

# **Nietzsche as the Student of Socrates**

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Thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the PhD Degree in Philosophy  
Department of Philosophy  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Ottawa

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines Nietzsche's relationship to Socrates through his positive philosophy of education, arguing that the latter is crucial to resolving the apparent contradictions of the former. While there is a good deal of literature dealing with Nietzsche's criticisms of the educational system of his day, there is relatively little on his own account of what education should be. I point out that the Greek conception of *agon* (roughly "contest" in English), is central to Nietzsche's understanding of education, and informs his ideal of the student-mentor relationship. This is the model on which, I contend, Nietzsche's relation to Socrates needs to be interpreted. Such an interpretation helps to make sense of, and reconcile, the divergent pictures of Socrates Nietzsche presents in his texts, which are sometimes admiring and imitative, sometimes hostile and contemptuous, and have led to conflicting interpretations within the scholarship on this subject. My analysis aims to shed new light on both the figure of Nietzsche's Socrates, and Nietzsche's philosophy of education, by relating these to one another.

# **Acknowledgments**

I am grateful to Sonia Sikka for guiding me in writing this thesis with an open mind and sober advice. Thanks also to Franck, for good friendship. Dedicated to all of my accidents.

# Abbreviations

- BGE — *Beyond Good and Evil*  
BT — *The Birth of Tragedy*  
D — *Daybreak*  
EGP — *Early Greek Philosophy and Other Essays*  
EH — *Ecce Homo*  
GS — *The Gay Science*  
GM — *The Genealogy of Morals*  
HC — *Homer's Contest*  
HH — *Human, All-Too-Human*  
KSA — *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe.*  
NCW — *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*  
NZ — *Notes on Zarathustra* (published in TI)  
PN — *Portable Nietzsche*  
PTA — *Philosophy During the Tragic Age of the Greeks*  
SE — *Schopenhauer as Educator*  
SPL — *Nietzsche: A Self-Portrait from his Letters*  
SL — *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*  
UWO — *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations*  
TI — *Twilight of the Idols*  
UM — *Untimely Meditations*  
WS — *The Wanderer and His Shadow*  
WTP — *The Will to Power*  
Z — *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

## Notes:

1. References to these texts appear in parentheses in the following order: abbreviated title, book number, chapter number or name, section number, page number.
2. References to KSA use the standard abbreviations for German titles (e.g. M = *Morgenröthe*, FW = *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, etc.).
3. For short passages, or when a translation for the German is not available, I have provided my own. In these cases the translation appears in square brackets without any additional notes.

# Introduction

## Overview of the Presentation

Socrates has been called “Nietzsche’s most variously imagined rival.”<sup>1</sup> But if this is true, then an adequate account of what Nietzsche conceived of as rivalry is needed for understanding how he conceived of his own relation to Socrates. In the final analysis, rivalry for Nietzsche is the best possible form of friendship, because friendship is understood as the paradigm of the *educative* relationship. This means it is the relation that provides the best opportunity for learning, because it provides the best conditions for overcoming (*Überwindung*). Paradoxically, this implies that Nietzsche’s version of the friend is one who actually resembles a kind of enemy. While it is true that Nietzsche viewed friendship as the highest relationship, he was also terribly concerned with the problem of what he called “slavish love”: of relating like a slave to one’s friends, one’s teachers, and everything that could be called an “idol.” Furthermore, he also believed that testing one’s powers against resistance was the only way to increase them. Under the rubric of Nietzsche’s new *agon* (contest), therefore, to attack, and even to attack those “closest,”<sup>2</sup> is not purely negative, because overcoming is positive. (EH *Why I am so Wise* 7 232-3) With the right kind of love, and the right kind of envy, it can instead be made a gesture of gratitude (*Ibid.*), and despising can be made into a way of revering. (Z 4 *Of the Higher Man* 3 297) All of this is possible under a new form of contest and a new form of polemic, according to which an opponent provokes an attack, not for being wholly repulsive, and not for lacking greatness, but for representing a high plateau, and precisely for being that in which it is *so difficult* to see what is repulsive.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is not totally mistaken to say that the task of attaining genuine individuality requires attacking what one fears and envies, as

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<sup>1</sup> James L. Porter, “Nietzsche and the Problem of Socrates,” in *A Companion to Socrates*, edited by Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar, Oxford, UK, Blackwell Publishing: 2006, p. 407.

<sup>2</sup> This is a reference to Nietzsche’s own clarification of 1875: “Sokrates, um es nur zu bekennen, steht mir so nahe, dass ich fast immer einen Kampf mit ihm kämpfe. [Just to let it be known, Socrates is so close to me that I am almost always fighting a fight with him.]” (KSA NF 8 97)

<sup>3</sup> Although he does not recognize it as a feature of friendship, Hildebrandt appears to have had a similar thought when he wrote that: “Sein Gegner im großen Streben, die Welt zu erneuern, ist nicht Sokrates, sondern der Mensch überhaupt im Intervall zwischen den Höhepunkten Äschylus und Wagner (oder Nietzsche). [His opponent in the great aspiration to remake the world is not Socrates, but rather, and above all, humanity in the interval between the highpoints of Aeschylus and Wagner (or Nietzsche).]” Kurt Hildebrandt, *Nietzsches Wettkampf mit Sokrates und Plato*, Dresden, Sibyllen-Verlag: 1922, p. 59.

some readers would claim; but it is properly based on the fear of remaining at a certain limit, of a complacency and a failure to overcome. Socrates was therefore attacked by Nietzsche, not in spite of his greatness, but because of it, and because of what could be learned in this way, both personally as well as generally: that is, a) in terms of Nietzsche's personal development, and b) the progress in Nietzsche's thinking about the best way to cultivate talent—in individuals generally, and in the genius in particular—that was made possible by his encounter with Socrates.

This thesis therefore deals with two related problems, and although the aim is to resolve one of these in particular, providing an adequate resolution to the first (subsidiary) problem is necessary for carrying out the task of addressing the second. The first problem is that a well-developed account of Nietzsche's positive philosophy of education is still lacking today. I argue that this lack has given rise to a certain tension within the scholarship surrounding the ambivalent, strategic, highly polemical, and confusing relation that Nietzsche adopted toward Socrates. Nietzsche's relation to Socrates is the second problem, and the one I take as my focus. My plan is to relieve the tension of the second problem by treating it as a symptom of the first. The aim of this approach is to attend to the root of the problem with Nietzsche's Socrates by elucidating his philosophy of education as well as the way in which he describes his own polemical self-education. This method acknowledges the concern that the reason we have yet to grasp the nature of Nietzsche's engagement with Socrates until now is that we still have yet to come to an adequate demonstration of how Nietzsche understood the nature of learning from another thinker. In a certain sense, therefore, I portray Nietzsche as a student of Socrates.

Since I argue that Nietzsche's dynamic and intensely personal engagement with Socrates is best understood as a reflection of his own educational philosophy, it is first necessary to understand what this philosophy entails. A crucial part of this is to elucidate the case of *agon* (roughly, "contest" in English) as the fundament of Nietzsche's philosophy of education. Nietzsche thought that the *agon* had appeared in different forms of operation at different times in history, and that these changes were brought about by certain key figures. In overcoming the last and greatest innovator of contest, Socrates, Nietzsche envisioned the life of a self-educator that would draw its power from all kinds of opposition, including the range between outright friendship to secret enmity. To give an account of how Nietzsche characterizes this life, and use the contents of this study as the background for my explanation of his very puzzling engagement with Socrates, will thus serve as the case study of an applied agonistic education undergone by Nietzsche. Combining the two problems at hand, therefore, the guiding question for my dissertation is: How was Nietzsche a student of Socrates according to his own philosophy of education?

Chapter one plots out the common terrain of opinion regarding Nietzsche's attitude towards Socrates by laying out the three major positions (both opposing and overlapping) that have effectively set the limits of this terrain until now. Following the example of Nehamas and Church, I have selected three

authors who represent what appear to be the most naturally opposing portrayals of this attitude: namely, Nietzsche's love, hate, and ambivalence for Socrates. The first of these portrayals, put forward by Kaufmann, is thought to be reflected in Nietzsche's praise and emulation of Socrates, while the second is shown by Dannhauser to be reflected in his critical opposition toward him. In the third position, Nehamas represents the attempt to account for the consistency of both portrayals by arguing that Nietzsche's expression of admiration and love for Socrates was mitigated by the need he felt to distance himself from a figure of history who, by appearing so similar in his philosophical cause and in other respects, threatened to eclipse the stature of his own genius and his own "individuality." I will demonstrate how Nehamas has misconceived Nietzsche's criteria for true individuality, and has consequently misconceived his treatment of Socrates as one that is rooted in a negative and overly simplified attitude of fear and envy. In response, my argument proceeds by reexamining how Nietzsche himself considered all of these attitudes—love, hate, and envy—to be complex concomitants in the process of *learning* from another individual. This process is based upon Nietzsche's ideal of friendship as a form of rivalry and his agonistic ideal of education, both of which he derived from the ancient Greeks.

Chapter two aims at establishing a corrected reading of Nietzsche's educational philosophy. This means: to identify this philosophy as agonistic, to give an account of how Nietzsche understood the *agon* (conceptually, historically), and to follow Nietzsche's historical reading of the *agon* into the life of Socrates, who is distinguished by having "discovered a new kind of *Agon*." (TI PS 8 13) The first step is to outline the ways in which Nietzsche has been received as an educational thinker, and then to identify what has been missing and misconceived so far in this discourse. The next step is to present Nietzsche's genealogical account of the *agon* as it developed and functioned within the pedagogical tradition of the Greek world. In addition to endorsing the belief that the cultivation of every talent requires contest, Nietzsche also recognized that the development of contest *qua* educational principle was itself an agonistic process, carried out historically by the champions of rivaling agonistic ideals. In the course of this development, Socrates thus emerges for Nietzsche as the third major contestant (after Homer and Heraclitus) in the developmental history of Greek *agon*, and also as the potential contestant of anyone who might attempt to reformulate the functional characteristics of *agon* in education. This means that Socrates was not only a personal adversary for Nietzsche—that is, not only one who provides the opportunity for accelerating his own personal development—but also the primary contestant to be reckoned with in the project of educational reform.

Chapter three details the basis of this reform. As opposed to the ideal represented by Socrates, whom Nietzsche casts an individual who developed only a singular talent to the exclusion of all others, Nietzsche's further reformulation of cooperative antagonism promotes the reciprocal relation of empowerment amongst talents, and does so in just the way that it does among individuals who are peers.

That is to say, in contrast to the tyrannical model of Socrates, what Nietzsche thought of as the contest amongst talents and habits is reconstituted, so that the dominance of one does not imply the permanent or absolute dominion of one, nor the complete diminution of any other. No given instinct, talent, or habit is therefore ever entirely dominant nor ever completely suppressed under the strictures of Nietzsche's *agon*, just as no opponent or "enemy" (which every true friend is, for Nietzsche) is ever to be annihilated. Moreover, the incidence of injury, illness, and defeat are elevated as elements of *success* under this method of education (i.e., Nietzsche's "war school" of life), along with the positive function of turning against one's teacher. For Nietzsche, this means waging a special kind of war, and it is at this point that Socrates becomes describable as the teacher who "wounds," against whom Nietzsche campaigns in an effort to "convalesce." The basic direction of this chapter is to move beyond the common method of recounting Nietzsche's criticisms of modern education in order to offer an account of what a Nietzschean pedagogy would positively entail. In turn, the various features and techniques of this pedagogy are illustrated both in light of their direct application with respect to Socrates (e.g., Nietzsche's choosing Socrates as teacher, friend, and enemy), as well as their more theoretical aspects as they pertain to Socrates as a reformer of education (e.g., Nietzsche's movement beyond the Socratic model of development).

Chapter four continues in the same vein by detailing the characteristics that distinguish Nietzsche's system of ascetic training (a kind of internal contest) from those of his predecessors. According to Nietzsche, such measures are adopted by those who wish to make suffering meaningful. Hence it is in this context that the pessimism of Schopenhauer is compared to that of Socrates, which Nietzsche claims to have discovered in the hidden sentiment behind his dying words. The pessimism of Socrates, which underlies a negative ascetic mode and a certain mode of "No-saying," remained a powerful model for Nietzsche, but then also one which stood ready to be overcome. Most importantly, this chapter identifies the key moment of contest between Nietzsche and Socrates, which appears in Nietzsche's final (though not only) treatment of his death. In the final analysis, I will also show how Socrates played an important role in arriving at Nietzsche's concept of *amor fati* by exemplifying the failure of even the best tempered individual, the highest of the Greeks, to overcome the pressing agonies of life. This chapter concludes by examining the role of secrecy in Nietzsche's treatment of Socrates, who is, I argue, his open as well as his secret enemy, and therefore his teacher. Finally, it is this chapter where I attempt to answer the following question: if such relations of friendship are meant to be mutually empowering, then what can be said about the empowerment that Socrates enjoys? The answer to this will include a consideration of how empowerment is brought about by ascetic means for Nietzsche. That is, the energies of Socrates—which for Nietzsche are profoundly strong, especially with respect to the heroic status of his death—are re-channeled, re-combined, and re-coordinated. From the perspective of

Nietzsche's martial ascetic, Socrates is being *exercised* in novel ways: in ways that are deformative and even damaging. The end result is a new, artistic Socrates, who exists as an ideal that stands above both friends. (GS 14 89)

# Chapter One

## The Model, The Villain, and The Mirror: Three Versions of Nietzsche's Socrates

### 1.1 The Problem of Nietzsche's Socrates

Understanding Nietzsche's positive philosophy of education, his method of *Selbsterziehung*, is necessary for a complete understanding of his attitude toward Socrates, because it is as much a philosophy of enmity as it is of learning. Accordingly, while reflecting late in his intellectual life on the course of his own philosophical growth, Nietzsche would remark: "The strength of those who attack can be measured in a way by the opposition they require: every growth is indicated by the search for a mighty opponent." (EH *Why I am so Wise* 7 232) He also makes it clear that, for him, every open attack is not necessarily what it seems: "On the contrary, attack is in my case proof of good will, sometimes even of gratitude." (*Ibid.* 232-3) Now it is well known that Nietzsche established a quite unorthodox, and sometimes vicious, assault on Socrates and on the Socratic legacy. On the other hand, since it can be so easily demonstrated that Nietzsche often spoke of Socrates and the life he led with terms of the highest praise—and since he also had such a great deal to say about relations between love, hate, and envy (i.e., relations that re-entwine these three)—it is clear that the real complexity of the relation between these two figures deserves special attention.

It was not until Walter Kaufmann wrote his essay titled "Nietzsche's Attitude Toward Socrates" (1950; alternatively titled "Nietzsche's Admiration for Socrates" in 1948) that scholarship began to significantly take up in a way the problem I wish to solve. To his credit, Kaufmann was among the first to challenge a constant dogma that had until then remained largely unquestioned: that Nietzsche simply hated and repudiated Socrates.<sup>4</sup> And even though Kaufmann seemed to have satisfied himself with the

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<sup>4</sup> Hildebrandt was also reader who rejected Nietzsche's hatred of Socrates, but only in favor of an interpretation that effectively denied his admiration of him as well. Instead, Hildebrandt attempts to present Nietzsche's Socrates as nothing more than a "myth" to be coldly manipulated according to the purpose at hand: as an enthusiast of Wagnerian tragic culture early on, as a more ruthless reformer later, etc. See Hildebrandt, *op. cit.*, especially p. 58. In this respect Nietzsche's approach to Socrates is supposed to resemble that of Aristophanes, as Hildebrandt points out. (*Ibid.* 13-4) However his overall interpretation suffers from a number of problems, most directly involving the problem of all other attempts to consistently order Nietzsche's relation to Socrates according to a definite number of stages. Even more problematic is that it

results of his own study, I believe the essential ambivalence of Nietzsche's relation to Socrates only then began to appear as a problem.

Here, briefly, are the details of the ambivalence brought to light in Kaufmann's essay. It is well known that as Nietzsche understood it, and as he vehemently insisted, Socrates had cursed life with his last breath. His pessimistic hostility to life seems denounced by Nietzsche as betraying the sickness of what would shortly afterwards come to pass for real wisdom in Greece. This, for Nietzsche, is a grave offense. Socrates then presents himself as the enemy of Nietzsche and of civilization as a whole. Moreover, he was an enemy not only in his teaching, but in his way of living, in his criminality, and even in his blood. The tension that becomes apparent with Kaufmann's essay occurs when one notices that Nietzsche also *concurrently* praises Socrates as one to be greatly admired, as possibly the purest of the ancient sages, the "great erotic," the constant "regenerator" of art, as well as for being "the first philosopher of life," and the one figure most distinguished by his "joyful seriousness," a trait which, as Nietzsche says, "constitutes the best state of the soul of man."<sup>5</sup> Kaufmann's answer to this is quite straight-forward. It is that Nietzsche adored Socrates; however, it was in such a way that he understood himself to be obliged to him in a strange way, as one who was meant to overthrow him. I will argue that, while it is underdeveloped and also problematically one-sided in its appraisal of Nietzsche's affection for Socrates, Kaufmann's contribution still provides the essential framework for dealing with Nietzsche's treatment of him.

Kaufmann's essay puts forth the contentious view that Nietzsche *loved* rather than hated Socrates, and even, as he says, probably above all others. Since Kaufmann's publication, various compromises have been struck between the two extreme views, i.e. between Nietzsche's simple "hatred" and "love" for Socrates, in the discourse surrounding the subject. Werner Dannhauser makes a typical presentation of the former position (i.e. Socrates as "villain") by citing the imbalance of Kaufmann's one-sided approach (Socrates as a simple lover and "model"). Alexander Nehamas attempts to establish a third way when he proposes that Nietzsche was fundamentally ambivalent in his disposition to Socrates, and that this ambivalence is grounded in his recognition of Socrates as a frightening reflection of himself (Socrates as "mirror"). In sum, I take the following to be not only a concise description of the how scholarly opinion has divided itself on the subject after Kaufmann, but also a revelatory statement of Nehamas' own view, which has fairly dominated discourse on the subject since its publication.

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requires a forced dismissal of those occasions when Nietzsche is quite clearly talking about his own personal attitude, e.g., "I admire the courage and wisdom of Socrates ..." (GS 340 272) In sum, Kaufmann's essay is the first to seriously take up *this* problem, with which I am concerned in the present thesis.

<sup>5</sup> These remarks—just a handful amongst many—are gathered from various sources in Kaufmann's essay, "Nietzsche's Attitude toward Socrates" in his book *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. New York: Vintage Books, 1968. In the course of this study, I will have occasion to examine each of these in their original contexts.

[Nietzsche] felt so close and in such competition with him [Socrates] that to acknowledge him would have seemed to him an acknowledgment that he himself was not, after all, who he said he was. Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates was therefore fundamentally ambivalent. Socrates was neither his 'model' nor his 'villain.' His constant problem, forever gnawing at him, was that he could never be sure that Socrates' ugly face was not after all a reflection of his own.<sup>6</sup>

In the context of this passage, Nehamas makes it clear that he is here referring specifically to Kaufmann when he speaks of Socrates as Nietzsche's "model" and that he is referring to Dannhauser when he speaks of Socrates as Nietzsche's "villain." And, in this respect, I largely follow the example of Nehamas, who uses the strategy of approaching Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates by using these three authors—i.e., Kaufmann, Dannhauser, and Nehamas—as representatives of the three points of conclusion that have hitherto been reached. It is worth noting that Jeffrey Church is another commentator who uses the same approach in his study.<sup>7</sup> While the view that Socrates was Nietzsche's "villain" (Dannhauser's view) is essentially the default position,<sup>8</sup> and while Kaufmann stands in direct opposition to this view, Nehamas' account carries with it the appeal of appearing to be the most inclusive opinion. Calling the ambivalence of Nietzsche's relation to Socrates "fundamental" seems to confer upon it the sense that it defies a homogenous solution. One of the problems remaining in this, however, is that the elements that will not be dissolved are those I will call but very "simple" versions of love and contempt. That is, they do not convey the depth to which Nietzsche explored these dispositions, and thus, most troublingly of all, they are not considered in light of how these dispositions were evidently thought by Nietzsche to serve as cooperative instruments of self-education.

My claim is that although Nehamas does provide a more balanced approach to the issue, it is a balance struck between a set of dispositions that appear naive in the face of Nietzsche's prolonged discussions of them. We have therefore not yet moved beyond Nehamas' basic discovery of Nietzsche's self-recognized affinity with Socrates, which is in turn believed to underlie his "fundamental

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, California: 1998, 155; hereafter cited as: Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, followed by the page number. It is interesting to note that Nietzsche uses the image of "rough and imperfect mirror" to describe the role of the friend. (*Z 2 Of the Friend* 83)

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Church, "Dreaming of the True Erotic: Nietzsche's Socrates and the Reform of Modern Education," in *History of Political Thought*, vol. 27 (2006), n689.

<sup>8</sup> I.e., the fairly ubiquitous view that "Socrates remains the arch-villain throughout all of Nietzsche's writings." Rose Pfeffer, *Nietzsche: Disciple of Dionysus*, Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg: 1972, p. 43. This view, which is based on the incorrect assumption that Socrates is a figure of history "who destroys the instinctual powers of man," should be credited with at least doing justice to the overall import of Socrates in Nietzsche's thought. (*Ibid.* 104)

ambivalence” towards him. In terms of methodology, for example, I would include authors such as Jeffrey Church among interpreters who tend to follow Nehamas' third way of thinking about Socrates: i.e. as a "mirror or a self-projection." Although Church further develops an understanding of the practical purpose behind Nietzsche's confrontation with Socrates, and although this purpose is at times associated with the advancement of educational theory, it is nonetheless still set out within the framework of Nehamas' model, which holds Nietzsche's contest with Socrates to be of a simple type, and does so without an adequate consideration of what significance the term “contest” took on for Nietzsche.<sup>9</sup>

By the same token, I would include Leslie Thiele in this category of readers, despite the fact that the view he expressed came eight years prior to Nehamas' publication. Indeed, Thiele's view can be seen as actually more advanced than Nehamas', specifically to the extent she appreciates that Nietzsche's fight with Socrates—which I claim to be an educational engagement—is also well-suited to description in terms of medical treatment and the agony of sickness. As Thiele describes it,

Socrates would be attacked where Nietzsche felt him to be the strongest, that is to say, where his philosophy most closely resembled Nietzsche's own and was thus particularly culpable for the germs of decadence it harbored. Nietzsche felt vulnerable to this infection: he battled with Socrates as a physician battles with a disease that he himself has contracted.<sup>10</sup>

This passage gives a good indication of how Thiele's view is similar to the one proposed by Nehamas. Just like Nietzsche's extensive treatment of love and contempt suggests, the jointly medical and military motif of injury and convalescence are equally essential to understanding his philosophy of education. Thus, in terms of comparison, the problems inherent to considering only simple versions of love and contempt (with their simple associations of harmony and discord), have their parallel in the simplicity of speaking about "health" and "sickness" without sufficient regard for how these things are related for Nietzsche. As a parallel argument, therefore, I urge that it is incumbent upon the reader to see that these terms are likewise meant by Nietzsche to serve as cooperative instruments of self-education, which coincides, in medical terms, with empowerment of a self-directed convalescence.

More recently, Christian Wollek has joined Volker Gerhardt in ascribing the title “alter-ego” to Nietzsche's Socrates, and in rendering a psychological account of the purposes behind his (apparently) changing attitude toward him.<sup>11</sup> Like Church, Wollek is successful in seeing Socrates as a means for

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<sup>9</sup> Church, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Thiele, Leslie P., *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.: 1990, p. 100-1.

<sup>11</sup> Christian Wollek, “Nietzsche und das Problem des Sokrates,” in *Nietzscheforschung Jahrbuch der Nietzsche-*

Nietzsche to accomplish different purposes, according to how he chose (or needed) to think of their personal similarities and differences.<sup>12</sup> However, the problem here is the same as with Nehamas. It positions Nietzsche as one who should be expected to be univocal in the expression of his feelings for Socrates at any given "period." Thus, in his early thought, Wollek claims that "Sokrates wird in eine wesentlich persönlich existentielle Weltdeutung und Lebensproblematik einbezogen als Mittel und Instrument eines Selbstaufklärungsprozesses, an dessen Ende eine erhoffte Heilung und Befreiung steht [Socrates is involved as a means and instrument of a self-enlightenment process in what is essentially a personal existential world-view and a problematic of life, at the end of which stands a wished-for healing and liberation.]" while in the later period, "Was im Zeichen des Sokrates als Versuch und Programm möglicher Selbstbefreiung und Selbstheilung begonnen hatte, endet in einer bodenlosen Zerstörungswut gegen Sokratische in ihm selbst ... das wieder Selbstprojektion, Selbstkampf Nietzsches gegen seine ungeliebte, nunmehr rundum abgelehnte sokratische Hälfte ist. [What had begun in the symbol of Socrates as an experiment and as a possible program of self-liberation and self-healing, ends in a ruthless violence against the Socratic in himself ... this again is Nietzsche's self-projection, his self-struggle set against his unloved, now completely rejected Socratic half.]"<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, this way of interpreting Nietzsche's changing attitude toward Socrates is appealing for coming close to stating that (but never how) Socrates was an agent of Nietzsche's philosophical development. On the other, it still aims at a common standard of periodizing his thought, because all such readings aim at showing why Nietzsche supposedly showed love and gratitude at some times and withheld it at others. Again, therefore, it suffers as such from the same limitations as Nehamas' interpretation, which I will show to be the wrong starting point for understanding this relationship.

With respect to these three streams of interpreting Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates—i.e., the

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*Gesellschaft*, Band 11 (2003), p. 245; also see Volker Gerhardt, "Nietzsches Alter-Ego. Über die Wiederkehr des Sokrates," in *Jahrbuch*

*der Nietzscheforschung*, Band 8 (2001), p. 315–332. In fact, Gerhardt's position is closest to Hermann Schmidt's in his *Nietzsche und Sokrates*, Anton Hain, Meisenheim am Glan: 1969. This is because both authors hold the view that Nietzsche was primarily a contestant with Plato. Thus, Nietzsche is portrayed as "ein wiedergeborener Platon" whose work consists in providing himself as a complement for Socrates, as Plato did with Alcibiades in the *Symposium*. (Gerhardt, *op. cit.*, 329 and 320-1) Drawing on an essay from Nietzsche's years at *Schulpforta*, Gerhardt speculates that his early conception of Alcibiades (representing *Realität*) and Socrates (representing the *Theoretische*) informed his later conception of the strife between the Dionysian and the Apollonian.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., Wollek's claim that "so ist der 'musiktreibende Sokrates' eine reine Schöpfung Nietzsches, die Verkörperung von Nietzsches Wunsch, seine reale Existenz als Wissenschaftler (Philologieprofessor) mit einer Existenz als Künstler zu vereinen [so the music-practicing Socrates is purely Nietzsche's creation, the embodiment of Nietzsche's wish to unify his actual existence as a scientist (a philology professor) with an existence as an artist]." (Wollek, *op. cit.*, 245)

<sup>13</sup> Wollek, *op. cit.*, 244 and 248.

loving admiration, the disdain, and the doppelgänger's "fundamental ambiguity" underlying this attitude—the present thesis could roughly be characterized as a one that offers a compatibility between these readings by accounting for how, as a philosopher of education, Nietzsche viewed the best interrelation of these elements. That is, it is an attempt to show that Nietzsche conceived of the three mentioned compartments as essentially compatible with, and even essential to, one another. And hence, although he certainly holds the best developed opinion on the issue so far, Nehamas is mistaken in thinking that Kaufmann and Dannhauser may not both be correct; nor does the position of Nehamas really rule out the solutions posed by these two authors. I believe the reason that the compatibilism expressed in my thesis has not yet been uncovered, and the reason that the current state of scholarship on the subject remains incomplete, is that no one so far has approached the complex issue of Nietzsche's engagement with Socrates from the vantage point of Nietzsche's own understanding of philosophical education, as well as his perspective on the nature of education as such, *both* of which necessitate an appraisal of friendship, contest, and enmity as elemental concepts of that philosophy.

It ought to be acknowledged that Nehamas was successful in characterizing the engagement between Nietzsche and Socrates as a "competition" or a "fight."<sup>14</sup> However, he does not go far enough in understanding what this means for Nietzsche; that is, *what having enemies means for Nietzsche*, and especially when it comes to the creative formulation of one's self. What is needed, therefore, is a collection and working out of the thematic consistencies within a large stock of writing Nietzsche devoted to this topic. In addition to Nietzsche's direct references to Socrates, there is also an array of observations, parables, characterizations, and various instructions regarding the proper conduct of a student as *living* principles of conduct for Nietzsche, many of which were born out of experiences with others, including Socrates in particular.

With this observation as the starting point for explaining Nietzsche's deep reverence and high praise for Socrates, which Kaufmann has already identified, it is my intention to avoid the pitfalls of interpreting Kaufmann's essay as no more than a reflection upon the other side (the positive side) of Nietzsche's "mixed feelings" toward Socrates. The problem with this explanation is not that it is false; for it is actually true, but flat (or underdeveloped), and it reflects the need to develop a fuller account of Nietzsche's position in relation to Socrates, which, in some aspects, appears contradictory. We need to say more about what it means to mix such things for a thinker like Nietzsche, who said much about the spiritual alchemy of mixing feelings and purposes. With this it becomes apparent that Socrates was to become the highest enemy of Nietzsche because he was the most powerful, the most beloved, and the

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<sup>14</sup> The word English "fight" is somewhat limited in connotation. Where it is appropriate, therefore, I will adopt the convention of referring to the German "*Kampf*" ("fight") e.g., in order to expose the relation between this term and "*Wettkampf*" ("contest").

most dangerous.

This fuller account traces the development of Nietzsche's contest with Socrates as it began in his earliest works, including *The Birth of Tragedy*, where he declares his rivalry with Socrates, the “demi-god” who would succeed the place of earthly opposition to Dionysus. This is ultimately in keeping with Nietzsche's own doctrine of enmity, whereby one rises to the utmost station of his possibility, and grows the strongest, by staking himself out as worthy of the most powerful adversary. By contesting no less than a divinity upon the earth, Nietzsche first *elevates* himself, in an audacious manner, to the height of one whom he holds in such high esteem. This trend of self-aggrandization (as opposed to the Socratic tendency for self-diminution) continues even into his latest works, for example, when he insists on calling himself a genius, the most terrible human being ever, godlike, or even “a destiny.” In the present chapter I explain why I disagree with Dannhauser, who takes this difference (i.e., the difference in the respective ironies of Nietzsche and Socrates) to cast Socrates as the more impressive and outright “victor” of the two figures; and I also explain how it is possible to go beyond Nehamas, who takes the same difference to illustrate Nietzsche's very conscious attempt at victory over Socrates by diversifying himself stylistically. In considering this latter view, it is most helpful to attend to reading Nietzsche's treatment of Socrates' death scene, but with special consideration for how this treatment evolved over time, and how Nietzsche managed to re-write the event of his death as a contest in different ways (at different times).

There is a change from Nietzsche's treatment of Socrates in his “early” and “middle” periods to what we find in *Twilight of the Idols*, wherein he attacks Socrates as a mere man: as an ugly man, a decadent, criminal type. With a debasing attack *ad hominem* upon what he introduces as a divinity, he now makes of Socrates a man, who would be assessed according to his physiognomy, his “breeding,” etc, and thus Nietzsche has executed a reversal of his original agonistic engagement (in *Birth of Tragedy*), with essentially the same end, self-elevation having given way to mortalizing attack, whereby an idol becomes a man, and the man is slain by the least delicate of means. Drawing on the example of Schopenhauer in Nietzsche's early analysis, Golomb makes a similar observation:

[o]n the one hand, there was greatness of spirit and ‘genius’, on the other, many ‘all-too- human’ flaws. It is precisely these latter elements that carried for Nietzsche a pedagogical significance, since it is through them that we are able to identify with the thinker and assimilate his thought. They allow us to bridge the gap between ourselves and the exemplary genius. This facilitates the processes of internalization, since otherwise we would be crushed under the burden of inaccessible greatness, and would renounce the attempt to reach it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jacob J. Golomb, “Nietzsche's Early Educational Thought” in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1985), p. 104.

I suggest that this could be a helpful model for considering how Nietzsche made accessible to himself another version of Socrates during this time, i.e., by “bringing it [the exemplar] down from the Olympian heights to the human dimensions of our life.”<sup>16</sup> This suggestion, however, remains consistent with view that Nietzsche revered Socrates throughout his intellectual life.

It is especially important to make this observation when considering the common opinion that Nietzsche began at one point to demonstrate some degree of reverence for Socrates, but later had a further change of heart, such that he then merely despised him altogether.<sup>17</sup> I will argue that this picture is inadequate. Once again, the delicate issue of Nietzschean pedagogical ambivalence, which is thoroughly *dynamic*, has been overlooked here. It is true that Nietzsche's explicit admiration for Socrates reaches a crescendo in the middle period, and that his outright malice for Socrates is most forcefully expressed in the later works. However I will be the first to offer, from the educational perspective of Nietzsche, an explanation for the different stages and styles of his ambivalence toward Socrates across time. I will argue that a major aim of Nietzsche's engagement of Socrates is to fashion a new and more productive version of him.

In addressing the question of *whose* Socrates Nietzsche is discussing, the answer is therefore: “his own.” For this reason, this thesis does not concern the *accuracy* of Nietzsche's portrayal of Socrates in relation to any of his sources, which he never cites anyway. My intention is instead to make understandable the often confusing, and seemingly inconsistent, relation that Nietzsche takes toward the figure of Socrates in his various treatments of him. This is accomplished by reading these treatments as reflections of various aspects within Nietzsche's philosophy of education: concerning one's comportment toward a teacher, an enemy, etc. But this is not to say that the Socrates emerging from this process is purely a private construction of Nietzsche's imagination. For, despite the famously protean nature of his character, Socrates remains a thoroughly public figure, whose stature is so well-established that it is beyond the threat of a total disfigurement (or of total “defeat,” as some commentators speculate) at the hands of Nietzsche. As he tells his readers in *Ecce Homo*, indeed, Nietzsche chooses which idols to campaign against according to this criterion: that they be victorious to the point of being effectively safe from defeat. (EH *Why I am so Wise* 7 232) In other words, it would seem that Nietzsche felt at liberty to reshape the figure of Socrates through the operations of his philosophical experimentalism, and did so

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Kaufmann attributes this opinion to Oehler, but it is also the opinion of both Dannhauser and Nehamas, for example, as well as that of James L. Porter in “Nietzsche and the Problem of Socrates,” in *A Companion to Socrates*, edited by Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK: 2006, p. 441.

especially for the fact that this figure appears among the most immutable and immune of history.

Regarding the inception of Nietzsche's Socrates, one may say it is clear that the life and thoughts of Socrates must have been passed on to Nietzsche as they have been to everyone else, which is by way of number of authors. And although he never offers any direct indication of which author he has in mind at a given moment of treatment, it would be helpful, if possible, to say something more about this in the present course of analyzing the composition of Nietzsche's Socrates. This can be done fairly simply, by following some of the more indirect indications within the text. In terms of the content of the character of Socrates on which Nietzsche focuses, the references he makes to specific dialogues (*Symposium*, *Apology*), as well as his intermittent commentary on the relation between the two philosophers, one may say that it is Plato's Socrates who appears most prominently in Nietzsche's thoughts. More specifically, it is the ironic seducer and wielder of the *elenchus*, the Socrates of Plato's early dialogues, such as the *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, and *Apology*. Furthermore, there is no doubt that Nietzsche is referring to the *Phaedo* early on (in *Birth of Tragedy*) when he discusses the story of a Socrates who is inspired to become a musician at the end of his life. On the other hand, the *Phaedo* also provides Nietzsche with the story he later uses (in *Twilight of the Idols* and the *Gay Science*) to slander, test, and overcome Socrates. This shows a willingness on the part of Nietzsche to choose at will and combine (or else isolate, as in the above case) the various elements of Socrates found in Plato's dramatic record. Finally, one should also note that Nietzsche is not averse to borrowing from multiple sources within a single treatment of Socrates, and also that Nietzsche occasionally goes beyond Plato in doing this. For example, in *Twilight of the Idols*, the Socrates of Plato's *Phaedo* is interspersed with the Socrates who is said to have been "unmasked" by a physiognomist in the street. (TI PS 9 14)<sup>18</sup> Once again, it is noteworthy in all of these cases that Nietzsche has chosen not to indicate his source.

In light of all this it appears accurate to say, with Church, that Nietzsche "tends to refer to the Platonic Socrates by default, only to utilize the figure of Socrates as presented by others as a way of filling out his character, challenging our view of him, redressing his place in world-history."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Nietzsche's cavalier approach to rewriting Socrates as a character may also be an indication of an attempt to emphasize the ethereal nature of this figure to begin with. This is the position of Porter, who wishes to show that "Nietzsche's Socrates, or rather the composite effect of his various imaginings of Socrates, attests to the irrecoverability of the historical Socrates just by leaving him in the unresolved condition of a 'problem' that he has occupied since his memory was first recorded."<sup>20</sup> Porter is most compelling in his

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<sup>18</sup> It is possible that Nietzsche is referring to Cicero's recounting of this story in his *De Fato* (section 50), as well as in his *Tusculan Disputations* (book 4, section 15).

<sup>19</sup> Church, *op. cit.*, 694.

<sup>20</sup> Porter, *op. cit.*, 413. Porter also compares Nietzsche's treatment of Socrates as similar to that of Homer in his early

preference to discuss Nietzsche's roles and deployments of Socrates, rather than his view(s) of him. He expresses it nicely: "Nietzsche inherits several different versions of Socrates, he interprets these creatively, and he adds a few of his own. What is more, his writings ... pick freely from among this range depending upon his momentary polemical and rhetorical requirements."<sup>21</sup>

Although I follow Porter this far, I am more skeptical about the picture he gives of Nietzsche's changing attitude toward Socrates.<sup>22</sup> As with the interpretations of Church, Wollek, and Nehamas, I am indeed skeptical with respect to the question of this "change" itself. It is my opposing view that Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates was fairly consistent over time. His public treatment of him, meanwhile, evolved over the course of time; and most importantly, it did so in keeping with the ongoing development of his educational philosophy. I therefore do not agree with the common portrayal of this process as a periodic oscillation between the simple extremes of loving and hating Socrates at different times; and, unlike these readers, I find that Nietzsche expresses admiration for him throughout his corpus—even into his latest period of writing. My thesis is that Nietzsche consistently both respected and loved Socrates at every point of his writing. For this reason, the evolution of Nietzsche's Socrates that I have in mind must instead be one which is determined by a changing inclination as to how he believed one ought to treat "the beloved." *This* change, however, is not merely a change in temperament, and cannot be properly conceived outside the context of Nietzsche's program of self-education. This explains why, although Wollek may go as far as to recognize Socrates as Nietzsche's "wahrer geliebter Feind," no one has yet recognized that this is primarily an educative relationship, and since no one has made of study of how enmity is meant to function concretely, no one has adequately understood this relationship.<sup>23</sup>

Nehamas has done well to illustrate the concrete occurrence of Nietzsche's passion for spurning the authority of others, hating as he did to openly admit to being the disciple, and certainly not the imitator of any other. But as a constant warrior, and as a truly independent man, Nietzsche did understand his debt to Socrates, as well as the many similarities between them, which he acknowledges at various

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philological studies: that is, "not [as] a person or individual so much as the transmission, projection, and construction of one – with Nietzsche's own version or versions occupying the most recent link(s) in the chain." (*Ibid.*)

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 407.

<sup>22</sup> For an idea of how he presents this picture, see *Ibid.* 409: "... once Nietzsche leaves his university post in 1879 ... Nietzsche's picture of Socrates broadens. The focus is less technical, less historical and philological (as is only to be expected with the change of audience) and more cultural-historical and more inflected with world-historical importance"; as well as *Ibid.* 421: "As the focus of the work shifts from metaphysics to ethics, and Nietzsche adopts the perspective of a connoisseur of the soul committed to its proper science [in BGE] ... Socrates comes increasingly to the fore." From my perspective, clearly, the second point stands out as the more interesting and credible of the two, since it reflects a change in how Nietzsche appreciated Socrates and what he thought could be learned from him at the time.

<sup>23</sup> Wollek, *op. cit.*, 248.

points.<sup>24</sup> Thus, as much as Nietzsche appears to exercise a strategic restraint in admitting his respect for Socrates, he did in fact express it in different ways and at various points in his writing. Nietzsche wished to understand and implement how an attack could be just as much a matter of admiration as a sincere compliment, and it is true that he had both many attacks and many compliments for Socrates. I argue further that Nietzsche not only dealt these attacks, but received them as the ideal students does—i.e. as blessings—from Socrates. From the perspective of Nietzsche's educational philosophy, that is, the weight of Socrates and the wound suffered at his hands is what is also for Nietzsche the constant opportunity for increase in power, as in the power of philosophical capability.

It is therefore my view that Nietzsche's very bold ambivalence toward Socrates was not merely a sign of his caprice, as Nehamas and Dannhauser each seem to suggest. Instead, his aversion to show outright devotion to anyone was for Nietzsche so vitally related to the necessity he felt for retaining a healthy malice toward what is worthy of its exercise. This, which may be called a "love of hating" is a relation inherent to all creative process for Nietzsche, and the implications for such a study with respect to Nietzsche's understanding of contest in education must be made clear. According to this understanding, for instance, Nietzsche held that enemies are *claimed* by the highest spirits in order to transfigure themselves; and the transfiguration at stake here is that of Nietzsche himself: his own self-creative education and the central role of *good* polemical practice in philosophy. This step of the investigation also requires a discussion of Nietzsche's references to Hesiod's distinction between good and bad envy. I believe Nehamas' own interpretation of Nietzsche's relation to Socrates could benefit from such a discussion, since his interpretation at times seems to portray Nietzsche's insistent and "irreducible" ambivalence toward Socrates as motivated by a kind of envy. I claim that the ambivalence has even more dimensions than this. Given an adequate exposition of Nietzsche's views on *agon*-as-enmity in education, it will become more plain to see how Nietzsche must have claimed Socrates, for example, both as his "open" as well as his "secret" enemy.<sup>25</sup> It is my thesis that Socrates was likewise as much an "open" teacher to Nietzsche as he was a "secret" one. This complication has not been recognized by scholars on the subject; and throughout the present dissertation I therefore attempt to explore the theme of learning to "hate one's friends" as one learns to "love one's enemies" in a new way.

## **1.2 Kaufmann's View: Socrates as Model**

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<sup>24</sup> For example, Nietzsche's homage to the ideal of an "artistic Socrates" in the *Birth of Tragedy*, or proclaiming his admiration openly in the *Gay Science*. As I discuss at length in the final section of this chapter, these instances seem to pose a serious problem for the interpretation proposed by Nehamas.

<sup>25</sup> See *Gay Science*, sections 169 and 211.

When it comes to approaching the relation between Nietzsche and Socrates, there appear to be two natural channels of interest. First, there is the interest taken in the way Nietzsche treated the person of Socrates as a pivotal character in history, and thus as a major source for (and reflection of) a great transformation in mankind as a whole. This, which has proven to be the more obvious and accessible topic, can itself be conceived in two parts. On the one hand there is the philosophy embodied by Socrates and given voice through Plato, and on the other, the virulent “Socratism” of the various schools that cropped up around him after his passing along with the pervasive legacy of Platonic thought throughout the Western world.

That Nietzsche understood Socrates to be a key figure in cultural and philosophical history is of course not unique—but then again, the personal severity and rancor of his tone, which has since often been considered a sign of his own smallness by critics, has stimulated its own set of spirited responses. To say that Socrates traditionally held a position of reverence in the minds and works of philosophers would certainly be an understatement, after all; and it was not until Nietzsche that Socrates, who is dubbed patriarch of moral reasoning, champion of dialectic, and, in the end, the self-styled martyr of philosophical virtue, was treated as an enemy of life.

By his response to those who find Nietzsche unduly harsh or simply unfair in his appraisal of Socrates, it would seem that Kaufmann believed Nietzsche was working against the already long-established dogma that beheld Socrates as a much more gentle and innocuous creature than he really was. “In the case of Socrates,” Kaufmann explains, “Nietzsche emphasized the element of rancor in his sarcasm—what he called *Bosheit*, malice. And in that case many did not wish to see Socrates in this light and, because Socrates was felt to be ideal, tranquil, the perfect sage, took offense at Nietzsche's portrayal.” (EH Kaufmann's intro. 207) This observation helps in part to explain the problematic reception of Nietzsche's critique of Socrates. Moreover, Kaufmann gives us reason to suspect that Nietzsche was in fact far more accurate in his “monstrous” view of Socrates than his contemporaries had been, writing that:

Only the safe distance of more than twenty centuries could make the hero of the *Apology* look saintly ... After all, what Socrates boasted of was perfectly true: he had taken pleasure in engaging the men of reputation in the marketplace to humiliate them before the crowd that gathered—often ... by using clever debater's tricks. He had a wicked sense of humor and found all this very funny; those he bested certainly did not. (*Ibid.*)

Furthermore, such a description is reminiscent of the very similar way in which Nietzsche portrayed his own mischievous taste for provocation: “For with me, malice [*Bosheit*] belongs to happiness—I am no

good when I am not malicious—I find no small justification of existence in provoking tremendous stupidities against me.” (EH *Appendix 4c* 343) I take it as a sign of agreement, as well, when Kaufmann remarks that “Nietzsche, like Socrates who was said to look like a satyr, disdains charm and embraces irony and sarcasm: he is not ingratiating, but wants to give offense.” (EH Kaufmann’s Intro. 207)

This line of thinking also leads to a consideration of how, on the other hand, and apart from all the concern taken with how Nietzsche depicted the life and philosophy of Socrates throughout his philosophical writings, there is also the issue regarding how Nietzsche himself could be compared to Socrates—not only in his way of thinking, but in his way of living. This is the second channel of interest. While this may appear to be an odd, even *ad hominem*, approach to the subject, it must also be admitted that Nietzsche himself invites this sort of methodology. And most often, to be sure, these two critical methods are found interlaced with each other in the various works written on the subject.

Kaufmann’s essay on Nietzsche’s relation to Socrates, which is simply titled “Nietzsche’s Attitude Toward Socrates,” would seem to be a natural point of departure for the present study. By his own description, it is meant to be a starting point for a new and better appreciation of how Nietzsche regarded Socrates. And it would be entirely fair to say that before this short essay was published in 1950, the predominant understanding of this attitude was very plainly that Nietzsche hated and repudiated Socrates as a corruptor of thought and culture.

Long reputed to be foremost among Nietzschean apologists, however, it seems that Kaufmann’s corrective efforts suffer from a tendency to disregard the actual legitimacy and strength of the more prevalent viewpoint. Time and again, for example, the reader notices that his essay will admit only to a “respectful criticism” of Socrates’ doctrines on the part of Nietzsche—and even this, he claims, does not appear in his writings before the publication of his *Daybreak*. But as anyone who is familiar with Nietzsche’s texts will know, the phrasing of his critique of Socrates seems at most times overt and braggish, seeming even to flaunt the freedom of disrespect.

Historically, much has been made of how Nietzsche would portray Socrates as exceedingly ugly, “rabble,” a man of ignoble descent who would represent “a moment of profoundest perversity in the history of values.” (WTP 431 235) As for the first of these charges, Kaufmann rightly draws upon a comparison to the Platonic Alcibiades to show that such an emphasis on physical ugliness does not preclude great respect and admiration. This however does not suffice to relieve Kaufmann from the task of dealing seriously, as he must, with the undeniable malice found in Nietzsche’s attack on Socrates.

