In *Beyond and Zarathustra*, Nietzsche discusses the need for spiritualized cruelty and its role in relationships with the self and others. In order to learn something new and not simply rest in familiarity, Nietzsche states that it is important to develop a severity toward the self that refuses one's interior resistance against change. (BGE, 229) He describes this as "a kind of cruelty of the intellectual conscience and taste" toward the self (BGE, 230) and later connects it to his concept of noble morality,³⁰ which he states is very difficult for those of "modern ideas" to grasp.

Spiritualized cruelty is a virtue for "the seeker after knowledge" (*der Erkennende*) who must use it against himself to admit when he is wrong or learn something that is against his hopes. (BGE, §229) It is also an ability that bodes well in friendship, according to Nietzsche, because it allows one to say what is necessary to the friend whether it is kind or not. Nietzsche states that sometimes it is important to be cruel to the friend out of care for him. He writes that there are times in friendship when one must make an injustice against the friend in order to drive him away.³¹ Nietzsche's ethics of friendship can require one to enact what we might call today "tough love," for example, to turn away from the friend out of love as Zarathustra does when he abandons his disciples at the end of the first part of *Zarathustra*.³²

Nietzsche's agonistic friendship involves peers and presumes enough equality between friends so that passionate knowledge-seeking can be a shared experience. Friends implement self-control and sublimate their desires for domination of the other into competitive striving for a higher ideal. (GS, §14) They must maintain an emotional distance between each other in order to observe one

³⁰ "The capacity for and the duty of, long gratitude and long revenge—both only among one's peers—refinement in repaying, the sophisticated concept of friendship, a certain necessity for having enemies (as it were, as drainage ditches for the affects of envy, quarrelsomeness, exuberance—at bottom, in order to be capable of being good *friends*): all these are typical characteristics of the noble morality which, as suggested, is not the morality of 'modern ideas' and therefore is hard to empathize with today, also hard to dig up and uncover." (BGE, §260)

³¹ *Daybreak*, §489.

³² See Z I, "On the Bestowing Virtue," §3 and Z II, "The Child With the Mirror."

another and learn. However, since agonistic friends are both invested in the same project and consider the other a worthy partner-opponent, they have admiration and respect for one another. Agonistic friends are constantly testing the limits of each other's beliefs and emotional capacities and thus being shaped through their interactions with one another. They remain fixed on the experience of learning and overcoming which requires both empathy and spiritualized cruelty. There is a profound level of recognition that occurs in this kind of friendship, one that is facilitated through the ability that both friends have to assert their ideas and arguments, to go out into the world and pursue their beliefs, and find others interested in engaging with them.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes, "I teach you the friend and his overfull heart... in whom the world stands complete, a vessel of goodness—the creating friend, who always has a complete world to bestow." (Z I, "On Love of One's Neighbour") The bestowing friend is portrayed as someone who has tremendous self-love and knowledge and longs to share, to find friends who will absorb his ideas. He is motivated by a sense of self-mastery, his self-control allows for a high level of creative energy in his own life to be expressed toward others. (Z I, "On the Bestowing Virtue") He is a leader, mentor, and teacher to his friends.

The bestower has reached a point of clarity and satisfaction with himself such that he is not competitive with others, like friends engaged in an agonistic relationship. He has casted aside the battle-driven approach and learnt gracefulness and modesty in his interactions with others. He expresses spiritualized cruelty toward his friends in order to incite struggle within them so they can strive against him without actively entering into competition himself. He recognizes potential in others and offers his wisdom to them so that they may use it for their own growth, believing that "to *give* is more blessed than *to have*."³³

The development of the bestowing virtue comes about through the accumulation and refinement of knowledge and the self-transformation that is associated with this process which requires great discipline. "When you despise what is pleasant and the soft bed, and cannot bed down far enough from the soft-hearted: there lies the origin of your virtue." In order to have the bestowing virtue you must become "sacrifices and bestowals" through the "thirst to pile up all riches in your souls." However this thirst is not that of a hoarder because one acquires precisely in order to bestow. "You

³³ "The Wanderer and His Shadow," §320.

compel all things toward you and into you, that they may flow back out of your wells as gifts of your love." (Z I, "On the Bestowing Virtue," §1) One requires great confidence and resilience to be a bestower.

The bestower is someone who has learnt to shape his drives into a trajectory that allows for his purposeful creation to be extended to others. Nietzsche writes that the bestowing virtue is a "power...a ruling thought it is, and around it a clever soul: a golden sun, and around it the serpent of knowledge." (Z I, "On the Bestowing Virtue," §1) The possession of the bestowing virtue is representative of Nietzschean flourishing because the bestower has reached a place of self-mastery having attained both knowledge and power that set him apart from his past selves and other people.