Moreover, it remains to be shown how it might be that such malice actually constitutes the greatest expression of his respect for Socrates, and how the positive reformulation of malice was for Nietzsche something inspired by the life of Socrates in the first place. This can only be achieved after clarifying how Nietzsche understood the nature of enmity and opposition in the sphere of education. But

unlike most commentators, my intention is not to strike a new balance between Nietzsche's *love* and *hatred* for Socrates, and nor is it to outline a chronology of his changing mind on the issue. What is called for instead is a more thorough understanding and application of how these two dispositions are integral to one another in Nietzsche. Evidently Kaufmann's sight of this integration, though not altogether missing, was diminished by his determination to compete directly with the contemporary views of those like Richard Oehler and the literature following his lead. It was possibly as a result of this that his own assessment remained largely one-sided.

Still, however unfortunate it may be that Kaufmann ignores the true weight of Nietzsche's degradations of Socrates in his attempt to showcase his more reverent remarks and thus to "rebalance" the common appraisal of his views, there is a lot to be learned from his study in this case. For one thing, it is useful when developing a picture of Nietzsche's personal similarities to Socrates, both in his character and his philosophical mission. Kaufmann reminds us that Nietzsche saw himself as an inheritor of the role as Socratic "gadfly," as well as spiritual physician, even though he held Socrates to have ultimately failed on both counts. Even more important is that Kaufmann's essay points at times, and however briefly, toward a more sophisticated vantage of how Nietzsche appreciated Socrates as an "idol" in his own way, which ultimately was just the way in which he overcame him as an enemy. "In a general way," he writes, "[Nietzsche's] dialectic appears in his attitude toward his heroes. Like Oscar Wilde, he thought that 'all men kill the thing they love'— even that they should kill it."<sup>26</sup> Borrowing from the terminology of Friedrich Gundolph, Kaufmann then titles the necessity of this overcoming the person to whom one is closest the "Brutus crisis."

Such a crisis, which seems to be portrayed as a sort of crisis of conscience, is meant to be observed in the cases of Nietzsche's break with Wagner as well as Schopenhauer. More specifically, it is the conscience of one who strives to become and remain an "individual." Here Kaufmann cites the following passage from the *Gay Science*:

Independence of the soul—that is at stake here! No sacrifice can then be too great: even one's dearest friend one must be willing to sacrifice for it, though he be the most glorious human being, embellishment of the world, genius without peer ... (GS 98 150)

It is clear that Kaufmann counts Socrates as one such "dearest friend" of Nietzsche, and as one who underwent at Nietzsche's hand the kind of friendly betrayal described above. Aside from this, however, Kaufmann says little more. But so rich is this idea that, to speak figuratively, it is as if Kaufmann, in the fervor of his excavation, has pitched up an important discovery and held it up a

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<sup>26</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 392.

moment, only to set it aside in returning to his upheaval of the common view of Nietzsche's Socrates. It is my inclination to recover this castaway idea, and to develop it further. This development carries with it significant implications with regard to the other major interpretations.

Against Dannhauser and Nehamas, for instance, I take Kaufmann's position as a reference point for arguing that *independence of soul* cannot, for Nietzsche, be entirely negative in the assertion of itself, as would be the case where by way of his "independence" one merely seeks to avoid being too closely associated with another thinker's ideas. To Nietzsche's mind, the task of attaining real independence must indeed be totally positive, because it is critical to the task of artistic self-formulation, and therefore also to one's *self-education*, which is the only kind of education Nietzsche is willing to praise as well as demand from "his" readers. It is important to also notice that the term "self-education" does not preclude the involvement of teachers in learning. Teachership itself must be re-conceived, Nietzsche thought, to include the overcoming of one's teacher in contest *as* the basis for learning. Broadly speaking, it is this positive side of individuality—an individuality which is for Nietzsche always wrought through contest with one's highest opponent for the sake of learning greater creative strength—that I wish to bring to bear in the course of this dissertation.

That which I take to be a misunderstanding of the so-called "Brutus crisis," which emphasizes the negative and ignores its more positive aspect, begins well before Kaufmann offers his opinion and continues throughout the literature to follow, and is still prevalent today. It is part and parcel of the view that the impetus behind Nietzsche's combat with those he admired most was no more than a natural expression of his desire to remain independent in what I would call the "weak" sense of the word, meaning that it would connote no more than the desire, at most, to remain happily unaffiliated and unconstrained in one's thought, and, at the least, to maintain the outward appearance of having achieved originality in one's thought.

The notion that Nietzsche's rivalry with Socrates originates from his own type of jealous insecurity is a theme which has been picked up and developed most influentially by Alexander Nehamas. But it can also be found presaged early on in Kaufmann's work, for example, when he professes his agreement with the belief that: "Nietzsche realizes that the greatness of Socrates is indubitable, while his own greatness is problematic."<sup>27</sup> According to this view, it is generally agreed that Nietzsche sought to publicly measure up to Socrates in certain ways, and that, because he often recognized so much of himself in the figure of Socrates, he was required to distance himself from such a figure in his constant attempt to achieve a strong (though negative) individuality. The premises of this line of thinking are basically correct, I argue, but the conclusion remains problematic. Although it is important to pay attention to the nature of Nietzsche's need to antagonize Socrates, this view suffers from a number of

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<sup>27</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 404.

problems I have already mentioned, and which I address in the upcoming section on the work of Nehamas.

For the time being I will trace out the progress Kaufmann makes in correcting the ill-gotten opinion that Nietzsche “hated” Socrates outright, as well as his opposition to the more mitigated opinion that Nietzsche admired Socrates as a man while “hating” his doctrines.

Throughout his essay, Kaufmann takes the influential critic Richard Oehler to represent the prevailing scholarly opinion on the nature of Nietzsche’s relation to Socrates—an opinion which, Kaufmann claims, is part of the common “misconstruction” of Nietzsche’s first book. Oehler seems for Kaufmann to exemplify and encourage all those who would be satisfied with the claim that Nietzsche simply attacked and rejected Socrates, and who would meanwhile disregard much evidence suggesting otherwise. For instance it was Oehler’s much credited opinion that in his early years, Nietzsche, as a stern disciple of Schopenhauer, had no choice but to scorn the optimism of Socrates. But this reasoning is poor, and discredits Nietzsche as one whose thought would be bound so tightly to the uncritical endorsement of another philosopher’s viewpoint. In any case, it should be understood that Nietzsche “rejected” optimism no less than he did pessimism, since he found both to be equally decadent, and both to fall short of the tragic viewpoint. Apart from this, moreover, Oehler’s explanation does nothing to address the puzzle of Nietzsche’s express admiration for Socrates. Kaufmann, whose essay bore the original alternative title “Nietzsche’s Admiration for Socrates,” took this puzzle to be at the core of Nietzsche’s disposition.

The reader of this essay finds that, contrary to convention, the author is surprisingly confident in attributing to Socrates various titles on Nietzsche’s behalf, including “hero,” “model,” “idol,” and “ideal philosopher.” To his credit, this evidences the progressive thinking Kaufmann has brought to bear on the matter. On the other hand, and despite his best intentions, Kaufmann ultimately obfuscates Nietzsche’s mode of engagement with his idols. Hence I would maintain that, in his reading of Nietzsche’s supposed idolatry of Socrates, Kaufmann has not gone far enough, and in the wrong direction anyway, so that rather than going on to establish and explain the peculiar way in which a “model” could exist for Nietzsche at all—a task that would require an understanding of his philosophy of learning—Kaufmann instead occupies himself with considering a quite particular case in which it looks as if Nietzsche has made Socrates his “model”, i.e. in the plain sense that he can be shown to have *imitated* him.

Foremost in Kaufmann’s mind is the conviction that Nietzsche must have modeled his final and most personal work, *Ecce Homo*, on Plato’s *Apology*. Among other things, he submits as evidence of this the fact that when Nietzsche graduated from school, he designated the *Symposium* his “*Lieblingsdichtung*.”<sup>28</sup> This hypothesis is significant, and one I that would like to develop further. To this end I will enumerate the points of comparison used by Kaufmann to demonstrate the “mirror-imagery” of

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 393.

these two texts, before going on to offer some additional support of my own.

In a single short paragraph, Kaufmann presents three important and striking affinities between the lives of Nietzsche and Socrates. In doing so, however, his interest in these three affinities seems eclipsed by his enthusiasm for revealing the hidden parallels between the two texts in question. Kaufmann begins by addressing the fact that in the first chapter of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche reiterates how he, as well as Socrates, is a decadent. The consequences of this admission on the part of Nietzsche merit more careful examination; and although Kaufmann does not pause here for further reflection, the difference Nietzsche describes between his and Socrates' decadence becomes important when attempting to think of the educational relation between them. Kaufmann proceeds with his remaining two points as follows:

In his discussion of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche ascribes to the overman that 'omni-presence of sarcasm [*Bosheit*] and frolics' which he evidently associated with Socrates; and in speaking of *The Case of Wagner* Nietzsche emphasizes his own love of irony. Yet not one of these points is as important as the fact that *Ecce Homo* is Nietzsche's *Apology*.<sup>29</sup>

The priority of interest for Kaufmann is clear. Next in appearance, and in much greater detail, are given three more specific points of parallel between the texts themselves. The first of these is with regard to how the heading of Nietzsche's first chapter, "Why I am so Wise," recalls the "leitmotif" of the *Apology*, which concerns the status of Socrates as the "wisest" of all men. Famously, Socrates himself interprets the nature of his wisdom in light of that kind of perverted ignorance that constantly takes itself for wisdom, or, as Kaufmann puts it, he interprets it "in terms of the foolishness of his contemporaries, who thought they knew what they really did now know, and in terms of his own calling."<sup>30</sup> This, he says, is reflected most clearly in Nietzsche's response to his own question, because he likewise gives answer to it specifically in terms of "the disparity between the greatness of [his] task and the smallness of [his] contemporaries."<sup>31</sup>

Kaufmann thus makes it his first point that in *Ecce Homo* we find Nietzsche describing his own virtues in similar fashion to those of Socrates. This reading is compelling, and there is even more evidence to support it. For example, Nietzsche also describes himself in the same place as one who commands a style of teaching reminiscent of Socrates' own. During a discussion of his time as a professor at Basel, where, as he says, he would "tame every bear," and "make even buffoons behave themselves,"

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 408.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 409.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Nietzsche next reveals what I take to be a crucial insight into his own philosophy of education,<sup>32</sup> and then goes on to boast of his uncanny ability to summon from his students the kind of philosophical wisdom which would otherwise lie dormant: “Let the instrument be what it may,” he writes, “let it be as out of tune as only the instrument 'man' can be—I should have to be sick if I should not succeed in getting out of it something worth hearing. And how often have I been told by the 'instruments' themselves that they had never heard themselves like that.” (EH *Why I am so Wise* 4 227) Nietzsche held a similar expectation to Socrates when it came to the results of philosophical teaching: namely, to bring something hidden and of value out of the student before him.

In presenting his second point, Kaufmann refers to the title of another of Nietzsche's chapters, the very next one, which is “Why I am so Clever.” This too is meant to indicate the direct influence the *Apology* must have had on Nietzsche's last work, since he answers the question by making the personal claim to have “never pondered questions that are none.” Kaufmann takes this response to mean that he, like Socrates, took deserved pride in his scorn for “far-flung speculations,” and hence that both men were alike in their interest of mutually confining their inquiries to “a few basic questions of morality.”<sup>33</sup> To put it in other words, both thinkers sought to bring philosophy “back down to earth,” though admittedly in quite different ways.

Not surprisingly, Kaufmann draws his third point of comparison out of Nietzsche's next title question, “Why I Write Such Good Books,” and once again Nietzsche's reply to it is thought to contain a further allusion to the greatness of Socrates when he writes that: “There is altogether no prouder nor, at the same time, subtler kind of book: here and there they [my books] attain the ultimate that can be attained on earth—cynicism.”<sup>34</sup> Kaufmann now reminds the reader of the esteem Nietzsche had for Socrates' special “wisdom full of pranks” which “constitutes the best state of soul of man.” And I suspect there is good reason to think, as Kaufmann so assuredly does, that this “best state” is characteristically cynical in nature. For the cynic is astutely prankish, and haltingly powerful (one need only recall the public antics of that original cynic, Diogenes of Sinope, for confirmation of this). Yet it is also apparent that Nietzsche has in mind the honesty and sincerity of cynicism when he praises it in this way. Kaufmann demonstrates this by citing section 26 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, for instance, where Nietzsche says so explicitly.<sup>35</sup> It is also most likely that the imagery of a lantern placed in the hands of Nietzsche's “madman” who goes about spreading the truth of God's death in the marketplace ought to remind one of

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<sup>32</sup> It is Nietzsche's personal dictum of style and self-mastery: “I am always equal to accidents; I have to be unprepared to be master of myself.” (EH *Why I am so Wise* 4 227)

<sup>33</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 409.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> In fact, Nietzsche writes there that “cynicism [is] the only form in which the mean soul touches honesty” at all.

the lantern carried constantly by Diogenes and lit, even during the daylight hours, as an aid in helping him seek out “any honest men.”

Apart from the various textual similarities on which Kaufmann has based his analysis of *Ecce Homo* and the *Apology*, I suggest that there is also a commonality in the motive behind each text. For one thing, it is helpful to keep in mind that Nietzsche thinks of himself as a man who, like Socrates, “breaks the history of mankind in two,” whereby it is only proper to say that “one lives before him, or one lives after him.” (EH *Why I am a Destiny* 8 333) Both figures therefore stand out in history as irrevocable mutations of world spirit, according to Nietzsche. As such, Nietzsche was able to see that each was alike in the amplitude of his respective historical affect; but more than this, each was just as much alike in the type of affect he produced, in the type of affect that he *was*, in the energy that was incarnated with each man. Hence it is small wonder that Nietzsche shortly goes on to notarize himself, no less than one ought to notarize Socrates, as “an act of supreme self-examination on the part of humanity, become flesh and genius.” (EH *Why I am a Destiny* 1 326) This attests to Kaufmann's assurance that Nietzsche so closely identified the dignity of Socrates' mission with his own.

Let us also consider the context of Socrates' *Apology*: the criminal trial. It is true Socrates was a criminal type for Nietzsche; and furthermore, this by itself has often been levied as evidence of the disrespect he paid him. But then again, one recalls that Nietzsche felt his own sense of criminality—i.e., as an outsider, as a socially disastrous event, as one who would be judged. For Nietzsche, criminals are all those creatures “who for some reason or other fail to meet with public approval,” and who, in their offense, “feel the terrible chasm which separates them from all that is traditional and honourable.” (TI SA 45 105-6) Should one care for such titles, it is even possible to say that Nietzsche, like Socrates, was of a *criminal hero* type, along with the likes of Jesus and Faust.

By his own standards, this seems to ring true. It is this same commonality, I think, which allows Kierkegaard to remark in one of his notes that: “Faust may be paralleled with Socrates. Just as the latter expresses the individual's emancipation from the state, Faust expresses the individual after the abrogation of the Church, severed from its guidance and abandoned to himself [...]”<sup>36</sup> I suggest that a similar comparison could hold between the revolutionary status of Socrates and Nietzsche, the latter of whom not only dealt with the aftermath of God's death, but who actually strove to implement it in the minds of people as a real world event. As for Jesus, we can see that he likewise represented to Nietzsche a criminal attack on the church and its hierarchical situation—(this is then what he called the great “historical irony,” that Christ after his death actually ended up founding a new church, especially thanks to Paul). But unlike Jesus, who died “too early” and before his time, it is the death of Socrates which should serve

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<sup>36</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, I*, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey: 1987, 479.

as a model for those who wish to face it with the personal authority of a philosopher.

To illustrate this point, Kaufmann makes use of Nietzsche's description—what he calls his “loving poetry”—of Socrates' noble acceptance of death:

That he was sentenced to death, not exile, Socrates himself seems to have brought about with perfect awareness and without any natural awe of death. He went to his death with the calm with which, according to Plato's description, he leaves the Symposium at dawn, the last of the revelers, to begin a new day, while on the benches and on the earth his drowsy table companions remain behind to dream of Socrates, the true eroticist.<sup>37</sup>

This passage is important in the interest of vindicating Nietzsche from the presumption that he hated Socrates in any straight-forward way. Notwithstanding its relevance here, the fact that Kaufmann chooses at this point to ignore Nietzsche's other, much less flattering remarks on the way Socrates faced death is a good indication of what needs to be amended in his explanation.<sup>38</sup>

From this it might simply be concluded that Nietzsche felt differently about Socrates and his death later on, when declamations of his optimism eventually gave way to declamations of his pessimism. But such a conclusion appears unavailable to Kaufmann, whose stated intention it is to show that Nietzsche's admiration for Socrates continued throughout his intellectual life—from his youth, through the *Birth of Tragedy*, right up until the publication of *Ecce Homo*. Accordingly, he wishes to resist the common portrayal of Nietzsche's “three periods” of thought—an “untenable dogma,” he claims, whereby, in the first stage, Nietzsche is thought to be highly critical of Socrates (and the scientific optimism he was cast to represent), only to become more genial in the second “positivist” stage, and finally to return to a most vehement opposition in the last. This periodical picture of his attitude toward Socrates, which gains credence through Oehler, and which still has much currency in Nietzsche literature today, is based on what Kaufmann identifies as an original misunderstanding of the *Birth of Tragedy*, coupled with a fatal disregard for Nietzsche's characterization of Socrates during his early lectures on “The Pre-Platonic Philosophers” at Basel in 1872, 1873, and 1876.

The latter of these two oversights consists in how interpreters have often taken the category “Pre-Platonic” to exclude Socrates.<sup>39</sup> Following this, Nietzsche has been read to give high praise only for those Greeks beginning with Plato while withholding it from Socrates himself. Once again, such a reading

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<sup>37</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 410; originally from BT 13 85.

<sup>38</sup> I am referring to the famous passages found in the *Gay Science* and *Twilight of the Idols*, both of which I will examine extensively later in this dissertation.

<sup>39</sup> Kaufmann suspects this to be due to the influence of Oehler's book, *Nietzsche and the Pre-Socratics*. (1904)

gives the impression that Nietzsche begins with a decidedly negative view of Socrates which would later be mediated and reshaped under the force of his new-found appreciation for science. However, one must in this case ignore the significant celebration of Socrates in those early lectures as being “the first philosopher of life [*Lebensphilosoph*].” Happily then, it is with Socrates originally that, “[t]hought serves life, while in all other previous philosophers life served thought and knowledge.”<sup>40</sup> This constitutes high praise indeed, especially when one recalls that at the time of these lectures Nietzsche was also busy composing his treatise on the “Use and Disadvantage of History for Life,” in which he lauds above all else the selective process of thinking for the sole purpose of enhancing life. But despite the fact that Nietzsche praises Socrates here, it nonetheless points to his being a radical departure from the tradition of philosophical thinking before him, and not its continuation. Meanwhile, and on the other hand, Socrates is simultaneously counted among what Nietzsche thinks of as the original sages of Greece.

Reflecting once again on his fateful departure from the world, for instance, Nietzsche refers to the “magnificent” *Apology*, wherein Socrates is said to have spoken to all posterity with his display of veritable “triumph over human fear and weakness” along with the “dignity of his divine mission”; and he then goes on to quote the words of Grote, who describes the scene as the time when death took Socrates down under in all his glory, just as the sun of the tropics settles into the waiting radiance of the waters below. This gives occasion for Nietzsche to observe how “with him [Socrates] the line of original and typical “*sophoi*” [sages] is exhausted: one may think of Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, Democritus, and Socrates. Now comes a new era ...”<sup>41</sup> This being said, one is now left with the rather confusing implication that, in addition to being the *first* representative of a new and divergent philosophical way, Socrates should at once stand as the *final* representative of philosophical practice who appears at the end of the chain of classical Greek sages. I suspect moreover that it is just this confusion, which results from Nietzsche's unusual conjunction of “first” and “last” and which is overlooked even by Kaufmann, which has proven to be such a disconcerting factor in the surrounding scholarship. However, whatever inconsistency one might surmise in it, and whatever flexibility of thought it might require, it is quite possible to conceive of Socrates as the last of an order while being at the same time the first of another. In the end, such a unique position testifies to the utter particularity of this life and the complexity of its role in world history.

As for the former of the two major oversights—i.e. with regard to the *Birth of Tragedy*—it is worth noting along with Kaufmann that Nietzsche's first book was originally intended to conclude with section 15. Before adding a lengthy aesthetic analysis of Wagner (a choice which he later expressly regretted), Nietzsche's original manuscript concludes by challenging the easily made assumption that

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 396.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 397.

Socrates, as the archetype and progenitor of “theoretical man,” should stand in opposition to the cause of art, which at that time appeared to be central to the need for man to renew and improve himself.

Kaufmann complains that interpreters have almost invariably ignored this section, and that this has once again lead to a drastic misrepresentation of Nietzsche's relation to Socrates as being clear and one-sided.<sup>42</sup>

And yet, even during the course of his own attack on Socrates in *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche deliberately cautions his audience against undermining the complexity of his position, for example, when after characterizing Socrates as the insidious culminative expression of decadence within the Greek psyche, continues with the insistence that: “we must now ask: ‘Toward what does a figure like Socrates point?’” He answers: “*we are certainly not entitled to see in Socrates merely an agent of disintegration,*” and goes on to identify Socrates as nothing less than he who “guarantees the eternity of artistic endeavor,” by forcing us, through the profundity of a constant experience with Socrates, generation after generation, to “reconsider the foundations of its art.” (BT 15 91)

Here we can see the value that Socrates bears to civilization, if nothing else, in just the appearance of his being a powerful opposing force. And after giving a careful study to Nietzsche's ideas regarding the philosopher as “cultural physician,” it becomes clear just how disintegration and all types of decadent debilitation can and must serve as agents of strengthening growth.<sup>43</sup> In particular, as one who instigates a war between science and art, Socrates *freed* art, reviving within it the vital instincts to attack and defense. This kind of process is reminiscent of how Nietzsche speaks about the ongoing war fought in the name of “liberalism.” For liberal institutions, he says, “so long as they are fought for,” actually “promote the cause of freedom quite powerfully. Regarded more closely, it is war which produces these results, war in favor of liberal institutions, which, as war, allows these illiberal instincts to subsist. For war trains men to be free ...” (TI SA 38 94-5). Following along in the same passage, Nietzsche also goes on to stipulate that in his terms, “Freedom denotes that the virile instincts which rejoice in war and in victory, prevail over other instincts[.]” This line of insight, I will argue, gives good reason to think that

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<sup>42</sup> One worthy exception to this is Hildebrandt, who understood each of Nietzsche’s portrayals of Socrates to be as untenable (and as consciously untenable) as the next: e.g., as theoretical man and affiliate of Euripides in *Birth of Tragedy*; or as a vicious degenerate in *Twilight of the Idols*. Referring to the first of these, Hildebrandt states quite sharply that, “Vom Standpunkt der Philologie ist diese Auffassung kaum ernst zu nehmen.” [“From the standpoint of philology this judgement is hardly to be taken seriously.”] Kurt Hildebrandt, *Nietzsches Wettkampf mit Sokrates und Plato*, Sibyllen-Verlag, Dresden: 1922, p. 13 and 22.

<sup>43</sup> This important theme will be analyzed in the chapters to follow. For the time being, I submit this note from the *Will to Power* as typical of the most vital point to be considered: “*The notion 'decadence':—Decay, decline, and waste, are, per se, in no way open to objection; they are the natural consequences of life and vital growth. The phenomenon of decadence is just as necessary to life as advance or progress is: we are not in a position which enables us to suppress it. On the contrary, reason would have it retain its rights.*” (WTP 40 32-3)

Socrates ought to be primarily thought of as the liberator of Nietzsche, and therefore as his educator.

By his own frank admission, Nietzsche remained engaged in a perpetual war with Socrates throughout his life: “Sokrates, um es nur zu bekennen, steht mir so nahe, dass ich fast immer einen Kampf mit ihm kämpfe. [Just to confess it, Socrates is so close to me that I am almost always fighting a fight with him.]” (KSA NF 8 97) This is a revealing note of Nietzsche's early period. Indeed, to say that the entire matter of Nietzsche's relation to Socrates can be read or misread through this short passage would be no great exaggeration in my view. Kaufmann is the first to introduce it in his essay, while others have gone on, implicitly or otherwise, to reshape the significance of its meaning. For some, like Nehamas, the “closeness” that Nietzsche expresses for Socrates should be taken to indicate his perception of a dreadful *similarity* between them along with the perception he consequently had of his own unoriginality; hence the driving need to “fight with him.” For his part, Kaufmann looks to interpret the statement in a surprisingly straight-forward way, citing it as evidence of the inevitable “Brutus crisis” to befall Nietzsche as he pressed on in pursuit of individualism. But neither of these readings proves satisfactory when one has a clear understanding of Nietzsche's doctrine of integration between the concepts of friendship and enmity. Rather, the term “closeness” should be read in its full range of meaning, most importantly including the sense of friendship and need that one feels for another who is “close to him.”

Nietzsche was adamant in thinking about the instincts of a civilization as subsistent on the strength of those which opposed them in cultural warfare. It is in this way that Socrates presents himself as the constant regenerator of artistic activity, i.e. by remaining (apparently) wholly apart and inconsistent with its nature.<sup>44</sup> At the level of the individual, however, the scenario appears somewhat different. For in this case Nietzsche recognizes the possibility of the Socratic spirit infusing itself within the soul of the artist (or vice-versa), in order to produce a genius capable of harnessing the great power of these two conflictual instincts. From the standpoint of Nietzsche's educational philosophy, such a fusion would, if successful, exemplify the model of internal harmony described by Nietzsche when describing the constitution of an ideal student.<sup>45</sup> In keeping with the nature of the task he undertakes in his essay, it is therefore understandable that Kaufmann would be so occupied with the notion that Nietzsche himself

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<sup>44</sup> E.g., in this note from the period of *Birth of Tragedy*: “Wenn er [Socratic man] hier in seinem Schrecken sieht, wie die Logik sich an diesen Grenzen um sich selbst ringelt und endlich sich in den Schwanz beißt - da bricht die neue Form der Erkenntnis durch, die tragische Erkenntnis, die, um ertragen zu werden, als Schutz und Hilfsmittel die Kunst braucht.” (KSA GT 1 101). [When he sees here to his horror how logic at these limits circles around itself and finally bites its own tail – then a new form of knowledge breaks through, the tragic knowledge which, in order to be endured, requires art as its shelter and aid.”]

<sup>45</sup> This I will address more fully in the section titled “Style and Harmony,” which deals specifically with the different natures of Nietzschean and Socratic harmony.

must qualify as being the “artistic Socrates.” Such a term, he says, actually denotes a kind of “self-portrait” on the part of Nietzsche. But what sort of man would this be?

In the *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche ruminates over the last days of Socrates, when it is reported that his daemonic counselor, the mysterious voice which spoke to him throughout his long life, suddenly changed in a radical way. “Sokrates, triebe Muzik!” was the new command—(a command which, for being a positive command at all, already reveals that something had changed; for the voice, whatever it was, had until then always only told Socrates what *not* to do)—and so he did, even composing a few of his own musical pieces. (KSA GT 14 96) This demonstrates the capacity within Socrates for the most profound exercise in self-overcoming: the overthrowing of his own “tyrant”; or at least it shows that, according to Nietzsche's reading, Socrates was rich enough to have even developed a conscience for his own overcoming, which was manifest as the call toward an “artistic Socrates.” Socrates thus signified the possibility of overcoming not only the Pre-Socratics, but also the overcoming of the age of Socratic *epigoni* to follow. In fact, as seen in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the possibility of an “artistic Socrates” is what Nietzsche explicitly had in mind from the beginning when he speaks of what type of human must re-transfigure the world.<sup>46</sup>

Nietzsche recognized from the beginning that Socrates had been force enough to reconfigure the entire sensibility of taste for his own world and well beyond. He was a “charioteer” of the world even long after his time: the prototype of an “entirely new mode of existence,” which was that of optimistic, theoretical man. (BT 15 92) One might easily take this as an indictment of Socrates’ compulsion to privilege theory over practice. However, as Kaufmann has pointed out, Nietzsche praised Socrates for his integration of the theoretical with the practical. Furthermore, it is the staunchness of the theoretical disposition that leads to its own reversal as it is propelled by restlessness toward realizing the vacuity of all foundations, and ultimately, propelled toward art: “When the inquirer [theoretical man], having pushed to the circumference, realizes how logic in that place curls about itself and bites its own tail, he is struck with a new kind of perception: a tragic perception, which requires, to make it tolerable, the remedy of art.” (*Ibid.* 95) This passage more clearly describes how Socrates can and must be viewed, again, not as a simple disintegration, but as a cultural propedeutic—as the one who necessitates art, who “guarantees the eternity of artistic endeavor.” Beyond this, however, it also points to the great value of

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<sup>46</sup> Yannick Soulaïdié makes the same point while thinking about Nietzsche’s insistence on the ugliness of Socrates: “Mais cette difformité, associée à une force de la volonté monstrueuse, avait aussi fait naître en Nietzsche l’espoir de voir apparaître, un jour, un ‘Socrate musicien,’ disciple de Dionysos, qui aurait pu servir de modèle à un homme tragique wagnérien. La laideur pouvait ainsi également représenter un pont menant vers une forme de sublime, d’art tragique.” Yannick Soulaïdié, “La Laideur de Socrate,” in *Nietzsche-Studien*, vol. 35 (2006), p. 34-5.

having *contradiction* amongst one's talents.<sup>47</sup>

I have said above that Nietzsche rejected (or perhaps, "disembraced") optimism no less than he did pessimism, because he found both equally decadent, and both to fall short of the tragic viewpoint. Now Nietzsche poses the question of his primary concern: "Will this dialectical inversion lead to ever new configurations of genius, above all to that of Socrates as the practitioner of music?" (*Ibid.* 95-6) This passage goes far to illustrate Nietzsche's *dialectical* comprehension of Socrates. Both the optimism of the living Socrates (as he was portrayed in his early works), as well as the secret pessimism of the dying Socrates, are for Nietzsche conditions to be overcome. His conception of Socrates as a living expression of both is indicative of why he saw a Socrates inverted on himself, the artistic Socrates, as a model for overcoming.

At the time, a tremendous battle was ensuing over the proper place and nature of genius, and it was thought by Nietzsche to be championed by men such as Wagner, and by Nietzsche himself. But then again, this battle between the barbaric activities of present day and the deeply seated transitional forces of artistic revival is ubiquitous to the age, says Nietzsche, and rages as it were across the whole cultural landscape. Everyone is involved in this war to a degree. "Alas, it is the spell inherent in such battles that he who watches them must also fight them." (*Ibid.*)

Even in his early works, Nietzsche had come to recognize what he called the "common war" upon everything rare, strange, and of a higher spirit in modern culture. *Ressentiment* takes its ascendancy over the more noble and ambitious faculty of a war-like envy, with the result that the inclination for hubris and the vitalizing force of its activity dies out in humanity. This I would argue is at least partly why the deplorable "will to mediocrity" features so prominently in the pages of his *Schopenhauer as Educator*. While this most widely points to a state of decline in all aspects of human interaction, it is really above all an educational problem for Nietzsche. And again, it is because Nietzsche saw the mindless drive toward total equality amongst people as the greatest threat to modern education that he looked to the Greeks for a new mode of education, and discovered with them the possibility of having *agon* stand central to the task of all learning.

I take Kaufmann as one whose opinion supports my own in this case. For, even though his consideration of Nietzsche's lifelong campaign against the age of mediocrity does not lead him to take note of the crucial relation it bears on educational philosophy, he does see that Nietzsche's response to this age was surely born of a lesson learned from the Ancients' penchant for contest; and more specifically, he realizes that it was likely inspired by Socrates himself. Nietzsche, he writes, was one who witnessed the people of his day "becoming resigned to being equally mediocre," while at the same time growing increasingly resistant to act on the desire for "excel[ling] one another in continued

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<sup>47</sup> See section 297 of GS: "*The ability to contradict.*"

competition.”<sup>48</sup> Hence Kaufmann gathers that, in this regard, “Nietzsche feels that he is only keeping the faith with this Socratic heritage when he calls attention to the dangers of the modern idealization of equality.”<sup>49</sup> Although Kaufmann does not take credit for the discovery (because he does not conceive of Socrates in the role of educator), Socrates here emerges as an educator of Nietzsche in his capacity for teaching him to resist education—that is, to resist the gravity of education which demands everything to be levelled off under its weight and which prevents the genius, who is a creature of excessive and wasteful experiment, from thriving at all.

This is a good illustration of how, although the publication of Kaufmann's essay has been helpful in making headway into the problematic of Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates, and although he addresses the key points of tension within this problem, it remains too simplistic. It likewise betrays a certain naiveté for Kaufmann to stop short of addressing the multitude of incendiary remarks against Socrates in Nietzsche's writings, and even in his earlier ones (e.g., *Birth of Tragedy*). Indeed, it is Kaufmann's surprising position that Nietzsche was constantly respectful in his critique of Socrates, while he was baneful only toward the garrulous hordes of Socratic schools following him and the “Socratism” of the age in general. No less surprising is his assertion that, “The *Dawn* is the first of Nietzsche's books in which a respectful critique [of Socrates] can be found.”<sup>50</sup> In this way, Kaufmann's essay again appears as a forceful avocation for recognizing the “other side” of Nietzsche's mixed feelings for Socrates. Unfortunately, the conceptual phrasing of this problem of “sides” continues unabated even in the work of those authors who have wished to correct him. With this in mind, I will move on to discuss the major contributions made by authors on the subject since Kaufmann's essay, with emphasis on how I believe these views should be modified.

### **1.3 Dannhauser's View: Socrates as Villain**

With the help of Kaufmann, I have taken a first step in addressing Nietzsche's relation to Socrates. Through his various discoveries and clarifications I have attempted to exhibit the real fondness Nietzsche had for Socrates: as a “friend,” “hero,” “model” (to use Kaufmann's word), as well as educator. Through his shortcomings (mainly in scope of inquiry), I have also attempted to unleash some measure of the complexity involved in this relationship. Now I wish to amplify this complexity from the other side by talking about the real “problem” Nietzsche had with Socrates, the “villain.” With such a full-bodied complexity, I think, one can better hope to achieve a certain level of simplicity in the end. So then, how

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<sup>48</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 405.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 401.

and why was Socrates an enemy to Nietzsche?

There is no shortage of works which allude to Nietzsche's vilification of Socrates. However as a primary aid in my attempt to answer this question I choose Dannhauser, for one, because he is among those interpreters who recognize the important difference (as well as the relation) between Nietzsche's "attack against" Socrates and his "fight with" him. Incidentally, he seems to prefer the term "quarrel" instead of "fight," possibly in an effort to emphasize the same sort of reciprocity: i.e., that Socrates is never defenseless. With Dannhauser's account, moreover, we encounter once again the seemingly unavoidable confluence between, on the one hand, a comparison of the discernible insights within Nietzsche and Socrates, and on the other, a comparison of the two as character types.

Evidently Dannhauser composed his work not only in reaction to, but as an extension of Kaufmann's original essay, which stressed the need for a more thorough examination of Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates, extended across all known references to him in the corpus, including those that would otherwise remain more or less implicit. Not only is the title of his book (*Nietzsche's View of Socrates*) similar to Kaufmann's; Dannhauser also seems to be carrying out the task prescribed in it by carefully sifting at length through all of Nietzsche's works, each in order of its public appearance, until he has come to assurance that the task is completed.

The pages of Dannhauser's book tell a story of Nietzsche as the thinker who recast the history of philosophy into the form of a great epic drama. Socrates is written in as its greatest villain, and this sets the scene for Nietzsche to emerge as its ultimate hero. But for Dannhauser, one might then suggest, Nietzsche seems to have aspired to the heroism of dragon slayers.<sup>51</sup> The image is appealing, to be sure; and one thinks also of the great hordes of ancient wealth of energies to be gained by such a feat, (i.e. by slaying the dragon who guards them and renders them useless in his cave), as well as the vanquishing of a tyrannical force. Despite its appeal, however, this kind of story does disservice to Nietzsche and the radical thrust of his mission to affect the future conduct of philosophy.

Dannhauser's work illustrates a common willingness among commentators to present the *agon* of Nietzsche and Socrates in overly simplistic terms: as a sort of zero-sum game with a distinct beginning and end point, and even more misleadingly, therefore, as a contest whose parameters are obvious and well defined. This last point is even more misleading, as I say, because it requires thinking about nature of philosophical contest as something quite obvious and somehow fixed, as well as the correlative implication that an *agon* taken up against the fixed order of traditional contest cannot be recognized as an

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<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Nietzsche is acutely aware of how appealing this kind of heroism can be to an individual, as evidenced by his description of a "*Condition for heroism*. – If a man wants to become a hero the serpent must first have become a dragon: otherwise he will lack his proper enemy." (HH I 498 180) Incidentally, Socrates is also referred to by Nietzsche as "the famous old serpent" in BGE 202 115.

alternative, and perhaps higher, form of philosophical contest. This is one aspect of Nietzsche's agonistic treatment of Socrates which I will bring to light in the present study.

Dannhauser's aim is of a different kind. After having surveyed Nietzsche's various charges against Socrates, all the while with reference to Nietzsche's life and style, Dannhauser finally reaches the conclusion that "That quarrel [between Nietzsche and Socrates] can scarcely be said to issue in a clear victory for Nietzsche"; and again, that "If the quarrel between Nietzsche and Socrates is viewed as a personal contest, an *agon*, as Nietzsche occasionally hints it should be viewed, it is again doubtful whether Nietzsche achieves victory."<sup>52</sup> However in Dannhauser's view, not only does Nietzsche fail to achieve victory over Socrates, but it is actually Socrates who defeats Nietzsche.

Dannhauser gives three counts upon which we ought to declare Socrates the "victor" of the fight between himself and Nietzsche, and I suggest that much can be learned about the nature of the contest he is describing by paying attention to these. He first of all decrees that, "[w]hen all is said and done, Socrates emerges as the fuller, more profound, and more enduring figure. Socrates, who wore only one mask, compounded of irony and urbanity, emerges as more intriguing than Nietzsche, the man of many masks."<sup>53</sup> But how, first of all, should this count as a victory? And more urgently: when is all said and done? That is, the *agon* ought not to be thought of as something that "happened once" between Nietzsche and Socrates, like some discreet event involving only these two men (who never in fact met). The *agon* itself is thus never all said and done, but rather it continues, perpetuated in proportion to its merits—in particular, its merits as an emulative contest. Remarkably, Dannhauser's book is not only a great testament to this, but it has in its own process also enacted this continuation. Despite this accomplishment, Dannhauser notably fails to acknowledge that what he has here called Socrates' "emerging" is a description of an activity which is brought about through his very work on the subject. In other words, such an emergence is the product of all that is "said and done" on his account.

The second count of Socrates' victory over Nietzsche is this: "In order to be as truthful and provocative as possible, Nietzsche was willing to violate all canons of public responsibility. Socrates, by contrast, managed at least to be as profound and ultimately as shocking, while giving moderation its due and dignifying the canons of public responsibility."<sup>54</sup> Again, how should this constitute philosophical victory? Is it simply that Socrates carried out his work with a greater degree of politeness? But then what if it is the very determination of what should count as philosophical victory that is at stake in the contest? And hence, what if it is this politeness itself which is meant to be overcome by the challenge Nietzsche mounts against the tradition? In this case one may notice that the active evaluative terms in Dannhauser's

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<sup>52</sup> Werner Dannhauser, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY: 1974, p. 272.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

thesis, which set one figure in pejorative contrast to the other, could easily be reversed. That is, why not say instead that Nietzsche “managed,” astonishingly, to raise such hell as to establish himself as a real enemy of modern days, and managed this with the crudest of means, while on the other hand Socrates only “was willing to” attain his stature as provocateur without any resort to overt, celebrated rancor, but rather only with subdued and utterly false modesty? Contrary to the thesis offered by Dannhauser, Nietzsche evidently chose his mode of engagement with Socrates *because* of its rude appearance, and not in spite of it. “You see,” he writes, “I don’t want rudeness to be underestimated: it is by far the *most humane* form of contradiction and, in the midst of effeminacy, one of our foremost virtues.” (EH *Why I am so Wise* 5 229)<sup>55</sup> The subtleties of Nietzsche’s deliberate transvaluation of rudeness here must remain lost on those who, like Dannhauser, cannot allow that Nietzsche’s success in exacting such a transvaluation signifies an important goal that is attained through his struggle against Socrates, is learned by him, and is therefore far from being a mark of any failure on his part.

The third count of Socrates’ victory over Nietzsche is perhaps the most sweeping of all, and comes to its final articulation when Dannhauser offers the following judgment: “One would be hard put to it to make a list of desirable traits or characteristics present in Nietzsche and absent in Socrates.”<sup>56</sup> As striking as it is, such a statement requires careful consideration. Here Nietzsche’s character is denigrated in comparison with that of his rival Socrates. In response to Dannhauser’s last claim, therefore, I wish to ask for a final time: ought this to be thought of as the determinative contest between these two? To stake out a list of “traits” for each, and tally up the number of “desirables” among them? I believe that the affirmative response, which I take to be Dannhauser’s claim, is based on the conviction that the real war between Nietzsche and Socrates, as two self-understood *Lebensphilosophen*, must take place as a contest of character. To this I agree. In the cases of both men’s activities, the “war of ideas” unfailingly led primarily to the unearthing of hidden assumptions and other secret burrows of the interlocutor’s psyche. Despite aspirations for truth, then, each war, including the war of ideas waged by Nietzsche against “Socratism,” was always ultimately eclipsed by the *war of character* which was effected alongside it and by means of it.

Once again however, what I find most problematic in Dannhauser’s account of how the contest of character between Nietzsche and Socrates should be adjudicated is that it seems to take for granted a standard by which to judge. Presumably, such a standard would be instantiated in one who “had” the

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<sup>55</sup> This remark appears shortly after Nietzsche’s discussion of the rules he has adopted for the conduct of his own *Kriegspraxis*, which outlines essential features of his style of engagement with opponents. In the context of the present thesis, this discussion obviously holds much promise for shedding light on the agonistics of educational engagement. For this reason I will return to take it up in further detail later on.

<sup>56</sup> Dannhauser, *op. cit.*, 273.

greatest number of the best traits or characteristics. But the contest between Nietzsche and Socrates was in part one between two rival conceptions of the human psyche, neither of which would gauge the merit of a life by such a crude calculation as Dannhauser's. In a word, Dannhauser's evaluation must here give due recognition to the Nietzschean demand for transvaluation. Whereas Dannhauser judges the merit of its objects (in this case, character traits) independently and in separate isolation from each another, for example, Nietzsche would always judge them in tandem, as detractions, expedients and mutating agents of each other.<sup>57</sup>

To elaborate on this point, let us consider for instance that, according to Nietzsche's fully developed portrait of the human soul, no trait of personality can be said to be "had" in any simple way; for each competes with another, delimits and reshapes the other in its activity. The nature and value of any given characteristic (or habit) can therefore be determined only in association with others. Hence like the alchemist, the student of life delights in the constant experiment of mixing different drives and longings, divergent habits and memories, and especially those which appear to interfere with the activity of the other in some novel way, with all the more delight taken in those mixtures that result in the most dramatic transformations. To venture a more appropriate appraisal of such a creature would thus require accommodating the idea of *proportionality* into one's thinking. According to Nietzsche, when given in proper proportion to another—and, therefore, when it is in proper subordination to another—the so-called "undesirable" trait may well become desirable: e.g., as a source of expedient tension, variety, chance for novel transformation, and a beauty made more striking by the unsightly elements at work within it.<sup>58</sup>

Judged from this perspective, it becomes ever less obvious who the true "victor" of the competition should be. From this perspective of contest, indeed, Socrates would need to be considered an instance of the rarest opportunity for advance in such "alchemical" self-stylization, not only for his having access to the widest array of temperaments, but also for the force with which one instinct could be made lord over others within him. Socrates was "master" of himself in this way, and Nietzsche certainly acknowledged as much. Mastery of this tyrannical sort does not, however, accomplish on its own the task of style for Nietzsche. It is but one form of self-overcoming, one way of exerting the power of arrangement over one's impulses—it is a most heavy-handed, intolerant, and therefore neatly "Spartan"<sup>59</sup> prescription for self-mastery which has no inclination for the subtleties of co-operative agonistic forces.

On the other hand, Nietzsche would admit that such ruthless impatience of the soul is always

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<sup>57</sup> E.g., see D 218 135-6, where Nietzsche applauds the artistic ability to set one's weaknesses off against one's virtue in such a way that it produces the affect of having that virtue appear even more beautiful, and more desirable.

<sup>58</sup> I will return to expand on this theme of "style and harmony" in chapter three.

<sup>59</sup> I use this word in reference to what Nietzsche thought of as the exclusive specialization of developing a single talent or faculty above all others, to the disadvantage of all others. This issue I will discuss at much greater length in chapter three.

come by honestly when it is effected upon oneself, like the strictures of martial law, in a time of great emergency. The potent admixture we find in Socrates begets stability in this way, and thus, longevity; it is a tonic fit for those in need of calming re-agents. Those on the other hand whose health depends on the *increase* of reactive agitation among the vital forces, those of Nietzsche's own time, need something else: not merely a tonic, one for all, but rather the sensibility and foresight to administer to oneself the best conditions for ailment and disability—along with the cruelty to enact these conditions—in the interest of attaining a robustness that might well appear as frailty in the eyes of many. The one who is successful in this might also appear to others as the home to a grotesque inner disproportionality, and may thus also appear to be vicious. Each of the two figures is extreme in his way. Each manifests the most threatening decay of his time and so each seems disfigured from one vantage or another—but then again, it is precisely the propensity for vice undertaken as a virtue which sets Nietzsche's decadence apart from that of Socrates.<sup>60</sup>

Finally, in distinction to Dannhauser's thesis, it might be argued that Nietzsche actually surpassed Socrates (and hence won a "victory" over him) in the depth of his penetration into the idea of the *agon* itself, and espied therein a new possibility for the meaning of victory. Nietzsche recognized that Socrates practiced agonal wisdom, just as he explicitly recognized this of himself. As such, he knew that to contest him was at the same time to be instructed in this wisdom, whereby the student under his instruction could expect something dormant within him to be "birthed" and developed as a result. This brings us face to face with the major aspect of contest as Nietzsche saw it, which was always educative (or developmental) in nature. The *agon* is the preeminent means of personal growth for Nietzsche, and not meant merely for staking a proof of merit over another thinker or for achieving the victory of seeming superior his antagonist in some specific way, when all is said and done. This I think is what has been most unfortunately lost in Dannhauser's reception of the contest between Nietzsche and Socrates.

#### **1.4 Nehamas' View: Socrates as Mirror**

In his book, *Life as Literature*, Nehamas attempts to explain the function and origin of what he has called Nietzsche's "stylistic pluralism." This term refers to the changing modes of Nietzsche's expression: between the critic and the positivist, for instance, or between his uses of aphorisms, essays of extended prose, verse, and dramatic narrative. In his explanation, Nehamas rightly claims that not only was Nietzsche at war with the whole host of systems and ideas passed down by the tradition of philosophy, but that he also fought against what he saw to be the stylistic constraints particular to that tradition. According to his reading, therefore, Nietzsche's stylistic pluralism ought to be viewed as "one

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<sup>60</sup> See EH *Why I am so Wise* 2 224.

of his essential weapons in his effort to distinguish himself from the philosophical tradition as he conceives it.”<sup>61</sup> As a highly personal thinker, and as one who believed that all philosophical expression bears with it the hidden convictions and real character of the speaker, it is argued that Nietzsche was one who felt an urgent need to make this fact manifest through his various modes of writing. The basic idea is that Nietzsche wished to make it impossible for the reader of his work to forget that there is a *man* speaking there, and thereby to banish the illusion that ideas can ever stand on their own, ready to be picked up and consumed as independent items of thought, all without regard for what personality stands behind them. Nietzsche’s aim here, to borrow Nehamas’ own terminology, would then be to realize a “life as literature” in explicit fashion, whereby his multitude of voices and expressive modes become “means and products of his effort always to insinuate himself between his readers and the world.”<sup>62</sup> Moreover, it is evident to Nehamas that this effort represents one of Nietzsche’s most pressing personal needs.

This summary explanation seems generally correct. However, it pays inadequate attention to the lively *experimentalism* which Nietzsche constantly strove to enact in his writing, and the extent to which this serves to explain Nietzsche’s “stylistic pluralism.” In those who are home to it, Nietzsche thought that the spirit of experimentalism manifested the deeply seated, restless drive toward the perpetual reformulation of ideas and of oneself, and a spirit which would continually seek to expose the endless possibility of thought, often by violent means, for example, when one lays waste to stagnant ways of thinking in order to stimulate growth, (as the gardener who cuts the shoots of a plant, which then sprawls out in new directions.<sup>63</sup>) Above all, for Nietzsche this spirit is a necessary feature of those “future philosophers” who are mandated to will the greatest freedom in thought. But these philosophers are “futural” primarily for their concern with maintaining conditions under which thought can be made radical and new, and not because they have yet to appear in history.

In evaluating the position of Nehamas, however, it is also important to recognize that this futural character and the radical experimentalism that it requires should be viewed as a positive and thoroughly *active* feature of the philosopher’s person, and not as one born of vanity, or forged as such in reaction to the fear of going unnoticed in the world. Indeed, there was little need for Nietzsche to set himself apart by his “shifting” from style to style—(as if he would count this a great victory in his war with the tradition). Among other things, Nietzsche saw as his, and his alone, the new genealogical task of reintroducing the

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<sup>61</sup> Alexander Nehamas, *Life as Literature*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass: 1985, 20; hereafter cited as: Nehamas 1985, *op. cit.*, followed by the page number.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche also sometimes describes the process of education with similar metaphor: “Education is rather liberation, a rooting out of all weeds, rubbish and vermin from around the buds of the plants ...” (SE 6)

world to the sight its own dying ideals, de-glorified, fully base and fully human ideals.

Whatever its merits or faults, Nehamas' interpretation remains of special relevance to the present study, because it explains Nietzsche's stylistic pluralism not only as a polemical reaction to, or as a "weapon against," the philosophical tradition in general, but also as a tactic adopted specifically for his fight against Socrates, with whom he never ceased to struggle. He concludes that "Nietzsche's many styles are to be explained through his relation to Socrates and to philosophy: they are an essential part of his constant war against them."<sup>64</sup> In light of this, Nehamas sets out to portray Nietzsche's stylistic pluralism as a method taken up as a reaction to his personal concern for distinguishing himself apart from Socrates, whose life project he allegedly feared was, at last, too similar to his own, and who therefore threatened to explode his own (inflated) sense of individuality.

This last point, which is central to Nehamas' conception of Nietzsche's relation to Socrates, is more fully expounded in another book titled *The Art of Living*. Apparently, Nehamas' treatment of this relationship is prompted by a series of questions he finds "strange and difficult" to answer. Foremost among these is why, according to Nehamas, Nietzsche seems to suddenly strike a "truce" with Socrates, and even to "become fond" of him, during the time when he was composing the *Untimely Meditations* and *Human, All-Too-Human*.<sup>65</sup> This he describes as a temporary, though "serious" change of mind. Once again, this reflects the view that Nietzsche had three distinct periods of engagement with Socrates, each of which tells a tale of how Nietzsche's (simple) feelings stood toward him at that time. In light of the inconsistency that this interpretation generates, I reject it, and offer instead that the change in Nietzsche's treatment of Socrates over time—which is never totally malicious *or* adulating, but always both—is best understood as a reflection of the development of his thought on educative relationships.

With that in mind, what I find most striking about both of the works Nehamas cites—i.e. as those belonging to his period of unexplained "fondness" for Socrates, *Untimely Meditations* and *Human-All-Too-Human*—is that this is a period reflecting Nietzsche's most intense interest in the nature of education and its related themes. These themes include: the usefulness of sickness; the martial school of life; enmity and envy (both public and private); the necessity of war; the necessity of self-education (along with the "necessary evil" of having teachers); the advantages of different "modes of attack"; and his conception of a new kind of contest and a new "gymnastics." Above all, it is within these books especially that he ponders how it could be possible for one *idolize* a teacher in such a way that he could learn effectively and be empowered by this act, instead of being disabled by it.

For his part, Nehamas does not see fit to draw similar attention to the prevalence of these themes during his discussion of this "exceptional" time in Nietzsche's treatment of Socrates. I suggest, moreover,

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<sup>64</sup> Nehamas 1985, *op. cit.*, 37.

<sup>65</sup> Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 131.

that this in turn prevents him from recognizing the direct relevance Nietzsche's concurrently advancing educational theory must have with respect to the question regarding Socrates. He therefore does not see that these texts are particularly important, not only for demonstrating a changing mode of engagement with Socrates, but more importantly, for the explanation that they can provide for this change.

Nonetheless, this oversight does not prevent Nehamas from recognizing that the close proximity and great weight of Socrates with respect to Nietzsche's intellectual development warrants asking whether or not he should be counted as one of his "educators." However I argue this question (or perhaps rather the way in which it is cast), is still deficient in several ways. In his approach to the issue Nehamas asks, for example: "Did Socrates play anything like the role Schopenhauer and Wagner played in Nietzsche's thought, or was he simply his enemy?"<sup>66</sup> But this phrasing of the question seems to imply that teachership bears no essential relationship to enmity, and possibly even that the two are exclusive of one another. Nehamas is undoubtedly aware of the "Brutus-like" complexity of Nietzsche's relation to Schopenhauer and Wagner, both of whom were variously idolized and attacked by him. Even so, I would contend that, given a closer inspection of his stated views on the subject, there is no such thing as "simply" being an enemy for Nietzsche. For instance, to be an open and celebrated enemy, as Socrates was, means a great deal under the rubric of agonistic education. It means for one thing that Socrates was worthy of enmity and of all the efforts of publicly resisting him, while a more "simple" enemy for Nietzsche may well be the one to whom no mind is paid at all. Nietzsche tells us as much as he reflects on his own polemical ideals: "[e]quality before the enemy: the first presupposition of an *honest* duel. Where one feels contempt, one *cannot* wage war; where one commands, where one sees something beneath oneself, one has no business waging war." (EH *Why I am so Wise* 7 232) In these cases one wages war by merely "turning away." On the other hand, the enemy for whom one has great regard and admiration is just what makes the best type of developmental contest possible at all for Nietzsche.

Nehamas is meanwhile satisfied to make provision for the claim that Nietzsche might have conceived of Socrates as one of his educators by pointing out that "Nietzsche never believed that resistance excludes learning."<sup>67</sup> This statement, though it is obviously true, is also dangerously misleading. It is misleading for being so understated, just as if one were to explain the process of photosynthetic growth in plants by pointing out that it is not *precluded* by sunlight, for instance. Learning for Nietzsche, we should rather say, is *nothing without* resistance, and *this* is what positively qualifies Socrates as his educator.

In a fashion similar to Dannhauser, Nehamas has paved the way for the final thrust of his analysis by first acknowledging some of the key similarities between Nietzsche and Socrates. Notably, these

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 132.

<sup>67</sup> Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 132.

similarities are thought to reside primarily within their oddly parallel (i.e. somehow parallel, yet divergent) styles of practice in philosophy, whereas their differences are determined to be of a more personal nature. As Nehamas has it, the most important point of parallel between these two is that they were both great and forceful innovators within the philosophical world. Specifically, with both are encountered “radically new philosophical interests, [and a] new and still unclear way of doing philosophy.”<sup>68</sup> Moreover as Nietzsche himself indicates at different points, each converted their practice of philosophy according to the conditioning effects of a strong polemical instinct; both drew upon the will to contest. This attitude is itself formative of a new kind of contest, whereby a certain victory can be claimed in just having brought one’s opponent into the contest, to be taken “seriously,” and to rise up as a great agitator. For this reason, Nehamas is correct in his observation that “Both Nietzsche and Socrates often fail in their efforts and have no effect at all; but as long as they even manage to upset their audience, they have already partly won the contest.”<sup>69</sup>

Aside from the similarities already identified, Nehamas seems to think of this last one as being most instructive in understanding Nietzsche's relation to Socrates. This line of thinking has to its advantage an appeal to Nietzsche’s opinion that the nature of things and people ultimately resides in their patterns of effect. And to the extent that this lends strength to Nehamas’ point of view, it likewise gives him warrant to fortify his description of Socrates as “the one figure in the history of philosophy with whom Nietzsche never ceased to be involved in a highly complicated, deeply equivocal relationship,” due most of all to his being “a figure who prompted, by very different means and with catastrophic results for his person though not for his character, exactly the same range of reactions.”<sup>70</sup>

On close inspection, however, there is a subtle yet apparent implication here—and to be sure, it is an implication which Nehamas directly espouses later in the essay. Namely, it is that while the effects of these two men were indeed comparable, only the philosophical method of *Nietzsche* was destructive to his own character, his inner “life,” while in the case of Socrates, it was only destructive to “his person,” meaning presumably that he paid for his methods with his physical, outer “life.”

Nehamas comes back to make good on the above implication when he speaks of Nietzsche’s real motivation for his disavowal of Socrates. With this in mind, therefore, I return now to address the relation between Nietzsche’s relation to Socrates and his “stylistic pluralism.” In short, it is alleged that Nietzsche was secretly aware of his drastic inferiority to Socrates—Socrates, whose legend is unsurpassable in the power of its effects, who thereby attains real *endurance*, and who, “in addition to inserting himself into history once ... keeps reentering it and constantly renewing and modifying his previous effects every

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<sup>68</sup> Nehamas 1985, *op. cit.*, 24.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 24.

time he is, as he has been so far, read again by a new generation.”<sup>71</sup> Aside from the envy he experienced in light of the great success of Socrates in finding such a perpetually dynamic life throughout the extent of philosophical culture, Nehamas suggests that Nietzsche also harbored misgivings about seeing that Socrates had “outdone” his own efforts in a way that would prove most embarrassing to him, because he had publicly maintained that the reverse was true.

One of Nietzsche’s most consistent and pointed criticisms of Socrates, says Nehamas (or at least of “Socratism,” as some would say) was in regard to a failure for his practice of philosophy to become “instinctual.” Mandated upon the task of providing reasons for one’s beliefs, the Socratic dialectical operation, and by extension, the “theoretical life” to follow from his example, would always carry over a feeling of awkward self-consciousness and artificiality in its movements.<sup>72</sup> From this Nehamas concludes that, of the various differences between them, Nietzsche would have liked to count this one as the most distinguishing case of his “victory” over Socrates in the contest of character. As such, it would appear for Nehamas to provide a case for the most damaging personal loss for Nietzsche, should he discover that this victory, this last vestige of hope for his own originality in comparison to Socrates, was all for naught.

This premises Nehamas' argument, which proceeds by observing that while it is true that Socrates is famous as one who spent his life searching for that special *techne* which would yield to him good reasons for action, he in fact never acquired such knowledge, and that consequently he always acted “without effort or hesitation and without reason.”<sup>73</sup> Nehamas draws on this line of thinking in order to claim with some confidence that, in the end, “Socrates had succeeded in living as ‘instinctively’ as Nietzsche claimed he had lived himself. And since Nietzsche, I believe, sometimes suspected that just that was the case, Socrates constituted an immense problem for him.”<sup>74</sup> But then, why exactly should we think this to be such a problem for Nietzsche? It is very problematic, I am sure, just as long as one follows Nehamas in his assessment of Nietzsche’s motivation for publicly distancing himself from Socrates, which is that Nietzsche took his goal to be “to attack traditional, dogmatic philosophy and to make a conscious effort to fashion himself as an inimitable individual,” so that the problem would be that “he could never be sure that his own project was not also the project of the character who animated the tradition against which he defined himself.”<sup>75</sup> Nehamas is now in position to answer to his own foundational question as to why Nietzsche “never” paid the same respect and gratitude to Socrates as he did to his other educators: “The reason is that Socrates was the only one among Nietzsche’s ‘educators’

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 28.

<sup>72</sup> Since this is on its own a matter of considerable complexity, the explanation given here must remain provisional until I return to explore it further in later chapters. For the time being, it suffices as a synopsis of how Nehamas views the issue.

<sup>73</sup> Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 154.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 154-5.

from which he could never be sure he had emancipated himself.”<sup>76</sup>

I find much that is valuable in this view; and although a good explanation, it is offered in response to the wrong question—i.e., why did Nietzsche withhold expressing his loving devotion to Socrates even though he was his teacher?—instead of one which addresses the very nature of “loving devotion” as it figures in a relationship of learning—i.e., why did Nietzsche’s understanding of Socrates as a certain kind of teacher necessitate a shifting mode of expressing his attitude toward him? To be clear, the first question is the wrong one because it is not true that Nietzsche withheld praise for Socrates during any “period”; the second question is what I take to remain when this is understood.

It is true that Nietzsche recognized the many important similarities he had with Socrates, and that he saw this as a complicating factor in his extensive treatment of him. But it is not at all clear that he ever found such similarities to be so personally threatening. Nor is it entirely clear that Nietzsche ever relied heavily on a portrayal of Socrates as a plainly “anti-instinctual” personality. That is, although he does view the practice of dialectics as being a highly technicized, hyper-cerebral activity that can obstruct the free uninhibited movement of thought, and though he is called the “prototype” for theoretical man, Socrates himself is never depicted by Nietzsche as one who struggled to execute all his actions with anything less than the grace of an easy-minded mastery.

On this point, it would be helpful to turn to a discussion Nietzsche himself gives on what he calls “the question of reason and instinct,” which is overlooked by Nehamas. This question he describes as “the question regarding whether the valuation of things [by] instinct deserves more authority than rationality, which wants us to evaluate and act in accordance with reasons,” to which he adds that this question is none other than “the ancient moral problem that first emerged in the person of Socrates[.]”(BGE 191 103) However, it is not simply the case that Socrates instigated the rule of reason over instinct categorically, without undergoing any of his own internal resistance to the accomplishment of this “tyranny.” Nietzsche makes this qualification of his opinion clear enough in the following:

Socrates himself, to be sure, with the taste of his talent—that of a superior dialectician—had initially sided with reason; and in fact, what did he do his life long but laugh at the awkward incapacity of noble Athenians who, like all noble men, were men of instinct and never could give sufficient information about the reasons for their actions? In the end, however, privately and secretly, he laughed at himself, too: in himself he found, before his subtle conscience and self-examination, the same difficulty and incapacity. But is that any reason, he encouraged himself, for giving up the instincts? (*Ibid.* 103-4)

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 154.

Socrates, Nietzsche tells us, arrived at a deep and radical conclusion all on his own: privately, secretly, and not without a good measure of malicious laughter at himself. It is a resolution which, I argue, even if proven less than ideal for Nietzsche ultimately, betrays an important understanding on the part of Socrates regarding the possibility for gainful interface between instinct and reason. In fact, Nietzsche goes on to have Socrates himself give voice to the imperative claim that, “One has to see to it that they [the instincts] as well as reason receive their due—one must follow the instincts but persuade reason to assist them with good reasons.” (*Ibid.*)

Unlike Nehamas, I do not see anything damning in the above passage devoted to Socrates, even though it falls outside of the period of truce and good will he envisions.<sup>77</sup> On the contrary, it directly challenges the reader to see that Socrates was no slave to dialectics—to see, as Nietzsche evidently did, that Socrates *secretly learned past himself* in order to realize, as he apparently did, that reasons are less than absolute in life, and that they should in fact be subordinated to the will of instinctual life.

This perspective, moreover, which looks upon Socrates with reverence for his private wisdom as well as the immense control he must hold over his appearance in order to maintain it (a talent reflective of his love and aptitude for trickery), is also encountered in another text already touched upon during the previous discussion of Kaufmann. This is the collection of comments bearing on Socrates in Nietzsche’s lectures on the pre-Platonic philosophers—(once again it is a source from outside of Nehamas’ period of truce, and again it goes unmentioned in his exposition)—where Nietzsche crowns Socrates the “first philosopher of life.” In his explanation of this unique title, Nietzsche adds that to his mind Socrates is the first philosopher for whom “[t]hought serves life, where as with all earlier philosophers life served thought and knowledge.” The goal of Socrates, he therefore says, “was a life of integrity, whereas the others sought a prominent amount of exact knowledge.”<sup>78</sup>

While Nehamas will only go as far as offering his belief that Nietzsche “sometimes suspected” he was similar to Socrates in this way, and that he may have been *covertly* inspired by it in his own pursuit of philosophy, I argue it is better to say with assurance that he not only knew about this similarity (and placed its originality with Socrates), but he also “owned up to it,” so to speak, by writing about it on several occasions.

By emphasizing Nietzsche’s “failed” distinction of himself above Socrates as the one who lived more instinctually, and further by casting this as his central claim to originality over him, Nehamas

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<sup>77</sup> At least, I can only assume that he interprets this passage as one that is damning of Socrates, since he does not discuss it, and hence never considers it as a potential counter-example to his periodical schema, which locates all positive characterization of Socrates within his “truce” period.

<sup>78</sup> From Nietzsche’s “Die vorplatonischen Philosophen”; see Sarah Koffman, *Socrates: Fictions of a Philosopher*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY: 1998, p. 227 and 280 n27.

effectively de-emphasizes the need for a discussion of other, potentially more legitimate points of comparison between them. The most crucial of these points lies, I believe, in Nietzsche's advance over Socrates (although by way of Socrates) in reformulating his psychological notion of what internal harmony would be ideal for the task of self-development.

Much like Dannhauser's analysis, which also mistakes Nietzsche's serial acts of war against Socrates for being the sign of a (much more reactive) attempt to salvage the appearance of his own originality, Nehamas' analysis inevitably arrives at a sort of itemized comparison between the life of Nietzsche and Socrates. It too is an analysis which is meant to show how, "in the end," Nietzsche must have adopted such a strange ambivalence toward Socrates because of the fact that he was always fighting a losing battle against him, because he was forever outclassed by him, and because he knew it. Near the end of his treatise, Nehamas thus urges the reader to:

Compare Nietzsche, sick most of his life (and making sickness part of the subject of his writing), with Socrates, who was the embodiment of health; Nietzsche, constantly bundled up against the cold, with Socrates, who wore the same tunic winter and summer and always went barefoot; Nietzsche, confessing that 'a single glass of wine or beer a day is quite sufficient to turn my life into a veil of misery,' with Socrates, whose prodigious drinking always left him perfectly sober; Nietzsche, squinting his way through the world, with Socrates, who prides himself that his bulging eyes allow him to see not only ahead but sideways as well; Nietzsche, spending his life writing frantically, away from everyone, with Socrates, who was always in public, always in conversation, and never wrote a word—compare them in these and in many other respects, and the question who is decadent and who is healthy begins to appear perfectly senseless.<sup>79</sup>

No doubt, this reasoning now threatens to force a depiction of Nietzsche as a poor figure who was after all unworthy of a true rivalry with Socrates. But actually, Nietzsche has already given due response to just this form of evaluation on a number of occasions. In a section from the *Gay Science*, for example, Nietzsche assures the reader that he has carefully considered exactly the same implications Nehamas is attempting to draw out in his comparison. Not only is he aware of the difficult reality of his physical temperament (how could he not be?), but he also declares his *victory thereby* over one such as Socrates, and for precisely the same reasons Nehamas has given in his attempt to justify the opposite opinion: "I am very conscious of the advantages that my fickle health gives me over all robust squares," Nietzsche writes. "A philosopher who has traversed many forms of health, and keeps traversing them, has passed through an equal number of philosophies; he simply *cannot* keep from transposing his states every time

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<sup>79</sup> Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 153.

into the most spiritual form and distance: this art of transfiguration *is* philosophy.” (GS 3 35; second preface: 1886)<sup>80</sup> Nietzsche will count his “victory” over Socrates in this specific sense—a sense which is perhaps closer to phrases like “a lesson learned,” or a “useful advance”—when he sees that he has surpassed Socrates in the art of transfiguration. His real teacher, he would come to recognize, had always been *sickness*, with Socrates representing a very special and personal case of this for him.

By contrast, Socrates “suffered” life as a pessimist, says Nietzsche—and he did it, moreover, despite his being blessed throughout his lifetime with an abundance of health, despite being more or less impervious to the several pains and disabilities that the living typically must endure: the same pains and disabilities that Nietzsche found constantly oppressing him even in the most hospitable circumstances. This would seem to imply that the pessimism of Socrates was of an extraordinary kind, since it could pierce through all the good fortune he was afforded. It is even possible to suggest that, for Nietzsche, physical illness may serve as a remedy for the pessimism from which Socrates allegedly suffered—“For it should be noted: it was during the years of my lowest vitality that I *ceased* to be a pessimist; the instinct of self-restoration *forbade* me a philosophy of poverty and discouragement.” (EH *Why I am so Wise* 2 224) It is during the final period of his thought, while writing his own intellectual autobiography, that Nietzsche more explicitly illustrates his advantage over Socrates. To invoke the imagery of *Zarathustra*, one might say that Nietzsche was able to rise higher than Socrates, for having been so much lower.

In a later section, Nietzsche describes with more detail the actual process of overcoming his own pessimism during a bout of miserable sickness: “In the midst of the torments that go with an uninterrupted three-day migraine, accompanied by laborious vomiting of phlegm, I possessed a dialectician’s clarity *par excellence* and thought through with very cold blood matters for which under healthier circumstances I am not mountain-climber, not subtle, not *cold* enough.” (*Ibid.* 222-3) When it was needed, apparently, Nietzsche had access to the power of a dialectician. Thus he counted it among his talents, as one of his most vital inner resources. He did not therefore see himself as being above the use of dialectics—but then, nor was he a slave to it. With his goal of inner pliability, of personal multiplicity, and of multifarious style, Nietzsche did not need to remain a constant dialectician, as Socrates had; and he continues by reminding his readers that it is Socrates he has in mind here, and to remind them, as he says, “*in what way* I consider dialectic as a symptom of decadence; for example in the most famous case, the case of Socrates.” (*Ibid.* 223; emphasis added)

What way is this? By asking this question, we acknowledge the need for an attempt to recall the specific way in which dialectics is problematic for its being given permanent dominion over the whole of

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<sup>80</sup> For further reference, see GS 120: “Even the determination of what is healthy for your *body* depends on your goal, your horizon, your energies, your impulses, your errors, and above all on the ideals and phantasms of your soul. Thus there are innumerable healths of the body ... In one person, of course, this health could look like its opposite in another person.”

one's operations in the case of Socrates.<sup>81</sup> In the above passage Nietzsche tells us that he has experienced this condition, and that he is "experienced in decadence," to be sure—however, in his case it is rather a timely and strategic position of dominance given to this talent when it is suited to the aims of a will, and freely abandoned at other times. As Nietzsche sees it, he exceeds Socrates—though Socrates was not without his own considerable power in this right—in his use of decadence against decadence.

This raises another crucial point about Nietzsche's philosophy of education. Above all, that which Nietzsche thinks is of prime importance when it comes to strength of character is the ability to use in the service of its furtherance *all* experience: that is, every personal circumstance, mischance, deficit or extremity of disposition. As Nehamas is aware, Nietzsche judges personalities accordingly. I therefore wish to call attention to Nietzsche's own criteria for what he thinks ought to be called a well-developed character; however I also wish to emphasize that this for Nietzsche is simultaneously a question concerning the criteria of a good education, of having practiced a good mode of self-education throughout one's life. This is clear from his answer to the question: "What is it, fundamentally, that allows us to recognize *who has turned out well?*" This answer should no doubt shed some light on what Nietzsche himself would deem legitimate in the final "comparison" between two lives; and this in turn should help to show what is missing from the analysis presented by those like Dannhauser and Nehamas. Nietzsche answers this way:

... a well-turned-out person pleases our senses, that he is carved from wood that is hard, delicate, and at the same time smells good. He has a taste only for what is good for him; his pleasure, his delight ceases where the measure of what is good for him is transgressed. He guesses at what remedies avail against what is harmful; he exploits bad accidents; what does not kill him makes him stronger. Instinctively, he collects from everything he sees, hears, lives through, *his* sum ...  
(*Ibid.* 224)

Nor is this standard for the measure of positive development merely theoretical. Indeed, in the same section Nietzsche goes on to use the same criteria in order to illustrate the special difference which holds between his own internal make-up and those he has called "the decadent," whose foremost representative is Socrates. This provides good reason to think of Nietzsche's description of the well-developed person as one which, as Nehamas suspects, serves to distinguish himself from Socrates. In any case, the difference he points to in the following passage is surely instrumental to *any* serious attempt to clarify how Nietzsche saw himself in comparison to Socrates: "Apart from the fact that I am a decadent, I am also the opposite. My proof for this is, among other things, that I have always instinctively chosen the

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<sup>81</sup> This will be carried out primarily in chapter two.

*right* means that are disadvantageous for him.” (*Ibid.*)

What then would the opposite of a decadent be? I suggest that since decadence is a type of deterioration, (literally, an instance of “decay”), the opposite would have to be type of “regeneration,” or “recuperation.”<sup>82</sup> Thus Nietzsche, the decadent who is nonetheless at once the *opposite* of a decadent, is the one who uses decay for the purpose of regeneration, indeed, as he repeatedly insists that he does. This is arguably Nietzsche's most important medical lesson for the cultural physicians of posterity. Moreover, the above suggestion is buttressed further by the peculiar nature of Nietzsche's own “proof.” For choosing the *right* disadvantages, and thereby selecting and arranging the various weaknesses and misfortunes of a life whereby such disadvantages serve to develop the greatest strength possible to the individual, is the method of lively enhancement *par excellence* for Nietzsche.

Meanwhile, Nehamas moves to dismiss Nietzsche's own method of personal distinction, his criteria for having “turned-out well,” which might otherwise have earned him the coveted title of “originality” over Socrates. This he does on the grounds that Socrates was also one who, he claims, “always knew what was good for him, whose pleasure, too, ended where he saw harm to himself begin, who was consistently in his own company, who believed in neither misfortune nor guilt.”<sup>83</sup> I concede this point, and freely submit that Nietzsche recognized these qualities in Socrates; however, Nehamas still does not at all address the most important aspect of the well-developed soul for Nietzsche. Not surprisingly, this is the aspect of the individual which corresponds most directly to the way by which one develops himself: i.e., it is educational in nature. More specifically, it is the criterion of having progressed through one's life according to the *Kriegsschule des Lebens*—a doctrine which Nietzsche takes as his own, fashioned at least in part, I argue, as a response to his polemical orientation to the philosophical tradition, and to Socrates in particular.

Given the results of his study, Nehamas fears that the question as to who is “decadent” and who is “healthy” between Nietzsche and Socrates has become senseless. With respect, I believe I can make some sense of this question in light of the preceding discussion. The answer is that both are decadents, as Nietzsche freely admits, but that Nietzsche is “decadent” (or “sick”) in a “healthy” way, by using sickness to the advantage of health.

And yet it is too simplistic to conclude from this that Socrates was the “*unhealthy*” decadent. Nietzsche understood that Socrates possessed enormous power, and even that he possessed the wisdom and the ability to sublimate this power into the service of a singular, overriding talent (dialectic), under the dominion of a single hypertrophied faculty (reason). Dialectical reasoning became a new way toward

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<sup>82</sup> That is, if these terms could denote not only the return to a previously established state, but also the possibility of moving toward super-abundant health. Hence, it might in fact be better here to use a word closer to “re-enhancement.”

<sup>83</sup> Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 153.

self-knowledge by way of vivisection: a new “surgery” which was at the same time more barbaric.<sup>84</sup> This, the medical way of Socrates, *did* do service to health, though not in an optimal way. It is ultimately inferior to Nietzsche’s own way, I argue, because it establishes the circumstances wherein greater energies use up the lesser. Socrates was therefore also a “healthy” decadent, but he was of a health which would serve as *the essential disease* of a greater health to come. It was this health, a health which depended upon the activity of overcoming, which Nietzsche envisioned and identified with his own character.

Socrates was, I agree, Nietzsche’s most private enemy. But I mean this in a sense quite different from Nehamas, who can only employ his hypothesis to explain why Nietzsche was reluctant to praise Socrates outright (presumably, as one believes that he “should” have), or at least not enough. I argue that there is liberty to claim, for example, that Nietzsche most often praised Socrates and his character *privately*, without giving his name and, indeed, even at one point by flagrantly concealing his identity from his readership.

Meanwhile, according to the view he has adopted, it must remain the intention of Nehamas to de-emphasize the extent to which Nietzsche actually praised and admired Socrates when he did. In fact, Nehamas never offers an answer for the question he originally proposed. Why did Nietzsche suddenly grow fond of Socrates for a time? “Why,” asks Nehamas, “apart from the truce he struck with him during his middle works (and with one exception we shall discuss as we go along), did Nietzsche never show Socrates the generosity of spirit, the respect, the gratitude, and even the love he retained for his other educators?”<sup>85</sup> According to my view, the answer is that the depiction of a temporary “truce” on the part of Nietzsche should be viewed with suspicion—that it would be better to say that he did show love and gratitude throughout his writings, albeit in various forms and at different levels of concealment.

Aside from the fact that Nehamas ignores a great number of flattering things Nietzsche says about Socrates in his earlier works (most notably including *The Birth of Tragedy* and his early lectures on the Pre-Platonics), the very basis of Nehamas’ question suffers from a variety of troubling counter examples which go unexplained by his theory. Firstly, it can easily be shown that Nietzsche remained equally critical of Socrates in these texts no less than he was in those previous to them. Secondly, and perhaps most seriously, there are also numerous examples from periods outside of these texts where Nietzsche describes Socrates with words of the very highest esteem—even much higher than what can be

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<sup>84</sup> “Barbaric,” that is, even from the perspective of the pre-Socratics. For, as Nehamas aptly puts it, “Curing is not excision but, as almost every ancient doctor would have agreed, a harmony of opposites.” (Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 139) Also see Nietzsche’s figurative declaration in his *Twilight* that “We no longer admire dentists who ‘pluck out’ teeth so that they will not hurt anymore.” (TI MA 1 82)

<sup>85</sup> Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 136.

found during the period Nehamas has in mind. Finally, there are a myriad of passages which have traditionally been read as either hostile or neutral with regard to Socrates—passages which, under more careful inspection, often reveal an underlying tone of admiration.

Quite unlike Nehamas, therefore, who holds to the position that Nietzsche’s so-called “period” of affection for Socrates ended after his *Untimely Meditations*, Kaufmann is of the opinion, as I am, that any such periodization is misbegotten from the start. Once again, in Kaufmann’s eyes it is Oehler who stands accused of perpetuating this false image of Nietzsche’s “rising and falling” adoration of Socrates: an image that still manages to survive even now. Kaufmann is one who views *The Gay Science* as the place where Nietzsche’s reverence for Socrates reaches its “apotheosis.” This obviously stands in sharp contrast to the view of Nehamas, for whom this same text *must* represent a sharp reversion toward a much more hostile, even ruthless, form of treatment.

This is not at all the case, under my interpretation. Aside from a number of passages that appear to allude to Socrates indirectly, in total Nietzsche mentions Socrates on five separate occasions in *The Gay Science*—and *all* of these, though certainly not uncritical in their own respects, contain within them expressions of the highest praise.<sup>86</sup> In section 36 Nietzsche lauds the supreme self-control possessed by the “wise Socrates,” and this he opposes to the “actor’s vanity and garrulity” displayed at the death of both Nero and Augustus. In section 328, Socrates is portrayed as the preeminent pioneer in the successful effort to combat “stupidity.” Before his time, Nietzsche says, the motto decrying the principle that “selfishness is the misfortune of your life” reigned over the minds of men, and thus it did “harm to egoism” by depriving it of a good conscience. Beginning with Socrates, however, a new motto rose up, according to which “thoughtlessness and stupidity, the way you live according to your rule, your submission to your neighbor’s opinion is the reason why you so rarely achieve happiness”—and while Nietzsche resists the impulse to judge this movement of thought against stupidity to be “better” than the more ancient attack on selfishness, he does go on to specify some approval of it by saying that, “[w]hat is certain, however, is that it deprived stupidity of its good conscience; these philosophers *harmed* stupidity.” (GS 328 258)

If anything, what Nietzsche resists most here is the inclination to praise Socrates for this without any qualification. Still, there can be no question that Nietzsche identified himself very closely with the effort of Socrates to challenge and do harm to stupidity, to thoughtlessness, to “living according to rule,” and to do so in submission to the ruling opinion of one’s neighbours.

In fact, Nietzsche considered this effort fundamental to the activity of wisdom. He articulates this

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<sup>86</sup> For the time being, I believe a review three of these (sections, 36, 328, and 340) will suffice in order to make the point. I plan to return to examine the other two (sections 32 and 372) after considering Nietzsche’s own philosophy of education in further detail.

thought when he confronts a question he has posed concerning the status of philosophy teachers in modern Germany. He complains that “[p]rofessors of philosophy no longer practice skills, not even debate,” and then asks, “[so] how in the world could they educate anyone, and educate them to wisdom, at that?” (UWO 301) The teachers delivering “completely useless” lessons in logic during Nietzsche's time, he reports, are far too young to educate students to wisdom. They are inexperienced in the ways of the world; and, having not even the inclination anymore to practice skills such as debate—skills which can only be enhanced along with a strong inclination for contest—the teachers of the German world are doubly hopeless when it comes to the teaching of wisdom. But what, we should ask, is wisdom? And how are teachers expected to exercise, and thereby increase, this wisdom? Nietzsche writes on this subject that: “The most important thing about wisdom is that it prevents human beings from being ruled by the moment. It is consequently not newspaperish: its purpose is to gird human beings equally well to face all the blows of fate, to arm them for all time.” (*Ibid.*) It comes as little surprise to see Nietzsche characterize the wisdom that is expected to be instilled through the teacher as being primarily a matter of “arming” the human being with force to prevent being ruled. It is a wisdom that does not rest with the opinions of the day, but strives to break through to something new and unusual. (*Ibid.*)

The third mention of Socrates is found in section 340. Unlike the others, Nehamas does not ignore this section altogether, and even cites it (in part), for the reason that it bears Nietzsche's famous suggestion that Socrates might have “suffered life” as a pessimist. From here, however, he moves directly on to discuss Nietzsche's later reiteration of this same notion in *Twilight of the Idols*. Remarkably, he does not see fit to include the first five lines of text introducing this section, which read this way: “I admire the courage and wisdom of Socrates in everything he did, said—and did not say. This mocking and enamored monster and pied piper of Athens, who made the most overweening youths tremble and sob, was not only the wisest chatterer of all time [der weisiste Schwätzer, den es gegeben hat]: he was equally great in silence.”<sup>87</sup> (GS 340 272) While the first sentence is a categorical expression of praise for “everything” that Socrates did or did not do (or say), the second is marked by a further bestowal of the title “wisest chatterer of all time.” Furthermore, it is a passage that touches on the tremendous effect that the enamored Socrates—whom Nietzsche also once dubbed the “great erotic”—had upon the Athenian youth as a teacher, as one who truly *moved* them, evidently, in large part by way of his genius in publicly “mocking” those who believed themselves wiser than they were. Thus Socrates is shown to be a great seducer of minds, the great “pied-piper” of the Greeks who must himself be “overcome.” (*Ibid.*)

It is also significant to see that the period of thought which Nehamas identifies as Nietzsche's

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<sup>87</sup> One instance of the “courage” and “wisdom” that Nietzsche admired on the part of Socrates was the brave honesty he had shown in his behaviour at the “trial of commanders,” where he was the only one to vote against their indictment on the grounds that it was anti-democratic. See for example UWO 61.

time of unexpected and unexplainable “fondness” for Socrates is also one that evidences the resurgence of an intense intellectual occupation with the function of *agon*. There he lauds the Greek artists for example, whom he says always wrote in order to *triumph*; and thus “[i]hre ganze Kunst ist nicht ohne Wettkampf zu denken: die hesiodische gute Eris, der Ehrgeiz, gab ihrem Genius die Flügel. [their whole art is not to be thought of without contest: Hesiod’s good Eris, ambition, gave wings to their genius.]” (KSA MM I 170 158) I argue that this observation helps to explain Nietzsche’s “new” appreciation for Socrates during this period as being based on a new appreciation of his value as both a contestant and an educator, because it was during this period that he was most forcefully making way into clarifying the relation between these two roles. Nietzsche goes further in establishing what it should mean for one to endeavour taking up a contest with a rival, including questions of motivation, tact, etiquette, advantage, etc.

But perhaps most important of all is that in this text, during this period, he gives his formulation for how one ought to proceed in a rivalous relationship by distinguishing two modes of contest. The healthy agonistic ambition of the Greeks,

... demanded above all that their work attain the highest excellence in their own eyes, as they understood excellence, without consideration for any prevailing taste or public opinion concerning excellence in a work of art ... Thus they strove for a triumph over their rivals in their own estimation, before their own seat judgment. Striving for honor here means ‘making oneself superior and also wishing to appear so publicly.’ If the first is lacking and the second is desired nevertheless, then one speaks of *vanity*. If the second is lacking and is not missed, then one speaks of *pride*. (*Ibid.*)

I believe this text shows us a Nietzsche who was actively pursuing what lies at the very heart of Nehamas’ *negative* depiction of him. And whether or not this is evidence enough to vindicate Nietzsche of the charge of “vanity”—which is, apparently, just what Nietzsche himself would call it—it is clear enough that Nietzsche devoted a great deal of thought, and publicly so, to the distinction between truly wishing to “make oneself superior” (i.e., to educate oneself by way of contest), and merely wishing to *appear* so to others. In my view, this passage and others like it cast serious doubt over the conclusion offered by Nehamas, whose entire argument is bent to prove that Nietzsche was a contestant of the latter variety.

Another example of such a passage appears earlier on when, in the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche clarifies the character of his relation to Socrates *against* those who do not appreciate him as a perpetuator and “regenerator” of art, and, even more poignantly, against all those whose envy toward him gives rise

to a sense that their own activities appear diminished in value when compared with his (that is, just as Nehamas supposes that Nietzsche felt his own originality to “pale” in light of the example of Socrates). “But before people were able to realize that all art is intimately dependent on the Greeks from Homer to Socrates,” he writes, “they had necessarily toward the Greeks the same attitude that the Athenians had toward Socrates.” (BT 15 91) Specifically, Nietzsche describes this attitude as a low form of envy, possessed of only by those who do not properly understand the necessity of Socrates as the progenitor and constant “regenerator” of art. Problematically, however, it is this same attitude which Nehamas accredits to Nietzsche, even though it is obvious that Nietzsche himself has identified it as immature and saw well beyond it. For, in keeping with the nature of this same envious attitude the Greeks took toward Socrates, he likewise observes that, “Practically every era of Western civilization has at one time or another tried to liberate itself from the Greeks, in deep dissatisfaction because whatever they themselves achieved, seemingly quite original and sincerely admired, lost color and life when held against the Greek model and shrank to a botched copy, a caricature.” (*Ibid.*) In sum, this is exactly how Nehamas conceives Nietzsche’s own attitude to Socrates—but he fails to notice that Nietzsche himself discusses this attitude deliberately, very early on, and that he discusses it as an attitude that is available only to those *before* him, precisely because his work was set out to put an end to such ignorance.

Not only do passages such as the above call into question the interpretation offered by Nehamas; they also lend support to my own argument, which claims that Nietzsche, during the period in question (i.e., the “middle period” of *Human, All-Too-Human*), was thinking much about the proper conduct of engaging in contest with a rival, much about how he had already contested Socrates, and was reformulating his thoughts (especially those regarding education) accordingly. Moreover, it was with respect to the undeniable right of Socrates to be called foremost among the world’s great teachers that Nietzsche composed the following passage, simply titled “*Socrates*”—

If all goes well, the time will come when, to develop oneself morally-rationally, one will take up the memorabilia of Socrates<sup>88</sup> rather than the Bible, and when Montaigne and Horace will be employed as precursors and guides to the understanding of the simplest and most imperishable mediator-sage, Socrates. The roads of the most divergent philosophic ways of life lead back to him; at bottom they are the ways of life of the different temperaments, determined by reason and habit, and in all cases pointing with their peaks to joy in life and in one's own self—from which one might well infer that the most characteristic feature of Socrates was that he shared in all temperaments [...] (WS 86 PN 69)

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<sup>88</sup> That is, the *Memorabilia* composed by Xenophon, which sets out to exonerate Socrates.

Nehamas chooses to end his discussion of Nietzsche's relation to Socrates with this citation. Nonetheless, his aim here is once again to frame the passage as being really a subtle criticism of Socrates, rather than as complimentary. Below it, he writes: "But to participate in every temperament is to participate in none, to be blank, almost not to have a face at all, however pronounced one's features happen to be."<sup>89</sup> This, remarkably, constitutes the whole of Nehamas' explanation. Strangest of all is that nothing more than a cursory reading of the rest of this passage (which is left out completely by Nehamas) is required to confirm that it is wrong.

But first I will return for moment to what portion Nehamas does treat of this passage, where I wish to first point out that Nietzsche never says of Socrates that he is distinguished, as Nehamas appears to suggest, by "an *equal* participation in every temperament." In fact, Nietzsche himself goes on to say something quite contrary to this in his next sentence. It is therefore striking to see that Nehamas chooses to omit this sentence from his citation of this passage, according to which, apart from his "superior intelligence," Nietzsche claims that most essentially Socrates "is *distinguished* by the gay kind of seriousness and that *wisdom full of pranks* which constitute the best state of the soul of man."<sup>90</sup>

Now, apart from its status as a compliment of the highest rank, it is abundantly clear from this that Nietzsche did not see Socrates as anything like a faceless "blank" for his having the ability to share in all the various temperaments of man. Just the opposite is the case, as Socrates succeeded in attaining a singularly powerful character which constitutes, as he says, the best state of the soul of man. Far from being a hindrance, in fact, such a participation in every temperament would be a matter of the greatest possible advantage in the "stylizing" of one's life for Nietzsche.

By ignoring the rest of the passage, Nehamas grants himself sufficient interpretative space to actually judge Nietzsche's comments about Socrates and his temperament as a denouncement, rather than as the most memorable instance of his reverence for him. More specifically, Nietzsche exalts the "gay seriousness" and "wisdom full of pranks" that we find so fully achieved in Socrates. Here again we have two of the closely related qualities recognized by Kaufmann as those Nietzsche admired most in Socrates: first, his prankish malice (*Bosheit*), the effect of which is a wicked kind of gaiety that knows how to laugh well; and second, there is what I will call his *ulteriority*—that is, his private indulgence in secrets and secret games, a genius for duplicity and enticement, and especially the control he wielded over his own "seeming." Even in *Twilight of the Idols*, one observes how Socrates continues to fascinate Nietzsche as one whose nature is "full of concealment, of ulterior motives, and of underground currents." (TI PS 4 11-2) Furthermore both of these qualities, it would seem, are best expressed in the extreme *irony* of Socrates.

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<sup>89</sup> Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 156.

<sup>90</sup> Italics on "distinguished" added.

It was during the age of Socrates, Nietzsche says, “among men of fatigued instincts, among the conservatives of ancient Athens,” when “*irony* may have been required for greatness of soul, that Socratic sarcastic assurance of the old physician who cut ruthlessly into his own flesh, as he did into the flesh and heart of the ‘noble’[.]” (BGE 191 104) This passage appears to speak favourably once again of Socrates’ perfection of ironic wisdom and the relation of this to “greatness of soul,” even if it were to be greatness only for a given epoch. Again, however, it is not acknowledged by Nehamas as a possible exception to the periodical scheme he has endorsed.

Socrates, that “great ironic, so rich in secrets,” had a wicked sense of humour that enhanced his public practice of philosophy. (*Ibid.*) But moreover, the prankish wisdom that Nietzsche exalts so highly in Socrates exhibits itself in the irony of all that he said—and did. So abundant were his personal energies, and so disposable were they to the service of his need for malicious laughter and comic irony, that Socrates could even afford to make a joke out of his own marriage; for, as Nietzsche has it (somewhat jestingly himself): “A married philosopher belongs *in comedy*, that is my proposition—and as for that exception, Socrates—the malicious Socrates, it would seem, married *ironically*, just to demonstrate *this* proposition.” (GM 3 7 107)

The significance of Socrates’ ability to laugh at himself as well as those around him with a spirit possessed of both of gaiety and malice should not be underestimated. Indeed, in the context of this study it is helpful to see that Nietzsche actually envisions such laughter as a means to the higher education of a people. In a section he titles “On ‘the educational establishment’,” Nietzsche makes the unusual claim that: “In Germany, higher men lack one great means of education: the laughter of higher men, for in Germany these do not laugh.” (GS 177 202) Shortly after, one discovers that he defines this laughter in terms that also recollect the mischievous *Bosheit* of Socrates, who delighted in the embarrassment of others whenever they were set upon by the ruthless “justice” of his method for excising untruth: “Laughter means: being *schadenfroh* but with a good conscience.” (GS 200 207) Elsewhere, Nietzsche even elevates such laughter to serve as the very measure of worth for philosophers: “I should actually risk an order of rank among philosophers depending on the rank of their laughter—all the way up to those capable of *golden* laughter. And supposing that gods, too, philosophize, which has been suggested to me by many an inference—I should not doubt that they also know how to laugh the while in a superhuman and new way—and at the expense of all serious things. Gods enjoy mockery [Götter sind spottlustig]: it seems they cannot suppress laughter even during holy rites.” (BGE 294 232-4) It is the malice found in such mockery, once again, which offends and desanctifies others as well as oneself, which is of preeminent value here.

In the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche would also praise such malice as elemental to the “preserving” agents of humankind, claiming that, “they [the “strongest” and “most evil”] have always reawakened the

sense of comparison, of contradiction, of joy in the new, the daring, and the untried; they force men to meet opinion with opinion, model with model. For the most part by arms, by the overthrow of boundary stones, and by offense to the pieties, but also by new religions and moralities. The same 'malice' is to be found in every teacher and preacher of the new ..."<sup>91</sup>

In the section on Kaufmann's view I have already touched upon the importance as well as the complexity involved in the task of acknowledging Nietzsche's account of Socrates, not only as the first in the line of the new thinkers to come, but also the last of another, more prestigious line. At this point I think it appropriate to redress this issue, most of all because Nehamas has framed his explanation of Nietzsche's adopted attitude toward Socrates as one resulting from a literary strategy designed to result in (at least the appearance of) individuality, originality, etc., by using the tactic of stylistic plurality. Again, I wish to object to the interpretation Nehamas offers for the passage titled "*Socrates*," which seems to conclude by saying that for Nietzsche Socrates was really without a definite style of his own, that he was a figurative "blank" for having convoluted the styles of all others.