Although Nietzsche does think self-love is a necessity for higher friendship, he also suggests that when it reaches a creative height exemplified in the character of the bestower, the desire to command others supersedes the explicit reciprocity that is active in agonistic friendship. This is because in addition to his agonistic structure of friendship that supports the shared growth of friends, Nietzsche wants to promote the development of genius individuals³⁴ who will become leaders and the bestowing virtue speaks precisely to this aim. Also, Nietzsche is insistent about the importance of maintaining "independence [*Unabhängigkeit*] of soul" over and above friendship "if one loves freedom as the freedom of great souls and he [the friend] threatens this kind of freedom." (GS, 98)

All three of these higher friendships are considered admirable for Nietzsche, part of building an ethics of friendship that supports creative growth and overcoming. Whereas the joyful friendship is most prominent in the middle works and the bestowing friendship more present in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's high appraisal of agonistic striving between friends is discussed through the middle to late period with the most sustaining presence in his oeuvre. An account of Nietzschean friendship that fails to acknowledge the important role that qualities of *agon* (cruelty, enmity, egoism) have in his ethics is one that does not fully grasp the significance of Nietzsche's re-evaluative plan to change human relationships.

In *The Gay Science* (§14), Nietzsche writes that friendship is distinguished from possessive love by its orientation to a shared higher ideal. In conclusion, I will ask what this ideal is and if it can tell us more about Nietzsche's ethics of friendship. There is a fair amount of

³⁴ Nietzsche describes a genius as someone who "begets or gives birth, taking both terms in their most elevated sense." (BGE, §206)

evidence in Nietzsche's writing to claim that truth is the ideal of friendship for Nietzsche.³⁵ Certainly philosophers attempt to seek out truth and Nietzsche makes fun of this³⁶, but he also maintains that insight is a virtue (BGE, §284) and that this virtue is connected to the pursuit of truth.³⁷ In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche praises the truthfulness of Zarathustra stating that,

Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His teaching is the only one that considers truthfulness to be the highest virtue—that means the opposite of the cowardice of 'idealist,' who take flight in the face of reality...The self-overcoming of morality from out of truthfulness, the self-overcoming of moralists into their opposite—*into me*—that is what the name of Zarathustra means coming from my mouth. (EH, "Why I am a Destiny," §3)

Zarathustra attempts to look to his intellectual conscience, what Nietzsche explains as the conscience behind the conscience that presumes and judges. The intellectual conscience asks the self how it came to the judgment it is making, what lies at the source of its conviction. (GS, §335) By attempting a meta-perspective during the process of judgment, there is a purification of one's opinions away from moral judgment, Nietzsche states, that aids in the quest toward truth.

In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche writes that one must welcome opposition to one's thoughts in order to promote honesty. He states that one should embrace opposition from others (friends, enemies) and also self-question all in the interest of truth. Even if it means facing defeat, one must strive for truth.³⁸ Those friendships that challenge personal truths or beliefs can act as a kind of check on those tendencies that seek out the familiar and the comfortable. (GS, §355) Friends who are openly critical can attempt to prevent the bending that the "will to truth" performs to make all other beings graspable, the bending of the 'truth' of other beings toward one's own perspective (Z II, "On Self-Overcoming"). Nietzsche suggests that friends can

³⁵ Robert Miner argues that truth, as the goal of friendship for Nietzsche, involves an ongoing voyage or quest in which questions are posed in the search for the "knowledge of truth," a truth which is non-dogmatic. Robert C. Miner, "Nietzsche on Friendship," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, vol. 40 (Fall 2010): 47–69, here 58.

³⁶ "Take care, philosophers and friends, of knowledge, and beware of martyrdom! Of suffering for 'the truth's sake!'" (BGE, §25)

³⁷ Miner, "Nietzsche on Friendship," 60.

³⁸ *Daybreak*, §370.

provide a meta-perspective when one fails to do so for oneself, or at least an alternative to the belief that is taken as a given. By affecting the intellectual conscience, friendship has the capacity to change the structures of belief systems and examine those convictions one holds dear, to test the level of one's probity (*Redlichkeit*). In Nietzschean terms, the point is not that 'the Truth' will be achieved one day, but rather that the development of the intellectual conscience through critical dialogue (with the self and others) will assist in understanding more about the process in which knowledge is "humanized" so that better descriptions of things can be formed. (GS, §112)

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche states that his path of "the seeker for knowledge" involves living an experimental way of life, a life of dangers, victories, failures, and attempts. "*Life as a means to knowledge*" (GS, §324) is praised. Later in *Zarathustra*, this path is qualified by Nietzsche's statement that life must always overcome itself and that one's knowledge of 'truth' must be placed repeatedly into doubt. This implies that the ideal of Nietzschean friendship is not 'truth' *per se*, but rather that friendship which pursues truth and health under the intellectual conscience serves the higher goal of overcoming. We can follow Deleuze here when he writes, "the friend, says Zarathustra, is always the third person in between 'I' and 'Me' who pushes me to overcome myself and to be overcome in order to live."³⁹

Certainly, the connections made between friendship, overcoming, and the Overhuman in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* are very strong ones. Nietzsche writes, "you cannot adorn yourself well enough for your friend: for you shall be to him an arrow and a yearning for the Overhuman." (Z I, "On the Friend") He also writes "Not the neighbor do I teach you, but the friend. May the friend be to you a festival of the earth and a premonition of the Overhuman." (Z I, "On Love of One's Neighbor") According to Kaufmann, Nietzsche's idea of friendship reaches its maturity in *Zarathustra* when it becomes a longing for the Overhuman or "a mean toward the self-perfection of two human beings."⁴⁰ But, is Nietzsche really seeking "self-perfection"? Nietzsche writes in *Zarathustra* that "the human is a bridge and not a goal" (Z II, "On Old and New Tablets," §3, my emphasis) and this suggests that Nietzsche is seeking something other than the perfection of the human. Instead, he is looking for "a beginning anew, a play" (Z I, "On the Three Transformations") and this play arises out of struggle and

³⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, (tr.) H. Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 6.