This indeed betrays a major oversight regarding Nietzsche's view of Socrates in the historical transition between the way of philosophy before and after his time. For to Nietzsche's mind it is in fact Plato, and not Socrates, who conglomerates so many elements of style into one that as a thinker he may no longer be adequately labeled "unique" or "individual" according to the sense in which Nehamas seeks to employ these terms. Nietzsche makes it out that, "Plato bundles all the forms of style pell-mell together," and that, "in this respect he is one of the first decadents of style[.]" Once again, it is all too often overlooked that Nietzsche *included* Socrates within a privileged original line of "monolithic" (*einseitig*) philosophers, and that he was meant to stand as the last of them. It is then Plato, and not Socrates, who is the first of those who were compounded (*veilseitig*) in style. He writes, for instance, that "in comparison with that Republic of Geniuses from Thales to Socrates, the philosophers since Plato lack something essential." (EGP PTA 82)<sup>92</sup> In this passage, Nietzsche is talking about a heritage of "older masters," who were more purely creative than their inheritors. And unlike the philosophic "hybrid-characters" who proceeded after them, they were true sages: they were "pure types," and, says Nietzsche, they were treated accordingly in their time.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> From PN 93; for clarity, I chose this over Kaufmann's other translation in GS 4 79.

<sup>92</sup> The phrase "republic of geniuses" was most likely adopted by Nietzsche from Schopenhauer.

<sup>93</sup> For a description of this original type, see EGP PTA 70: "All those men are integral, entire and self-contained, and hewn out of stone. Severe necessity existed between their thinking and their character. They are not bound by any convention, because at that time no professional class of philosophers and scholars existed. They all stand before us in magnificent solitude as the only ones who then devoted their life exclusively to knowledge. They all possess the virtuous energy of the Ancients, whereby they excel all the later philosophers in finding their own form and in perfecting it by metamorphosis in its most minute details and general aspect."

The important point to be seen here, Nietzsche urges, is that “they [the hybrid-characters] are founders of sects and that the sects founded by them *are all institutions in direct opposition to the Hellenic culture and the unity of its style prevailing up to that time.*” (EGP PTA 82; emphasis added) To be sure, however, this is not to say that Plato and those hybrids that followed learned nothing from the old masters, and more importantly, nor is it to say that this “opposition” is not itself essential to the process of this learning.

As the student of Socrates, Plato was seen by Nietzsche as yet another first in the line of others to come. Hence it is especially significant in this case to see how Plato, the “mixer” of philosophical styles and ideas, was in a position to appropriate the lessons of Socrates. On this Nietzsche writes his opinion that, “Plato did everything he could in order to read something refined and noble into the proposition of this teacher—above all, himself. He was the most audacious of all interpreters and took the whole Socrates only the way one picks a popular tune and folk song from the streets in order to vary it into the infinite and impossible—namely, into all his own masks and multiplicities.”(BGE 103 190)<sup>94</sup> Did Nietzsche learn something from Plato the student here? And so did he manage to vary “the whole Socrates” himself into all of his own “masks and multiplicities”?

Nehamas' reading would allow us to agree perhaps quite strongly to the latter, but not to the former, of these two implications. That is to say, while Nehamas is prepared to acknowledge that Nietzsche did incorporate (begrudgingly) the substance of Socrates into his multifarious operations, he does not see that this is due to the nature of the relation one takes to Socrates as a student, with Plato being the closest and, in Nietzsche's opinion, the greatest (even if the most contemptible) student of that teacher. From this it seems fitting therefore that Plato was the founder of the academy, whereby philosophers and their positions became different “sects and institutions,” as described above. Nothing in the academy could remain “pure” for its being a place where the operations of philosophy turn toward the interpretive formulation and reformulation of doctrines (like “Socratism”) as opposed to that of men (like Socrates). And though it is not the explicit aim of the present thesis, there is nevertheless something of Plato *qua* student to be found in Nietzsche, who was himself a most “audacious interpreter” of Socrates; who, like Plato, fashioned a distinct image of the life and person of Socrates; and who opposed him as much as he followed him in all of this. The transition from Socrates to Plato was for Nietzsche, among other things, a great shift in the way in which one learns philosophy from others, and a movement into the age of multiplicity and incorporation. Like Plato, I will argue, Nietzsche too founded a new way of learning from others—a new school of learning, so to speak, and with it a new form of incorporative style

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<sup>94</sup> The more famous description is given on the same page: “In a jest, Homeric at that: what is the Platonic Socrates after all if not *prosthe Platon opithen te Platon te Chimaira* [Plato in front and Plato behind, in the middle Chimaera].” (BGE 103 190)

that nevertheless aims at retrieving a “purity” of style which does not at all preclude multiplicity. As I will argue, finally, this is the real worth of the lesson learned by Nietzsche from Socrates. It is a lesson of education which is come upon according to its own precepts, i.e., not by following Socrates in his exclusivist philosophy of education, but by overcoming it by means of his own.

As I have stressed above, one must be wary of portraying Nietzsche’s notion of achieving “individuality” in a basically negative way. It is not for him just a matter of avoiding similarity—or worse yet, the *public appearance* of similarity—to the powers of another “individual.” Nor is it a matter of ignoring the similar out of a feeling that what has already been done has little value for what is yet to come (the distasteful lot of *epigoni*). More positively, it should be thought of as using this similarity as a means of establishing the equal standing of one’s opponent, and thus as an opportunity for real advance over him, through contest, toward something new.

In the course of his study, Nehamas has identified two tasks which must be completed in order for someone to call himself a real “individual” in Nietzsche’s sense. The first is for one to develop *style* by fashioning a unified whole out of every accident befalling one’s life, including, for example, “accidents of birth and growth, health and sickness, choices made consciously and unconsciously, friendships made and lost, works composed or left unfinished, features liked and despised.”<sup>95</sup> This account is drawn out in reference to section 290 of the *Gay Science*, where Nietzsche gives his most elaborate (though not only) account of the need for one to incorporate every available material, regardless of its quality, as it would best suit the design of a life. Nehamas is also correct in pointing out that accomplishing this task requires that an individual come to a certain reckoning—one which is best come upon, Nietzsche would say, by considering the case of one’s life and the whole universe as an “eternal recurrence” of the same.

Much less textual support is offered by Nehamas for his identification of Nietzsche’s second “task” of individuality, however. This other task is the seemingly straight-forward requirement that “the whole one constructs, the self one fashions, be significantly different from all others. If it isn’t, then one is not distinguishable from the rest of the world: one has not become an individual.”<sup>96</sup> And here, of course, is where Nehamas believes he has found the reason for Nietzsche’s rejection of Socrates: he was secretly afraid that the “self” he had fashioned according to his special model of personal harmony and integration—a model that was thoroughly based on his own discovery of *amor fati* in face of the prospect of eternal return—was nonetheless so similar to the character of Socrates that Nietzsche risked failing to attain the second task in the eyes of the public.

This argument is, however, significantly flawed. First of all, what Nehamas calls “task one” is

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<sup>95</sup> Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 141.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* 142.

not, for Nietzsche, anything like a *universal* requirement of one who is to be called an individual. If it were, then it would follow that the number of “individuals” to be found throughout history would be next to none—(Socrates himself, for example, would fail to qualify as a genuine individual according to this standard). Furthermore, we should recall in this instance that Nietzsche considered his encounter with the idea of eternal return and the ideal of *amor fati* to be a discovery of the rarest sort: that which he took to be his greatest and most personal contribution to the history of thought. In fact, Nietzsche’s accomplishment of this first task (and perhaps even just his recognition of it as a “task” at all) constitutes his accomplishment of “task two.” Most notably, he is set apart from Socrates by it; and moreover, he knew it, and made it known to others.

I have already discussed how Nietzsche used this method of distinction to set himself apart from Socrates as the “decadent” who uses decadence to his best advantage, and with a minimal loss of energy. But the most telling case of this distinction lies in GS 340; or rather, it lies within the transitions between this section and the sections that appear after it in the text. Famously, it is in GS 340 where Nietzsche finally “smells” out the pessimism of Socrates at the end of his life. As a great pessimist, however, Socrates had developed a model of internal harmony that was incredibly powerful, though less than ideal. This is precisely why this passage ends with the declaration that we must, alas, overcome *even* the Greeks—even the mightiest among them, Socrates. Hence this explains precisely why we find the first appearance of Nietzsche’s eternal return and the victory of *amor fati* it promises following directly after this passage in GS 341. This I think is the apotheosis of Nietzsche’s esteem for Socrates, for his “courage and wisdom,” which Kaufmann has in mind; but it is also the moment of his overcoming, and a certain departure. Why must we “overcome even the Greeks”? It was that *even* Socrates could not pass the test of the eternal return, for deep down even he, the “soldier’s soldier,” had suffered life. Section 341 is then in turn followed immediately by the introduction of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, the Socratic antipode, with the words of a dramatic narrator: “*Incipit tragoedia* [Tragedy begins.]” At this point it should be noted that, of the major claims to individuality that were available to him (even if one agrees that this should mean nothing beyond “novelty”), Nietzsche’s favorite was the right he felt to call himself the first “tragic” philosopher. I wish to continue developing this notion in the coming chapters. Most notably, I will set out to show that the tragic overcoming of Socrates’ (masked) pessimism is accompanied, for Nietzsche, by an advance made beyond the model of an educational harmony determined according to the life of Socrates, who is represented as the *Lebensphilosoph* of an extraordinary, singular talent.

## Chapter Two

### Nietzsche's Genealogy of Contest

#### 2.1 The Reception of Nietzsche as an Educational Philosopher

Despite his rising status as a source of influence in other areas, Nietzsche remains underrepresented in the world of educational theory. On the other hand, it has not been uncommon for readers to question the shortage of work devoted to this aspect of his philosophy. In an essay reviewing the literature on this subject, Cooper refers to the “shocking neglect” this represents, adding that this neglect is not limited to North American scholarship. In Germany as well, he recalls, the impact of Nietzsche’s philosophy of learning “was confined either to small, esoteric circles, like the poet Stefan George’s *Kreis*, or to the rhetoric of Nazi educational programmes.”<sup>97</sup> Writing more than a decade later, Sassone observes that “when comparing his impact in the field to his importance in other discursive formations, it seems clear enough that Nietzsche has not been seen as a major philosophical figure in educational theory and practice.”<sup>98</sup> The reason for this is still unclear, and it becomes a pressing question to the extent it can be shown that there is still much left to be considered in Nietzsche as an educational thinker. Hence, the present section outlines what has been overlooked in Nietzsche’s philosophy of education to date, and how this material can serve to resolve an important question in Nietzsche scholarship, which is the question of his relation to Socrates.

Reiterating the same shortage and necessity of this study once again, Golomb has offered the following explanation: “Nietzsche’s impact on educational thought has always been surprisingly neglected, perhaps because it is hard to divorce his educational views from his whole philosophical

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<sup>97</sup> David Cooper, “On Reading Nietzsche on Education,” in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1983), p. 119. More recently, Rosenow indicates that the situation is even more extreme than this: “Whereas Nietzsche appears in Anglo-American educational interpretations as a democratic and humane educator par excellence, German interpreters not only disqualify him as an educator, but practically erase his philosophy from educational theory.” Eliyahu Rosenow, “Nietzsche's Educational Legacy: Reflections on Interpretations of a Controversial Philosopher,” vol. 34, no. 4 (2000), p. 673. A good example of this is the text, Niemeier, *et al.*, *Nietzsche in der Pädagogik? Beiträge zur Rezeption und Interpretation*, Deutscher Studien Verlag, Weinheim: 1998, in which each author but one (Löwisch) rejects Nietzsche out of hand as a contributor to the philosophy of education.

<sup>98</sup> Sassone, *op. cit.*, 511.

endeavour[.]”<sup>99</sup> This view is correct, but I wish to add that the opposite expression is equally true as an explanation. That is, Golomb is right to argue that it can be difficult to extract the salient features of Nietzsche’s educational philosophy from all the texts not explicitly dedicated to the subject, or those which do so in a sporadic (aphoristic) way. On the other hand, if one remains within the bounds of the few texts that speak about public institutions of education (i.e., *Schopenhauer as Educator*, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*), Nietzsche’s contribution to education is just as much neglected for appearing to be all *too easily* separated from his general philosophy. This in turn has resulted in the particular emphasis found in previous attempts to engage this area of Nietzsche’s thought.

Generally speaking, the attention that has been paid to Nietzsche’s philosophy of education has taken shape in an attempt to answer two questions. First, there is the project to determine *whether* and *how* Nietzsche has anything to offer the educational system of a modern democratic society; second, and often in conjunction with the first project, there are those attempts made to draw out a picture of the ideal teacher from the narrative of Zarathustra.<sup>100</sup> Both of these questions ultimately bear on Nietzsche’s agonistic characterization of learning, and it is a positive sign that there has been an increased interest in this feature of his philosophy.<sup>101</sup> However, it is evident that commentators until now, even including those who recognize the *agon* as central to Nietzsche’s learning, have asked questions of a limited scope. This is largely due to a tendency to exclude crucial material pertaining to educational method in Nietzsche’s corpus. My method therefore entails expanding the sphere of investigation when it comes to this material. In addition to the more formal aspects of Nietzsche’s educational philosophy (e.g., his genealogical analysis of contest), I wish to include Nietzsche’s most concrete material: e.g., his practical advice on how to appear as a contestant, how to deal with victory and defeat, how to sublimate feelings of hatred or envy, how to think of limiting or exaggerating oneself as a type of contest (asceticism), how to make use of all things (including defeat), how to choose enemies for their value from the perspective of a student, etc. *This* is what is missing in the study of Nietzsche as an educational philosopher.

As mentioned, the first major issue of concern for commentators is Nietzsche’s tendency to promote the elitist education of an aristocratic caste, whether this caste is defined in terms of spiritual superiority or an overt social ranking. To speak of the possibility of a “democratic Nietzsche” in opposition to the more familiar “Nietzsche of the few”<sup>102</sup> has thus become the reigning preoccupation of those who make a study of his thoughts on education. It was especially during the 1980’s that the topic of

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<sup>99</sup> Golomb, *op. cit.*, 99.

<sup>100</sup> Peter Fitzsimons draws the same summary conclusion in *Nietzsche, Ethics and Education: an Account of Difference*, Rotterdam, Sense Publishers: 2007, p. 5-6.

<sup>101</sup> Here I have in mind especially the work of Hatab, Appel, and Acampora.

<sup>102</sup> I am following Leslie Sassone in her use of this term.

Nietzsche's philosophy of education began to attract real attention. Nonetheless, this attention was still primarily regarding the question of its theoretical applicability (or lack thereof) in the real work of academic institutions, rather than specifying its pedagogical structures and techniques. As a result, the question as to whether or not there could be any place for Nietzsche's elitist ideas about education within a democratic society remained central to this discourse.

Based on its promise of providing the student with a way to identify and exceed former limitations, Hillesheim is one who argues that Nietzsche's concept of self-overcoming (or "self-surpassing," as he preferred) could indeed be appropriated in the modern classroom.<sup>103</sup> Beginning what would become a prolonged debate, Rosenow responded to this in a paper published under the title, "Nietzsche's Educational Dynamite," where it is argued that Hillesheim is incorrect to translate *Selbstüberwindung* and *Selbstaufhebung* as "self-surpassing" on the grounds that this term fails to take into account the fact that Nietzsche did not want to improve the self through self-creation but deconstruct the self through "overcoming and annihilating the self."<sup>104</sup> The traditional picture of self-mastery is denied by Nietzsche and self-overcoming becomes nearly the conceptual opposite of this, claims Rosenow, who argues instead that Nietzsche opposed this sense of self mastery and advocates in its place the throwing off of the rational strictures that limit the expression of our more primal selves. For this reason, we can only adopt Nietzsche partially, and with great caution.<sup>105</sup> But this line of thinking presents the problem of making Nietzsche out to be at the same time a very strict anti-egoist, as well as a type of primordial egoist (i.e. one who promotes the freeing of more primal, "irrational" energies). Both of these tendencies are present in Nietzsche, it is true; however, the term "*Aufhebung*" must imply more than annihilation. I would argue therefore that "self-surpassing" is sufficient as a translation of *Selbstaufhebung* only if the English verb "to surpass" is thought to bear with it the connotation of a destructive activity. Meanwhile, Mark Jonas is correct to challenge the conclusions of both Hillesheim and Rosenow by claiming that in fact Nietzsche's conception of self-overcoming remains similar to the traditional notion of self-mastery in a way that Rosenow seems to ignore, which is that it still promotes the moderation of one's desires and passions, even though it diverges from the traditional notion in that the reason for self-overcoming is to increase power in the individual rather than increased social responsibility.<sup>106</sup>

But Nietzsche was not a thinker who looked upon the role of the state in education with sheer

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<sup>103</sup> James Hillesheim, "Suffering and Self-cultivation: The Case of Nietzsche," in *Educational Theory*, vol. 36, no. 2 (1986), p. 171-8.

<sup>104</sup> Eliyahu Rosenow, "Nietzsche's Educational Dynamite," *Educational Theory*, vol. 39, no. 2 (1989), 308.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 316.

<sup>106</sup> Mark Jonas, "(R)evaluation of Nietzsche's Anti-Democratic Pedagogy: The Overman, Perspectivism and Self-Overcoming," in *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, vol. 28 (2009), p 152-169.

contempt. Taylor has argued that, as necessary consequence of history, Nietzsche easily recognized that the state is not something to be dismantled or ignored, but nor a structure that should be expected to transform itself very radically.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, Fennell attempts to show that Nietzsche developed a vision that is consistent with a regular course of education for regular people, whereby the majority would be denied an education that aims at anything besides the promotion of the goals of mediocrity, which are economic and social stability.<sup>108</sup>

Resorting to more theoretical means, Jonas counters this by appealing to the universality of the will to power in all individuals. By virtue of this universality, he argues, each has the capacity to “learn self-mastery and develop into higher individuals, even if they will never become one of the few and rare ‘unfathomable ones.’”<sup>109</sup> From this it is meant to follow naturally that “Nietzsche emphatically does not think the majority should be taught to be ‘average,’ or decadent, or to accept their internal nihilism; rather they should be taught to be self-overcomers who know how to admire power and beauty.”<sup>110</sup> Thompson, who sees potential in using Nietzsche’s insights into the problems of state-managed education, wishes to show that at stake in this is really the matter of reorienting the comportment of the learner to the subject. He emphasizes Nietzsche’s appeal to the aspect of leisure which allows the individual to enter into a relation with the subject matters of the world without being bound by the advantages they promise, and without, therefore, the constraints of knowing what to expect from them.<sup>111</sup> Once again, however, I would highlight the fact that this potential for improvement is meant to address a deficiency pointed out by Nietzsche in current models of education, and not as an implementation of any positive articulation on his part.

Aloni is another reader who is optimistic about the prospect of suitably appropriating Nietzsche’s educational insights into the domain of schools. The first pedagogical dimension of Nietzsche’s philosophy consists, he says, in “a radical redefinition of the aim of education—formulated in medical and cultural terms—as the recovery of health and worth.”<sup>112</sup> The second is what he calls “Nietzsche’s

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<sup>107</sup> Quentin Taylor, *The Republic of Genius: A Reconstruction of Nietzsche’s Early Thought*, Rochester, Rochester University Press: 1997.

<sup>108</sup> Jon Fennell, “Nietzsche Contra ‘Self-reformulation,’” in *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, Vol. 24 (2005), 85–111

<sup>109</sup> Jonas, *op. cit.*, 164.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* 166.

<sup>111</sup> “In leisure, one is able to gain a perspective on things without being bound or directed by personal preferences or socially viable viewpoints. It is this Greek thought that features prominently in Nietzsche’s lectures when he speaks of a ‘solar system of timeless and impersonal reflections.’” Christiane Thompson, “The Non-Transparency of the Self and the Ethical Value of Bildung”, in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 39 (2005), p. 524.

<sup>112</sup> Nimrod Aloni, “The three pedagogical dimensions of Nietzsche’s philosophy,” in *Educational Theory*, vol. 39, no. 4 (1989), p. 302.

pedagogical anthropology: his contribution to the philosophical and historical study of human nature, experience, and possibilities with a particular interest in the educative potentiality of man.”<sup>113</sup> And the third pedagogical aspect of Nietzsche’s work is its capacity to be educationally affective upon the reader, “anchored in the fact that they [his writings] are, in themselves, educative,” with the aim being “to liberate and empower individuals toward authentic, autonomous, and creative life.”<sup>114</sup> But Johnston, who criticizes many of those who identify Nietzsche as a source for educational reform, points out the problem of how Aloni seems to ignore the overriding evidence that, for Nietzsche, “education is neither liberating nor empowering. If individuals wish ‘authentic, autonomous, and creative life,’ as Aloni maintains, they must achieve this outside of education, for it is an entirely personal goal.”<sup>115</sup>

Others have suggested that Nietzsche-as-teacher can provide guidance for an individual only to a very limited extent, e.g., by having him show the way to self-overcoming and the unlocking of energies,<sup>116</sup> or by allowing, as Reynaud has, that, “as an antidote for the modern spirit, Nietzsche’s thought should be taken by modernity as a privileged means for self-criticism. It is in that respect . . . that Nietzsche is an *educator*.”<sup>117</sup> Sharp also arrives at a very limited role for the teacher in Nietzsche’s ideal when he concludes that the true educator for Nietzsche has only two purposes, and no more: “The good educator for Nietzsche is one who can seduce the students into a love of knowledge and truth and who can show them the usefulness of sublimation as a means to an end, and nothing more.”<sup>118</sup> I submit that this is a reasonable endpoint for those who recognize the importance of seeing Nietzsche as the teacher of self-educators, because the tension between terms such as “teacher” and “self-educator” can easily lead to a reluctance to ascribe to Nietzsche the role of an author who issues any definite and straight-forward instructions. On the other hand, this tension is reduced when, after examining the role Nietzsche attributed to friendship in the activity of self-learning, the reader considers that the instruction given by Nietzsche in this case may be much more akin to something like the advice of a friend and peer.<sup>119</sup>

It is true that Nietzsche was writing for the exceptional human being. But this is an individual who does not live apart from others in any absolute way. If Nietzsche’s educational philosophy finds its

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* 303.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* 304.

<sup>115</sup> J. S. Johnston, “Nietzsche as educator: A reexamination,” in *Educational Theory*, vol. 48, no. 1 (1998), p. 79.

<sup>116</sup> Rosenow 1989, *op. cit.*

<sup>117</sup> Phillipe Reynaud, “Nietzsche as Educator,” in *Why We are Not Nietzscheans*, edited by Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, translated by Robert de Loaiza, University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1997, p. 157.

<sup>118</sup> A.M. Sharp, “Nietzsche’s View of Sublimation in the Educational Process,” in *The Journal of Educational Thought*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1984), p. 102.

<sup>119</sup> But even in this case, if Sharp is correct in limiting the role of the teacher in such a way, there is much more to be said in learning these two things: the “seduction to love” and the way of sublimation.

locus in the society of superior individuals then it does make sense to ask about its impact on those who are not their peers. Considering the issue of how the majority stands to be affected, Hillesheim makes the suggestion that when it comes to the issue of social utility, the masses should be seen to rise with the tide of Nietzsche's creators, but that they may not easily know or appreciate this themselves.<sup>120</sup> But Johnston, who believes that any public systematization of *Bildung* is ruled out for Nietzsche, criticizes this reading for characterizing Nietzsche as the fashioner of an aristocratic system of education, whereby there would be one standard for the masses, including "the prospect of education for the dissemination, the passage, of sociocultural values" and then another for the creation of the self-overcoming individual.

Johnston's own view is much more opposed to any possibility for the usefulness of Nietzsche's pedagogy in public society, on the somewhat abstract grounds that "[e]ducation cannot reach a self-overcoming individual. Education, for such a person, is something that must also be overcome."<sup>121</sup> This interpretation, which seems to have Nietzsche as a kind of anti-educator, emphasizes the individualistic framework of his thoughts on learning, which is incompatible with the rigidity of schools as we understand them. Of a similar view is Bingham, who suggests that as a prerequisite for making claim to any possible implementation of a Nietzschean school, commentators have until now read Nietzsche with a certain amount of naïveté.<sup>122</sup> And although I would support this claim, its scope nonetheless remains effectively limited to only those considerations of Nietzsche's critical views on modern public education.<sup>123</sup> I also support the claim that, within the bounds of this limitation, there is not to be found any implementable system of education. That being said, it is a mistake to adduce that Nietzsche put forth no workable structure of educative practice; and meanwhile, the contrary view remains based on an oversight that is in need of remedial attention.

Johnston typifies the judgment that there is a lack of a positive doctrine in Nietzsche's educational philosophy when he claims that, "[a]lthough Nietzsche laments the state of *Bildung*, he does not supply needed material for its improvement."<sup>124</sup> Not surprisingly, the reason for this is reiteration of

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<sup>120</sup> James Hillesheim, "Nietzsche Agonistes," in *Educational Theory*, vol. 23, no. 4 (1973), p. 353; hereafter to be cited as Hillesheim 1973, *op. cit.*, followed by the page number.

<sup>121</sup> Johnston, *op. cit.*, 77.

<sup>122</sup> Charles Bingham, "The Goals of Language, The Language of Goals: Nietzsche's Concern with Rhetoric and its Educational Implications," in *Educational Theory*, vol. 48, no. 2 (1998), p. 229; mistakenly I think, not even Rosenow is exempt from this censure, despite poignantly noting the tendency of Nietzsche's Anglo-American readers to either "smooth over or disregard" whatever is at variance with their attempt to "interpret him in accordance with the established norms of democratic education." (Rosenow 2000, *op. cit.*, 684)

<sup>123</sup> Bingham's own basis for this claim is likewise derived from the same limited sources, e.g., when he cites the pontification of Nietzsche's fictional "philosopher" of the lectures on education: "His conclusion? Mass education is not important." (Bingham, *op. cit.*, 238)

<sup>124</sup> Johnston, *op. cit.*, 79.

what I have called the tension between “teacher” and “self-educator.” It is because for Nietzsche, he claims, “there is no question of a reconciliation between the realms of the individual and social. One simply has to overcome the social if one desires in turn to self-overcome.”<sup>125</sup> And hence, Nietzsche is said to have provided “no blueprint for this task ... no ‘shared’ methods of instruction, no curricula that can be perused, no contents to be discovered. There is only the individual, making up these rules as he or she goes along.”<sup>126</sup> This is incorrect. In response, I would argue that if we take as the entire object of our inquiries nothing but the isolated term “self-overcoming” or else Nietzsche’s collection of derisive comments on the relation between school and state, then certainly it is difficult to see Nietzsche as anything beyond a critic of *Bildung* as it was practiced in his day. However, there is more to Nietzsche’s educational practice than the observation that the highest education should consist in the practice of self-overcoming and the overcoming of teachers (which is not the same act as dismissing them). Specifically, he *teaches* the reader how to do it in a rather straight-forward way, often simply by making public his observations on what seemed to him most effective.

With very few exceptions,<sup>127</sup> the most prevalent misconception in the critical interpretation so far has been the tacit belief that Nietzsche offered no more than a critique of public institutions of learning. To some extent, however, this misconception has been tended to on the part of those who draw attention to Nietzsche’s pedagogical exemplar, Zarathustra, by asking what can be learned about Nietzsche’s pedagogical ideals from this character. Those who take up *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as the major text of Nietzsche’s educational philosophy therefore enjoy the advantage of appealing to a more obviously positive set of ideas, which are set out in the words and deeds of its protagonist. Gordon is the most successful in emphasizing the operational images of “mirroring” and “unmasking” in the teaching style of Zarathustra. He also sees the importance of the movement that happens in the teacher’s learning how to teach the overman and the eternal recurrence of the same.<sup>128</sup> In a responsive article, however, Jenkins

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* 81.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* 83.

<sup>127</sup> One such exception is Lomax, who could be said to have offered an account of Nietzsche’s positive educational philosophy. He sets out to retrieve Nietzsche from his postmodernist construal as the consummate nihilist, as one who came solely to disrupt and tear down the mores of modernity. Instead, Nietzsche is portrayed as one who sought to replace the dominant religion with a religion of his own, complete with a set of doctrines and initiative precursors. Nietzsche’s mission is then identified as an educative one because it is seen as the mission to empower the individual, particularly the philosopher. However, Lomax (fatally) fails to distinguish between Nietzsche’s techniques of education (his martial ascetics) and the techniques of religion. It is very likely this oversight which leads him on to the striking and quite misguided conclusion that, according to Nietzsche’s true intention for its use, “the eternal recurrence is Christianity for philosophers.” J. Harvey Lomax, *The Paradox of Philosophical Education: Nietzsche’s New Nobility and the Eternal Recurrence in Beyond Good and Evil*, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books: 2003, p. 85.

<sup>128</sup> Haim Gordon, “Nietzsche’s Zarathustra as Educator,” in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1980), p.

criticizes the tendency in this to emphasize the form of Zarathustra's teaching while neglecting its content, which is always delivered dogmatically.<sup>129</sup> But despite this criticism, Gordon importantly succeeds in recognizing that Zarathustra *qua* teacher often elicits support from his students in his personal task of coming to know himself. This is the process of the teacher "reaching out to" and learning from his students.<sup>130</sup> Earlier, Heidegger also made a study of Zarathustra as teacher in a piece titled "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?"<sup>131</sup>, where he argues for a reception of Zarathustra as the teacher of the eternal return ("the circle"), suffering, and life. In this, Zarathustra holds above all the promise of educating man with respect to his relation to being. As I discuss elsewhere in the present study, as well, Laurence Lampert's book, *Nietzsche's Teaching: an Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,<sup>132</sup> portrays Zarathustra as a teacher of the way past *ressentiment* and revenge, and similarly outlines the necessary stages of moving between isolation and company, instruction and example.

Another article of interest, especially since it draws some attention to the comparison of Zarathustra and Socrates, is Martha Kendal Woodruff's, "Untergang und Übergang: The Tragic Descent of Socrates and Zarathustra." Most valuably, Woodruff promotes the importance of reading Zarathustra as a parody of Socrates.<sup>133</sup> In terms of dramatic element, she argues, what might be the Aristotelian tragic flaw of both Socrates and Zarathustra is that, "[f]or both, it seems to be an inability to love another as an equal, a refusal of full *eros*."<sup>134</sup> This comparison is noteworthy for the implications that it carries in considering Nietzsche as an educational thinker, because it aligns Socrates and Nietzsche's educative avatar, Zarathustra. But I maintain that it is too simple to say, as Church has, that in his final overcoming of Socrates Nietzsche wanted to displace an educational love for discovery with one of love for

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<sup>129</sup> Keith Jenkins, "The Dogma of Nietzsche's Zarathustra," in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1982), p. 251-254.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* 186-7. On this note, I think it would make an interesting project to ask whether Zarathustra had any true "friends" as he described them. I am inclined to answer yes.

<sup>131</sup> Translated by Bernd Magnus in *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 20, (1967), p. 411-31.

<sup>132</sup> New Haven: Yale University Press: 1986.

<sup>133</sup> Also see Peter Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press: 1996, p. 127-48, on "The Beginning of Zarathustra's Political Education," and Gordon, *op. cit.*, 182., where he considers the difference between Zarathustra retreating from the failures of teaching in the marketplace, and Socrates, who seemed to have no need. For the present study, this becomes relevant to the extent the it demonstrates Nietzsche's advance over Socrates in learning from defeat. See my section of Nietzsche, Epictetus, and Socrates in chapter three.

<sup>134</sup> Martha Kendal Woodruff, "Untergang und Übergang: The Tragic Descent of Socrates and Zarathustra," in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 34, Autumn 2007, p. 74; also see Kathleen Higgins, "The Whip Recalled" in *Nietzsche*, edited by Richard White, Ashgate Publishing, Burlington, UK: 2002, 511-528 (especially 518-20) where Higgins convincingly compares Zarathustra's encounter with the old woman—who teaches him of love—to Socrates' discourse with Diotima in the *Symposium*.

creation.<sup>135</sup> Nietzsche wanted to actually transmit this art of displacement and of self-mastery.

Accordingly, the main contribution I wish to make to *this* discussion is a study of Zarathustra as one who is a teacher of learning, because he is the teacher of the friend.

Thiele provides a good example of what can be gleaned from a comparison between Zarathustra and Socrates when one considers their implications into the nature of this type of learning. This she does by highlighting Zarathustra as an educator who relies on a constant vacillation between providing for the education of others and total solitude.<sup>136</sup> In the same context, she also speaks about the envy that Socrates must have had of his interlocutors who, unlike him, could retire from their discussions with a clear conscience, and who remained “untroubled by the voice of the most unrelenting critic, a critic Socrates always met when he was alone.”<sup>137</sup> As Thiele points out, Zarathustra also suffers from his solitude and the truth it bears to him, and so he warns those who would follow him in the practice of solitude that “you yourself will always be the worst enemy you can encounter; you yourself lie in wait for yourself in caves and forests.”<sup>138</sup> So entirely agonal was his thinking that Nietzsche would even conceive of mountain-top solitude as a kind of contest or war. But as Zarathustra learned during his sojourns of teaching and learning down in the valleys, the same could be said about having companions, (e.g. pupils, teachers, and enemies). Nietzsche’s philosophy of friendship, which is an agonal precept standing central to his philosophy of education, is a practical philosophy, entailing a new personal ascetics that is conditioned by a new *Kriegspraxis*, with the goal being the expression and extension of power.<sup>139</sup> I suggest that an explanation of how this process is actually meant to work, and how it *did* work in the case of Socrates, will provide a more comprehensive reception of Nietzsche’s total contribution to educational philosophy.

In his review of the literature, Cooper criticizes the tendency of those who follow Gordon in focusing on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as the text from which to gather Nietzsche’s thoughts on education, wishing instead to turn to what he considers the three major works on the subject: *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, *Schopenhauer as Educator*, and *The Use and Abuse of History*. Bingham also

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<sup>135</sup> Much credit is due to Church for recognizing that Nietzsche engages and overcomes Socrates in the activity of education (i.e., educational reform), even though he locates the entire procedure in *Birth of Tragedy*. There is the stage at which Nietzsche overcomes Socrates, as Church puts it, “through a transfiguration of *eros*.” (*Ibid.* 689-90) Specifically, he sees that “Nietzsche replaces this erotic striving for what Nietzsche considers to be a deleterious, corrosive illusion with an erotic striving for ‘power’, to put one’s stamp on things, to legislate, rather than to discover.” (*Ibid.* 704)

<sup>136</sup> Thiele, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* 179.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*; quoted from Z 90.

<sup>139</sup> Later on, when he was recounting his own self-education, Nietzsche would further distill his doctrine of philosophical polemic into a short list of dictates in *Ecce Homo*, where he shows how it is possible to see his campaign against Socrates as a strategy of radically conceived tactics: e.g., that are purposefully “compromising” of his own reputation. These are the tactics of wrath without resentment, which I shall discuss in the final chapter.

follows this trend, though he limits the scope of his inquiry even further by ignoring the last of these works.<sup>140</sup> A common feature of these texts is that they all explicitly pertain directly to the subject of education; and a second is that they all consist largely in a *critical* evaluation of educational institutions. The problem with this emphasis is that, perhaps only because they were not collected into a volume of educational doctrine, so much of what Nietzsche had to say about education outside of state institutions, the “school of life” that is conducted by his self-educator, is lost in the general discussion. The crux of all education always remained self-learning for Nietzsche; however, it is not enough to derive from this that Nietzsche’s vision of education is antithetical to public management and therefore untenable democratically.<sup>141</sup> My claim is that the above mentioned texts (and the first two in particular) serve well to delineate Nietzsche’s concern with the method of institutional education which takes as its paradigm a straight-forward relation between teacher and student—a relation that he elsewhere describes under a new model. Specifically, what deserves a great deal more attention is the wealth of ideas presented by Nietzsche on the inner-harmonics of the self-educator in the text *Schopenhauer as Educator*, and also into his middle and later period (especially *Human, All-Too-Human* and *Daybreak*).<sup>142</sup> This material includes lessons on the applied wisdom of choosing teachers, and in undertaking a new formulation of the teacher-student dynamic: i.e., one that is characterized by its freedom from slavish power relations. This dynamic adheres in relations of power between people just as much as in the relations between competing elements of the psyche which, for Nietzsche, constitute a single individual. Such is the case, for instance, when the tyranny of any given talent, habit, or instinct is overcome with the establishment of a healthier system of inner rivalry. In keeping with the original function of the *agon* in Homeric Greece as Nietzsche understood it, however, this competitive arrangement of power is designed to preclude egalitarianism just as much as tyranny.

I therefore concentrate on illuminating Nietzsche’s philosophy of education as founded upon the concept of *agon*, and then elaborate on the specific activities and characteristics of this philosophy: i.e.

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<sup>140</sup> See Bingham, *op. cit.*, 230. Others who seem to abide by this restriction include Hatab, Thompson, and Detweiler, all of whom are most concerned with the politico-institutional implications of Nietzsche’s thoughts on education. Fitzsimmons goes even further to suggest that Nietzsche’s period of “explicit educational philosophy” is really to be found between the years of 1872 and 1874. (Fitzsimmons, *op. cit.*, 14)

<sup>141</sup> This is not the question I am presently interested in. On the side of those who see little to no place for Nietzsche’s thoughts in educational policy, see Johnston, Appel, Jonas, and Bingham, “What Friedrich Nietzsche cannot stand about education: Toward a pedagogy of self-reformulation,” in *Educational Theory*, vol. 51, no. 3 (2001), p. 337–52; see Taylor, Fennell, Aloni, Thompson, Hillesheim, Rosenow and Hatab on the other. In my view, Hatab’s argument has a distinguishing advantage in appealing to the idea that *agon* is a descriptive category for Nietzsche, meaning that its operations already pervade education and other social institutions from the beginning, and that therefore a discussion of its structures is always relevant to potential reform.

<sup>142</sup> One author who has expressed a similar view is Sassone, whose work I will return to later.

how agonistic education is actually to be practiced, according to his advice. Next, I move beyond Nietzsche's genealogical account of *agon*, beyond his theoretical account of how *agon* is central to the best forms of education, toward a more specific account of how Nietzsche formulated his own educative practice. The key features of this formulation include: the centrality of self-education, Nietzsche's conception of education as empowerment, the way such education must proceed through relations of love and hate, friendship and enmity. These educative ideals, as well as the activities described as exercises in their attainment, are not only themes of life in general. They comprise the positive content of Nietzsche's pedagogy.

In considering this point it should be noted that, outside of his critique of modern education, when Nietzsche refers to "the teacher" it is not at all clear that he has in mind the employee who oversees the affairs of a classroom. Rather, he is thinking of the self-educator, whose teachers are made up of friends, peers, rivals, and geniuses who live only in words.<sup>143</sup> Recognition of this feature in Nietzsche's thought is a prerequisite for attempting to outline his positive doctrine of learning which, contrary to popular opinion, *does* provide a discussion of, and a solution to, a number of problems related to education. And although it is far less common than recognizing the need to further explore Nietzsche's educational philosophy, the necessity of drawing upon his relation to Socrates in this work has also been noticed by some. Speaking on the modern prevalence of "an unbridled and undirected search for knowledge," Church points out that "Nietzsche discerns the origin of the modern drive in Socrates, the last 'vortex and turning-point' of history. Reform to education thus requires a historical account of the origins of the drive for knowledge, which leads Nietzsche to a confrontation with the figure of Socrates."<sup>144</sup> In this thesis I will describe precisely this confrontation, in all of its dimensions, and with specific questions of education in mind.

I will examine, for example, one of the major issues of education Nietzsche deals with: namely, the question of whether it is best to cultivate a singular talent within a student, or many. His answer, ultimately, will be that it is best to cultivate the one by means of the many, and the many by means of the one—but that *there must first be the one*: i.e., a powerful singular talent that serves as the center. I will demonstrate how Socrates plays a role in this determination, since he represents the most extreme case, and the most successful case, of a singular talent overriding all others. In terms of education, Socrates empowered himself considerably by subverting every action and all available energy into "becoming

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<sup>143</sup> When Nietzsche speaks of Schopenhauer as "educator," for example, he does not use the term *Lehre*, which is a term which, as Fitzsimmons puts it, "would more closely signify 'instruction or the imparting of some body of knowledge or doctrine'"; instead, therefore, he chooses *Erzieher*, which "carries the idea of challenging, provoking, stimulating, inspiring; all part of acting as an exemplar." (Fitzsimmons, *op. cit.*, 16) Fitzsimmons credits Richard Schacht for first making this observation in *Making Sense of Nietzsche, Reflections Timely and Untimely*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

<sup>144</sup> Church, *op. cit.*, 689.

what he was”: the insuperable contestant of dialectic. For just this reason, Nietzsche enters into a critique of Socrates’ inner politics (his “tyrannical” mode of inner harmony), and can be said to have *learned* from Socrates according his own agonistic standard, meaning that he surpassed the lesson of Socrates. It is the “artistic Socrates” who represents for Nietzsche an even greater model for the student. A consideration of this helps to allow for a further discussion of how, although Socrates has provided the highest model for the inner harmonics of singularity, he is appreciated as a teacher only when one has gone beyond this model by fashioning another, superior form of inner harmonics.<sup>145</sup> In turn, and finally, this discussion arrives at a position from which to better clarify the particular form of ascetic practice that Nietzsche would prescribe for bringing this condition about, which is the martial asceticism of a student who wills the creative integration of his instincts and abilities through adversity, enemies, and warfare. Simply put: for Nietzsche, the educative contest is martial.<sup>146</sup> Accordingly, a new *Kriegspraxis* is needed to determine the possibility for the birth of a new type of learning; and I would add that it is Nietzsche’s own activities as a student which demonstrates this best. This arrangement of ideas must be explained more entirely in a complete discussion of “Nietzsche’s contest,” and this discussion must include: Nietzsche’s understanding of *agon* as a concept developed over time, his own contributions to it as a concept and as a practice, and a consideration of his own contests.<sup>147</sup>

Understanding the way *agon* functioned in terms of education for Nietzsche is important in a number of ways. It is reflective not only of how he viewed the nature of education at its best, but also the way in which Nietzsche himself proceeded in self-education.<sup>148</sup> Based on the penchant of the Greeks to orient the contest toward enhancing one’s own reputation and glory, for example, Nietzsche develops a series of observations on how to best engage an opponent. Accordingly, I aim to demonstrate that it is impossible to fully understand Nietzsche’s engagement with Socrates without an appreciation of his

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<sup>145</sup> By the term “inner harmonics” I mean to denote the arrangement of the deployment of energy (or priority) amongst the many competing instincts and talents within an individual and, by extension, within a given society. For Nietzsche, Socrates is most notable for not only rearranging the harmonics within, but without.

<sup>146</sup> Given an understanding of the link between these concepts, one quickly sees why it is also correct to say that “[w]hen Nietzsche speaks of war he is speaking of the contest of ideas, thoughts, and values” (Hillesheim 1973, *op. cit.*, 348); and, “Nietzsche’s warfare is but the Greek *agon* in the arena of ideas.” (*Ibid.* 349) Also see Fitzsimmons, *op. cit.*, 70, where he makes the same point.

<sup>147</sup> Naturally I have in mind the pre-eminence of his contest with Socrates. See the summarizing section of the final chapter, “Nietzsche’s Contest.”

<sup>148</sup> Hillesheim also recognizes this point, though he seems to only see its application with regard to Nietzsche’s personal program of inner-agonistic development, and not with regard to others, such as Socrates: “Nietzsche not only developed a theory of inner contest, he attempted to live by it, and as he did he was forced to recognize the anguish and agony of the *agon*, the immense price that one must pay, or at least risk paying, again and again in the process of ‘becoming who you are.’” (Hillesheim 1986, *op. cit.*, 175)

thoughts on agonistic education, because only with this appreciation can one fully understand Nietzsche's personal as well as theoretical appropriation of rivalry.

Church seems to catch sight of this possibility, but does not pursue further into the realm of agonal education, when, in a footnote, he writes that, "[t]o appreciate fully Nietzsche's view of Socrates, one must recognize that Nietzsche confronts him with a practical purpose of overcoming the Socratic tradition through education."<sup>149</sup> My intention is to describe Nietzsche's carrying out this purpose, as well as the evolving program of his confrontation with Socrates, and to show that Nietzsche's personal overcoming of Socrates is best thought of as the grounding event of what should stand as the crucial example of the education Nietzsche has in mind. Why? Because Nietzsche thought of a strategic confrontation with others as the operational mechanism behind this style of learning, and because, as Church rightly points out, "[t]he exemplary confrontation of great individuals for Nietzsche consists of his own confrontation with Socrates."<sup>150</sup> I argue that it is for precisely this reason, i.e. that his contest with Socrates is the exemplary confrontation of great individuals, that we find ourselves at odds in understanding Nietzsche's view of Socrates without considering Nietzsche's project within the philosophy of education. Establishing Nietzsche's historical understanding of the *agon* will therefore provide us with a better position for explaining how his protracted and evolving *agon* with Socrates yielded real philosophical results for Nietzsche, including, I will argue, some level of contribution to his discovery of that notion which overcomes a feeling of disappointment with the world, "*amor fati*."

## **2.2 The Contest of Homer**

I claim that Nietzsche's dynamic and intensely personal engagement with Socrates is best understood as a direct reflection of his own educational philosophy. It is therefore necessary to at present examine how Nietzsche arrived at this philosophy, and to refer back to those earlier texts in which Nietzsche recounts his inheritance of this philosophy from the ancient Greeks; then to proceed to look at the reconfigured contest Nietzsche develops out of the ground of this philosophical inheritance--that is, the transformative reiteration of the Greek contestual school of life into Nietzsche's *Kriegsschule des Lebens*--and demonstrate how it was in keeping with the principles Nietzsche ascribed to his school of martial contest that he engaged Socrates, whom he identifies as another figure responsible for a reformulation of the contestual drive, and as a personal educator.

The thematic issue of agonism is common to both of the two major questions<sup>151</sup> posed by

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<sup>149</sup> Church, *op. cit.*, 689.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* 708.

<sup>151</sup> I.e. whether Nietzsche's view of education had anything to offer liberal democratic institutions, and what might be taken

commentators on Nietzsche's philosophy of education. In his book *Nietzsche Contra Democracy*, for example, Appel presents a criticism of attempts that have been made to employ Nietzsche for democratic purposes, and particularly with respect to agonistics. Because Nietzsche remains radically aristocratic, the claim here is that he cannot be appropriated within the context of democratic egalitarian ideals. On Appel's reading, the main reason for this is that "an *agon*, for Nietzsche, is a selective activity restricted to an elite and not extended to the public as a whole."<sup>152</sup> On the other hand, in a paper published under the provocative title "Prospects for a Democratic Agon: Why We Can Still be Nietzscheans," Hatab challenges this understanding by pointing out that Appel's claim rests on the misguided assertion that Nietzsche envisioned the highest function of *agon* to include only a superior few, leaving nothing more than the prospect of "an elite who compete with each other for creative results in isolation from the mass public; indeed [that] the elite simply use the masses as material for their creative work, without regard for the fate or welfare of the general citizenry."<sup>153</sup> Hatab urges us instead to recognize the capacity for the *agon* to function constructively beyond the interplay of the elite. As the present chapter conveys, this is at least consistent with Nietzsche's expressed thoughts, since he held the view that the most suitable characterization of all relations amongst people is to say, firstly, that they are always contestual in one form or another; and secondly, that the best type of these relations corresponds to a particular type of contest.

The first of these views is a corollary extension of the *Wille zur Macht* expressed in his later writings, as well as in his conception of *agon* through Heraclitus, who was a very likely influence on his thoughts in this respect. The second of these views, which is also discussed in this chapter, is that, as a properly functioning social form, contest can have the desirable effect of eliminating tyranny. Thus, for Hatab, in an egalitarian democracy such as our own we can benefit from the fact that "agonistics simply destabilize politics and prevent even ostensibly democratic propensities from instigating exclusions or closed conceptions of political practice."<sup>154</sup> The problem of his disdain for egalitarianism can then be dismissed under this view if we are willing to trade in the notion of "equal respect" for "agonistic respect," the latter of which best represents the hallmark of democracy in any case.

But apart from its implications in the institutional workings of a democracy, Nietzsche's intention is perhaps best served by working through how he characterized the value of agonistics as a way of employing (i.e., sublimating) the strife of existence, first in the political dimension, and second, in the

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as a way for education from the character Zarathustra.

<sup>152</sup> Fredrick Appel, "Nietzsche Contra Democracy," Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY: 1999, p. 140.

<sup>153</sup> Laurence Hatab, "Prospects for a Democratic Agon: Why We Can Still Be Nietzscheans," in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, vol. 24 (2002), p. 136.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* 130.

interpersonal pursuit of individual excellence. Much of this study has already been well-conducted by Christa Acampora, from whose thesis I have greatly benefited, and in what follows, I hope to build on her scholarship.<sup>155</sup> This is especially true with regard to the transitional phase of the pre-Homeric world, in which Nietzsche detected the birth of a certain agonistic cultural operation. This operation, because it had the effect of rechanneling the impulses of human activity, and because it effects itself in the formation of new culture, should be counted as a radical reformation of education for Nietzsche.

Throughout his works, Nietzsche displayed a constant concern for describing the condition of the great human being. Truly exceptional is the individual who not only has talent, but also good fortune in the accidents of life (however “bad” those accidents might often appear), as well as a tremendous will to struggle, to great suffering, and to all forms of victory, in a lifelong campaign of self-education. Nietzsche’s concern for enhancing the possibility for this type of human to flourish in the world leads him to also consider the cultural conditions necessary to its success. For this reason, Nietzsche’s concern remains educational in its aims. Nonetheless, Nietzsche’s contribution to the philosophy of education has not been widely celebrated or explored. And although a renewed contemporary interest in the topic of *agonistic* education has remedied this oversight to some extent, I am convinced that the full scope of Nietzsche’s understanding of contest—in all its ramifications as the unregulated condition of life, but also as the regulated condition of the best life—has not yet been fully appreciated.

One aspect that should be further considered is how, at times, it is tempting to see Nietzsche’s ideal of learning as a reflection of how the creative forces of the natural world seemed for him to play out.<sup>156</sup> Even in his middle works, Nietzsche continues to reason that it is only because “the desire for victory and eminence is an inextinguishable trait of nature,” and because it is therefore “older and more primitive than any respect for and joy in equality,” that the Greek state saw need to accord their livelihood to this trait of nature, and consequently they “sanctioned gymnastic and artistic contest between equals ... where that drive could be discharged without imperiling the political order.” (HH II 226 225) In this context Nietzsche has highlighted the public function of contest as a safe-guard against dangers of the unrestrained (or the “non-sublimated”) universal urge for victory over another. There is however much more to be said about the positive nature of this function, not as a kind of safety-valve (an image that Nietzsche specifically cautions against), but as a stimulant to growth. (EGP HC 57) Nietzsche

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<sup>155</sup> Christa Davis Acampora, *Philosophos Agonistes: Nietzsche as Exemplar and Educator*, UMI, Ann Arbor, MI: 1997, (hereafter referred to as Acampora 1997, *op. cit.*, page number, with other works by this author being cited similarly); “Contesting Nietzsche,” in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* vol. 24 (2002), p. 1-4; “Nietzsche Contra Homer, Socrates, and Paul,” in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* vol. 24 (2002), p. 25-53.

<sup>156</sup> Heraclitus, whose view of the universe operating as a child who haphazardly plays the “game” of building up, reshaping, and wiping out all things (as in the game of making sand castles, for example) had a great impression on Nietzsche, and evidently influenced even his most “post-metaphysical” thoughts on culture and education later on.

saw how it was that, with the Greeks, individual contestants were not only each meant to “keep each other down” in order to preclude a monopolization of one over the whole field of contest; for, to his mind, this course would remain purely negative and reactionary. Instead, the opposition of contest is meant to elevate, even if this entails a timely *increase* in tyranny. One opposes and overcomes the tyranny of an apathetic mediocrity, for example, by establishing the tyranny of a creative aristocracy. To elaborate this point, it is best to return to Nietzsche’s earliest and most extended discussion of *agon*.

During the time he spent preparing his first book for publication, Nietzsche also produced a work called “Homer’s Contest.”<sup>157</sup> In the opening words of this text, Nietzsche chooses to begin his treatment of *agon* in ancient Greece by bluntly disavowing any ultimate distinction between “humanity” and “Nature”—“But such a distinction does not in reality exist,” says Nietzsche: for, “the ‘natural’ qualities and the properly called ‘human’ ones have grown up inseparably together. Man in his highest and noblest capacities *is* Nature and bears in himself her awful twofold character.” (*Ibid.* 51) Hence he concludes, apparently from this fact alone, that as an extended resemblance of the processes underlying the activities of nature, it follows that “[those] abilities [of man] generally considered dreadful and inhuman are perhaps indeed the fertile soil, out of which alone can grow forth all humanity in emotions, actions and works.” (*Ibid.*) Obviously this bears within it certain presumptions regarding the processes of production in the natural world, as well as far reaching implications regarding the process of production and education—i.e. of “growth,” and of “cultivation”—in the world of the human.

Nietzsche cautions however that what is most “human” should not be confused with what is most “humane”—and *especially* when it comes to understanding the Greeks. Contrary to the prevailing view of the Weimar classicists of his day, Nietzsche stressed that the pre-Homeric Greeks were not a people of a child-like innocence, patiently idling in the calm meadows of pre-history. Just the opposite: that which Nietzsche sees most distinctly in the Greek psyche is the trait of utter “cruelty,” of a “tiger-like pleasure in destruction,” which constantly demands its satisfaction as a matter of course in life. As evidence of this, Nietzsche reminds the reader that “[w]hen the victor, in a fight of the cities, according to the *law* of warfare, executes the whole male population and sells all the women and children into slavery, we see, in the sanction of such a law, that the Greek deemed it a positive necessity to allow his hatred to break forth unimpeded ...” (*Ibid.* 52) In such a world we see the reigning power of the instinct to destroy and to take

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<sup>157</sup> Acampora (1997, *op. cit.*) does well to justify the view that “Homer’s Contest” should be considered more or less on par with his published works. First of all, it is known that Nietzsche considered it to be a finished work, and intended to use it as a preface to future work. He also presented it as a gift to the Wagners to be read publically. Moreover, for one who believes the *Untimely Meditations* to represent the apex of Nietzsche’s concern with developing a philosophy of education, it is less surprising to learn that drafts for this text included a chapter called “*Der Wettkampf*,” (“The Contest”), with reference to his work on the pre-Socratics, and also that an early lecture series delivered by Nietzsche focused specifically on the contest he perceived between Homer and Hesiod.

pleasure in destruction: the instantiation of *Vernichtungslust* as a ruling principle for the life of a people.

The condition resulting from this is an especially debilitating type of pessimism. For, according to Nietzsche, “the uninterrupted sight of a world of warfare and cruelty led—to the loathing of existence, to the conception of this existence as a punishment to be borne to the end ...” (*Ibid.* 53) Life then became a curse for being so ruthlessly violent, and seemingly without any means of its own justification. This is a world-condition that would give birth to the grave wisdom of Silenus, who, when pressed to answer, decried that for a human it is best not to have been born at all, and that second best would be to die as soon as possible.

Let us now for a moment consider the significance of “Homer’s Contest” as a work. The title is telling in itself. Primarily this essay is meant to articulate the way in which the *agon* pervaded the entire activity of life in ancient Greece: in all their customary habits and dispositions, in the course of their political development, and, in sum, in every establishment, disruption, and re-establishment of value. As the reigning principle of valuation, it ran through the veins of a culture that was distinguished by Nietzsche for realizing a healthy vitality and will to growth. But then Nietzsche chooses to call it “Homer’s” contest, for what reason?

I wish to answer this question provisionally by saying that, for Nietzsche, Homer himself was a contestant, albeit a very special one. To him he represented the preeminent and originary contestant of ancient Greece: the archetypal contestant, as it were, whose victory consisted in establishing the centrality of *agon* within the Greek spirit to begin with. With Homer, then, the agonistic impulse comes to power in the Greek world; but meanwhile, this occurs only *as the result* of a contest.<sup>158</sup> This contest, Nietzsche claims, is not a casual game at all. Rather it is the struggle thrust upon the pre-Homeric world to overcome, in one way or another, the brutal conditions of the madness and violence threatening to suffocate their will to advance, and their very lives, under the crushing weight of unmitigated pessimism.

As the discoverer and establishing founder of contest as a central feature of life, Homer was a saving force within the Greek world. The saving power of this “event” lies in the affirmative disposition it carries over into all the affairs of life. In the better known pages of his *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche takes this optimistic transition within the Greek psyche to be best expressed as a reversal of the wisdom of Silenus by Homer. Now the world appears worthy of the effort of living, with the new wisdom that, “to die soon is worst of all for them, the next worse—to die at all.” But how did Homer effect this change?

Nietzsche reminds the reader that the world of Homer is rife with war, betrayal, and strivings of

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<sup>158</sup> See Acampora’s expression of this point: “Homer, Nietzsche claimed, is a model of revaluation; he is not simply a poet who viewed the world as a beautiful place—his optimism was achieved by overcoming a contemporary pessimistic view of life. Homer’s sense of beauty was not a gift, it was an accomplishment, a victory.” Christa Davis Acampora, *Philosophos Agonistes: Nietzsche as Exemplar and Educator*, UMI, Ann Arbor, MI: 1997, p. 56.

all kinds. In that realm there are contestual interchanges among men as well as between Gods and humans, and the heroes accomplish feats of ability that rival the divine. One now has a Herakles to behold as the patron of that bravery and strength drawn out of one who is “put to the test.” Above all, with Homer the lust for a reputation as a victor, for justification of life found in heightened personal legacy, becomes a cause for which one’s suffering could be offered with the good conscience of a Greek. Danger is esteemed when the constant threat of destruction becomes a condition of the worthiest life, and mortality takes upon a tragic prestige. As Acampora has pointed out, it is precisely because only mortals could stake their lives that only they could be counted heroes. Then again, however, what is equally significant about the implementation of *agon* within the Greek world is that a contest of prestige could be carried out that did not threaten the destruction of its participants.

In Nietzsche’s terms, this is the transition by which *Kampfregung* (the naturally combative, agonistic impulse) is transmuted beyond the ravaging spirit of *Vernichtungslust* to become the burgeoning ground of *Wettkämpfe*. This in itself, he says, is vital to understanding the Greek soul, and as such it constitutes “one of the most noteworthy Hellenic thoughts and worthy to be impressed on the new-comer immediately at the entrance-gate of Greek ethics.” (EGP HC 54) It was under the protective hand of Homer that the Ancient Greeks came to reinterpret their own *Kampfregung*, with its deep-seated need for striving, as a source of strength rather than as a curse. Violence is freed into its own celebration in the realm of mythology. On this Nietzsche remarks, and not without some irony, that, “*Combat* in this brooding atmosphere *is salvation and safety*; the cruelty of victory is the summit of life’s glories.” (*Ibid.* 53; emphasis added) Acts of war are personified, and deified, when cast in the vivid colors of Homeric verse. Their destructiveness is justified by its necessity to the cause of a grand cultural narrative that signifies the different shapes of real human achievement.

Art thereafter becomes an arena of contest in Greece, under Nietzsche’s reading. The aim of its activity predominantly becomes that of competing against one another in reiterating the grandeur of Homer: in marble, in song, in oratory, etc. But again, for Nietzsche it is not that the narrative taken up as the material for contest between artists *happened* to be violent. Its contents “won them over,” so to speak, only as a result of an appeal made to their bellicose instincts. This is why Nietzsche asks the reader to consider: “[w]hy had the Greek sculptor to represent again and again war and fights in innumerable repetitions, extended human bodies whose sinews are tightened through hatred or through the recklessness of triumph ... Why did the whole Greek world exult in the fighting scenes of the ‘Iliad’?” (*Ibid.* 52) As a competitor with others of his rank, the Greek sculptor channels the spirit of the Homeric wars in more ways than one. In fashioning the figures of mythic warriors, he also fashions himself a warrior.

Regardless of Homer’s true historical relation to the matter, it is safe to say that the Greeks

became virtually obsessed with the allure of contest in nearly all the affairs of life. The pressing need for victory that had always been felt by the Greeks is refined into a new taste for the “good” victory, and in this is established a newly elevated potential for greatness in reputation.

In contrast to what is deemed good in victory attained according to the demands of *Vernichtungslust*, i.e. where the victor rejoices in the feeling of annihilating an opponent who is seen as despicable, the good contest is always held to be one taken up by contestants who are of equal stature, and hence, even more importantly, always in the spirit of *fairness*. Indeed, it is in virtue of this very equality that a contest must take place as an orchestrated event, with *rules* agreed upon so as to equalize the contestants further, in the sense that the extent of the equality between them is laid bare by regulating the affair. From this vantage, Acampora reminds us that it is possible to see that the formation of all the various contests within the Greek world must itself be a kind of contest of the artisans. But we should be aware that contest, under this broad definition, would include the proceedings of a legal trial for example, and the garnering of political power, as well as, very commonly in most times throughout “civilized” history, the duel to the death. The English word “contest,” then, if we might reconsign the word, should not be understood as only the commercial-aesthetic pass-time of nations; no more so than fine art should just be understood as more fashionable or high-minded entertainment.

Nor was it just that all public activities were discovered to be inherently contestual, but also that each needed to be made into a contest that would isolate and expose various talents. For the Olympic Games, contests were developed according to how a particular skill could be evaluated among competitors: the speed as opposed to the endurance of the foot-racer, the subduing power of the wrestler, the beauty and concision of the orator and its effect upon the audience, etc. And hence contests of all kinds were designed with care and precision. They were made complete by the establishment of rules, and then later they were added to with the embellishments of decoration and custom that tend to come with anything celebrated over time. All the while, however, the contest of sport always ran as the surface over a streaming current of *polemical* instinct. For this reason, one should bear in mind, as Acampora does, that as for Greeks, “Inseparable from the image of the victorious hero in the foot-race is the hero in the death grips of a deadly struggle on the battlefield.”<sup>159</sup> Beyond this, moreover, and aside from those which were formally shaped and regulated, contests were also made of (or discovered in) activities that occurred outside of any organized competitive event. Most importantly perhaps, political activity was recognized as essentially determined by the *agon*, as was anything that required a public demonstration of ability.

Even so, Nietzsche understood that, for the Greeks, contests really need not be “events” at all, such that, for example, even a hostile disposition taken against some absent person could also be

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<sup>159</sup> Acampora 2002, *op. cit.*, 36.

considered a productive contest. As Nietzsche recalls: “Aristotle once made a list of such contests on a large scale; among them is the most instance how even a dead person can still incite a living one to consuming jealousy ...” (EGP HC 56) It is no accident that the issue of envy and jealousy come into focus here. For, in short, these emotions play a key role in the concept of contest. The driving force of the contest is a feeling of jealousy (*Neid*), provoked by the sight of greater capacities possessed by another, which propels one toward the object of the contest. Depending on the spirit of the contestant involved, this object will either be to suppress and diminish the opponent by causing (at least an apparent) decrease in his strength, or, alternatively, to use this jealousy as way to increase one’s own power.

Beginning as early as *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche maintains a steady interest in the dual nature of envy, and has much to say on its apparent generative power within a culture. In his middle period he would go so far as to liken it to the reproductive anatomy in mankind: “Neid und Eifersucht sind die Schamtheile der menschlichen Seele. Die Vergleichung kann vielleicht fortgesetzt werden. [Envy and jealousy are the private parts of the human soul. The comparison could perhaps be extended.]” (KSA MM I 503 321) In order to make sense of this rather odd description, it is first necessary to see how it is rooted in Nietzsche’s interpretation of the Greek world.

Unlike the educative attitude of the contemporary scholars, who viewed envy and ambition as threats to the integrity of the student, Nietzsche’s perspective was inspired by that of the Greeks, who saw an indispensable value in both. As he conceived of it, the disposition of envy also admits of different kinds, some of which are healthier than others. It is moreover a condition adherent between those who consider themselves more or less equal, rather than between those of vastly disparate stations.<sup>160</sup>

Although his discussion of envy is at least equally prominent in earlier works, I have selected the description he gives of it below from *Human, All-Too-Human*, in part for its clarity and concision, but also as a way of showcasing his continued preoccupation with the subject during a period in which he was, I argue, most energetically seeking to expound a positive educational philosophy.

*Envy and its nobler brother.*—Where equality really has prevailed and been permanently established there arises that tendency which is on the whole accounted immoral and can hardly be conceived of in a state of nature: *envy*. The envious man is conscious of every respect in which the man he envies exceeds the common measure and desires to push him down to it—or to raise himself up to the height of the other: out of which there arise two different modes of action which Hesiod designated as the evil and the good Eris. (HH II WS 29 315)

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<sup>160</sup> This point becomes especially important when considering what Nietzsche took to be the best modes of “victory.” See for example HH II 344 392.

Before going on to further detail Nietzsche's interpretation of envy, a couple of preparatory notes are in order. The most important aspect to be found in a consideration of envy as an instrument of training is the crucial relation it bears to the nature of contest. Given this fact, it also is worth noting that although Nietzsche consistently introduces the subject of envy by referring to the works of Hesiod, it was really Homer whom he thought to have successfully instigated the spirit of *agon* as the engine that drove the developing Greek soul.<sup>161</sup> Lastly, it also becomes apparent in Nietzsche's other thoughts on the matter that he did not ultimately view the activity of the first type of envy simply as something "bad," to be avoided altogether. Specifically, I believe the infamy of his own acts of "pushing down" the heightened figure of Socrates (amongst others), should suffice to demonstrate this.

Exactly what then are the "two modes of action" brought about under the two different spells of envy cast by the God Eris, according to Nietzsche? For an answer to this, I turn again to his earlier work on the Greeks, where he has discovered a feature of education seemingly lost on the present age. For, he says, "the whole Greek antiquity thinks of spite and envy otherwise than we do and agrees with Hesiod, who first designates as an evil one that Eris who leads men against one another to a hostile war of extermination, and secondly praises another Eris as the good one, who as jealousy, spite, envy, incites men to activity but not to the action of war to the knife [i.e., war to the death, but rather] to the action of *contest*." (EGP HC 54)<sup>162</sup>

One of the most essential features of contest is borne out in this passage. Evidently, the activity of contest is to be distinguished in the first place from the purely annihilative activity of warfare. That being said, however, the reader must be prepared to acknowledge that Nietzsche needed to also allow warfare—i.e. the direct and violent confrontation with an other, as opposed to the attempt at surpassing one's equals or superiors at a distance—to be included as a primary form of contest in the world. In a productive contest, it is thus not specifically the desire to suppress or even to "wound" the opponent which ought to be avoided, but rather the urge to "exterminate" once and for all, and to therefore effectively put an end to the contest.<sup>163</sup> In the end, a large part of the motivation for Nietzsche to newly appropriate the contestational school of the Greeks into his own resides, I argue, in the fact that he saw every historical refinement or "shift" in the orientation of the cultural *agon* to be based in an appeal to the

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<sup>161</sup> In short, Nietzsche considered Hesiod and Homer to be engaged in a type of cultural contest with one another. Hesiod was however thought by Nietzsche to lack the vitalizing force of optimism found in Homer, and therefore somewhat less transformative in his affects.

<sup>162</sup> I will also suggest that this vision of the Greek *agon* was formative of Nietzsche's later vision for an esteemed state of perpetual "war without gunpowder," discussed in the section on "Nietzsche's Vision for the Public Reinstitution of Agon."

<sup>163</sup> At various points in his work, and perhaps to the great surprise of some of his readers, Nietzsche himself reflects this principle by denying that he wishes an end to Christianity, and that he instead wants nothing more than its continuance as a potent source of opposition. For the clearest example of this, see WTP 361 291.

thriving polemical instinct of its people. And incidentally, aside from the special case of Homer himself, Socrates seems to stand alone in Nietzsche's mind as exemplar (and instigator) of the most radical occurrence of this kind of shift.

As an elemental component in the relations of friendship and enmity alike, however, it is surely a mistake to conceive of envy as a feeling of "ill-will" toward another individual. As such, I think that Dwight David Allman formulates the matter well when he speaks in terms of the dynamic of love (*Liebe*) and envy (*Neid*) that grows out of awe (*Ehrfurcht*).<sup>164</sup> Envy is painful and instructive. It is directed toward the one who is admired, and it is centrally involved in the love found between the best of friends. Indeed, even the envy held for a bitter enemy is tied to a certain kind of "love" for Nietzsche.

But there are also variations within the different types of envy as well. One such variation turns on the aspect of public status, and comes into play with the perception of one who seems to over-step his natural station in the world. This Nietzsche calls the "envy of the gods," which, as he says, "arises when he who is accounted lower equates himself with him who is accounted higher (as Ajax does) or who is *made* equal to him by the favor of fortune (Niobe is as a mother too abundantly blessed) ... The victorious general often experiences the 'envy of the gods,' as does the pupil who produces a masterly piece of work." (HH II WS 30 315-6) It is also entirely reasonable to suspect that Nietzsche had some measure of experience with this type of envy in his own life. Many of his colleagues were reportedly taken aback by his exceptional placement as a young professor at Basel, for instance. Arranged in large part on account of a glowing recommendation from Ritschl, Nietzsche's status there thrust him into the awkward light of the celebrated prodigy who had been (somewhat controversially) aided in reaching beyond the usual range of his status, and whose effects would surely be watched with interest by all those around him. In effect he was the pupil who, by producing "masterly" works of philology at such a young age, suddenly became a teacher.

The issue of having a proper station in life, and therefore the issue of complication that arises when someone exceeds this station, is closely related to the Greek notion of *hybris*. In light of this connection Nietzsche describes the plight of Miltiades, whose insatiable hunger for victory inevitably brought himself and others to disaster when the gods decided he had overstepped his bounds. Though I will not attempt here to explore all the dimensions of *hybris* in the culture of the Greeks, one can see from this already that, for one thing, it is not that all amounts or kinds of contest are equally good. Certain excesses and imbalances of power within the field of contest therefore needed to be managed through a system of regulation, which might also be called a system of "etiquette," since its concern seems in large part to be for maintaining a certain level of dignity and taste in the activities of contest.

Nietzsche points out with emphasis that a primary feature of this etiquette was an enforced

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<sup>164</sup> Dwight David Allman, "Ancient Friends, Modern Enemies," in *Southern Atlantic Quarterly* 97 (1998)

insistence on the free circulation of contest, whereby stoppages that might be caused by the *undefeatable* opponent would be eliminated. Hence for the Greeks the motto of the day became the quite self-conscious and deliberate demand that: “‘Among us nobody shall be the best; if however someone is the best, then let him be so elsewhere and among others.’” (EGP HC 57) Nietzsche quickly adds to this that, “‘The original sense of this peculiar institution however is not that of a safety-valve but that of a stimulant.’” In other words, the forced exile of one who dominates a particular contest is for the sake of heightening, and not diminishing, the level of antagonism among its participants.<sup>165</sup>

Nietzsche saw this as fundamental to the function of contest. Although it allows for the greatest gains in strength and style, it is still inimical to tyranny. “That,” he says, “is the kernel of the Hellenic contest-conception: it abominates autocracy, and fears its dangers; it desires as a *preventative* against the genius—a second genius.” (*Ibid.* 58) Read in a technical light, this would imply that, so long as there are at least two geniuses who are capable of outdoing each other, and who, though they are counted equal in many respects, may still inspire envy within each other in order that each may be raised up (*erhöten*) to the ascending height of the other, then the integrity of the contest as means to enhancement is maintained.

Touching now upon the themes of contestual tyranny and equality brings us ever closer to the questionable figure of Socrates, who for Nietzsche was just one of these “tyrants” in the contest of dialectics. But it is important to point out that he was an agent of tyranny in yet another sense. That is, not only did Socrates dominate the competition of dialectics with his mastery of the ironic technique (*elenchus*); Nietzsche claimed that Socrates also made a “tyrant out of reason” itself by demonstrating its power dialectically, and with unparalleled skill. Hence, at stake in this is not only the personal prestige of a man named Socrates, but the revaluation of what was to be counted best in life which was effected through him. Socrates succeeded above all in fascinating the Greeks with his exceptional talent, by appearing undefeatable, and therefore singularly “best among them,” and therefore appearing also as a monster. And it is possible that the exceptionality of this man which granted him tyranny over his opponents also fueled the fascination taken with the contest of “giving reasons.” It would seem then that in this case, Socrates is that preeminent “genius” for which is required the antagonism of “second.” Is it reasonable then to ask whether Nietzsche is really a contestant of Socrates in this sense?

It is true that Socrates represents an autocratic or tyrannical force within a certain practice of dialectics. This being said, however, Nietzsche obviously did not contest Socrates in the sense that he tried to prove himself the better dialectician. On the other hand, Socrates was not only the most renowned practitioner of dialectics. According to Nietzsche, with him there was also established a tyranny of the

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<sup>165</sup> As a side note, this I think could be called one of the distinctly “anarchical” features of Nietzsche’s thought; and it serves as a good example of this, for the fact that despite its tendency toward multiplicity and potential strife, its aim is nonetheless the welfare of a political community.

dialectics over the contests within Greek culture, whereby the expressed power of reason (i.e. of giving reasons) made itself the dominant force within the domain of thought and speech. If at all, Nietzsche must then be the “second genius” to the autocracy of Socrates by being a genius of a different type. As such, Nietzsche attempts to reach behind Socrates (and over him) as perhaps no other has. He might in this light be seen as one who contested Socrates in the act of fashioning a new contest, as it were, as a challenge in itself.

Obviously, this last claim requires much more explanation and support. For the present moment, however, I will take the liberty of introducing it in such a brief manner only as an indication of what is to come. For now I will leave off a deeper consideration of Nietzsche as the contestant of Socrates (i.e. as the new reformulator of “contest” in thinking), and instead return back to Nietzsche’s description of the *agon* as it presided in the pre-Socratic world. After that, I will go on to discuss the change it allegedly underwent with his life and death.

### **2.3 The Contest of Heraclitus**

Heraclitus is another figure recognized by Nietzsche as a powerful reformulator of the *agon* as it appeared in the ancient world. And in similar respect to Heraclitus, Nietzsche at least entertained the more radical idea that, beyond its being the most suitable model for public action and organization, the *agon* should also be seen to pervade all of reality as a principle of nature. This consideration was an important step in the development of thought for Nietzsche, as it was indicative of the shift in the conception of *agon* from the poetic and political into the purely philosophical.<sup>166</sup> In Heraclitus, he recognizes this step as it originally took place in antiquity; and hence, he says:

Only a Greek [Heraclitus] was able to consider this conception [i.e., contest] as the fundament of a *Cosmodicy*; it is Hesiod's god Eris transfigured into the cosmic principle, it is the idea of a contest, an idea held by individual Greeks and by their State, and translated out of the gymnasia and palaestra, out of the artistic agonistics, out of the struggle of the political parties of the towns into the most general principle, so that the machinery of the universe is regulated by it.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> I.e., the metaphysical. While I agree it must be kept in mind that Nietzsche did not consider himself a metaphysician in the ordinary sense, he was nonetheless very much occupied with speculation upon the nature of the world as conceived, however hypothetically, according to the universal phenomenon known as the “will to power.” For this reason one might say that he identified himself with a particular “metaphysics,” even though he was not himself a “metaphysician.”

<sup>167</sup> From “Philosophy during the Tragic Age” in *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 101-2. Also see Diogenes on the philosophy of Heraclitus: “That of the contraries, that which leads to production is called war and contest [*polemos* and *agon*], and that which leads to the conflagration is called harmony and peace; that change is the road leading upward, and the road leading

Here we have a depiction of *agon* being derived as a metaphysical concept from the practices inhering within a society, rather than the reverse. For this fact Heraclitus, like Homer—and like Socrates, and like Nietzsche himself—is a contestant in the grandest sense, because he participates in the contest of determining the life of the *agon* within a people. Heraclitus thus succeeds in rarefying the *agon* and rendering it philosophical, only to thereafter have this philosophical rendition come back to re-inform the function of the *agon* within the Greek public world.

Conceived as the universal principle of activity, however, Nietzsche also recognizes that contest must ultimately be self-regulating, for the simple reason that according to the cosmody of contest found in Heraclitus (or, for that matter, any doctrine one might refer to as “panagonism”), there can really be nothing outside of the contest. Ontologically speaking, therefore, it would complicate matters greatly to think of the affairs in the universe as one thing, while thinking of the forces that determine their natural limits as another.

For this reason, Nietzsche seems to acknowledge that any imposition of a regulated order, whether it be “upon” or “from within” the world, would itself have to be an activity of contest. I suggest that it is in light of this complication that Nietzsche would go on to praise Heraclitus as the one whose puzzled gaze only “at first” sees within the whole world nothing except “innumerable pairs wrestling in joyous combat entrusted to the superintendence of severe umpires,” whereby the umpires would have to be somehow seated in an isolated position of judgment over and above (or outside of) the regular affairs of contest. But then, says Nietzsche, as a matter of sudden realization, “a still higher presentiment seized him [Heraclitus], [such that] he no longer could contemplate the wrestling pairs and the umpires, separated one from another; the very umpires seemed to fight, and the fighters seemed to be their own judges— ...” (EGP PTA 103) Once again, of utmost significance in this is the recognition that the activity of judgment over fights (contests) is itself a fight (contest); and secondly that one can hardly participate in a fight or contest without simultaneously judging it *as* a participant.

This is a crucial consideration for the metaphysician who takes *polemos* for the *arche* of the universe, as Heraclitus did, and as Nietzsche often seemed to do. I suggest there is a close resemblance between this radical sophistication of contest *qua* cosmody and how Nietzsche viewed the public iteration of contest as a principle of education, i.e., in ancient Greece, and later, in his ideas for the possibility of a “new Greek Academy” in the future. For as Nietzsche indicates, not only did the pupils under this education conduct contests of their own, but the educators, who were the purveyors of contest amongst pupils, would likewise compete against each other, just as the Heraclitean umpires would

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downward; and that the whole world exists according to it.” Among other things, this passage serves to show that the philosophical doctrine of Heraclitus held the related subjects of war and contest in close association with one another.

become themselves contestants, such that even their own “regulating” activity would itself need to be seen as contestual in nature. In Greek culture then, where contest was acknowledged as an important method of training, the teachers were, like umpires, responsible for orchestrating the various tests and contests of their students—and so, adds Nietzsche, “as the youths to be educated were brought up struggling against one another, so their educators were in turn in emulation amongst themselves.” (EGP HC 59)

While this passage perhaps admits of a fairly monolithic vision of agonism, it is potentially more complex than it might first seem. To some extent, the designation between student and educator seems to become blurred, and even to verge on superfluity. That is to say, if all learning is meant to take place in a contestual striving amongst peers, then according to what Nietzsche says above, the teacher appears in this case to be just as much a student as any of those under his care. Likewise, the “students” are just as capable of self-education for their being capable of regulating contest amongst themselves. Consequently, the honorific title “teacher” is called into question, as well as, to some extent, the necessity of teaching as a stated profession. In my view, Nietzsche does not deny, but rather encourages this type of blurring of the various designations between student and teacher, and as such it is also akin to the destructive activity of “forgetting,” for Nietzsche, which he sees as a means to invigorating the re-creative forces.

At times, Nietzsche challenges the traditional roles of student and teacher outright, as when he speaks on the great modern possibility for independent learning:

Now that self-education and fraternal education are becoming more general, the teacher must, in the form he now normally assumes, become almost redundant. Friends anxious to learn who want to acquire knowledge of something together can find in our age of books a shorter and more natural way than ‘school’ and ‘teacher’ are. (HH II WS 180 353)

Perhaps most importantly, this indicates Nietzsche’s movement from a study of the “teacher” to his new emphasis on the *friend*. Another feature is that Nietzsche gives this and other prominent indications of a certain naturalism standing behind his doctrine of agonistic education. It is properly reflected in the education of every art, says Nietzsche, whereby: “[e]very natural gift must develop itself by contest.” (EGP HC 58) As Nietzsche saw it, this viewpoint was both historically true of the Greeks, and technically true for of his own way of operating as a philosopher, and his own way of operating as a student. Nietzsche’s strength lay infamously in his polemic; and therefore, as he himself makes clear, he draws upon the strength of *having* enemies. Later in the development of his thought he would conceive a new love for one’s enemy that would become for him the chief principle of education by contest.

Nietzsche’s later rendition of the *agon* retained much of what was found valuable in it originally.

As it was instantiated in ancient Greece, a key aspect of the *agon* was a perceived necessity for safeguarding against the tyranny of the one who would dominate any specific contest. This concern was less for the sake of equality amongst contestants than it was for the ensured continuance of active growth. This is because the prospect of victory for any individual constitutes a vital source of energy and motivation for overcoming of all kinds. When on the other hand a hero becomes a God, so to speak, he then ceases to inspire others as a hero—in this case, rather, he might at best inspire praise and adulation (i.e. the impoverished form of “emulation,” which does not include the drive to supersede the other). This kind of *daunting* idolatry was therefore to be removed by the public operation of the *agon*. Indeed, Diogenes reports that Heraclitus himself experienced first hand this stricture of public contest when his beloved friend, Hermodorus, was sent into exile solely on account of being superior to his fellow-man. Unhappy with this judgment, Heraclitus is said to have proclaimed that the Ephesians deserved to have all their youth put to death and the youngest ones banished from their city, just as they banished Hermodorus, who was the best man among them. They had acted according to their credo: “let no one of us be pre-eminently good; and if there be any such person, let him go to another city and another people.”<sup>168</sup> This anecdote may serve to emphasize that, while Heraclitus did affirm the agonistic nature of all existence, he nevertheless appeared much more concerned with the cosmological implications of this observation than he was with the necessity of the social conventions which stood in accord with it. In sum, this is the major characteristic of the Heraclitean shift from the public to the metaphysical *agon*.

As I will show in the section given on “The Contest of Nietzsche,” this bears with it a special significance in the fuller development of Nietzsche’s thought. There I demonstrate how, even in his most mature and best established thought, Nietzsche appealed to the principle of *agon*, not only as a cosmodycy or as an ideal principle of a self-induced internal arrangement, but moreover as the basis for a new political order. With time, even more of the Heraclitean tone of *polemos* seems to figure into Nietzsche’s overall conception of *agon*; and by the time of his writing *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche had already fully integrated his notions of contest, war, and (martial) asceticism.

#### **2.4 The Contest of Socrates**

The following is presented as a view of Nietzsche’s Socrates, especially in light of the immense influence he was thought to have exerted over the nature of the *agon* in his own time and beyond. This is an important step in coming to terms not only with how Nietzsche viewed Socrates as a preeminent personal contestant within the philosophical arena, but it also provides a vantage for how he viewed him as the architect of the dialectical-theoretical contest which continues to pervade the operations of

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<sup>168</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, translated by C.D Yonge, Bell and Sons, London: 1915, p. 376.

philosophy as well as the psyche of “learned” discourse more widely. In other words, Nietzsche did not only challenge the philosophy of Socrates, but also the way in which this philosophical method, the method that demands clear and unassailable reasons for all hypotheses, came to power and remains influential.

As one whose life transformed and redirected the polemical currents of the culture, Nietzsche considered the appearance of Socrates in the world to be like a great discharge of “energy,” which had been stored up in a powerful civilization—the conditions, he would say, necessary for any great leap forward in culture and education. In large part, we should note, this is the function of the genius upon the world for Nietzsche. This he explains in a section entitled “*My concept of Genius*”:

—Great men, like great ages, are explosive material, in which a stupendous amount of power is accumulated; the first conditions of their existence are always historical and physiological; they are the outcome of the fact that for long ages energy has been collected, hoarded up, saved up and preserved for their use, and that no explosion has taken place. When the tension in the bulk has become sufficiently excessive, the most fortuitous stimulus suffices in order to call ‘genius,’ ‘great deeds,’ and momentous fate into the world. (TI SA 44 101-2)<sup>169</sup>

As the one who is radical enough to redistribute the productive energies of culture, Nietzsche also sometimes speaks of the appearance of the genius upon the earth as a kind of “miracle.” By invoking terminology that carries with it the association of a surprisingly great fortune, the occurrence of which as an effect seemingly untouchable by regular methods of explanation, I believe Nietzsche intended to underscore the subtle complexity of the causal foundations behind such an event. It is a miracle for the reason that, “[u]nder the same circumstances countless men continually perish, the single individual who has been saved usually grows stronger as a consequence because, by virtue of an inborn, indestructible strength, he has endured these ill circumstances and in doing so exercised and augmented this strength: that is the explanation of the miracle.” (HH I 242 116)<sup>170</sup>

With respect to what would be required of the world for such a one as Socrates to thrive as he did in Athens, Nietzsche also concludes that the present age would be too hostile a place: for, as he observes, “the conditions for the genesis of the *genius* in modern times have *not improved*, and the aversion to

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<sup>169</sup> In this context, Nietzsche uses Napoleon as an example both of idealized “criminal” as well as “genius.” (See TI SA 44 105)

<sup>170</sup> But then, when it comes to an educational attitude that no longer believes in miracles, Nietzsche advises that it will need to pay attention to three things: “firstly, how much energy is inherited? Secondly, how can new energy be ignited? Thirdly, how can the individual be adapted to the enormously diversified demands of culture without being distracted by them and his individuality dispersed ... how can he play the main theme and at the same time the subordinate theme as well?” (*Ibid.*)

*original men* has increased to the extent that Socrates could not have lived among us, and in any case would not have lived to be seventy.” (SE 79; emphasis added) What typically seems to pass without notice for those who are concerned with Nietzsche’s attitude toward Socrates is that in this passage he is naming Socrates as a “genius,” as well as an “original man.” But sadly, original men are still not welcome in our climate. This is meant in the very bleak sense that an original life is likely to be choked off from the beginning, or at an early age, in the modern world.

The enhanced possibility for the production of fine men is the preeminent value of education for Nietzsche; and for him education is to be likened to the source of all “energy” for growth in culture. The passage most indicative of this idea can be found in *Twilight of the Idols*, where it is made clear that the effect of these major changes is purely transformative, and not properly *productive* of cultural energy: “The mightiest of all thoughts absorbs a good deal of energy which formerly stood at the disposal of other aspirations, and in this way it exercises a modifying influence; it creates new laws of motion in energy, though no new energy.” (TI ER 29 252)

From this perspective, Nietzsche’s view that Socrates held sway over world-history by revising the nature of contest all around him is especially significant. For, as Nehamas rightly indicates, Nietzsche valued most consistently “the ability to use material that already exists in the world in a new and different way; that is for [Nietzsche] the mechanism that accounts for all major changes in history.”<sup>171</sup> In the context of this description, I believe the “material” one must have in mind in the case of Socrates is none other than the vibrant original Greek obsession with contest. *This* energy, which Socrates at once both inherited and bequeathed anew upon the Greeks, was for Nietzsche a great subterranean water-shed, full of surging pools of enhancing potential. It was not until he wrote *Twilight of the Idols* that Nietzsche finally came to articulate how Socrates must have appealed to the ancient world. During his time, the Greeks were already brimming with contestual energies which could no longer be kept in sustainable harmony, and it was upon this energy that Socrates brought his “new laws of motion.” Also significant in this is that Nietzsche understood Socrates to fascinate and reign over the Greek psyche by appealing to the *polemical* instinct of the people, rather than the purely *agonal* instinct.

Given this and other similar evidence, it is tempting to support the argument which claims that Nietzsche ultimately saw the *agonal* instinct as a refinement of the *polemical* instinct, and that we should interpret the latter as consistent with the spirit of “down-pushing” (*Herabdrückend*) and of the joy taken in annihilation (*Vernichtungslust*), while the former should be characterized as consistent with the superior spirit of *Erhebend*, and the desire for mutually empowering contest.<sup>172</sup> While this distinction is useful insofar as it illustrates the refinement of contest from the *purely* destructive to the optimally

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<sup>171</sup> Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 137-8.

<sup>172</sup> This I take to be the thesis proposed by Acampora.

transformative model, I will also argue that this distinction is insufficient for understanding Nietzsche's outlook on the relationship between these two apparently different instincts.

For Acampora, who sees at once the key underlying role played by *agon* in Nietzsche's thought, as well as the massive role played by Socrates in the historical development of *agon*, it is tempting to identify the figure of Socrates and his legacy with "unhealthy contest," since dialectics succeeded in pressing the life out of all other forms of contest, and since it seemed to aim at a certain kind of final and humiliating defeat of one's opponent. Socrates and the peculiar taste he brought to prominence are thus associated with a kind of satisfaction of the annihilative instinct and the urge to suppress the powers of another. There is much to be said in favour of this reading, especially when considering the charges of vengeance, *ressentiment*, and pessimism that Nietzsche entertains with respect to Socrates and his practice of public debate.<sup>173</sup> However, there is little to show that Nietzsche himself would agree to this assessment without qualification, and hence this portrayal of Socrates as exemplar of a means by which to "destroy" all forces of opposition is not entirely faithful to the portrayal given by Nietzsche. The problem lies with mistakenly ignoring the difference between a desire to "push down" and a desire to destroy, or in the tacit assumption that one necessarily accompanies the other. For another thing, Nietzsche conceives of pushing down (*herabdrücken*) as a possible means of raising up (*erheben*); indeed, I have taken up the task of showing how Nietzsche adopted this method as a primary feature of his educative philosophy. Failure to observe this distinction also obfuscates the issue of Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates, I argue, because the "contest" between them (when it is recognized as such) is, accordingly, always construed on the basis of a model of engagement that seeks out the total defeat of one's opponent, and never his elevation—and of course therefore never the elevation of one's opponent *by way of providing* opposition, or providing him with defeat.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> In this case, one is perhaps reminded of the following passage, where Socrates would be associated with the latter, privileged characterization of the need to destroy. But this on its own is debatable, I would argue, just as is the notion that being one who is antagonized by "all existence" is necessarily always an undesirable condition for Nietzsche: "The desire for *destruction*, change, and becoming can be an expression of overfull, future-pregnant strength (my term for this is, as one knows, the word 'Dionysian'); but it can also be hatred of the misdeveloped, needy, underprivileged [*des Missratenen, Entbehrenden, Schlechtwegekommenen*] who destroys, who *must* destroy, because the existing, and even all existence, all being, outrages and provokes him." (Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 375; translated from GS 370)

<sup>174</sup> Nietzsche's notorious treatment of Socrates in *Twilight of the Idols* is perhaps the best representative of this, and in chapter three's section on Socrates as the teacher who "wounds," I will demonstrate how Socrates is both "pushed down" as well as "elevated" in this text. By contrast, Hildebrandt is quite mistaken in characterizing this text as a deadly engagement with Socrates: "[e]in Kampf auf Leben und Tod, keine Heroisierung [a battle of life and death, without heroization.]" (Hildebrandt, *op. cit.*, 58) Among other things, Nietzsche was aware that Socrates could never be annihilated in this way. Furthermore, this awareness acted for Nietzsche as a primary criterion for the proper selection of an enemy, *vis a vis* the precepts of his new *Kriegspraxis*, which I examine in chapter four.

Furthermore it seems that the matter of Socrates' underlying motivation in contest—in particular, the question regarding his affinity with the contrasting instincts of self-elevation and suppression of the opponent—is made more complicated than Acampora would allow by the nature of irony employed in his dialectic. That is, it was often the presumption of his adversaries to claim that Socrates wanted nothing more than to publicly best his opponents, and to thereby “push them down” to the common level. However, Socrates himself maintained that in fact it was his sole desire to discover someone who stood above him in matters of knowledge, and to raise himself up to that level by proceeding through dialectical contest.

Nor does Acampora's portrayal of Socrates seem consistent with those primary accounts given of him by those such as Diogenes and Xenophon. In the descriptions of these authors, Socrates was one who had a reputation as one who constantly wished to be instructed by others—but only in a very peculiar way: namely, he wanted to learn from others in the specific sense of having them provide for him the opportunity to learn on his own. Thus Diogenes describes Socrates, not as one who wished more than anything to abolish the views of his opponents or to “push them down,” as Acampora would indicate, but rather as one who worked to lift himself up and above the *doxa* of those who claimed to know. And so, says Diogenes, “in an argumentative spirit he used to dispute with all who would converse with him, not with the purpose of taking away their opinions from them, so much as of learning the truth, as far as he could do so, himself.”<sup>175</sup> The same description continues with a series of anecdotes, including those of his associations with Euripides and with the recorded work of Heraclitus; the extent of his diligence when it came to a regimen of physical training; the great renown of his bravery and expertise on the battle-field; and finally, of his disregard for public distinction for these things in favour of friendship.<sup>176</sup>

But if Nietzsche's portrayal of Socratic style really is to be taken as a condemnation of it as representative of *Vernichtungslust*, as Acampora urges, then according to my hypothesis we should expect Nietzsche's own ideal self-stylization, as well as his own version of ideal inner harmonics, to be a

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<sup>175</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, Vol. I*, translated by R.D. Hicks, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA: 1965, II 22 153.

<sup>176</sup> “And they say that Euripides gave him [Socrates] a small work of Heraclitus to read, and asked him afterwards what he thought of it, and he replied ‘What I have understood is good; and so, I think, what I have not understood is; only the book requires a Delian diver to get at the meaning of it.’ He paid great attention also to the training of the body, and was always in excellent condition himself. Accordingly, he joined in the expedition to Amphipolis, and he it was who took up and saved Xenophon in the battle of Delian, when he had fallen from his horse; for when all the Athenians had fled, he retreated quietly, turning round slowly, and watching to repel any one who attacked him. He also joined in the expedition to Potidaea, which was undertaken by sea; for it was impossible to get there by land, as the war impeded communication. And they say that on this occasion he remained the whole night in one place; and that though he had deserved the prize of pre-eminent valour, he yielded it to Alcibiades, to whom Aristippus, in the fourth book of his treatise on the Luxury of the Ancients, says that he was greatly attached.” (*Ibid.* II 23 153)

model of action based on the need for preserving the life of one's enemy, just so long as we note that the "life" of an enemy does not necessarily mean the biological life of a person who holds that view. Ideas have their own lives to some extent, for Nietzsche: they take on "hosts," and seem to live through them.<sup>177</sup>

Moreover, this kind of model is precisely what we do find. In an aphorism he calls "*The life of one's enemy*" Nietzsche explains that "—He who lives for the sake of combating an enemy has an interest in seeing that his enemy stays alive." (HH I 531 183) And there is good reason to suggest that Nietzsche would also count himself among those described here, those who live for the sake of combating an enemy, or that he therefore also harbored an interest in "seeing that his enemy stayed alive," as the following passage makes plain in his posthumous notes: "The *continuance* of the Christian ideal belongs to the most desirable of desiderata: if only for the sake of the ideals which wish to take their stand beside it and perhaps above it—they must have opponents, and strong ones too, in order to grow *strong* themselves ..." (WTP 361 291) At least at this late stage of his idealizing, Nietzsche did not wish the annihilation of his opponents; and even more than their mere survival, he wished their strength. What is most desirable here for Nietzsche is the maintenance of a good enemy according to the demands of a healthy polemic. But did Socrates not desire this as well?