⁴⁰ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 366.

no-saying. Nietzsche wants to destroy the last human which concerns, as Heidegger points out, “the Platonic, Christian-moral interpretation of the world,”⁴¹ but this destruction goes further. In the interest of multiplicities and becomings, Nietzsche’s goal is to move through the last human and into, as Deleuze writes, “the man who wants to perish,”⁴² who takes destruction to its limit so that it becomes affirmative and creates something new, *über* or over what has been before.

In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes that the “Overhuman is the sense or meaning of the earth [*Sinn der Erde*]” against the other-worldly. (Z P, §3) The *Übermensch* is not a god, nor is it a type to be viewed through Darwinism and “hero worship.”⁴³ It is not about self-perfection. Yet, this nebulous thing or state of being can be approximated and discussed conceptually without seeking a precise representation for it. We can do more than feel or sense it.⁴⁴

Becoming *übermenschlich* involves a state of being called “post metaphysical.”⁴⁵ Learning how to become post metaphysical requires a heightened awareness of the influences that have come to affect the structures of knowledge that are dominant. This occurs through the development of the intellectual conscience in solitude or in relationships that support a way of life which does not seek exterior justification in religion. It is not that one develops some absolute kind of knowledge or eternal truth, but that descriptions become more self-aware and nuanced. Habits must be re-programmed, ways of life and the structure of values changed. The after of this process of overcoming is the Overhuman who “needs steps and opposition among steps and climbers! To climb is what life wills, and in climbing to overcome itself.” (Z II, “On the Tarantulas”)

The Overhuman rises through the overcomer who engages in active nihilism; they are a value-creator who has taken many steps in order to sublimate their drives, purify their judgments and self-

⁴¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. III, (tr.). D.F. Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 217.

⁴² Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 175.

⁴³ Jill Marsden, “Sensing the Overhuman,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* vol. 30 (Autumn 2005): 102–12, here 102. See EH, “Why I Write Such Good Books,” §1.

⁴⁴ Marsden states that the *übermenschlich* cannot be conceptualized but rather must be sensed or felt and that “the overhuman is to be sensed in Nietzsche’s thinking at the very point where cognition fails” (*Sensing the Overhuman*,” 108–9).

⁴⁵ Ansell Pearson, “The Eternal Return of the Overhuman: The Weightiest Knowledge and the Abyss of Light,” *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, vol. 30 (Fall 2005): 1–21, here 1.

overcome. The Overhuman is that ephemeral idea, a representation of the many becomings, the possibilities related to the therapeutic and knowledge-seeking *choix de vie* of the free spirit. The task of the free spirit is to change values and there is substantial evidence in Nietzsche's writing to suggest that this occurs through agonistic striving between friends.

Nietzsche views friendship as an opportunity for shared self-cultivation and the coming of the Overhuman. Keith Ansell Pearson points out that the Overhuman can only become through the human: the two are irretrievably linked.⁴⁶ I would add to this that, aside from a rare few, humans require social interactions and friendships in order to learn, grow and change, to be admirable human beings in the strongest sense. Nietzsche's agonistic ethics of friendship puts human relationships to work with a therapeutic aim, requesting those involved to challenge themselves and their friend. This kind of striving friendship is less comfortable and also more intimidating than the relationships of pleasure that we know today.

For Nietzsche, friendship does have a role to play in "the discipline of suffering," what he considers to be the source of all of the enhancements of human beings (BGE, §225) because overcoming necessarily involves struggle, but also joy and insight (BGE, §284) Nietzsche thinks psychology is "the path to the fundamental problems." (BGE, §23) and he employs it as a diagnostic, no-saying method to expose the ideological structures that govern human relationships. However, Nietzsche is also a re-evaluative thinker whose critical works are building blocks for his yes-saying therapeutic philosophy. At the heart of Nietzsche's agonistic ethics of friendship is a bestowing energy that utilizes dissonance and dialectics in the interest of raising the other up into a self-overcoming. He believes that "the future is to be prepared by the labors of self-transfiguration to which free spirits submit themselves, once they have been jolted into wakefulness."⁴⁷ As Nietzsche states he is not a man, he is dynamite! (EH, "Why I am a Destiny," 1) As an agonistic and bestowing friend, Nietzsche utilizes his words explosively to help his future friends become what they are.

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⁴⁶ Keith Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life* (London and New York: Routledge 1997), 15.

⁴⁷ Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, 14.