As a note of clarification, I should say that in using the word "polemic" in the above I do not simply mean to designate the practice of "making accusations" against an other—not even for the most part. Surely Socrates was a polemicist, for example. Of course, he sometimes made veiled accusations, and often received them from others. These were his enemies, who would make accusations publicly and in earnest, and often in fits of anger with him. They were those who were much less subtle than him in this regard, and also much less ironic. For all this, Nietzsche would say, they were less "malicious" in their tactics than Socrates, who portrayed himself as a kindly, bungling buffoon of a man, even (and especially) to those under the threat of his special brand of assault and humiliation (*elenchus*). The friends of Socrates, on the other hand, who, no less than those who hated him, also stood in as his opponents in dialectical contest, would most often accuse only in jest, and even then they would do so only with the hope of provoking Socrates to some ingenious retort. In Nietzsche's eyes, with this special mastery of dialectic Socrates wielded a "merciless instrument" within a newly flourishing world of philosophical contest.

With the force of his dialectical style, Socrates would lead the other to show himself wrong, and to renounce his own misbegotten (or "miscarried") views. Meanwhile, it was Nietzsche who claimed to be able to "smell" the particular decay and dishonesty of any thinker, so that his real genius was to be found, as he would later say, "in his nose." It seems then that both Nietzsche and Socrates, each in his

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<sup>177</sup> See WTP 964 506.

own way, begot the image of who could see right through people, despite the fact that in the end it was Nietzsche, and not Socrates, who became famous for the terrible wrath of his accusations.

It is in light of this similarity, as well as in further support of its establishment, that I submit the following passage, where Nietzsche seems to echo the sentiments of Socrates, the famous “gadfly” on the neck of the righteous, who preached ignorance rather than certainty when it came to matters of morality. Similarly, Nietzsche writes for his part that:

When I came to men, I found them sitting on ancient presumption: all presumed long to have known what is good and evil. An ancient, tired matter they presumed all talk of virtue to be; and whoever wished to sleep well spoke of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ before going to sleep. This sleepiness I disturbed when I taught: what is good and evil, *that nobody knows yet*.<sup>178</sup>

Both Nietzsche and Socrates were “upsetting” forces to those around them. As Dannhauser puts it, both were “fighters against their time”—and yet, they seem related in their lives and modes of philosophy always as an *inverted* pair in so many ways.<sup>179</sup> From the educative standpoint, for instance, there is a distinct parallel in how, like Nietzsche, Socrates was the disciple of no one; and further that for this reason each of them became, in a sense, the student of everyone, meaning just that each remained open to learning from the occasion of doubting the authority of the one being “cross-examined.”<sup>180</sup>

In the practice of interrogation shared between them, Dannhauser detects what I have called one of the many “inversions” between Nietzsche and Socrates. Specifically, he observes that “Socrates was the plebeian dissector of an aristocratic society,” while “Nietzsche is the aristocratic dissector of a plebeian society.”<sup>181</sup> It is true that Socrates was thought of by Nietzsche as the scorn of the type of aristocratic sensibility that he alleged himself to have. At the same time, however, and despite how stunning its symmetry may appear, we should see that even Dannhauser’s example is refracted by Nietzsche’s own particular lens of interpretation, under which Socrates is “plebeian,” and appeals to the

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<sup>178</sup> This is Kaufmann’s translation from *op. cit.*, 443-4; it is originally from Z 3 *On Old and New Tables* 2 214.

<sup>179</sup> The most famous example of the vision of Nietzsche as the final “inverted” version of the Platonic metaphysician belongs to Heidegger, who, like some others, saw Nietzsche as the end of a grand metaphysical cycle. In my view, most significant is that Heidegger’s Nietzsche was a figure who was both “first” of one era, but also “last” of another, in much the same way that Socrates appeared as such to Nietzsche. And although I do not wish to enter here into further detail, I take this to be an indirect point of support for my own argument, since I too wish to portray Nietzsche as such: i.e. a self-ordained “pivot” of history on par with Socrates.

<sup>180</sup> See TI preface viii, where Nietzsche calls his text a “declaration of war” carried out with a new cross-examination of his idols—most notably beginning with Socrates.

<sup>181</sup> Dannhauser, *op. cit.*, 37.

mob even more powerfully than to the aristocracy. Let us therefore consider for a moment the reasons Nietzsche gives for holding this rather provocative interpretation.

In Nietzsche's eyes, Socrates fascinated the Greek world, both plebe and noble alike, as an apparent "physician and savior." Just as importantly, however, Nietzsche saw that Socrates impressed himself into the vital agonistic tradition of Greece in a major way. Socrates, he says, "discovered a new kind of *Agon*"; but more than this, there is the fact that, within this newly established *agon*, "he was the first fencing-master in the best circles in Athens." (TI PS 8 13)<sup>182</sup> What a rarity it must be for the founder of a new type of contest to also become and remain its leading practitioner. What indeed can be said of one who not only champions a particular sport or art form—i.e., who not only prevails within it, who not only has a following within it—but who in fact founds an entirely new one? For one thing, it is important to see that the following of such a figure, those of his or her "school," must now include *not only* those who emulate a style within a given contest; but it must also include anyone who participates in the newly established contest at all. Herein lies the enduring power of radical agonistic transformation for Nietzsche, and it begins, once again, with the "ignition" of stored up cultural energies by a figure possessed of extraordinary personal talent. During his own time, Socrates marveled even those at a great distance with word of his unique skill as a dialectician. His opponents most often openly acknowledged his reputation, whether begrudgingly or in praise, as being the wildest and most indomitable foe, and thus as object of the most covetous prestige which attaches to the name of a mysterious and undefeatable "brawler" of the streets. But again, for Nietzsche it was not just that Socrates was a proven champion in the contest of dialectics. In large part, it was the sheer novelty of such a contest being taken so seriously, and with such ubiquitous fervor, that best demonstrates the *extremity* of Socrates as a figure in the history of culture.

As mentioned, one of the most striking parallels between Nietzsche and Socrates is that each represents an event of revaluation and change within the practice of philosophy. With emphasis, Nehamas summarizes the point nicely: "But such a radical revaluation of values [as Socrates effected] makes [him] as surely an 'immoralist' in relation to his world as Nietzsche wished to appear in relation to his own. And now the neat and extreme contrast Nietzsche has drawn between Socrates and himself begins to lose its clear outlines."<sup>183</sup> Although I think it somewhat extreme to call Socrates an "immoralist" in the first place, there is some truth in what Nehamas claims. In this case one is reminded of Nietzsche's later call to arms for the immoralist philosopher: "[W]e shall conquer and come to power even without truth. The

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<sup>182</sup> For contrast, also see Nietzsche's later characterization of his own work as "warlike," as evidence that he "takes pleasure in fencing," and that he is also perhaps somewhat reckless in his attacks, or "dangerously quick at the draw." (EH *The Untimely Ones* 1 276)

<sup>183</sup> Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 152.

spell that fights on our behalf, the eye of Venus that charms and blinds even our opponents, is *the magic of the extreme*, the seduction that everything extreme exercises: we immoralists—we are the most extreme.” (WTP 749 396) This in sum is the great eroticism of Nietzsche. Like Socrates, he too sets himself apart by a special ability to “fascinate.” But it is harder to say whether or not Socrates conquered and came to power “even without truth.” In this case, one might suggest that Socrates had wielded the *power* of truth, even if he did not possess “the truth” itself, in the sense that although he claimed to know nothing (or next to nothing), he still had the power to deduce the hidden falsity of all would-be truths, and to do so publicly, in what was supposed by some, and vehemently doubted by others, to be a fair contest. This Nietzsche understands to be Socrates’ “buffoonery”—it is Socrates in light of his showmanship, as an actor, as one who might appeal to the Greek pedestrians for the strength of his trickery and guile, but also for his genius in “fencing.”

So what then, in martial terms, was the special nature of Socrates and his approach to dialectics, and what made it so singularly powerful? Socrates' way was strange, and it posed itself as an enigma to the appraisal of its victims. More than anything, it was known for its raw effectiveness. Using the momentum of the other to send him spinning, his peculiar way of engagement brings to mind that of Kano Jigoro (1860–1938), who was the founder of modern Judo, and who, it is said, was a warrior of such skill that to fight him was like fighting “an empty jacket.” By taking no position, or at least seeming to, as the ironist does, the opponent entangles himself and is worn out in his own argument. The special effectiveness of this way is therefore amplified in proportion to the careless aggression on the part of the opponent. And for this reason, Nietzsche surmises that a true master of dialectic can in fact “play the tyrant” with it; moreover, he adds that such a one “compromises when he conquers with it. [For the] dialectician leaves it to his opponent to prove that he is no idiot: he infuriates, he likewise paralyzes. The dialectician cripples the intellect of his opponent.” (TI PS 7 13) Thus did Socrates infuriate some, ingratiate others, and more importantly, did he *fascinate*.<sup>184</sup>

In coming to a comprehensive view of Nietzsche's Socrates, it is crucial to recognize that Nietzsche directed much of his energy in opposition against the common procedure of philosophy, which he took to have its grounding in the life of Socrates, especially as it was disseminated by Plato. Near the end of his thinking life, it also appeared to Nietzsche that all philosophy is polemical in nature, such that even to read and interpret was an act of war. Thus, in his last deliberately published book, *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche goes so far as to wage a war on the propriety of philosophical warfare itself, and on the traditional rules of engagement therein, when he dares to boast generously of himself throughout the text,

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<sup>184</sup> It should also be noted that Nietzsche thought Socrates appealed to the polemical instincts of the people so successfully in conjunction with an already prevalent desire; for “The Greeks (or at least the Athenians) liked to hear people speak well. Nothing distinguishes them so thoroughly from non-Greeks as does this truly greedy craving.” (GS 80 134)

unapologetically, as a genius, “the bringer of the gladdest tidings in history,” but also a calamity, and indeed, as a destiny unto himself.

Certainly Nietzsche distances himself from Socrates in this regard. He inflates himself to obscene proportion, gorging himself shamelessly on such titles, but always, I believe, for the sheer effect of this. Socrates, on the other hand, could be viewed as equally obscene in his false modesty, which was arguably just as or more effective. It is evident from the comments Nietzsche makes on the spirit of the one who “plays the fool” in dialectic that he sees it as less noble to claim ignorance, or feign weakness—an act which I think should be identified as a doubly provocative feign, since it is one employed with the sole purpose of being found out—and “play possum,” all in hopes of reaching engagement from a position on favoured ground. However, Nietzsche is not the antipode of Socrates in the sense of being one who is wholly sincere, wholly without irony, or without any measure of the mischievous delight taken in playing pranks and wearing masks. On the contrary, Nietzsche's feign is of bravado.

The difference between these two techniques is again one of inversion. The self-effacing technique of the ironist is likewise meant to be found out (for it is no “secret” weapon), and its employment also serves in fact, not only in appearance, to empower the author. In the case of Nietzsche's bravado, it is the inverted power of exaggeration which turns upon the act of amplifying one's position, rather than diminishing it. On the field of war, by comparison, the war cry (which is an image that Nietzsche occasionally invokes) is not only meant to signal battle in a direct and honorable way; it not only threatens and oppresses the enemy to the point of hesitation, but it also actually seizes the very one who cries out and carries him into the farthest reaches of his capability. And by comparison, only the reverberating sound of a great historical calamity, a destiny in itself, and an “explosion” as if by dynamite could have enough force to accomplish what Nietzsche envisioned for himself, and so that is what he became, in part, *by way of* the force in his own declarations. The war cry is an exaggeration of oneself, to be sure, but then, for Nietzsche, an exaggeration in the appearance and the feeling of power need not be taken as distinct from its “reality.”

But after all, there is no such thing as true “masklessness” for Nietzsche anyway. And once again, in a world conceived of as the contestual interplay of forces, or as the warring union of opposing elements, for that matter, when *all* philosophical engagement is polemical, it stands to reason that there could be no such thing as “not fighting” at all. What refusing to fight thus amounts to, however, is only fighting by *appearing* not to put up a fight. This is the art which Socrates perfected. Moreover, it is an art form which was, for Nietzsche, a deplorably common, lowly, and extremely powerful one. It found such an effective hold in the Greek world because it appealed, as Nietzsche says, to the polemical instincts of its people; but then, we must recognize, in the case of “the mob” it did so in a particular way: i.e., by appealing to the diminutive instinct, which compels making oneself so small that he may not be found,

just as so many of the world's creatures are apt to do, and one might imagine how, in the natural world, such creatures make a place for themselves by going unnoticed, and escape their suffering by becoming small.<sup>185</sup> They raise no real challenge because they make little noise; or perhaps we should say the reverse: that they keep quiet because they wish to avoid confrontation (especially public confrontation, which can be particularly “deadly” in the human world). These creatures do not want their weaknesses to be discovered and to thus jeopardize their place. Like most things, however, such an apparently fear-laden action, an avoidance of conflict, and even such a refusal, can be transvaluated.<sup>186</sup> Accordingly, I think, this activity indeed becomes composite of Nietzsche's own reformation of philosophical *agon*, beyond Socrates.

Before this can be established, however, it is first necessary to consider the way in which Nietzsche understood Socrates as impressive enough to determine, whether intentionally or not, the agonal taste of an entire culture. Besides his appearance as a physician and “apparent cure” to the malady of his times, Socrates always fascinated all those around him, Nietzsche says, “by appealing to the combative instinct of the Greeks[.]” (TI PS 8 13) Still, even in keeping with Nietzsche's somewhat exaggerated caricature of his life, Socrates did not on his own establish the contest as central to the Greek sensibility; for again, Nietzsche thought that this authority belonged primarily to Homer. According to his view, however, Socrates held a great victory in establishing *the taste* for a new conflict, which is an effect to be measured on the grandest scale, as a true cultural development. This development is most vividly reflected in the fact that Socrates “introduced a variation into the contests between men and youths.” (*Ibid.*) Moreover, I believe that with a further understanding of Nietzsche's ideas bearing on the functional relation of love and envy to the educational contest, it will become ever more clear to the reader how, for instance, this “victory” of the true educative innovator can and ought to be seen as representing the proper cause behind Nietzsche's otherwise unsupported declaration that in addition to being a great reformer of the combative instinct and of contestual practice, “Socrates was also a great erotic.” (*Ibid.*)

But in the regular scheme of things, dialectics appears only a last resort to Nietzsche, who writes quite plainly that, “A man resorts to dialectics only when he has no other means to hand.” (TI PS 6 12) Thus he seems to complain that Socrates' *only* weapon was dialectic. This in turn would seem to betray a deficiency, as well as the presence of a threat perceived on the part of the dialectician (that is, aside from

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<sup>185</sup> See GS 318 252-3.

<sup>186</sup> In the animal kingdom, to use the same comparison, major predators such as the lion and the bear are known to move quietly at their leisure and when they find it useful, but also to be capable of making a menacing display of themselves (with voice, posture, etc.) They survive best by maintaining the authority of a sustained challenge to all comers, especially since this means that there will be all the fewer deadly confrontations, while *increasing* the potential number of rival confrontations, when the fight takes place purely in a contest of portrayal.

the threat which the dialectician may himself pose to others and himself). Thus it could be instructive in considering this matter to see what Socrates was, according to Nietzsche, supposed to be lacking in this regard. What other than dialectical skill could be required of a philosopher here? And why should the use of a single means of victory be seen as a deficiency? Is this not similar to, say, scolding a “fencer” for wielding *only* his sword? In advancing along this line of questioning, a problem that occupied Nietzsche for the entire length of his intellectual career draws ever closer: how and whether to fashion oneself according to a vast plurality of means, or rather to the promotion of a singular, dominating talent.

In terms of a direct answer, we can at least discern from what Nietzsche says of him that Socrates must have lacked the use of those devices of conviction that he directly opposed. That is to say that his exclusive reliance on the provision of “reasons put to the test” precluded, for example, communicating the conviction of one’s views by way of sheer “command”; and outside of the constraints of a set dialectical style, Nietzsche would see that one could maintain a whole host of other talents and techniques appropriate to the activity of philosophical polemics.<sup>187</sup> But then, on the other hand, it is also true, as Nietzsche sees it, that Socrates could be what he was only according to the special exclusivity of his living philosophy, because he fascinated in his extremity as well as his novelty. Specifically, he succeeded as an eccentric whose singular talent had grown obscenely powerful for becoming the *singular* conduit for all the raging energies of his own internal agony as well as for all the advanced energies of a shared instinctual conflict within the whole Greek world.

And for the apparent fact that he had perfected only a single philosophical talent—that is, for the fact that he had availed himself of only a single martial technique—, the figure of Socrates fell short of being a complete and robust example of a true thinker for Nietzsche, for whom this apparent “failure” on the part of Socrates is, as I argue, primarily a failure to optimize the configuration of inner-harmonics. But I wish to stress that in no way does it follow from this that the harmony Socrates perfected was not legitimately “great” in Nietzsche’s view. This is made further evident, I believe, by reading the following two passages side by side:

The highest type of free man would have to be sought where the greatest resistance has continually to be overcome: five paces away from tyranny [*fünf Schritt weit von der Tyrannei*], on the very threshold of the danger of thralldom. This is psychologically true if, by the word 'Tyrants' we mean inexorable and terrible instincts which challenge the *maximum* amount of

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<sup>187</sup> With some reflection on the musings of Nietzsche on the subject, one might imagine some of this order to include: the freedom to posit at will (or the freedom of positive experiment), the ability to contradict, the ability to appear wrong, a varying method of subtlety and of “good manners,” real modesty, good friendship, good timing (and a good sense of timing), etc.

authority and discipline to oppose them. (TI SA 38 95)

Everywhere the instincts were in anarchy; everywhere one was within five paces of excess [*fünf Schritt weit vom Excess*]: *monstrum in animo* was the general danger. ‘The instincts would play the tyrant; we must discover a counter-tyrant who is stronger than they.’ On the occasion when that physiognomist had unmasked Socrates, and told him what he was—a crater full of evil desires, the great Master of Irony let fall one or two more words more, which provide the key to his character. ‘This is true,’ he said, ‘but I mastered them all.’ How did Socrates become master of himself? (TI PS 9 14)

The answer to this last question must be, I think, as “the highest type of free man.” But this is a great compliment being paid to Socrates by Nietzsche, just at that time when he is presumed to be most intent on undermining him. What is missing from this presumptive view is that Nietzsche was more interested in overcoming than undermining. A second answer to Nietzsche’s question comes from the same place: that he did it with “the *maximum* amount of authority and discipline to oppose them.” Understood in this light, it becomes further apparent why Nietzsche follows up by asking *how* Socrates accomplished this; for Nietzsche sets himself to overcome Socrates in the *way* of his harmony, and of his style of self-command. As a discipline of a new kind, Nietzsche’s ascetic gymnastics would overcome the basis of the so-called “ascetics of negative virtue”—i.e., those by which one instinct empowers itself vampirically upon all the rest.<sup>188</sup>

Once again, in this I wish to highlight the esteem Nietzsche demonstrated for the greatness of Socrates, whose tyrannical harmony of talent and instinct was among the greatest and deeply transformative of historical erring. Indeed, I argue that it is the error of Socratic harmony which would allow for his own harmonic ideal to take shape; and moreover, this sort of appreciation for Socrates as the greatest and most fortuitous error in world-history which I here attribute to Nietzsche is entirely faithful to his own assertion that “the errors of great men are venerable because they are more fruitful than the truths of little men.”<sup>189</sup>

That being said, perhaps it is true that the Socratic technique of using irony in order to transform the appearance of weakness (in this case, ignorance) into a “crippling” force over the opponent really was sprung from the desperate energies of one who, as an individual, and also as the microcosmic portrait of an entire culture, found it necessary to turn to such measures. Then again it is equally important, and far less frequent, to recognize that Nietzsche was capable of recognizing the false modesty of the ironist as

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<sup>188</sup> See for example GS 304 244; I will return to deal with this point in chapter four.

<sup>189</sup> Fragment from Nietzsche’s “Critique of Schopenhauer.” (PN 30)

admirable in one who is constantly plunging himself into the fray, “in with the lions” of the public arena, so to speak, as Socrates was. Or, more generally speaking, one should see that Nietzsche was prepared to admit nearly any means when some talent is extraordinarily employed to serve the instinct for victory, and that all kinds of deception were variously acceptable and even encouraged tactics for Nietzsche when it came to carrying out contest with others as well as with oneself, (as in the case of tactical “self-deception”). Still, at the extremity of this position it remains tempting to think that Nietzsche would simultaneously refuse to acknowledge the tendency toward martyrdom as a warrior's inclination.<sup>190</sup> Whatever the case may be, Nietzsche saw that it was the special appeal associated with Socrates for wielding the power to do so much with so little in his contest with others (regardless of station), and for turning apparent weakness into what appeared as an insurmountable strength, which so forcefully captured the attention of the masses in ancient Greece.

But as much as Nietzsche professed the “mobbish” appeal of dialectics as the practice which, even in the hand of a plebe with no proper sense of “command,” could seize advantage over any other, he did not ignore the fact that the special dazzle of Socrates and his representation of the dialectical contest did not charm the plebe more than it did the noble class, who, indeed, seem to be those who had the most to lose in this case, according to Nietzsche’s interpretation. It is possible to suggest that Socrates, the pied-piper of Athens, fascinated and compelled the masses toward dialectic in how this talent appeared as a way by which the common could attain humiliating victory over the noble. Meanwhile, with the aristocrats Socrates appealed to the combative instincts once again, but in just the opposite way. In this case it was the allure of a delicacy which *can* be valued only by those of best noble spirit for Nietzsche: that is, the allure of being defeated in a new, mysterious fashion, by a method of fighting that at first presented itself as perfectly naïve, to win over others as if by accident. This, at the very least, was highly entertaining. As a growing threat to the conditions of the Athenian aristocracy, it was fascinating to them, perhaps morbidly so.

But if this is true, and the highest taste for contest is for Nietzsche the one that revels in the various modes of defeat, then it is worth pointing out that Socrates portrayed this exceedingly well. From morning till night, as Xenophon reports, Socrates did nothing except publicly welcome and defeat all challengers in dialectical contest; and this he did all throughout the long course of what might be called his philosophical “death wish.” By this phrase I mean to indicate the wish he constantly held to be definitively superseded in dialectic by his superior, so as to be instructed by this individual, and hence to finally prove the oracle at Delphi wrong in assessing him above all others. Such “death” is then the great

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<sup>190</sup> I will refrain from engaging any further with the question as to whether Nietzsche took Socrates for a true martyr-figure. He does, however, fit the description Nietzsche offers in *Human, All-Too-Human* when he writes that, “A martyr's disciples suffer more than the martyr.” (HH I 582 188)

physician because it is the great educator, because it is the great defeater.<sup>191</sup>

Let us return for the time being to examine how, notwithstanding his crediting him with a uniquely superior talent for dialectic, Nietzsche finds the character and person of Socrates to be highly questionable at best, and at times actually seems to condemn his special expertise.

At the heart of his discussion of the “The Problem of Socrates” in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche poses a series of unanswered questions: “Is the Socratic irony an expression of revolt, of mob resentment? Does Socrates, as a creature suffering under oppression, enjoy his innate ferocity in the knife-thrusts of the syllogism? Does he wreak his revenge on the noblemen he fascinates?” (TI PS 7 13) The vast majority of readers have accepted it as an obvious fact that Nietzsche believed the answer to all these questions was “yes”; however it may be better to say that he definitely *suspected* as much, and that he believed our idyllic conception of Socrates should be ‘problematized’ by this suspicion. In either case, we see that Nietzsche is concerned in the same passage with describing the specific way in which dialectic can be employed so powerfully as a weapon, even in the hands of the mob. As a dialectician, Nietzsche explains, a man has at hand a “merciless instrument,” which, in its operation, obliges the offering on the part of the other, and always only in the currency of “reasons.” As such, there is a distinctly egalitarian quality to its operation, matched in kind, according to him, by the contemporaneous egalitarian revision brought on in the new dramatic operation of Euripides.

The way in which dialectic may be seen to hold special appeal for the group of people, or the “type,” that Nietzsche calls “the mob,” is apparent; and although the special skill of Socrates may even be described according to this appeal as “mobbish” in character, Socrates was nonetheless recognized by Nietzsche as a truly phenomenal champion of dialectic, whose status as such could be called anything but “mobbish,” at least insofar as this term is also taken to connote “mediocrity.” Somewhat paradoxically then, being the most extreme case of what was common is also precisely what allows Socrates the status of an original and advanced figure. In other words, his unique refinement and mastery of this dialectical skill, which as a practice is representative of mob resentment, marks him as the very opposite of the commonplace or the mobbish, who might be considered a nobler figure for having at his disposal only the most ignoble means to his ascension.

For a more contextual demonstration of this one might recall the account given by Xenophon

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<sup>191</sup> With this I mean to impart, if only briefly, a possible alternative to Nietzsche’s reading of the Socratic death scene whereby the nihilative appearance of his last words might arguably take on a more positive dimension, even by Nietzsche’s standards. It is not, after all, the pessimistic or nihilistic spirit that seeks out defeat in contest, at least so long as it is recognized as a means to empowerment (in the case of Socrates, as a means to “truth.”) By this understanding, his welcome embrace of death as a means to better “health” is no more reprehensible than his philosophical death-wish, which compelled him to embrace defeat in the contest of thought by yielding to his antagonist, i.e., by being united with the proven truth of his antagonist’s teaching.

when speaking of Critias and Alcibiades, those two “friends” and affiliates of Socrates, whose treasonous villainy was thought by some to constitute an indictment of the influence exercised by Socrates over those exposed to his teaching. In response to this charge, Xenophon says the following:

Never were two more ambitious citizens seen at Athens. Ambition was in their blood. If they were to have their will, all power was to be in their hands; their fame was to eclipse all other. Of Socrates they knew—first that he lived an absolutely independent life on the scantiest means; next that he was self-disciplined to the last degree in respect of pleasures; lastly that he was so formidable in debate that there was no antagonist he could not twist round his little finger. Such being their views, and such the character of the pair, which is the more probable: that they sought the society of Socrates because they felt the fascination of his life, and were attracted by the bearing of the man? or because they thought, if only we are leagued with him we shall become adepts in statecraft and unrivaled in the arts of speech and action? For my part I believe that if the choice from Heaven had been given them to live such a life as they saw Socrates living to its close, or to die, they would both have chosen death.<sup>192</sup>

I have chosen this passage with the hope of underscoring how, as Xenophon reports it, those in power were often intrigued not only by the ability Socrates displayed for making do with the “scantiest means” with his ironic mode of debate; but they were just as taken with his way of getting by with the scantiest means of livelihood—they remained fascinated by his carefree poverty, although they were not so compelled to follow him in it. Xenophon’s *apologia* for Socrates in this case seems to be that although these two criminals were fascinated by both aspects of the Socratic efficiency—that is, in speech, as in life—they nonetheless remained men who sought his company in pursuit of personal advantage. The dialectic of Socrates, as he explains, was useful to these men, just as it was to the plebes; his power of asceticism was less so. Hence again, while it is understandable that Nietzsche would identify the dialectical contest of Socrates as “mobbish” in its appeal, it was also appreciated in a distinct way by those of the aristocratic caste, and Nietzsche knew this as well.

From this vantage it may be reasonable to conjecture that Nietzsche sees it as possible to take hold of dialectic in a way that services the better instincts of life (i.e. as opposed to revenge, feelings of helplessness, etc.)<sup>193</sup> This being said, it cannot be ignored that Nietzsche still poses the question with

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<sup>192</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, translated by H.G. Dakyns, Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish MT: 2004, p. 9.

<sup>193</sup> See my discussion above of what Nietzsche calls “the way in which” he sees dialectic as a symptomatic of decadence. (Section 1.3, p. 55-6) There I demonstrate Nietzsche’s own appreciation for its practice—a practice which, as he says, he is incapable of during his healthier moments.

respect to Socrates personally: “Can it be,” he asks, “that dialectics was only a form of revenge in Socrates?” (TI PS 7 13)<sup>194</sup>

For Nietzsche, Socrates represented a truly severe case in the excess of every competing instinct that strove amongst each other within the Greek psyche. This gives a sense of how Nietzsche could ultimately think of him as a type of “remedial wound” upon the world. For now, however, it is better attempt to ask in what way Socrates might have been oppressed or “wounded,” and in so doing, ask what therefore prompted the monstrous formation of this individual, who would ignite the pent up energies of the age. In other words, for what transgression, and for what oppression, would Socrates have sought revenge against the nobility? Perhaps we ought to look toward those whom Nietzsche claims Socrates sought revenge upon—namely, those aristocrats in possession of worldly power. But then again, Socrates did not seem to perceive himself as one who had been wronged, unless it was, as Nietzsche would have us think, that he held this perception “secretly,” as a kind of underground current that covertly directed all of his activity. On the surface at least, it is not clear that Socrates thought of himself as one who was in need of the revenge Nietzsche refers to: a resentful revenge, which could at best serve as salve for some enduring psychical wound suffered at the hands of another. On the contrary, Socrates professed to play the physician's role in helping others to recover from their own pathologies, like the illness of ignorance and its corruptions, in a manner sometimes akin to surgery.<sup>195</sup> According to Socrates, justice wounds for the sake of purging the sickness of injustice from out of the patient; and it is for similar reason that we should say the criminal is entitled to his punishment.<sup>196</sup>

For Nietzsche, the instinct for revenge and punishment is characteristic of those who operate from out of a lack of power and the feeling of personal impotence. Given this, one can see how it appears as almost obvious to him that “with dialectics the mob comes to the top.” (TI PS 5 12)<sup>197</sup> Nonetheless, he says more than just this. Among his reasons for making this claim is that, before Socrates' time, “dialectical manners were avoided in good society” because “they were regarded as bad manners, they were compromising.” (*Ibid.*) But then what should be said about the state of that taste which Socrates managed to “veer round in favour of dialectics”?<sup>198</sup> Here Nietzsche reminds the reader that, despite its

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<sup>194</sup> One might notice that it is with the same tone, which is of a seeming unwillingness or hesitancy to believe it as a possibility, that Nietzsche chooses to *ask* in GS 340 whether Socrates, that soldier of soldiers, might have suffered life as a pessimist.

<sup>195</sup> It is true that Nietzsche associates Socrates with this activity more than Socrates would himself, since he preferred to speak of his practice as most akin to that of midwifery.

<sup>196</sup> For this line of thought, see Socrates' interview with Polus in Plato's *Gorgias*, translated by W.C. Helmbold, New York, Bobbs-Merrill: 1952, p. 43-48.

<sup>197</sup> “... der Pöbel kommt mit der Dialektik obenauf.” (KSA GD PS 5 69)

<sup>198</sup> This characterization is actually taken from Nietzsche's later notes, where he still ruminated over the powerful influence

modern reputation for dryness, the practice of dialectics met with a Greek audience who found it wildly intoxicating for the tactical subversion it threatened (or promised) to establish against the older power of authority and custom.

In those days, souls were filled with drunkenness at the rigorous and sober game of concept, generalization, refutation, limitation—with that drunkenness which the great ancient rigorous and sober contrapuntal composers perhaps also knew. In those days there still lingered on the palate of the Greeks that other, more ancient and formerly all-powerful taste: and the new taste presented so magical a contrast to this that they sang and stammered of dialectics, the 'divine art', as though in a delirium of love ... It was Socrates who discovered the antithetical magic, that of cause and effect, of ground and consequence: and we modern men are so accustomed to and brought up in the necessity of logic that it lies on our palate as the normal taste and, as such, cannot help being repugnant to the lustful and conceited. (*Ibid.*)

But who are these “lustful and conceited” who find this taste for dialectic so repugnant? I think that Nietzsche would have to associate himself with this bunch, despite the fact that he enters into a critical description of these individuals—those who have become capable of being repulsed by the new taste put upon the palate of philosophy under the spell of the “antithetical magic” of Socrates. By his own description, therefore, Nietzsche ought to be included amongst those disposed toward the practice of philosophy described in the following:

These [the lustful and conceited] take delight in that which stands out in opposition to it: their more refined ambition would all too gladly have them believe that their souls are exceptions, not dialectical or rational beings but—well, 'intuitive beings', for instance, gifted with an 'inner sense' or with 'intellectual intuition'. Above all, however, they want to be 'artistic natures', with a genius in their head and a demon in their body and consequently enjoying special rights in both worlds, and especially the divine privilege of being incomprehensible. (*Ibid.*)

Again, I believe that this censorious description is at least in part applicable to Nietzsche himself. For instance, Nietzsche was certainly one who strove to stand apart artistically in the academic world of philology as well as philosophy. There is also no doubt that Nietzsche was foremost among those who came to recognize the fatiguingly drab character of the dialectician; and yet he also seemed to perceive

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Socrates had over the taste of the Greeks: “*Socrates*.—This veering round of Greek taste in favour of dialectics is a great question.” (WTP 432 353)

within himself a certain "inner sense." Despite the distaste he might have of it, he nonetheless resembles the character of Socrates in this way. Nietzsche prided himself on being *the* thinker of instinct, as well as—even above all, one may say—on being a man of “divine taste,” as opposed to “divine insight.” These two things, i.e., mastery in instinct and taste, are very close in relation to each other for Nietzsche, who thought of himself as exceptional in his intuitive diagnosis of historical maladies.

## **2.5 The Legacy of the Socratic Contest, and the General Decline of Contest in the World**

Nietzsche reminds the reader that in the golden age of Athens it was recognized as perfectly natural and necessary for one to harbor an active, egotistical ambition in the pursuit of excellence. More than anything, this was because only as such could the individual be sufficiently prone to the heightening effects of *eris*. Modern educators, on the other hand, “fear nothing as much as the unchaining of so-called ambition,” as their views are entirely conditioned by the ubiquitous drive toward the “fellowship” of equanimity. (EGP HC 58) Overall, the fear of accelerated egoism in modern times is perpetuated by a difference in the way we conceive of egoism from the Greeks. To us, the egoist is merely a model of selfish interest; while on the other hand, Nietzsche says, “[t]o the Ancients however the aim of the agonistic education was the welfare of the whole, of the civic society. Every Athenian for instance was to cultivate his Ego in contest, so far that it should be of the highest service to Athens and should do the least harm.” (*Ibid.*) In this consists a great appeal to Nietzsche, who strove toward defining the perfectly “individualistic” learner as one who, though thoroughly selfish, would be of the highest value to his culture as a result of this egoism, which holds the best promise for producing transformation within that culture.

Meanwhile, however, Nietzsche observes a period of decline in Greece after an extraordinary victory over the Persian army. Much of this was as a direct result of unfettered *hybris* on the part of the Greeks at that time. They became bloated and clumsy with the intoxication of their glory. They took on the elevated sense of destiny that can becloud a people, and bring calamity to those who appeared unstoppable in the exercise of their will.

Acampora likens this state of affairs to Nietzsche’s vision of the German victory in the Franco-Prussian war which left education in shambles, rife with the self-satisfaction of cultural philistines. It is this same degenerate condition which he is so eager to disparage in the pages of his *Schopenhauer as Educator* as well as in the message of his inaugural lecture at Basel, *On the Future of our Educational Institutions*. In both texts Nietzsche urges the overcoming of what has become typical in the personality of the scholar: the sluggish of spirit, operating basically out of fear, opportunism, and the resulting need

to please those around them immediately, as well as the need they feel more generally to be of some use to the interest of the state. In the first of these texts, Schopenhauerian man is held up by Nietzsche as remedial of this philistine state of affairs, which is state of degeneration that originates in Socrates.

As Nietzsche saw the matter, a distinct set of problems arises as the result of the monopoly of dialectics that comes to overshadow and even eclipse the prestige of all other contests. In this case, it is when its champion is so much of a champion that he captures the attention of its aristocracy, and enthralled it to the point of a new obsession with “giving fair reasons.” The first and most important of these problems, I argue, is that of disharmonious specialization.<sup>199</sup>

Besides this problem, however, from the perspective of Nietzsche’s new “Greek” school of martiality, one of the most crucial features missing from it as a contest is *physicality*. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche stresses his view that the legacy following from the life of Socrates has widely determined the course of Western humanity: in its contest, speech, education, and therefore in the valuation of which kind of talent is best to have and cultivate. Thus he reports: “So it happened that ever since Socrates the mechanism of concepts, judgments, and syllogisms has come to be regarded as the highest exercise of man’s powers, nature’s most admirable gift.” (BT 15 94) Nietzsche also explains that this monopoly within the domain of academic education has also pervaded the education of *ethos*. It was that people could be educated by means of the syllogism (in Socrates’ own case, a special type of dialectics), that one would become ethically great. According to Nietzsche, therefore, “Socrates and his successors, down to our own day, have considered all moral and sentimental accomplishments—noble deeds, compassion, self-sacrifice, heroism, even that spiritual calm, so difficult of attainment, which the Apollonian Greek called *sophrosyne*—to be ultimately derived from the dialectic of knowledge, and therefore teachable.” (*Ibid.*)

Beyond the point to be made that Socrates is depicted in this as an educator for the world (and therefore also to Nietzsche, albeit in a new way), there is the point that Nietzsche saw Socrates as the figure whose life began a cultural regimen of knowledge—i.e., of concepts, of judgments, of syllogism—as exercise *par excellence*, i.e., with no respect to the body. This is the change described as “a further development and turning inward of the ancient agonistic gymnastics and of its presuppositions,” which indicates the general “decline” in the condition of *agon* after the pre-Socratics. (EGP GS 23) Socrates personally remained committed to the exercise of the body, however, although his “teaching” of this was, for Nietzsche, not as influential as was his teaching of “dialectical knowledge” and the idolatry that followed him as “theoretical man.”

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<sup>199</sup> To be precise, it would be better to instead say a “less than ideal harmony” of specialization, since, as I will explain, Nietzsche actually recognized the greatness of Socrates’ singularity of talent, but took it upon himself to exceed it with his own model of inner harmonics. I will return to deal with this problem at some length.

The notion that the life of Socrates stands at the beginning of a new form of contest underlies much of the argument made by Acampora, who interprets Nietzsche as one who held Socrates largely responsible for the eventual decline of contest in general. As she says, therefore, “after Socrates, with the Cynics and Stoics, *agon* is excessively spiritualized, it becomes a moral battleground, with Herakles as patron saint of struggle against passions, not flesh and blood, etc.”<sup>200</sup> The second thrust of Acampora's argument is to point out how this internalization of the *agon*, along with its “excessive spiritualization,” would prepare the way for the loathsome internal contests of sin and cleanliness established with the ascendancy of the Church.

Though I think that this is basically correct, it calls for some clarification. It is all too tempting to take Nietzsche's depiction of Socrates as a kind of cultural catastrophe as a license to infer that Socrates was in his mind “the guilty” one, or at least “the unfortunate” one of history, who was for this reason fit to serve as his personal idol at the alter of hatred and regret.<sup>201</sup> Much in the way that he saw the life of Jesus Christ as the precursor to a long period of festering illness throughout the world, Nietzsche viewed Socrates as a great damaging force in history. But then, likewise, Nietzsche was not “anti-Christian” in the sense that he found the life and person of Christ regrettable: i.e., we would not be ‘better off having never met him’—and the same should be said with respect to Socrates.

Admittedly, in this line of thought also lurks the danger of too easily separating Socrates from “Socratism” on Nietzsche's behalf, whereby the latter becomes a dire, though perhaps necessary, mishandling of Socrates “the man.” And although he advises against it, even Kaufmann cannot resist the appeal of using this distinction as a means of freeing Socrates from the stigma of being taken as Nietzsche's absolute enemy. It is problematic; but even without this distinction, Socrates as an individual is redeemable according to the same standard by which Nietzsche judges himself, namely, by measure of the potential for *enhancing recovery* made possible by the damage wrought by that individual: “Thus,” he says, “the highest evil belongs to the greatest goodness: but this is—being creative. I am by far the most terrible human being that has existed so far; this does not preclude the possibility that I shall be the most beneficial.” (EH *Why I am a Destiny* 2 327) And yet according to this same standard, even so, we may

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<sup>200</sup> Acampora 2002, *op. cit.*, 40. This line of thinking is supported by Nietzsche's later views, where he writes most extensively on his vision for a reformulated ideal for cultivative training: e.g., “I am delighted at the military development of Europe, also at the inner anarchical conditions”; for in such a time, he writes, “bodily capacity recovers its value, valuations are becoming more physical, nutrition consists ever more and more of flesh. Fine men have once again become possible.” (WTP 127 104) According to this vision, as well, one's daily regimen (habits, conformities, diet, etc.) would become the object of certain personal contests which bore some similarities to those of the ascetic. I will discuss the decline and potential resurgence of physical culture in a later section of chapter three.

<sup>201</sup> I still maintain, however, that this is not inconsistent with the view that Socrates did serve Nietzsche in exactly this way—when he needed him to.

wish to ask what benefit, if any, could be counted from the *influence* of Socrates on history according to Nietzsche? Even if we are prepared to agree with the distinction, is it wholly appropriate to partition Nietzsche's assessment between "Socrates" and "Socratism" as one between "beneficial" and "harmful"? Certainly not. To say so marks a failure to observe the dynamic reciprocity between these ideas for Nietzsche, who would find benefit even in what he hated most in Socratism, as well as harm in what he loved most about Socrates.

For example, even when looking for the benefit of Socrates outside of the personal enhancement made possible through an engagement with him as a philosophical educator (that is, outside the advantages of having him as a personal "teacher"), we find that Nietzsche also makes room for appreciating what he normally speaks of as the corruptive force Socrates has had over history at large. For an illustration of this, I recommend the following aphorism from Nietzsche's middle-period, which bears the title, "*Reason in the schools.*" He begins by asserting that "[t]he schools have no more important task than to teach rigorous thinking, cautious judgment, and consistent inference," and he next goes on to credit "the great scientist" von Baer with the observation that the superiority of Europeans over Asiatics lies precisely in their "trained ability to give reasons for what they believe—something of which the latter are wholly incapable." Whereas Europe has gone through the school of consistent, critical thinking, he says, "Asia still does not know how to distinguish between truth and poetry," and so is not conscious of whether its convictions are "derived from personal observation and methodical thinking or from fantasies." (HH I 265 PN 56-7) But who except Socrates does Nietzsche credit with introducing to the world a "trained ability" to "give reasons for what they believe"? It is true that this ability is described by Nietzsche as a sort of sickness. But for those who understand and give sufficient weight to his philosophy of education, it is only natural to see that this sickness actually provides the greatest lesson for the world: its best "schooling."<sup>202</sup>

It is Nietzsche who time and again seeks to disparage the pleasure and necessity of giving reasons within the dialectical contest, as well as within the "theoretical" mode of life that ensues from its broader institution within the world. But then Nietzsche also criticizes the condition of a modern education that does not know the joyous spirit of those who undertook the steps forward with the Platonic Socrates into a new conception of *agon*, as well as of reason.

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<sup>202</sup> It is also worth noting that this opposition between "truth and poetry" is reflective of Nietzsche's keen interest in the contest between Plato and Homer. Far too often, however, and even though the importance of *agon* in Nietzsche's thought might be generally acknowledged, he is tacitly placed on the "side" of Homer against Plato's Socrates, that is, as a sort of reactive force in favour of a regeneration of poetic influence in philosophical discourse. From the passage above, one can clearly see that this is a grave over-simplification.

*How philosophy is done today.* —I have observed that our philosophizing youths, women and artists of today want of philosophy precisely *the opposite* of that which the Greeks derived from it! He who does not hear the continual rejoicing which resounds through every speech and counter-speech of a Platonic dialogue, the rejoicing over the new invention of *rational* thinking, what does he understand of Plato, of the philosophy of antiquity? (D 544 544-5)

Kaufmann is right to emphasize that, despite the fact that he also criticized it as a practice and that he identified Socrates with its tyrannical establishment in the world, Nietzsche was also capable of partaking in the appeal of the dialectician. He thought he understood what was special in it from the perspective of its novelty, for example, and he appreciated it as such. But for Nietzsche it would seem nonetheless that understanding the special “joy” of the Socratic legacy serves best of all as a way of understanding the dramatic and long-lasting hold it has had over the affairs of science and education. With this in mind, the following passage, which at first appears damning of the modern age, and specifically of its educational ideals and their origins, should be read as a pertinent reflection on the power of extremity to be found in the idyllic figure of Socrates, the prototypical man of theory:

Our whole modern world is caught in the net of Alexandrian culture and recognizes as its ideal the man of theory, equipped with the highest cognitive powers, working in the service of science, and whose archetype and progenitor is Socrates. All our pedagogic devices are oriented toward this ideal. Any type of existence that deviates from this model has a hard struggle and lives, at best, on sufferance. (BT 18 109)

One must pause here first of all to recall that in his *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche also makes Socrates out as the eternal “progenitor” of art—(and to recall, moreover, that hard struggle is good as well as “sufferance” in the pursuit of greatness). Now arises the question concerning how Socrates could possibly be responsible for the enhancement of both of these two apparently divergent streams of culture.

As a more concrete example of how Socrates is generative of art in its modern aspect, the reader may turn to the character of Faust as understood by Nietzsche: that is, as a figure who reached the limits of Socratic rational moralism (which, for Nietzsche, culminates in a fundamental rejection of the dictum that happiness = knowledge = virtue). “We have only to place Faust,” says Nietzsche, “who storms unsatisfied through all the provinces of knowledge and is driven to make a bargain with the powers of darkness, beside Socrates in order to realize that modern man has begun to be aware of the limits of Socratic curiosity and to long, in the wide, waste ocean of knowledge, for a shore.” (*Ibid.*) Faust is characteristic of one who, like Nietzsche, can no longer rest within the contours of the Socratic legacy,

when a new curiosity turns toward darker things. In this respect, one might say that Socrates is formative of the drive away from pure rationality, *back* to art, to instinct, and finally to the experimental immoralism of Nietzsche's futurist philosophy. But he is formative in the strictly agonistic sense, for it is only through the contest of discovering and breaching the widest limits of Socratic curiosity that such a character can be formulated. Negatively speaking, this indicates a departure from learning from an other by way of emulation in the sense of "following" or "copying," and positively, toward learning from another conceived of as emulation in the sense of "meeting and surpassing." Paradoxically, Socrates stands in a position to teach art by allowing for the furthest possible removal from it.

In the next chapter I discuss Nietzsche's early, speculative depiction of the perfect teacher: the teacher who could never be for him, ultimately, since what he imagined was a teacher whose authority would be so perfect that the project of self-education could be abandoned. At the moment, we can see that Socrates falls short of this kind of teacherhood—i.e., the kind worthy of blind discipleship—because he was unable to keep his single supreme talent from debilitating the growth of every other capacity. This is far from the mark of the skill which itself positively engages the development and harmony of all others. And Socrates, it seems, was nothing without dialectic. He had abandoned the pursuit of any other engagement with life, and his obsession with the perfection of reason was at the price of developing any other instinct. As Nietzsche understood it, Socrates made a tyrant of reason within himself; and by his example, he ushered in the tyranny of reason upon a Greek age—an age that was until that time itself surging with the malady of imbalanced instincts and great excess. (TI PS 9 14)

But then it is not reason *per se* which Nietzsche opposes, as if this could ever be the case, even in his moments of "testing" the effective range of irrationalism (i.e. for its worth as an instrument, or, if one prefers, as an inner-alchemical additive); and nor is it an avocation of living by the instincts, just as they are, without the intercession of any inner-governmental principle: in a word, as an "anarchy" of instincts rather than an "tyranny." That is to say, he does not oppose reason merely by means of a rearrangement or disarrangement of the Platonic schema of the soul. Nietzsche instead sees the picture from the alchemist's perspective, and as a matter of convalescence, arriving at the conclusion that, instead of suppressing or destroying altogether the instinct and talent that Socrates championed, one is better off subordinating them constructively to others. Hence, "[a] man recovers best from his exceptional nature—his intellectuality—by giving his animal instincts a chance." (TI MM 6 1) This is among the most profound expressions of Nietzsche's insight into 'recovery' as it must take place on the worldwide front, for it seems to imply the benefit of letting first nature take hold as a matter of therapy: i.e., therapy for the ailment of hyper-conductive reason.

As is well known, Nietzsche envisioned Socrates as a living testament to the decline of his age. Nietzsche was just the same. He was an explosive pronouncement of advanced nihilism, a detestable

condition, for which his own terms of description would seem appropriate: “As the extreme example of this state, he fascinated—his terrifying ugliness made him conspicuous to every eye: it is quite obvious that he fascinated still more as a reply, as a solution, as an apparent cure of this case.” (TI PS 9 14) Once again, however, both also fascinate the age in as much as they appear to each be a respective “reply” or “cure.”<sup>203</sup> Socrates appears as such a cure, that is, as such a *physician*, in proposing to carry out the tyrannical imposition of will upon the legion of instincts within, and to do so in response to the threat of those rivaling and unruly instincts gaining power over the whole. But this does not constitute good harmony for Nietzsche. Medical treatments in severe cases of emergency can themselves be horribly disfiguring. Socrates himself suffered such disfigurement.<sup>204</sup> Like Socrates, Nietzsche appeared as such a physician most of all in how far he had progressed into the disease of the age.

Hence Socrates, as Nietzsche sees it, “wreaks his revenge” on the noblemen of Athens. Socrates, the cumulative specimen of decadence, serves as cultural physician who would *heal* by such vengeance, by such *wounding*. In the case of administering this therapy, says Nietzsche, “neither Socrates nor his 'patients' were at liberty to be rational or not, as they pleased; at that time it was *de rigueur*, it had become a last shift. The fanaticism with which the whole of Greek thought plunges into reason, betrays a critical condition of things: men were in danger; there were only two alternatives: either perish or else be absurdly rational.” (TI PS 10 15) This displays well the character of Socratic tyranny as it was understood by Nietzsche. It is premised upon a *threat*.

Whether this threat is brought about purely by natural circumstances, or whether it is best considered to be a method of leverage on the part of philosophical champions (preeminently, Socrates) is left open by this passage. But while it may be a war waged single-handedly by Socrates, it is also more widely the war of an age upon itself. For the Greek world, then, Socrates demonstrated victory—even if a draconian victory—over the teeming mass of conflicting passions within the psyche of Greeks at a time which, because of this same state, was also a time of great inheritance. The enormous wealth of energy inherited from all the generations prior, or perhaps one should say, the energy that was “won,” was then channeled and discharged into an obsessive will to truth along with goodness (*à la* Plato's “moral intellectualism”), and then, under the sway of such a ruthless calculus, the will to happiness.

The question remains for Nietzsche: are we enough recovered from the threat that first initiated western thought into the era of rational self-restriction? That is, are we prepared to impart some degree of mastership to alternate instincts within us, and to channel the resulting development into the concerted effort of composing oneself as a great artistic work? Such a preparation would seem to reflect the meeting

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<sup>203</sup> Both were exceedingly powerful for the same reason: for, “[i]t is only a question of strength: to have all the morbid traits of the century, but to balance them through a superabundant, recuperative strength. The strong man.” (WTP 1014 524)

<sup>204</sup> “Le combat intérieur, que se livrent ces instincts, laisse des stigmates sur le visage de Socrate.” (Souladie, *op. cit.*, 38)

of a Dionysian and Apollonian spirit, where an image of vivid stability and distinct character is used as an organizing principle for the display of what can only be described as a multitude of conflicting desires, of vehement competing forces within oneself. As Nietzsche wishes to portray it in his *Twilight of the Idols*, Socrates was in fact just this: perhaps the last truly tragic figure, in fact, since he perfectly wore the visage of control, tranquility, and form upon a nature of violent imbalance within.

In particular, the Socratic response to the threat of anarchy and inner collapse was the hypertrophy of a single instinct: thus he turned everything to the use and expansion of a single instinct, reason, and thus were the energies of all the conflicting drives within him diminished and controlled under the “reins” of its stewardship. Yet apparently it was not only Socrates, but also Nietzsche, whose personal composition took extraordinary shape in response to a threat.

This is well illustrated in a letter to Franz Overbeck on Christmas day of 1882 where Nietzsche writes with desperation that, “If I do not discover the alchemists’ trick of turning even this—filth into *gold*, I am lost.— Thus I have the *most beautiful* opportunity to prove that for me 'all experiences are useful, all days holy, and all human beings divine'!!!!”<sup>205</sup> If this is a true indication of how he viewed the matter of his own experience, then clearly it was far from a casual or purely intellectual interest Nietzsche had in ruminating over the development of harmony, along with the all-resourceful character and the inner-alchemical remediation of imbalance. At various moments in his life, Nietzsche came to realize that he had no choice but to transvaluate and absorb the forces of affliction in his life. And so whereas Nietzsche's motto for the morbid condition of Socrates was “become absurdly rational or perish,” for his own case one would have to say that it was really “become radically transfigurative or perish.”<sup>206</sup> As with Socrates, therefore, this was not a mere accident of his “philosophy,” but rather a basic necessity of his own philosophical life.

How, then, did Nietzsche conceive of enacting this transfiguration? Just as he was concerned with thinking through the conditions of life under which Socrates was generated, as well as the inner necessity of arriving at the total priority of reason within his being, Nietzsche was concerned with his own personal development, along with the conditions of a life that would call for a new priority, beyond Socrates, and by way of Socrates. This theme therefore constitutes the major focus of chapters three and four of the present thesis.

The above discussion of Nietzsche’s genealogical account of *agon* has led necessarily to the point

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<sup>205</sup> Nietzsche is borrowing at the end from the essay “History” by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Most striking in this expression is how, within it, and in accordance to the very doctrine of transfiguration he is then espousing, Nietzsche already embraces the threat of his turmoil as a “most beautiful opportunity.” Hence the reader is presented with an instance of real transformation, and not merely a declaration of belief in the idea of it.

<sup>206</sup> As I demonstrate in the next chapter, Nietzsche does recount adopting such a “motto” for his own life most forcefully for having been subject to the threat of inner personal collapse.

of considering the account he gives of the tyranny of reason imposed by the life of Socrates. More than this, however, it led Nietzsche himself to question the psyche of Socrates personally. This is because Socrates stands as a genius whose victory as a contestant was not only multi-faceted, and not only among the greatest in history, but was also realized through the perfection of a specific inner condition: namely, a tyranny of one instinct (reason) over all others, and the accompanying tyranny of one talent (dialectics) over all others. This is precisely the meeting point of Nietzsche's treatment of contest, his treatment of Socrates, and his own philosophy of education; for, as a philosopher of education, Nietzsche concerned himself with questions regarding exactly this type of condition—questions which include: whether it is better to cultivate one talent rather than many; whether it is better to have one instinct dominate the rest; whether such dominance can be modified to accelerate growth, and whether it should be temporary or permanent, etc. In conjunction with these questions, Nietzsche poses new questions concerning how such growth is best accomplished: i.e., the best way to use decadence as a stimulus to growth; to what extent learning is best accomplished under the instruction of a teacher; to what type of relationship we should appeal when articulating the ideal teaching relationship; what contest can be provided in order to overcome one's teachers along with oneself, and to what end?

In tracing out Nietzsche's answers to these questions in the following chapters, it is my goal to present an instructive collection of Nietzsche's positive philosophy of education. In light of this presentation, Socrates will more fully appear as the model of a type of development that Nietzsche sees as ideal in some sense, but as one that is surpassed by his own. In light of his status both as the beloved and the despised rival of Nietzsche, Socrates will furthermore reveal insight into how Nietzsche not only expounded a positive philosophy of education, but also undertook it as a course of his own (auto-didactic) empowerment, according to the precepts of his own school: *der Kriegsschule*.

This same theme is entered upon in various ways throughout most of his texts, but especially during his later period of thought. It is closely related to what we might call Nietzsche's "medical school of life," whereby learning, which is always a matter of growing stronger in some capacity, is accordingly always a matter of supercessive convalescence, i.e., recovery (*Genesung*) in excess. Accordingly, across the breadth of Nietzsche's work, one can see that the two most prominent motifs used by Nietzsche to characterize such concepts are *the martial* and *the medical*, both of which are related to the other, and are even isomorphic of one another in many respects. This last point is best and most concisely illustrated when the two motifs meet in Nietzsche's famous dictum: "*Aus der Kriegsschule des Lebens*. — Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker. [*From the war school of life*. — What does not destroy me, makes me stronger.]" (KSA GD *Sprüche und Pfeile* 8 60) I take it as my task to elaborate the demands of this particular school, and so I will concentrate on interpreting the passages in which Nietzsche associates martiality with philosophy, education, and friendship. Finally, from the perspective of this school I will

show that Socrates is the greatest teacher for being the greatest enemy. Or, to borrow in this instance some of the “medical” terminology Nietzsche was fond of using, one might say that Socrates was the great wounder, and therefore the great healer, and therefore the great strengthener.<sup>207</sup>

This point is particularly significant when it is also understood that, for Nietzsche, being educated is always a matter of becoming more powerful in some way. Being self-educated is clearly best, and it requires an understanding of not only the proper methods of “instruction,” but also, along with this, an understanding of the will to power expressed in the dynamic between the teacher and student, among peers, and in contestants. In his later works, Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is instrumental in demonstrating a teacher who felt so antagonized by his need for disciples no less than the need to rid oneself of the same disciples—not, however, with a feeling as if one were better off without ever having disciples or having ever experienced discipleship, but rather as one would be rid of an adversary, which would mean overcoming an opponent, whether this opposition<sup>208</sup> is revealed in an assault, for example, or in a surrender, or agreement. Why, then, is it ultimately “necessary” to have enemies? Nietzsche answers that it is for the same reason it is necessary to have friends and lovers: the greatest friend is the “best enemy,” and the ideal teacher is perfect rivalry. In this philosophy of education, the overarching idea is to conscript all available enmity into the service of friendship. To put it another way, from the perspective of teacher, and more specifically from the perspective of the teacher from Nietzsche's *Kriegsschule*, education will always be a matter of empowering victory by any means, including most importantly the means of personal defeat; and likewise, from the perspective of Nietzsche's “cultural physician,” healing will somehow always involve harming.

In light of this, it becomes pressing to explain the doctrine according to which opposition stands central to learning, when “learning” is understood as the expression of growth in strength. To offer a rough thematic formulation of the doctrine known as “the will to power”: strength for Nietzsche equals activity. Truly then, strength is the activity of strength: i.e., its expression, the constant need for this expression, etc. Moreover, the expression and exercise of strength is always the growth of strength. The philosopher of education must recognize, then, like an ideal student, that all activity is exercise. According to Nietzsche, and as he demonstrates in his work, contest alone imbibes the exercise of strength.

Quite early on, Nietzsche expressed his affinity with an elaborated version of the Heraclitian

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<sup>207</sup> This point cannot be properly appreciated without a consideration of some of Nietzsche's thoughts on the role of the teacher as the one who “wounds.” For this I refer the reader to section 224 of HH, which I treat at length in chapter three.

<sup>208</sup> Unfortunately there is no English word that captures well the condition of “being an opponent” for another individual. Use of the word “opposition” in this case and others to follow should therefore be understood to convey the occupation of this relationship, and not merely a particular incidence of conflict or disagreement.

cosmodycy of strife, and expressed a recognition that the appropriate mode of *education* for such a world would take place with a similar spirit to that which came to prevalence in the ancient Greek world: namely, the agonistic mode. It is reflected in the education of every art, and Nietzsche makes it clear he learned from the Greeks to see that “[e]very natural gift must develop itself by contest.” (EGP HC 58) Nietzsche would later insist that his way as a philosopher was driven by the warlike contest. He stipulated that his strength lay in his polemic, and therefore, as he himself indicates, that he drew upon the strength of having enemies. Love for one's opponent is thus the chief principle of education by contest, for Nietzsche. This point needs further clarification, however. For one thing, we should see that there are innumerable ways of waging war for Nietzsche, including, e.g., a campaign for popular assent, attempting to convince others, attempting to subordinate others, falling madly in love with another person, or attempting to impose feelings of shame or pity.

Equally important is that wars are most often conducted with oneself (with old habits, limitations in thought, etc.), as with one's own physical ailments, and that there is even a struggle fought with one's own talent.<sup>209</sup> When considering the *agon* as the fundamental relation between the various talents, habits, and instincts of an individual (and, more largely, a culture), Nietzsche therefore turns to the phenomenon of ascetic practice. The role of Socrates in this is significant, primarily because he was one whose exceptional talent for dialectical contest was all-consuming. That he attained a kind of perfection in his dialectical engagements was a great testament to his stature, as Nietzsche acknowledges. Historically speaking, the excessively monolithic model of Socrates' inner harmony, however it may have served him personally as a way to develop a single supreme ability as well as become master his impulses, would not necessarily serve as a way toward greater strength or health for those who attempted to emulate him, (i.e., by constraining all other instincts under the ordinance of reason). Nonetheless, for Nietzsche there remained much to be learned from the life and death of Socrates, who succeeded in appealing to the polemical instincts, in reiterating the *agon* of culture in education, and in saving the Greek world, of which he thought Socrates was the most extreme case, from the damage that would be caused by a brooding strife amongst a hoard of unchecked desires and instincts.

This raises a point that should be made Nietzsche's appropriation of Socrates, which is that it was concerned with the issue of health, and the prospect of greater health. For Nietzsche, the reeducation of the instincts is very closely associated with the act of undergoing different patterns of health, such that, as a consequence, the best state of health is not a state at all. Instead, it is the successful traversal of many states. In Nietzsche's vision of Socrates, the permanent tyranny of reason within him was accompanied by the permanency of a one kind of health; and so although he was an exemplar of the perfection attained in a having a supreme talent and although he was the exemplar of a constitution that seemed to approach

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<sup>209</sup> For example, see WTP 814 431.

invulnerability, Socrates falls short in comparison to the ideal that Nietzsche would develop—the ideal of having experienced many forms (not levels) of health, and therefore, as he says, so many forms opportunities to grow philosophically.

As a classical philologist and philosopher, Nietzsche knew the irony of his claim that Socrates was a type of physical degenerate. Compared to that of his own, Socrates had a titanic constitution. Nietzsche knew for instance that Socrates was one whose renown in battle was surpassed only by his reputation in the dialectical street contests of Athens.<sup>210</sup> For these reasons and more, as Nietzsche has made clear, we must take care to see that Socrates was not “simply” a degenerate. (BT 15 91) I wish to take the issue further by pointing out that Nietzsche reported himself to have attained, through a life of physical affliction, a state of strength, of great inner constitutional health, from which he could actually praise his own ailments as irreplaceable teaching devices in the “gymnastics of the will.”<sup>211</sup> Nietzsche saw the same in the case of Socrates' own degeneracy, although it is clearly of a much different sort, whereby physical stamina and prowess may be accompanied by (and at the expense of having) a spiritual constitution in constant havoc. Thus, by comparison, while Nietzsche struggled endlessly to control the rather wild conditions of his health, Socrates is portrayed by him as one who did as much to establish a rule of order over the pandemonium of competing urges raging within. Each represents a life of philosophical thought which is at the closest point of recovery—i.e. recovery in excess, overcoming—which for Nietzsche is synonymous with empowerment. Socrates is likened to a kind of a desperate cultural-biological reaction to an affliction that was running rampant in the land, deeply transfiguring of culture, but then also equally as a kind of remedial mutation in humanity, and the bringer of a new medicine. For Nietzsche, however, most remedies are in the end some version of the disease; and the

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<sup>210</sup> For a study of Socrates as a military legend and as a rather ruthless warrior, see Mark Anderson, “Socrates as Hoplite,” in *Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2005), 273-89. Through the testimonies of his comrades (in *Laches* and by Alcibiades in the *Symposium*) and the account of the battles by Thucydides, Anderson demonstrates that Socrates' military service was more extensive than previously thought. By outlining the biographical conditions of his military career—e.g., that Socrates served *voluntarily*, even in campaigns that were especially cruel, such as in the siege of Scione under the command of Cleon, where it is known that women and children were made slaves—he persuades the reader that Socrates ought not be viewed as any kind of passivist, but instead that “[e]verything we know about Socrates leads us to believe that he reflected deeply upon the relevance of hoplite culture to the pursuit of the good life.” (*Ibid.* 273) He recalls as well that Socrates associated closely with the warrior class in Athens: for, “he married into their ranks; he drank and sang with them at their symposia; he exercised and talked with them in their palaestrae; he visited their homes; he fought beside them on the battlefield. These were not the typical actions of an indigent Athenian. Socrates actively pursued this life for himself; he went out of his way to live it.” (*Ibid.* 286)

<sup>211</sup> E.g., this passage from *The Gay Science*: “Yes, 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.” (GS 295 237)

greatest disease prompts the greatest remedy, just as the greatest opposition prompts the greatest in contest.

From this, the perspective of Nietzsche *qua* physician, Socrates suffered a disfigurement in his face and in his soul. In educational terms, Nietzsche saw that although Socrates succeeded in learning to master his impulses by establishing the singular rule of reason (as expressed publicly in the contest of dialectic), this rule did not constitute good, or at least not the best, harmony for Nietzsche. Nietzsche's Socrates was the most powerful and vivid exemplar of a singular talent. In him all energies are directed toward fulfilling the instinct for reason, and channeled into the contest of dialectics. On the other hand, Nietzsche also saw that this type of "harmony" was at least preferable to the one effected by those who wished to see all talents cultivated, and each with equal vigor. In my treatment of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, as well as *Human, All Too Human*, therefore, I explain how this is best understood as reflective of the difference he sees between Socratic education—which is for Nietzsche most heavily "Spartan" in character, since it relegates the service of all capabilities to the strengthening a single, tyrannical talent—as against "Athenian" education, which aims at developing each capability of the student equally. And although Nietzsche primarily has in mind here the psychology (and therefore the physiology) of the individual, more than any design for the specific implements of public education, he nonetheless often criticized the teachers and educational institutions of his day, expressing his judgment that the failure of 19<sup>th</sup> century German education is an effect of its adherence to the practice of the Athenian philosophy of education. In this, the term "philosophy" is meant to convey what for Nietzsche would signify a configuration of the available "energies" of the student, such that, in this case, all energies are directed in all directions. The Germans are "nothing", he therefore says, for their trying to be "everything."

Above all, it is important to realize from this how Nietzsche, despite his seeming to have accused Socrates of enacting a tyranny of reason, also understood that tyranny of some sort is always required for the project of the self-made student, which is a "stylization" of character into a singularly directed force. With a careful reading of the above mentioned texts, it becomes clear that, between these two characters of education (the Athenian, the Spartan), Nietzsche's certainly sides with Socrates, who represents the latter, and whose appearance in the world Nietzsche construed as a great redirection of energy. Among other things, Nietzsche could admire the "style" of Socrates and the Spartan mode of empowerment for being guided by a single and thoroughly polemical taste.<sup>212</sup> But I wish to demonstrate how the singularly powerful taste of Socrates is idealized only to be surpassed by Nietzsche's own. Here and throughout my thesis, therefore, I wish above all to relate the character of what I take to be Nietzsche's own configuration of synergistic (educational) harmony, by which lesser talents and even weaknesses amplify,

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<sup>212</sup> "Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste!" (GS 290 232)

and are amplified by, a single supreme talent and purpose.

Kaufmann is ultimately correct to emphasize that Nietzsche admired Socrates as a man of self-control and self-knowledge. Beginning with Socrates, the dictum “nothing but reason” has pervaded as a powerful, exclusory model of inner harmony. However, Nietzsche also sees that the Platonic and Christian trend of denying or even abrogating all things of the body in favor of the “highest” matters of spirit and mind, along with the mobbish pretension for guilt and punishment, has corrupted the contest of self-development generally. In the face of this, Nietzsche develops a highly refined model of learning which involves ascetic training; and, while his specific comments are often in reference to the practice of philosophy, it is nonetheless clear that Nietzsche wished to speak to the nature of all training with the goal of discovering what is best in all forms of training. It a program of education by all means, according to which no activity goes without being adapted to some sort of exercise.<sup>213</sup> It is the way available only to the soldier (WTP 430 350), and it affords the chance of achieving a transvaluation of malice: a transvaluation which is itself made possible only under special historical conditions. This important motif is especially well developed in the pages *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and, to some extent, *Schopenhauer as Educator*.

In the course of offering a parallel account of Zarathustra and Socrates as educators, and in light of Nietzsche’s views on the necessity of the educator to “employ every means of discipline,” including both praise and scorn (WTP 980 512-3), Thiele makes the case that, “[l]ike Socrates of the *Republic*, the educator [for Nietzsche] stokes or dampens the passions of his disciples the better to pursue justice in the human soul.”<sup>214</sup> For my argument, the salient point in this comparison lies in how, for each, an active manipulation of the soul and its hierarchy is what is at stake with the intercession of a teacher. I intend therefore to describe the mechanisms of this manipulation as a “martial asceticism,” which includes actively managing one’s appearance to others and before oneself, as well as one’s engagement with teachers. For, as its primary aim, this thesis takes on the task of thinking about how Nietzsche engaged with his teachers, and with Socrates in particular.

It is Thiele’s conclusion that “[j]ust as Nietzsche proposed values that were the negation of all previous values, so he proposed himself as the educator who was the antithesis of all previous educators”; and in this respect, Thiele argues, Nietzsche saw himself as the usurper of Socrates.<sup>215</sup> This seems correct, for one thing, because Socrates for Nietzsche represents the prototype of theoretical man, and hence the model which all education has striven to reproduce. In all of this, the tension which Nietzsche presents us with in the case of Socrates—that greatest coincidence of the

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<sup>213</sup> See for example HH I 292 135, which is examined more closely in chapter three.

<sup>214</sup> Thiele, *op. cit.*, 170.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* 169.

“for” and “against”—must now be developed into an opportunity to explore Nietzsche's novel perspective on the dynamic between hatred and love, obeying and commanding, as well as between the forces of animosity, envy, and even malice toward an other. From this perspective, I will advance the view that Nietzsche regarded Socrates, and used him, as a way of conditioning a more perfected way of learning for himself (above all), as well as others.

## Chapter Three

### Nietzsche's "War School" of Life

#### 3.1 An Introduction to Nietzsche's "*Kriegsschule des Lebens*"

As a psychologist, Nietzsche tended to conceive of the human psyche as a “labyrinthine” complex of competing drives and tendencies, and at times also suggests that one might think of this sort of complexity as we would think of a tangled jungle, where each species not only competes within the ranks of its own kind, but also against rival species.<sup>216</sup> The metaphor is apt, for in such an environment there is an endlessly entangled complex of contest. One imagines how there is competition even between the different kingdoms of life there, as when trees shape the whole junglescape in the activity of competing amongst each other for light, just as when, with vast systems of roots, they strive for distant water sources, or when the same trees arm themselves against the sieges of burrowing insects. Likewise, in the human psyche, it is not only “urges” or “instincts” which rail and rank against each other for power, but also things such as *talents, habits, goals*. In an aphorism entitled “*Excess as cure*”, for example, Nietzsche suggests the idea of talents that bear an “antithetical” relation to one another, that actually contest one another, and further remarks that, as a matter of practice, “[o]ne can reacquire a taste for one's own talents by revering and enjoying antithetical talents for a long time to excess,” whereby he concludes mysteriously that, “—The employment of excess as a cure is one of the more refined artifices in the art of living.” (HH II 365 294) This motions toward the way in which the concepts of balance, excess, and recovery come to play such an important role in Nietzsche's ideas on the development of talent. In particular, it is necessary to see that for Nietzsche recovery *from* excess, as well as recovery *in* excess, are essential to the refinement involved in his “art of living,” the doctrine of which is none other than that of his own “military school of life.”<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> For one example of Nietzsche's agreement with the use of such a comparison, see WTP 959 504: e.g., “The jungle-growth 'man' always appears where the struggle for power has been waged the longest.” As I will discuss shortly, he often also compares educative cultivation with “gardening.”

<sup>217</sup> A common and acceptable translation of “*der Kriegsschule de Lebens*.” (TI MM 8 2) My occasional use of the alternative “war school” or “martial school” reflects an effort to avoid the limitative associations of military practice (structure, purpose, tradition, etc.) at that time.

First of all, this school is one that equates learning with an accelerated growth in strength, and the accompanying feelings of increased strength. It was under this pretext that Nietzsche famously wrote the following aphorism: “*Aus der Kriegsschule des Lebens. — Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker. [From the war school of life. — What does not destroy me, makes me stronger.]*” (KSA GD *Sprüche und Pfeile* 8 60) The second message (in the second half) of this aphorism is so well known that it has become a regular turn of phrase in the English language. But it has never been widely recognized as a fundamental statement of Nietzsche’s *educational* principle.

What about the first message? The second reflects Nietzsche’s understanding of the fundamental lesson that must be learned about the activity of education, but the first explains how one learns to learn. And if it is true that learning for Nietzsche is always something suffered and survived, then it would seem that understanding both the source and the process and of this type of learning would be paramount. I suggest that the question of priority in education for Nietzsche would need to be: what power do we endure, and what do we oppose, when we learn? The first half of this aphorism is demonstrative of this priority, because the relation between the first and second portions reveals is *genetic* in nature, in the sense that the second was learned by means of the first. Thus, before we can ultimately answer the question, what is “*der Kriegsschule des Lebens?*”, we must first recognize that such a school, a school of life, schools the student in lessons of a very special kind. Nietzsche indicates that he has learned from this school nothing less than the principle of learning itself: that learning, which is the gathering and exercise of power, is enacted through a certain utilization of hardship. Learning is the best talent, and perfects itself in total sublimation, and then, in Nietzsche’s total love of fate. For the philosopher of the will to power, it is the central talent for the orbit of all others.

The next question is to ask why all of this is specifically characteristic of the *martial* school of life. And why is this martiality so closely tied to his “*medicality*”? These questions are of great importance for explaining Nietzsche’s understanding of an implementable philosophy of learning. For one thing, this is because the martial school of life renders the same lesson as what Nietzsche tells us he has taken up as his own personal motto, which is that convalescence from a wound, and not steady health, is the way to greatness. By way of analogy, it is just as the earth must fissure for the volcanic humors to throw up its mountains and jungles (to invoke Nietzsche’s “*landscape*” motif), or just as the experience of betrayal may, for some, be a way toward learning a new and more varied constitution.<sup>218</sup> In the world of human relations, moreover, the experience of loss at the hands of

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<sup>218</sup> For a contrasting view of Socrates as the purveyor of a type of health that consisted in never being sick or injured, see Plato’s *Gorgias*, *op. cit.*, 45: “*Socrates*: Which, then, is a happier condition for a man’s body to be in: to be cured or never to be sick at all? *Polus*: Obviously never to be sick. *Socrates*: Happiness, therefore, as it

another is what stimulates the strongest forces of recovery. For Nietzsche, loss or injury at the hands of another is an especially effective of this recovery (i.e. to gainful excess) when it is at the hands of one held dear. By extension of this principle, it follows that Nietzsche's "closeness" to Socrates, and the love he felt for him, were actually prerequisites for the type of creatively productive contest he undertook against him, and *not*, therefore, reasons in spite of which this could be accomplished.

How is it possible to maintain these inversions of love and friendship? The answer is not simple. It can involve, so to speak, even double and triple inversions (i.e. of the "for" and "against" one bears towards another). In brief, it is living in accordance with the knowledge that, as Nietzsche says, "The lover wants to create, because he despises! What does he know of love who has not had to despise precisely what he loved?" (*Z 2 Of the Way of the Creator* 90); but again, why?—Nietzsche answers: "For the great despisers are the great reverers." (*Z 4 Of the Higher Man* 3 297) And yet, as the careful reader will notice, it is not said here that the lover "despises" because he "wants to create." According to Nietzsche, in fact, the reverse holds true—thus, love and its creative force both begin as servants of malice, spite, and all other aspects of *eris*.

A major consequence of this is that "despising the beloved" now becomes established as indelibly necessary to a creative love, rather than as just a rare possibility of it. Conceptually, this bears some similarity to the way in which Nietzsche excels in being "wounded" at the hands of another, and in using war as a means of recovering from this in excess. The following section is therefore offered to demonstrate how this process is immediately relevant to the problem of Socrates.

### **3.2 Socrates as the Teacher Who Wounds**

In chapter one I discussed Nehamas' rather gross assessment of Nietzsche and Socrates in terms of character and health, according to which he believed they should be ranked. I explained how it is really of the essence to see that the same current of thought which binds the matters of higher education, martiality, and powerful health, run throughout Nietzsche's middle as well as his later period. In fact, his own views on health are rather complex, and integrated together with his thoughts on the value of exposure to different forms and degrees of stress, injury, effort (found in any contest) that afford the opportunity for new growth. At all times, he appears preoccupied with discussing what he calls "the usefulness of sickness," as evidenced in the following aphorism:

He who is often sick does not only have a much greater enjoyment of health on account of the *frequency with which he gets well*: he also has a greatly enhanced sense of what is healthy

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seems, is not to be rid of evil, but rather never to have had it at all."

and what is sick in works and actions, his own and those of others: so that it is precisely the sickliest writers ... who usually evidence in their writings a much steadier and more certain tone of health, because they understand the philosophy of psychical health and recovery better and are better acquainted with its teachers—morning, sunshine, forests and springs—than the physically robust [*die körperlich Robusten*]. (HH II 356 293; emphasis added)

This speaks in support of my view that Nietzsche was publicly aware of the disparity between the physical constitution of himself and Socrates, who was super-humanly robust. But there is more to be gleaned here. To pursue the issue further, the above aphorism might be better read along with a reminder of how, at one point in the story of Zarathustra, the animals advise him to go out of his cave, where, as they say, “all things want to be his physician,” and urge him to take up singing after his traumatic seven-day illness: “For convalescents should sing,” they tell him—“let the healthy talk. And when the healthy man, too, desires song, he desires other songs than the convalescent.” (Z 3 *The Convalescent* 2 236)<sup>219</sup> But then in what should we suppose the difference between these “songs” to consist?

Based on the way Nietzsche has portrayed the virtues of being wounded and being made ill, one might surmise for one thing that the convalescent's song is one that would be carried over in an appreciative and hopeful tone. Such a song could then be bright even if there is only a little that is pleasing or “at ease” in it. On the other hand, the song of the physically robust may celebrate health as a freedom from illness, all the same—but not as a freedom that has been *won*; and hence it is not at the same time also the song of a warrior.<sup>220</sup>

What then is the significance of “the wound” for Nietzsche? Among other things, a wound may be seen as an opportunity for yielding to the offer of help from another, or, for that matter, for refusing it. From Nietzsche's perspective, what is most significant is the opportunity that a wound or a bout of illness presents for novel perspective, new habits, and a new, keener sense of self and one's personal movements. (HH I 289 133-4) This observation seems correct. Indeed, as many who have suffered injury or sickness will attest, a wound still requires much of one's own personal care and attention, even while under the steady watch of a professional, and even, to a degree, when one is asleep. Nietzsche sees it as a chance for experiencing heightened sensitivity and bodily awareness,

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<sup>219</sup> It is interesting to note that Nietzsche would later recognize that unlike Socrates, who only ever spoke, it would have been more fitting for him to have *sung* his first book, the *Birth of Tragedy*.

<sup>220</sup> This is reminiscent of an early reference Nietzsche makes to the unique virtue of one who shows himself to arise once again “like a wounded warrior,” and whose eyes are therefore “alight with unspent power and the calm wisdom of the dying.” (BT 10 68)

as well as a compensative coordination in one's movements. It forces one to learn how to move carefully, and, more importantly for Nietzsche, to learn how to *move* in a new way: a process which requires otherwise docile faculties to become active and dominant, fashioning thereafter a new and unsteady version of the whole.

For Nietzsche, with the wound there comes the possibility for an enhanced ability to *do without*; and thus, there is not only an enhancement in each other ability, but also an enhancement in the coordination of one's capacities. It is here, moreover, that Nietzsche espies the value of certain ascetic practices, when novel co-ordinations of one's abilities must arise in order to adapt for oneself a new style of movement.<sup>221</sup> This is a good illustration of what Nietzsche had in mind when talking about the paramount need to stylize one's life. He has observed that the best stylization occurs in one who recognizes personal weaknesses, and makes a great bundled strength out of a series of these weaknesses by rallying them around the cause of a single supreme talent. This, the ascetic project of personal reformulation and the development of talent, is the real significance of the wounding injury for Nietzsche.

Now with this in mind, and also given that Nehamas has read *Human, All-Too-Human* as a work where we see a completely new appropriation of Socrates on the part of Nietzsche, it would seem a good idea to examine what he says of him there. One section, simply titled "*The experience of Socrates*," talks about the experience one is likely to have when encountering a "master," as well as the problem of being a master. Specifically, Nietzsche writes in this passage about his discovery that:

When one has become a master in some field one has usually, for that very reason, remained a complete amateur in most other things; but one judges just the other way around, as Socrates had already found out. This is what makes association with masters disagreeable. (HH I 361 PN 58)

This aphorism, which is most notably ignored by Nehamas and all those who wish to further the interpretation that Nietzsche esteemed Socrates during this period, is to my mind indicative of the way in which Nietzsche esteemed him at the time. Here is an example of praise in a very special light, for Nietzsche is recounting in this passage a lesson that he himself has learned from "*The experience of Socrates*." This speaks in favor of my view, which suggests that the period usually identified as a temporary change of heart regarding Socrates is better understood as a decisive period of reflection

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<sup>221</sup> On this point see Aharon Aviram, "Nietzsche as Educator?" in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 25, no. 2 (1991) 219–234, and Bingham 2001, *op. cit.*, 346. Clearly, this has implications in the study of Nietzsche's transvaluated ascetic programs, of which I return to treat at the end of the present chapter.

upon the nature of learning from another thinker, especially when it comes to learning lessons about the development and the management of one's talents.

It is interesting to see that Kaufmann appends a footnote to this passage which reminds the reader of the fact that "Wagner liked to be called 'master.'" To a large degree, Nietzsche's movement away from Wagner represents a movement away from a particular way of thinking about relating to one's teachers and "heroes." As a young man, and in his first published book, Nietzsche openly lavished praise upon Wagner, and even went so far as to graft upon it, somewhat awkwardly, a whole section devoted to the promise of a Wagnerian salvation of art through a re-birth of the tragic spirit. And although he was a cherished long-time friend, mentor, and idol, Nietzsche would eventually reject Wagner for a number of reasons, foremost among which was the distaste he came to feel for his apparent attitude of self-satisfaction, for his having also become a happy "Wagnerian." This in large part would also disqualify Wagner from the title of "master" for Nietzsche in another sense, by which I mean that he was no longer suitable as a mentor.

According to the text above it was Socrates, then, who allowed Nietzsche to recognize the dangers of having an extraordinary talent in control of one's life: as in the case of many great masters, including Wagner, and certainly including Socrates himself. But this would suggest that Socrates first discovered ("found out"), and Nietzsche learned through him, the particular disagreeability of associating with these kinds of "masters." It suggests to me again that Socrates had something to teach Nietzsche about education, something he had himself learned by his own "*experience*."<sup>222</sup>

This might also help to illuminate a key difference between Wagner and Socrates as educators. That is, Socrates could be seen as a master of a better sort than Wagner because of his capacity for recognizing the limits of himself as a specialist, and as one who embodied the educational spirit which Nietzsche characterized as "Spartan." On the other hand, those who believed that cultivating a certain exceptional talent meant an accompanied elevation of *all* talents would be self-deluded: they would mistake themselves for students whose success was of a more "Athenian" inclination, meaning they were prone to believing that their mastery extended over all talents, and thinking far too highly of themselves. The difference between Socrates and Wagner is that the malicious irony of Socrates served to dissipate the conditions for arrogance: with his ironic outlook, he could see the limitations of his talent as well that of others.<sup>223</sup> Thus he gained understanding of

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<sup>222</sup> There is provocative ambiguity in the title "Die Erfahrung des Sokrates," since it refers at once to how Socrates "learned" the lesson, as well as how one "learns" it from him, namely, by experiencing him.

<sup>223</sup> I am referring here to what Nietzsche esteemed as the "*irony* may have been required for greatness of soul, that Socratic sarcastic assurance of the old physician who cut ruthlessly into his own flesh, as he did into the flesh and heart of the 'noble,'

what Nietzsche would call living under the “vampirism” of one’s own talent. As an educator, therefore, who teaches the way of self-education, Socrates exceeds Wagner in this case.

In another passage from *Human, All-Too-Human*, Nietzsche sheds light on his relation to Socrates (though he does not name him there) when he once again employs terms of medicine to discuss issues of education. There is a point to be made about what is necessary for “progress” in the population, at which point he returns to reinstate the claim that those like Socrates, “who degenerate,” are also “of the highest importance wherever progress is to take place; every great progress must be preceded by a partial weakening. The strongest natures *hold fast* to the type; the weaker ones help to *develop it further*.” (HH I 224 PN 55) Having discussed how the activities of both strong and degenerate natures each affect the development of a culture, Nietzsche next turns to the individual. And again, it is not unreasonable to think that Socrates is close to mind here—i.e., the Socrates whom most commentators take to be denounced on account of his physical deformities: “It is somewhat the same with the individual: rarely is degeneration, a crippling, even a vice or any physical or moral damage, unaccompanied by some gain on the other side ... for example ... the one-eyed man will have one stronger eye[.]” (*Ibid.*)<sup>224</sup> After this Nietzsche immediately makes it clear that here he is speaking in particular about his consideration for sickness as a *teacher*, and of his picture of the teacher as one who actually *administers* sickness and infectious wounding to the pupil. Among its other important features, it is also a rare case in Nietzsche’s writings where the role of the teacher is emphasized rather than that of the self-educating student.

In the case of the individual, the task of education is this: to put him on his path so firmly and surely that, as a whole, he can never again be diverted. Then, however, the educator must wound him, or utilize the wounds destiny inflicts upon him; and when pain and need have thus developed, something new and noble can then be inoculated in the wounded spots. His whole nature will absorb this, and later, its fruits, show the ennoblement. (*Ibid.*)

This description of the teacher, taken from the heart of what I argue should be considered his most extensive work on educational philosophy, and from a period identified by many as exceptional with regard to Socrates, is of crucial significance. From it one might deduce that if Socrates is the

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with a look that said clearly enough: 'Don't dissemble in front of me! Here—we are equal.' (BGE 191 104) Unfortunately, Nehamas ignores this passage entirely, even though its publication falls outside the period of “truce and fondness” he detects in Nietzsche’s writing.

<sup>224</sup> It may or may not be relevant to point out that Socrates was once referred to by Nietzsche as a Cyclops, presumably for the singularity of his rational vision. (KSA GT 14 92)

great wonder of Nietzsche, then he would at once be the great teacher; but even more compelling, I think, is the inverse expression: if Socrates is to qualify as the great teacher, then he must be shown to be the inflictor of the most profound wounds. I wish to show that this is the case. To this end I turn to the introduction Nietzsche gives for his *Twilight of the Idols*, which, incidentally, is also the text that is supposed to be the clearest display of unmitigated opposition he shows toward Socrates.

From the beginning of this work, one thing is made clear above all. Nietzsche introduces the volume first by indicating—and then by demonstrating, in the course of his polemic against Socrates—that the correct way of war (i.e., his ‘martiality’) is for him very closely related to the way of wound and recovery (i.e., his ‘medicality’). With some consideration for this, it is quite possible to show how, according to his own reformulation of war-as-recuperation, Nietzsche wages war on Socrates in order to recover from the wounds he inflicts. In his introduction to the book Nietzsche writes:

Surplus power, alone, is the proof of power. —*A transvaluation of all values ...* This end justifies every means, every event on the road to it is a windfall. Above all *war*. War has always been the great policy of all spirits who have penetrated too far into themselves or who have grown too deep; a wound stimulates the recuperative powers. For many years, a maxim, the origin of which I withhold from learned curiosity, has been my motto: *Increscunt animi, virescit volnere virtus*. (TI Preface xvii)<sup>225</sup>

To the reader it may seem odd that, in outlining his polemical manifesto at the onset of a campaign against his “idols,” Nietzsche immediately turns to speaking of his need for being “wounded,” which is something typically associated with defeat more than with victory. However, Nietzsche understood that the process of recovery is always elemental to the process of strengthening; and this he took to be his primary means for excelling against himself as well as others. Education would then be for Nietzsche, I propose, a matter of convalescence from the *agon* of facing one's teachers, whoever they may be. It is not most essentially that such figures 'do damage' to the student, but that they hold enraptured in agony anyone who takes them seriously—this meaning for Nietzsche that they are regarded in how they contribute to the way of one's living. Strength is gathered, he insists, only in those cases when it is needed. Socrates above all had seared himself into

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<sup>225</sup> Translation: “The spirits increase, vigor grows with a wound.” This is a quotation from the poet Furius Antias by the 2nd century Roman author, Aulus Gellius: *Noctes Atticae*, XVIII, XI, IV (“Attic Nights”): “*sanguine diluitur tellus, cava terra lutescit. / Omnia noctescunt tenebris caliginis atrae. / Increscunt animi, virescit volnere virtus. / Sicut fulca levis volitat super aequora classis, / spiritus Eurorum viridis cum purpurat undas. / Quo magis in patriis possint opulescere campis.*”

Nietzsche's purview, just as, according to the Nietzschean diagnosis, he was a menace of a man: a demi-god who had invaded the whole world after his time. Still, we should be careful to see that Nietzsche did not merely suffer war, however, and he was not himself a martyr in this way. His preferred type of convalescence, he says, is of a much more active nature.

It is also tempting to interpret the relation between “war” and “wounding” as a simple one that holds between a cause and its effect: an effect which in turn gives rise to a newly invigorated system of recovery and an increase in power. However the metaphor is really more sophisticated than this. For, as much as the ravages of intellectual and spiritual warfare—i.e. such as one's defeats, failures, and submissions to the ideals of another—would be the wounds inflicted upon the participants in conflict, for Nietzsche the waging of war is in fact also the *result* of these wounds. Why? Because to his mind contest and even war itself could be a form of recovery from one's wounds. This is how he could claim, oddly enough, that “another means of recovery, which is even more to my taste, is to cross-examine idols.” (*Ibid.*)

Now an intriguing question emerges, which is: how did Nietzsche conceive of *Twilight of the Idols* as a kind of convalescence (*Genesung*) and recovery (*Erholung*)—and further, from what? That is to say, one may wish in this case to ask what injury Nietzsche feels he is facing down by writing this book: e.g., from what wound does his cross-examination of Socrates promise to recover him? It is, I suggest, the injury that is suffered at the hands of these ancient idols themselves: the deep ruptures and abscessing brought about by having the oldest philosophical presumptions thrust upon and integrated into one's being during the whole course of life, and especially when one is still young (this is, after all, *what* and *how* a person regularly learns, for Nietzsche). More importantly, for the one who esteems himself highly enough, the injury of Nietzsche's educational process implies suffering and recuperating from the wounds of the nobler variety of envy.<sup>226</sup>

By the description he gives of his intentions, the war which Nietzsche wages against Socrates in the text that follows this preface, his cross-examination of this “idol,” is a means for recovery from wounds that have been inflicted upon him.<sup>227</sup> Moreover, from his comments regarding the role of a

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<sup>226</sup> As I have also stated, much of the wounding-suffering inflicted upon one friend by another comes for Nietzsche in the form of envy. And while Nehamas identifies this as an important feature in Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates (and although it is never recognized as consistent with Nietzsche's philosophy of education), I argue that he is mistaken about the type of envy that is at play in this most crucial case, and that moreover he does not openly address the distinction between the different types of envy at all. This oversight prevents him and others from seeing the educative significance of Socrates as a “wounder” and enemy in *Twilight of the Idols*, and burdens the reader with accepting a rigid periodization of Nietzsche's “feelings” toward Socrates, which itself remains unexplained and plagued by questions of consistency.

teacher-as-wounder, we therefore know that this to him constituted a relationship of learning; and, to be more precise, this is constitutive of a teacher-student relationship only as it is seen from the privileged perspective of what Nietzsche goes on to describe extensively under a personal rubric he calls “*der Kriegsschule des Lebens.*”

With this, I wish to emphasize the apparent fact that, even in what is commonly taken to be his most overtly polemical treatment of Socrates (which it is), Nietzsche opens the text by announcing him as personal educator. In order to step further into this relationship, we must turn our attention more directly toward what Nietzsche had to say about the comportment of enmity, and how it relates to learning.

### **3.3 Enmity and Education**

Some of the interest taken in Nietzsche’s philosophy of education has gravitated toward the narrative of *Zarathustra* as the guiding parable for understanding this educational model in its activity. Perhaps the best example of such work is *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, by Laurence Lampert. This book proves to be a useful guide to *Zarathustra*, which, as Lampert highlights, is at once the philosophical expression of educational ideals (i.e., as voiced in the speeches of the Zarathustra, the “teacher”), but also the story of a life as it progresses through different stages in comprehending the nature of education. This is the life of Zarathustra, the “student,” who comes to learn *learning* through his experiences. In particular, Lampert examines the hidden necessity of one’s experiencing disciples as desirable, as regrettable, and as transformative. Zarathustra then personifies the master student, in which the cooperative roles of solitude and company come to realize the best mode of educative process.

What I wish to draw upon is the general point Lampert makes when he says of Zarathustra’s teaching on the transvaluation of enmity. It is that, “Zarathustra’s teaching on what is due one’s enemies explicitly opposes the New Testament’s justice of requiting evil with good, of disarming the enemy and ending enmity; *instead, it arms the enemy and aims at enmity.*”<sup>228</sup> Of interest in this is how the student of Zarathustra is expected not just to “deal with” or tolerate enmity, but rather to aim at it. The reason for this, I think, is simply that the student always aims at advantage in overcoming, and enmity is vital to this. But the question of what Nietzsche’s student hopes to receive from the enemy remains an open one.

Beginning his speech “*Of War and Warriors,*” where Zarathustra teaches the conduct most

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<sup>228</sup> Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching: an interpretation of Thus spoke Zarathustra*, New Haven: Yale University Press: 1986, p. 70; italics added.

befitting the group of warriors standing in audience before him, he proclaims that: “— We do not wish to be spared by our best enemies, nor by those whom we love from the very heart. So let me tell you the truth!” Once again, immediately to mind springs the question concerning what it would mean to be “spared” by those whom we love so deeply. Spared from what? I think the answer to this is complex, and that arriving at it also involves the association of other questions. For example, the reader must also ask whether one should wish not to be spared by the “best” enemy for the same reason as by those one loves most—and what exactly is being willed in this case?

To begin with, Nietzsche has indicated that those whom we love most are also those from whom we stand to bear some kind of assault. Moreover, we know that “the best enemy” is, for Nietzsche, one who is certainly loved from the very heart. We already know, and now confirm, that *the best enemy just is the best lover*. Zarathustra continues: “My brothers in war! I love you from the very heart, I am and have always been of your kind. And I am also your best enemy. So let me tell you the truth!” It is Zarathustra the teacher, therefore, who is the best enemy. It is, once again, the teacher—the great enemy, the great lover—from whom we do not wish to be spared. Hence Socrates was after all just what Nietzsche said he was: the “great erotic,” not only of ancient history, but of Nietzsche's own life; moreover he was also for this reason, as I have set out to demonstrate, the great teacher of Nietzsche's intellectual life, and his best enemy.

Zarathustra goes on to teach the men in front of him the proper mode of engagement with one's best enemy (i.e. Zarathustra himself): “[y]ou should be such men as are always looking for an enemy – for *your* enemy. And with some of you there is hate at first sight. You should seek your enemy, you should wage your war – a war for your opinions. And if your opinion is defeated, your honesty should still cry triumph over that!” In short, the message here, as well as the most curious sentiment lying at the center of the question regarding Nietzsche's relation to Socrates, is that “You must be proud of your enemy.” (*Z 1 Of War and Warriors 73-4*) Executed this way, even defeat is authorable, something to be celebrated as a victory, and something to gain from. Nietzsche's narrative persona here preaches the task of seeking out the intimacy of love within enmity. This is something new, and probably best understood in contrast to the teaching of Christ on the matter of “loving one's enemy.”

In fact, Nietzsche's overcoming of Christian enmity, (and therefore the Christian ideal love) can be shown to serve as an illuminating example in Nietzsche's own personal integration of decadence. “Do not underestimate the value of having been religious.” (HH I 292 135) This Nietzsche wrote during a period of formative reflection on the ideal mode of self-education, when he sees that having once been religious—not only in the sense of having certain metaphysical beliefs, but in action—is a valuable way of understanding the hidden currents of psycho-historical activity.

As an illness, it also makes possible the attainment of multiple healths and abilities, all depending on how the experience is integrated by the individual. This explanation need not remain strictly metaphorical, however, and Nietzsche's account of his own life would seem to explain it best.

Nietzsche's relation to Christianity was a complicated polemic. Although he was a vicious opponent of its doctrines he was not above using transvaluated elements of Christianity in formulating his own ideas. For this I would like to say that Nietzsche is anti-Christian in a post-Christian way, meaning that, at least at times, he rises above his own feelings of resentment for Christianity, not out of indignation, but out of opportunity. What is "post-Christian" about his engagement with Christianity is that his position of enmity is not impeded by the need to oppose all Christian things.

Incidentally, Nietzsche's reformulation of enmity is itself a perfect example of this. That is, he does not need to *destroy* the Christian maxim that one must "turn the other cheek"—and just for this reason, one sees that he is also simultaneously free of the opposite need for revenge. Indeed, he showcases a superior conception of enmity in the very way by which he takes this set of two rival conceptions (i.e., that one should either turn the other cheek to the enemy, or else destroy him in revenge) as what is to be overcome by means of his own. That is, his response to the enemy is to transvaluate enmity itself. Nietzsche gives new value to enmity by overcoming the religious ideal of enmity once harbored within himself.

Along with Lampert I have suggested how an important difference resides between loving one's enemies in the way Nietzsche has in mind and in the Christian sense, the latter of which he thought to align with a doctrine derived from a sense of herd instinct to survive, whereby one always repays injury with kindness, with the goal of shaming the enemy into giving up his onslaught. This is the weaponization of pity. One can observe a superb statement of the great difference between the Nietzschean and the Christian model of love for the enemy in the imperative words of Zarathustra: "When, however, you have an enemy, do not requite him good for evil: for that would make him ashamed. But prove that he has done something good to you." (Z 1 *Of the Adder's Bite* 93)]"

Two important themes run through this passage. Firstly, Zarathustra has a special and unexpected regard for his enemy. That is, although he would assail his enemy, he does not do so by impressing a sense of shame upon him. On the other hand, when the Christian requites good for evil, there is still a type of attack, and also an act of revenge. This act is thoroughly hidden and resentful, however, and it always imposes itself through shame. Another kind of revenge is achieved in Zarathustra's case as well, but in a way that is thoroughly victorious, since in this case one is actually empowered and elevated by the enemy; and moreover, one in this case *really* does his enemy good, since his mode of revenge provides an example by which to elevate oneself. Even more remarkable is

that Nietzsche simultaneously both expounds and demonstrates his principle in this passage, since he is in fact proving that his enemy (the Christian) has given him the chance to overcome the worst forms of justice and revenge.

The second theme is that of activity: that is, in order to prove to the enemy that he has done something good to you, one must first make it so. This indicates the proper mode of opposition for Nietzsche. It is not passive aggression, but is instead perfectly *active*, in the sense that it moves beyond *ressentiment*, beyond the need for revenge, even if that revenge is disguised as an aspect of the virtue “brotherly love.” It is a powerfully selfish aggression, in the best sense, since it requires the transvaluation of suffering at the hands of another. It requires that one transform all such energy, channeling it by means of that loftiest of styles which incorporates all misfortunes. In effecting this transformation, the student must furthermore transvaluate the act of revenge itself. For, in “proving” that one has been done some good by him, there is a new sort of revenge: one which is not driven to task by the mercantile need for “payback” (as when one pays evil with evil), nor by the sallow need of the martyr for exerting power over the other by the impression of guilt upon him (as when repaying evil with good). Instead, Zarathustra overcomes the enemy by directing the forces generated in his relation to him straight to his own advantage, by not being concerned with vengeance itself, even though a type of vengeance is exacted upon the enemy as a result nonetheless. This is the “friendly” assault. Indeed, if that enemy is wise in the ways of learning from antagonism, such a refined level of engagement could potentially serve as a propaedeutic for his own improvement. This is being a good friend to one's enemy for Nietzsche, and he is improved by its effects. Human improvement is, for Nietzsche, a process of self-overcoming, and a matter of increasing in power and in the feeling of its exertion. Learning, then, is understood as the activity of power, and power is understood to be activated by contest.

### **3.4 Learning Understood as the Increase of Power and the Activity of Self-education**

Nietzsche generally distinguishes between two types of education, each of which is fixed upon achieving a separate end. On the one hand, *education for service* is always a matter of training its subjects to become competent in some field or some technique for the purpose of enhancing the productive force of a people. This process of education is thus meant to yield happy, hard-working individuals who serve to promote the ends and values already operating within a given society. During the time when Nietzsche was writing his most explicit critique of contemporary education (i.e. the critique delivered in his inaugural lecture series “On the Future of Our Educational Institutions”), this sort of educational ideal was steadily gaining prevalence in Germany. The 1850's

saw the influential publications produced on the subject of educational reform by those such as Gustav Freytag, Adalbert Stifter, and Gottfried Keller, in which was reflected a rapidly changing social atmosphere—one which bore with it the demand for prioritizing the increasingly middle-class interests of science, business, and industry. Hence the more romantic ideals of personal struggle and experience then came to be overshadowed by the concern for stability and the valorization of labor.

The *education of culture*, on the other hand, is not so directly related to whatever advantages can be predictably derived from the efforts of training. Instead it focuses on incubating and drawing out from the student a particular assemblage of character. Its aim is always the conception of exemplary individuals: for Nietzsche, those who are capable of the tragic, who have the power to make meaningful (and thus livable, condonable, deceptively beautiful) the conditions of life within a given time and place. Through cultivating the steadfastness of a stoic personality, for example, or the flourish of a daring artist, it is thought that new opportunities for cultural growth—the ordered production of new genius, new art, along with the propensity for reformulating laws and values—can be brought about. However the above is not merely a way of distinguishing between differing roles of applied science and the higher arts. For despite their considerable differences, both are capable of furthering the cause of *Bildung* for Nietzsche, just as both are equally manifest of the same urge for power by way of overcoming.

In order to clarify the “will to power” to some extent, along with its implications in the educational sphere, we should first of all notice that, as it finds expression in the relations among people, it is not simply always equivalent to a will to dominate or to tyrannize, (even though it may very often be the case.)<sup>229</sup> A good example can be shown in the relation between a teacher and the one who wishes to take up discipleship under him; for it is, after all, one of *submission*, of *subservience*, for the sake of personal empowerment. Christianity, too, although it operates by means of exerting the forces of guilt, *ressentiment*, and pity, is, as Nietzsche points out, perhaps the strongest expression of the will to power ever known. Along the same lines, it is important for us to come to an understanding of how, for Nietzsche, acts of benevolence, just as much as those of malice or tyranny, are exercises of power, and therefore also steps taken toward greater power. It is also true that Nietzsche thought of this effect of growth as secondary when it came to the exercise of a particular capacity. What is important to the individual is the *feeling* of exerting power, just as, for example, Nietzsche imagines that the gymnast must enjoy his exercise for itself, with or without an

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<sup>229</sup> E.g., see Nietzsche’s opinion that, “Our ‘benefactors’ are, more than our enemies, people who make our worth and will smaller.” (GS 338 269) Also see Nietzsche’s aphorism called “*On the doctrine of the feeling of power*,” where he concludes that, “—Benefiting and hurting others are ways of exercising one’s power upon others; that is all one desires in such cases.” (GS 13 86)

audience.

What it means to learn for Nietzsche must be thought of in terms of what it means to overcome. Both terms denote the same circumstances which, moreover, always center upon the contest of *teaching oneself*, since ideally all education is for Nietzsche self-active education. Overcoming is therefore always at the same time self-overcoming, because overcoming in any case *is* the expression of increase in power: i.e., its exercise and its feeling of success over itself. This implies that for Nietzsche's student the process is always ultimately a self-contest, even though the contest itself may be carried out, seemingly, in three basic ways.<sup>230</sup> It may be exclusively with oneself (as with the ascetic), with another person (as with the wrestler) or with circumstances themselves (as with the convalescent), but then, ultimately, *all* of these are ways of contesting oneself. Hence, when one acquires a new skill or a new limit of skill, one might say it is also the overcoming of the one who "could not," even though the possibility of this self-victory may well have involved the participation of another person, living or dead. As Nietzsche saw it, the Buddhist ascetic, too, wishes to overcome the self (wage a self-contest of starvation, celibacy, etc.) whenever he wishes to overcome the metaphysical "self" that cannot be without the suffering of desire.

Next, the will to overcome just is the will to power. This kind of statement is not as redundant as it might appear. For this it is important to realize that Nietzsche emulated the Greeks in their disdain for utility in favour of prestige won by victory, the power of a good name, the acceleration of personal growth by means of overcoming opposition, etc.; but it is equally important to note, as Kaufmann has, that Nietzsche eventually saw in all of this the most radiant visage of the will to power. For, "suddenly it occurred to Nietzsche that the basic drive that prompted the development of Greek culture might well have been the will to power, when he notes his conviction that the Greeks preferred power to anything 'useful' and even to a good reputation."<sup>231</sup> In short, it is not that one wishes to overcome himself and become greater simply in order to "accomplish more tasks" or some such, but rather that overcoming is always set toward the order of experiencing the *power* of being able to accomplish more, and the feeling of power concomitant with every new and higher exertion of the will.

Finally, the will to all learning, which is the will to overcoming, is the will to power. There is another redundancy waiting here, but I think it is instructive once again. For, it forces the question regarding the will to truth as compared to the will to empowerment in skill, endurance, or *savoir-faire*. To Nietzsche's mind, the proper project of education was not essentially about the reception or

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<sup>230</sup> I easily concede this as a simplification. As I wish to demonstrate, for example, Nietzsche allowed the complex belief that contests themselves could enter into conflict, etc. For the moment I will leave this point aside.

<sup>231</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 192.

mere “gathering” of truths (i.e., knowledge); but then again, if we conceive of truth as vitality or power, then certainly education is always a gathering of this, even when it is not conceived of as such by those who are involved. Thus for Nietzsche it is fair to say that all learning, and even the collection of “knowledge” or individual “truths” as a scientist is often supposed to pursue, is even so the will to increase in power and ability—and hence, “Why is knowledge, the element of the scholar and philosopher, associated with pleasure?”, asks Nietzsche. His reply is the following:

Firstly and above all, because one here becomes conscious of one's strength; for the same reason, that is to say, that gymnastic exercises are pleasurable even when there are no spectators. Secondly, because in the course of acquiring knowledge one goes beyond former conceptions and their advocates and is victor over them, or at least believes oneself to be. Thirdly, because through a new piece of knowledge, however small, we become superior to *all* and feel ourselves as the only ones who in this matter know aright.” (HH I 252 119-20)<sup>232</sup>

This gives a good indication of Nietzsche's thought regarding learning and the feeling of power during the (middle) period which I claim to be one of accentuated attention set upon the ideal nature of the self-educating student.<sup>233</sup>

It is evident that these themes strike deep roots into Nietzsche's thought during this time, and continue to develop until the end of his working life where, in *The Will to Power*, they come to their fullest fruition. Furthermore, it is this periodical perspective from which one can best gauge the nature of Nietzsche's changing treatment of Socrates. Even so, there is also the need to acknowledge the problem of treating the publication named *The Will to Power* as a “text” produced by Nietzsche. Given the questionable way in which this book was compiled and edited by his sister, the reader must take care to keep the questionable status of this publication in mind at all times, and to treat the ideas held within not as a collection of Nietzsche's “final views,” but as a type of scaffolding upon which to base an interpretation of other, formally published material. It would be the type of apparatus that can be quickly torn down once the work is done without effect, but also the type which has a significant role to play in carrying out the work of interpreting Nietzsche.

In this manner, it can be shown that many crucial themes found in *The Will to Power* can also be identified to varying degrees in one of the later texts submitted for publication by Nietzsche, *On*

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<sup>232</sup> Although it is not exactly the same message, there is also something of this notion in Zarathustra's later proclamation that “Will to truth” is really at bottom the “will to the conceivability of all things.” (*Z Of Self-overcoming* 136)

<sup>233</sup> For an example of where Nietzsche applies the same reasoning to art, also see WTP 809 427: “All art works tonically, increases strength, inflames desire (i.e., the feeling of strength) ... ”

*the Genealogy of Morals*. I believe that, with caution, this may serve as a source for a better sense of bearing on the status of certain views expressed in *The Will to Power*. For example, we can find reason to believe that Nietzsche was serious about his claims in *The Will to Power* when he speaks about how the way of the philosopher relates to the way of every animal. In the *Genealogy* he had already concluded that “Every animal—therefore *la bête philosophe* [the philosophical animal], too—instinctively strives for an optimum of favorable conditions under which it can expend all its strength and achieve its maximal feeling of power” (GM 3 7 107). And yet this striving is for Nietzsche not a simple hedonism. Evidently with this in mind, he goes on to make the following grave qualification, like a miserable, drawn-out reminder, in brackets: “(I am *not* speaking of its path to happiness, but its path to power, to action, to the most powerful activity, and in most cases its path to unhappiness).” (*Ibid.*) The path to the most powerful activity possible did involve suffering and unhappiness for Nietzsche, with the feeling of increase being most akin to what we would call “pleasure.”

On the other hand it is the active spirit, who wishes nothing more than the ability to overcome, and who suffers therefore, who is strong enough to love suffering for its ingredience in overcoming, which is the wellspring of all activity and pleasure in activity. Later on, in *The Will to Power*, one can see that Nietzsche expands with more depth into the *feeling* of activity, asking: “Why is all activity, even that of a sense, associated with pleasure? Because before it an obstacle, a burden existed? Or rather because *all doing is an overcoming*, a becoming master, and increases the feeling of power?” (WTP 661 349) Most important in all things, and indeed, most alluring, was always for Nietzsche the heightened capacity for activity, which is the discharge and expansion of some power.

This aspect of his thought is vital for a correct understanding of his views on the aims of education. When it came to the study of history, for example, Nietzsche deplored any approach that did not *personally* improve and empower the student. To be sure, when it came to matters of education and learning altogether, Nietzsche was not primarily concerned with the collecting of facts or the “gathering of information.” Even this pursuit, he would say, is inextricably tied to the will to power and the goal of enhancing the opportunity for discharging power, i.e. in the use of some skill or capacity, as in the case of developing a talent in philosophy or philosophical style.

Fundamental to Nietzsche’s educational philosophy is the conviction that learning must be a matter of gaining increased power from all things and experiences, including one’s personal collection of “knowledge.” But his major concern in matters of education was not specifically *what* to learn, but rather *how* a student should conduct his own learning, and under what circumstances this is best possible. The first point is demonstrated nicely when Nietzsche proposes that even scientific inquiry is an expression of the will to an increase in the power of an ability. In a middle-period

aphorism titled simply, “*Ability, not knowledge, is acquired through science,*” Nietzsche makes the claim that

The value of having for a time rigorously pursued a *rigorous science* does not derive precisely from the results obtained from it: for in relation to the ocean of things worth knowing these will be a mere vanishing droplet. But here will eventuate an increase in energy, in reasoning capacity, in toughness of endurance; one will have learned how *to achieve by the appropriate means*. (HH I 256 121; emphasis added)<sup>234</sup>

It would seem that the second point is re-confirmed immediately after the first in the preceding passage, when Nietzsche indicates that, even beyond what is learned and even what increase in capacity is gained, most valuable is learning the most expedient means of learning. The ultimate lesson is an educational one. How should one forge style? How should one cultivate a talent? I would argue that these questions cannot be answered apart from one another for Nietzsche. Both are primarily born out in terms of what could be considered metaphorically as the central inner-mechanical, or “inner-alchemical” question for Nietzsche, which focused upon the relation within the individual between the one talent and the many, or between the supreme and the subordinate. For Nietzsche, finally, it is my reading of this that the best talent is ultimately none other than the talent for learning itself, which, for Nietzsche, is cultivated through an agonistic engagement with Socrates.

Nietzsche had much to say on the nature of talent, its improvement, and how improvement always requires the *activity* of it: i.e., the discharge of its particular power. The qualities of “toughness,” “endurance,” and the increase of “energy” have already been shown to play a key role in the scientific *savoir faire*; but the reader comes to see that this is common to the enhancement of any talent.<sup>235</sup> “*Talent*. — In as highly developed a humanity as ours now is everyone acquires from nature access to many talents. Everyone *possesses inborn talent*, but few possess the degree of inborn and acquired toughness, endurance and energy actually to become a talent, that is to say to *become*

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<sup>234</sup> The purpose of early-aged education is apparently much the same for Nietzsche. Writing on the under-valued effect of grammar-school teaching, Nietzsche indicates his understanding of what is best about it. The study and recital of archaic texts, for example, can be truly relevant in teaching the youth. Most often, he says, students encounter the study of the classics as a great labor: “a monstrous procedure: before young people who are in no way whatever ripe for it ... But herein lies the value that usually goes unrecognized—that these teachers speak the *abstract language of higher culture*, ponderous and hard to understand but nonetheless a higher gymnastics for the head ... If the pupils merely *listen*, their intellect will be involuntarily prepared for a scientific mode of thinking.” (HH I 266 126)

<sup>235</sup> Just as is the *agon*, Nietzsche says—probably because these three qualities are both gained by, and necessary for, education by way of contest.

what he *is*: which means to discharge it in works and actions.” (HH I 263 125) To become what one is—this is the charter of Nietzsche’s entire project. In *Zarathustra*, it becomes a first teaching. But to become a talent, to give style, to become what one is all require the attributes of the contestual student, e.g., the capacity for a healthy envy and malice, a sense of what is good in contest, energy, endurance, adaptability, etc., for the fact that all talents require contest for their development.

Although accurate, it is not enough to say that Nietzsche believed strongly in self-education; for with this there remains the explanation as to *why* self-education was of such primary importance to him when it came to matters of development. Then again, what seems at odds with this is the real importance of having teachers, which Nietzsche often acknowledges with discussions of different lengths and at various angles. The incongruence is reconciled when one finds in the end that the requirements of the self-educator include *choosing* one’s teachers, and also the ability to learn from (and thus make a teacher of) not only all people, but all things in general. This, I would say, is the thoroughly “active” accomplishment of self-education for Nietzsche.

Nietzsche spoke often and with emphasis on the rank difference between an active and a reactive character.<sup>236</sup> For him, the active evaluation of life pronounces itself most fully in creative freedom, including that creativity which is at the same time a discharge of the instinct for destructivity and No-saying. Both the active and the reactive lives are, of course, subject to suffering, and each is driven toward a type of destroying and denying; but while both may commonly suffer the torments of life, the latter would be induced toward a pessimism of resentful resignation, revenge, and compromise (i.e., a reactive valuation of life, as in the case of the Jewish enslavement); while the former enters into a pessimism marked by the activity of strategic and mischievous offense, experiment, and joyful destruction.<sup>237</sup>

Pessimism is also something to be endured well for Nietzsche. As such, it is a lesson.<sup>238</sup> For a sorrowful vision of the world brings one close to the truth, for whatever time is necessary, and especially close to the suffering of its ugliness. As an experience, it is “wounding” in a most

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<sup>236</sup> For further depth into this important thematic issue, also see GS 317 252, where Nietzsche explains the related distinction between *pathos* and *ethos*. The first is passive and transitory, the second is generally more permanent (as in “disposition”), and is essentially active.

<sup>237</sup> Naturally I have in mind here Nietzsche’s image of Schopenhauer as a pessimist and active spirit of the first rank. See for instance SE 44: “But there is a way of denying and destroying which is precisely a result of that mighty longing for healing and salvation. This was first taught to us profane and thoroughly secularized people by Schopenhauer. All existence which can be denied deserves to be denied ...”

<sup>238</sup> Nietzsche, who was greatly affected after once happening on a text of Schopenhauer during his student years, calls it “that pessimism which Schopenhauer had to re-teach our age but which is as old as the longing for culture itself.” (SE 57) I will return to explore the dimensions of this lesson as compared to that of Socrates in an upcoming section.

transfigurative way. Moreover, the revelation of the generally wretched condition of existence has proven the basis for all kinds of religio-ascetic developments. Accordingly, not only on the level of the individual, but also on a larger cultural scale, the meaning of its “convalescence” has come down in a variety of historical forms. These forms generally correspond to the basic types of nihilism which ensue in the wake of moral and metaphysical exhaustion. For Nietzsche the *active* nihilism of attack, of waging a war with the use of destructive ideas, is foremost in necessity; while in the Buddhist, for example, convalescence would instead involve rest and *inactivity* above all. Stillness is, admittedly, the more common utility of convalescence for those who are in need of recovery from injury or ill-health. In ascetic terms, this implies the mode of abstaining from certain inclinations, as the Stoic who wishes to “make a castle of himself” and attain a kind of personal impenetrability. The Christian, however, whose *reactivity* consists in taking revenge upon the body, in self-loathing, and a hatred of all temporary things, is a nihilist of the most insidious variety, whose overcoming serves as a means to recovery only for the very strongest of wills.

Further to this I would argue that the privilege of activity over reactivity became fundamentally necessary for the formation of Nietzsche's solution to the otherwise horrifying prospect of an eternal return: I mean his favorite “gift” to the world, which he named *amor fati*. However, without adequate attention to the distinction of activity in the judgment of a life capable of enacting *amor fati*, this crucial disposition may be all too easily conflated with the attitude of Aesop's fox, for instance, who called all the grapes sour which he could not reach. But Nietzsche's lover of life wills his own defeat and suffering *as* his own defeat and suffering, along with all the misery of world-history, again and again innumerable, as if it were his greatest delight to do so. Hence this fox does not call the grapes sour in order to “sweeten” the taste of his circumstance; rather, he eats voraciously, and calls the sour good. In short, this is for Nietzsche the active perspective of the “tragic” philosopher.

But even in the case of such radical individualism, whereby teachers are ideally adopted and disposed of according to an extraordinary will for enhancement, Nietzsche acknowledges that there is undeniably still the need for others. No student can ever begin with self-sufficiency; but on the other hand not all types of teachers are equal, and thus they are not equally necessary. In a section from *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, for example, Nietzsche offers the following pragmatic account of how the number of a certain type of teacher, the “intermediary,” should be limited to whatever extent possible in order to preserve the energy and nourishment granted by truly creative spirits:

*The teacher a necessary evil.* As few people as possible between the productive spirits and the hungering, receiving spirits! For the intermediaries falsify the nourishment almost

automatically when they mediate it: then, as a reward for their mediation, they want too much for themselves, which is thus taken away from the original productive spirits; namely, interest, admiration, time, money, and other things. Hence one should consider the teacher, no less than the shopkeeper, a necessary evil, an evil to be kept as small as possible ... (WS 282 PN 71)<sup>239</sup>

By way of analogy, Nietzsche is describing a sort of market scenario here. Evidently his is an argument for the case of efficiency, whereby the answer for him becomes the effort to reduce teachers to a minimum, all the while acknowledging them as a “necessary evil.” Ultimate efficiency in this case, whether it is possible to attain or not, would therefore seem to coincide with nothing less than complete educational self-sufficiency, which does not preclude the personal involvement, i.e., personally directed involvement, of more “original” teachers (like Schopenhauer, for example).

To rise to the power of a purely self-sufficient learner would therefore require not only great talent, or even having already accomplished great breadth in learning. Instead, for Nietzsche it would require having mastered *learning itself*. This is precisely the mastery Zarathustra promises to his disciples.<sup>240</sup> And this, as I see it, is the cornerstone of Nietzsche's approach to education. It is a self-orchestrated mastery of all its multifarious ways on the part of the student: self-knowledge, whereby the most intricate mechanics of one's inner process are exposed and exploited through agonal manipulation.<sup>241</sup>

Nietzsche makes it clear that, for him, “*There are no educators*”; and thus: “—As a thinker one should speak only of self-education. The education of youth by others is either an experiment carried out on an as yet unknown and unknowable subject, or a leveling on principle with the object of *making* the new being, whatever it may be, conform to the customs and habits then prevailing: in both cases therefore something unworthy of the thinker, the work of those elders and teachers whom

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<sup>239</sup> The passage continues with a related assessment of Germany's economic condition, which likens the teacher to a superfluous tradesman: “... If the trouble in the German situation today has perhaps its main reason in the fact that too many people live by trade and want to live well (and thus seek to cut the producer's prices as much as possible while at the same time raising the prices to the consumer, in order to derive an advantage from the greatest possible damage to both), then one can certainly find a main reason for the spiritual troubles in the surplus of teachers: on their account, one learns so little and so badly.”

<sup>240</sup> “And you shall first *learn* from me how to learn—how to learn well.” (Z 3 *Of Old and New Law-Tables* 16 223)

<sup>241</sup> In this regard, being empowered by understanding the way in which education works could be thought of in the way that understanding how the atom works has proven to be empowering (for better or for worse), in the sense that after gaining the knowledge that tremendous, potentially unlimited energy, lies waiting in the minutest events of subatomic interference, empowerment quickly became a matter of measured agitation.

a man of rash honesty once described as *nos ennemis naturels*.” (HH II WS 267 374) With this, I think, Nietzsche reveals another way in which to behold the teacher as a “natural enemy.” In this case, the enemy is the common teacher, who works to impose a rule of regularity over the student by blotting out all the ‘unruly’ habits that might otherwise prevail.

This is a common enough theme in Nietzsche’s thoughts on modern egalitarian education. Even so it is rash to conclude from the above passage that this particular type of teacher-as-enemy is for this reason the “unwanted” or “unnecessary” one for Nietzsche, as opposed to the greater enemy, whom one envies and admires, and who challenges the student to freedom with his “wounding” assault.<sup>242</sup> For, as he goes on to say, even this experience of an education, which seems oppressive to the individuality of the student, becomes for the best student a stimulus to the reverse effect: “—One day,” he says, “when one has long since been educated as the world understands it, one *discovers oneself*: here begins the task of the thinker; now the time has come to call on him for assistance—not as an educator but as one who has educated himself and who thus knows how it is done.” (*Ibid.*) The well-developed thinker thus arrives to serve as an educator of sorts, but not one of “rules.” Specifically, the thinker of this experience comes back as the teacher of the art of self-education, by way of example.

In light of this, I would offer the observation that learning seems always two-fold in an important way. When someone learns anything, then that person also simultaneously learns, by way of exhibition and by way of participation, the various ways of education in that subject. Perhaps this helps to explain how, in the university, one is supposed to go from being a pupil to being a teacher without ever having been trained as a professional educator, simply having been a student so long that a working knowledge of the classroom is thought to be unavoidable. But then again, education does not belong only to the schools. The best student, and perhaps therefore the best teacher, is one who can learn in this two-fold manner outside of the classroom, since this implies an understanding of the nature of education in all its myriad forms. “Learning by all means” would then make a fitting motto for such a school. As one who found his highest philosophical achievement in the all-embrace of *amor fati*, there is small wonder that, within the realm of educational philosophy, Nietzsche also formulated an ideal of the student whose method is equally all-embracing, tirelessly incorporating all experience and personal energies into the service of producing the consummate self.

There should be no doubt that the crucial characteristic for Nietzsche's ideal student is *resourcefulness*. Not far behind is the effectual reward of this characteristic: *innovation*. In a consideration devoted to Nietzsche's teaching on self-stylization, there must therefore be an intention of first introducing the need he saw for freeing oneself from the power of ordinary, ministerial

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<sup>242</sup> I also understand that this might easily be mistaken for my own view.

teachers. Once again, for Nietzsche the best student learns without the direction of teachers; but this is not to say that he is not “taught” by them. Nietzsche determined his own curriculum, for which he chose his own teachers; but he also emphasized the need to be self-generating in terms of education, to be capable picking philosophy out of the air, so to speak, when the student provokes learning all on his own, and *every* experience becomes a ground for learning production. This figure is usually described as a type of fighter: a reckless spirit with a will to subversion of all kinds.<sup>243</sup> Even if only as a matter of stature, it seems that others cannot help but take a forceful position towards such an individual. In keeping with how Nietzsche's view that all human exchange is an exchange of power, and when coupled with the means of gaining ascendancy and efficiency by controlling these exchanges, this disposition renders the best state of advantage for learning. On the other hand, we still need to ask how one ought to be disposed to those teachers who are truly worthy of the title “genius.” How should one learn from those to whom even the pledge of discipleship is warranted? Who are these individuals, and how does an education under the auspices of their genius actually accomplish the task of freeing the student from the need for “a master”?

### **3.5 On Slavish and Masterly Love**

For those who wish to unriddle what seems to be a strange and shifting disposition taken up by Nietzsche toward Socrates I would advise the following as a key insight into the type of love he sought to bestow, not only upon Socrates, but also upon himself. Late into his life, and looking back, Nietzsche writes: “There is a slavish love that submits and gives itself; that idealizes, and deceives itself—there is a divine love that despises and loves, and reshapes and elevates the beloved.” (WTP 964 506)

One kind of love is simple. It simply loves. It lays down everything in submission to love. But there is another kind of love which is complex in a unique way. Paradoxically, it is a love that loves *and* despises. Despising therefore does not preclude loving. But nor, however, does Nietzsche mean that in this case these two exist side-by-side in an individual's behavior toward the other, as if that individual would love the beloved in some ways while despising him in others, or that his still simple, pathetic love would occasionally wane and transition into hatred, i.e. at different periods.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> For example, see SE 45: “[H]e has to be hostile even to the people he loves and the institutions in which he grew up; he may spare neither people nor things, however much it hurts him ...”

<sup>244</sup> I have already rejected all of these notions when it comes to the question of Nietzsche's love-hate relationship with Socrates: that is, he did not simply hate him; he did not hate him piece-meal; nor did he just experience a temporary “bout of sympathy” at some period or other.

Rather, these two emotional drives, loving and despising, are to be integrated into a dynamic interplay of formative opposition. They are integrated ideally for Nietzsche when each preserves and heightens the other.

One might easily wonder how this could be and what it might be like. I venture that it is not very difficult to imagine. No matter how much a man loves another, for instance, or even how desperately he loves, he cannot “submit and give himself over” to the one whom he also truly despises. This kind of integrity, this self-mastery and power, a kind which makes dueling brothers out of the drives of love and hatred, is itself gained through the capacity for being an enemy. Hence, malice *saves* the lover. War makes free. Nonetheless, the instinct to despise, to oppose or shun, to overcome in every way, is *not* kept apart from another powerful instinct, which is the instinct *to succumb* in every way.<sup>245</sup>

The strongest human creature, according to Nietzsche, would forge within itself a love resulting from the condition of a maximal internal conflict, whereby love and hate are reshaped in each other's image. Thus, hatred straightens the back of the lover; likewise, love softens and teaches hatred how to submit—but always only as an act of war. This last point ought to be taken in similar fashion to the way that acts of obeying and commanding can and must belong together for Nietzsche. (*Z 1 Of War and Warriors 73-5*)

Moreover, just as all good students have first to learn how to obey and as well as how to command in life, it is also true that “[w]e have to learn to love,” and, as Nietzsche writes, “learn to be charitable, and this from our youth up; if education and chance offer us no opportunity to practice these sensations our soul will grow dry and even incapable of understanding them in others. Hatred likewise has to be learned and nourished if one wants to become a good hater: otherwise the germ of that too will gradually wither away.” (HH I 601 192) From this and other passages it is apparent that for Nietzsche the particular way that one is disposed to love and hatred is paramount to determining the quality of an education, and that this disposition is itself something that must be learned and practiced. This would include the way one appears to others in displays of love and hatred, for example, or the particular way in which one's love is contested and reformed by the underlying will to despise, along with one's mastery in employing the different energies provided by this contest in attaining increase in the powers of engagement.

Consequently, if learning is accomplished through the skillful application of love and hatred, then this skill must itself be cultivated, as Nietzsche indicates above; and hence, the promise Zarathustra makes to teach learning itself *must* entail educating his students in the ways of love and hatred. This necessity of approaching the subject of love and hatred as themes of education, along

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<sup>245</sup> See Daybreak section 60, where Nietzsche calls these two the “two species” of human happiness.

with the accompanying necessity of “learning to love,” is confirmed early on in Nietzsche’s ruminations on education. Training of this sort requires that the student experience the effort of exercising all kinds of loving and hating, and thereby strengthens the capacity for freely abiding within a wide range of friendship and enmity.

For the ideal student, love becomes the instrument of higher learning. As such, it must be employed with strategic restraint. As we can see in his notes on *Zarathustra*, where Nietzsche sketches his perception of hierarchy among types of students in accordance with their respective ways of loving, this implies the inestimable value of the skill for using one’s love and obedience strictly in order to better command. This kind of deliberative mastery over love is therefore characteristic only of the first and best type of student, whom Nietzsche calls: “(1) The Commanders, the mighty—who do not love, unless it be that they love the images according to which they create. The rich in vitality, the versatile, the free, who overcome that which is extant.” (TI NZ 22 264) However, for Nietzsche, the love felt for “the images according to which one creates” is unthinkable without the love felt for images according to which one destroys; and hence Nietzsche must say that the reason for which “the lover wants to create,” is not because he loves (i.e. in a simple way), but rather for precisely the opposite reason—“because he despises!”

Next in rank are those of the second type, whose love is of a distinctly more “slavish” variety for its further emphasis on the role of reverential obedience in love. They seek to “free” themselves from the task of self-education, just as Nietzsche toyed with the idea of doing. Disciples of this kind are therefore: “(2) The obedient, the ‘emancipated’—love and reverence constitute their happiness, they have a sense of what is higher (their deficiencies are made whole by the sight of the lofty).”

And finally, there are those whose love is entirely slavish, namely: “(3) The slaves, the order of the ‘henchmen’—: they must be made comfortable, they must cultivate pity for one another.” (*Ibid.*) It is reasonable to suggest that Nietzsche has in mind here those idolaters and sycophants described at length in *Schopenhauer as Educator*: i.e. the common “scholar,” whose ambition is the benign comfort of indistinguishability, most often won by virtue of appearing harmless and dedicated to such things as protocol and state welfare.

I wish to discuss all three of these categories in light of Nietzsche’s reflections upon the role of teacher and student in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. At this point, however, it would be most helpful to first establish an understanding of Nietzsche’s reflections upon the nature of friendship—including the tension therein between love and animosity, as well as the relation between friendship and education—before going on to explore the multifarious theme of discipleship, which I have briefly touched upon in the above.

### 3.6 Friendship and Education

*Make me useful to my friends, rather than agreeable.*

—Crates of Thebes

This study began with a look at Kaufmann's interpretation of Nietzsche's Socrates. I suggested there that Kaufmann came closest to a true conception of him, however briefly, when he elucidated what he called the “Brutus crisis” of Nietzsche's conscience. I wish now to revisit this theme in my approach to the understanding of friendship which Nietzsche presents in his writings,

Concerning Shakespeare, and specifically the composition of what he considered his greatest tragedy (which he evidently thought should have been titled “Marcus Brutus” instead of “Julius Caesar”), Nietzsche writes of how the character of Caesar was, by his conflictual relation to him, a kind of enhancing agent for the character of Brutus, not the reverse; and thus, as he says, “The height at which he places Caesar is the finest honor that he [Shakespeare] could bestow on Brutus.” (GS 98 150) Brutus was for Nietzsche the most compelling character Shakespeare ever developed, and he also suspects that Shakespeare secretly praised Brutus above Caesar, and even above himself.<sup>246</sup> Most likely, he thinks, such a tribute to Brutus was sprung from Shakespeare's having had his own “gloomy hour” and his own “evil angel,” just as Brutus had. (*Ibid.*)<sup>247</sup>

And there is much to be admired in Brutus. He makes the picture of a man of action at any cost, as opposed to the rather paltry portrayal of the contemplative man—and thus, asks Nietzsche: “What is all of Hamlet's melancholy compared to that of Brutus?” (*Ibid.* 151) But it is not just the difference in magnitude of the melancholy between these two that Nietzsche has in mind here, nor the fact that Hamlet was paralyzed by his melancholy, while Brutus was not. The act of violence required of each character was dramatically different. Recall that Hamlet faced an enemy for whom he had no love, no bond of friendship and no admiration; and Brutus, meanwhile, suffered the task of slaying his king and leader, brother-at-arms, and mentor. This was the great weight of his melancholy over Hamlet's. All the same, however, he was driven neither by the need for revenge (as Hamlet was), nor out of envy (as his co-conspirators were), but in fidelity to the cause of Rome—to the death of

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<sup>246</sup> In the face of the poet (whom Nietzsche thinks to represent the author, Shakespeare himself) Brutus cries out, “What are the wars to do with these jiggling fools [*Schellen-Hanswurst*]?” Kaufmann is one to suggest that the choice of the word *Hanswurst* (buffoon) in translating this passage appears significant when one recalls Nietzsche's later use of this word in describing Socrates, as well as himself.

<sup>247</sup> Also see SE 108, where Nietzsche exalts Brutus over Plato for illustrating the dignity of philosophy in Roman history.

friendship, out of respect for friendship. And so the poet phrases these, the words of Antony, in eulogy of Brutus:

This was the noblest Roman of them all ...  
His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'<sup>248</sup>

That the life of one most famous for the murderous betrayal of his friend and lord should be called a gentle and balanced one ought to give pause for reflection. From the perspective of Nietzsche's own 'alchemical' doctrine, we should say that Brutus was composed of a mixture which most importantly yielded the potency of *being an enemy* to one's friend. But what is the value of this?<sup>249</sup>

First of all, it is evident that Nietzsche always considered the undertaking of friendship with another in terms of power, learning, and advantage (i.e. in terms of the potential for overcoming). As Zarathustra explains in his speech on friendship, the need that one feels for a close association with the other is also revelatory of what is found lacking in oneself. This points toward Nietzsche's conception of the friend as a type of "mirror" in which to study and overcome what is worst in mankind and within oneself. On the other hand, meanwhile, the closely related instigation of enmity has its own way of revealing those areas wherein one is weak and must improve by means of a good enemy. Thus Zarathustra declares to his audience:

Our faith in others betrays wherein we would dearly like to have faith in ourselves. Our longing for a friend is our betrayer. And often with our love we only want to leap over envy. And often we attack and make an enemy in order to conceal that we are vulnerable to attack. 'At least be my enemy!' - thus speaks the true reverence, that does not venture to ask for friendship. (*Z 1 Of the Friend* 82)

At first sight it would appear that the words "at least" are meant to instill a sort of

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<sup>248</sup> William Shakespeare, "The Tragedy of Julius Caesar," in *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, edited by Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller, Penguin Books: New York: 1962, act 5, scene 5, p. 1335.

<sup>249</sup> See *Z 1 Of the Friend* 82, where Nietzsche refers to enmity as a capability which is, presumably, one to be learned and cultivated: "If you want a friend, you must also be willing to wage war for him: and to wage war, you must be *capable* of being an enemy."

conciliatory sense within the term “enemy,” such that it would be the first preference to have a friend, and only second best to have an enemy. Such an assessment is shown premature, however, when seen in light of the lines which follow shortly after, where Nietzsche has Zarathustra declare that: “In your friend you should possess your best enemy. Your heart should feel closest to him when you oppose him.”

This indicates that there is no “pure” friendship, wholly kept apart from enmity, as one might first suppose. Instead, both are always concomitant with each other when the friendship between two individuals is sincere. Zarathustra teaches that his audience should author the enemy in the friend, and then he asks: “Can you go near to your friend without going over to him?” (*Ibid.* 83) To be the friend of another one must certainly be affected by the gravity of that other. That is to say, there must be sufficient attraction involved in order to generate a healthy repulsion. For, to be afflicted by one's affection for another is in keeping with the duplicitous nature of loving friendship. But what is most vital in all of this is the imperative that one should not surrender entirely to the friend—and this, not only for the sake of preserving independence and self-command (even though obedience is also part of this), but for the sake of being a good friend to the other and being an aid in their own projects of self-overcoming.

Sometimes, the adamant refusal to give oneself over completely to the friend implies the use of subterfuge and disguise. “Masking” then becomes a ploy of helping friendship, of respect, when one *saves* the other the truth about his innermost self. It is for this reason that Zarathustra also asks accusatively: “Do you wish to go naked before your friend? Is it in honour of your friend that you show yourself to him as you are? But he wishes you to the Devil for it! He who makes no secret of himself excites anger in others: that is how much reason you have to fear nakedness! If you were gods you could then be ashamed of your clothes!” (*Ibid.*) For Nietzsche, it is a necessity of human being to live in disguise; but the “fear” of nakedness is really the fear of committing offense against the friend, and not fear of the compromising affect of exposure to the other. Being too truthful with one's friend is ugly, and even obscene, for Nietzsche. Apparently it is only the human of which this is required, as the Gods need hide nothing, who need nothing, and who cannot properly have friends themselves.

According to its nature, friendship for Nietzsche is a rare and exclusive relation, and it is not to be confused with the more regular conditions of affection observed amongst people, or the common consideration prescribed for everyone amongst everyone in terms of “civility.” Thus, says Zarathustra: “I do not teach you the neighbour but the friend.” (*Z 1 Of Love of One's Neighbour 87*)<sup>250</sup> By this Nietzsche intends to illustrate how utterly remote his idea of friendship was from the

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<sup>250</sup> Also: “My brothers, I do not exhort you the love of your neighbour [*Nächsten*]: I exhort you to love of the most distant

placid “neighbourly love” professed by the Christian or the Socialist, and how friendship was for him in fact something greater than so-called “love.”<sup>251</sup> Shortly after Zarathustra’s sermon on the friend, Nietzsche therefore invokes his chapter on the Neighbour to expound just this point, and also to show that he still has in mind the friend as rival, as antagonist, peer, and as equal, by which he also wished to show that this was still his conception of the Greek contestual friendship, rooted as it was in the envy of those who thrive on experiment and victory; and hence, in the course of teaching to create and to “learn learning,” Zarathustra teaches that: “‘You should always be the first and outrival all others: your jealous soul should love no one, except your friend’ – this precept made the soul of the Greek tremble: in following it he followed his path to greatness.” (*Z 1 Of the Thousand and One Goals* 85)<sup>252</sup> This leads us back once again to the core value of friendship, which lies in its propaedeutic power.

Kaufmann captures nicely a major sense of the relation between friendship, education, and enmity (or hardness) when he writes that, “In short, Nietzsche thought that friends should be educators to one another; and educators must not be sentimental.”<sup>253</sup> Another way of putting the same point might be to say that only those capable of providing the opportunity for growth and learning should be called friends, and that this provision cannot arise from those who are merely “friendly,” but who are capable of enmity and opposition, who are willing to provide for struggle and hardness.

According to my interpretation, it is no accident that it was during the period of writing *Human, All-Too-Human* that Nietzsche fully realized the intense necessity of the relationship between friendship and learning. In what is perhaps his most revelatory comment on the subject, he makes clear that the quality of pupilage must be gauged in terms similar to those of friendship, both of which are ideally expressive of the agonistic ideal.

*Humanity in friendship and mastery.* —‘If you are going towards the morning I shall draw towards evening’—to feel thus is a high sign of humanity in closer association with others: in the absence of this feeling every friendship, every discipleship and pupilage, becomes sooner

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[*Fernsten*].” (*Z 1 Of the Way of the Creator* 88)

<sup>251</sup> That is, for example, the love he ascribes to woman, or the love he saw expressed among men as mere “commraderly.” See, e.g., GS 14: “Here and there on earth we may encounter a kind of continuation of love in which this possessive craving of two people for each other gives way to a new desire and lust for possession—a *shared* higher thirst for an ideal above them. But who knows such love? Who has experienced it? Its right name is *friendship*.”

<sup>252</sup> This is followed shortly after by a reiteration of the Friend as one who imbibes self-overcoming and the longing for superiority: “May the future and the most distant be the principle of your today: in your friend you should love the Superman as your principle.” (*Z* 88)

<sup>253</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 368.

or later a piece of hypocrisy. (HH II 231 272)

It is telling that Nietzsche would so closely associate the role of the friendship with that of the pupil and the disciple, and then also, by extension, the role of the teacher. As a summary explanation of what will be further developed in the pages to come, I offer the following: for Nietzsche, every friend is, as an ideal contestant, both the teacher and pupil of his peer, and sometimes even a “disciple,” who then engages in a specialized contest with “the master.”<sup>254</sup>

The true significance of the above passage can only be realized with the knowledge that Nietzsche consistently identified the friend as one who abets the way toward *Überwindung* (overcoming). It is for this reason that he says: “You cannot adorn yourself too well for your friend: for you should be to him an arrow and a longing for the Superman.” (Z 1 *Of the Friend* 83) Nietzsche further explains that the friend is often best seen as a reflection of oneself; and then, at some rare moments in the friend's company—when watching a friend who is sleeping, for example—one can gain a view of what could be best despised in man: he can recognize that man is to be overcome, and also what best kind of enemy is fashioned in the cause of overcoming.

By this depiction one sees that it is unnecessary for the friend to be an “inspiration,” when this is meant in the sense of being a figure who is superior in some talent, or even one who is more advanced in the ways of freedom and overcoming. In narrative terms, the low increases the high for the one who “goes under” in order to “go over,” or looks down in order to go up. In plainer words, one does not only learn from his superiors. In an effort to emphasize this feature of friendship, Nietzsche therefore has Zarathustra declare that: “Many a one cannot deliver himself from his chains and yet he is his friend's deliverer.” (*Ibid.*)<sup>255</sup> Once again, the most capable human is for Nietzsche the one who learns just as well from bad examples of overcoming as he does from the good.

It would be fair, I think, to suggest that Nietzsche's philosophy of friendship tends toward the egotistical and the narcissistic. After all, it has little to do with providing mutual comfort, security, or what we would normally consider “a helping hand” in life. According to his view, we see that friends (and therefore also enemies), are primarily ways by which to arrive at oneself, and as such they are always ways by which to accomplish, in various modes, the goal of overcoming. They are windows onto the underlying nature of human relations; and moreover, they even make way for self-knowledge and self-overcoming. This theme Nietzsche illustrates in the following section of *Human*,

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<sup>254</sup> The figure of Wagner especially comes to mind here, and Nietzsche has much to say about the advantages and vices of such a common ideal for discipleship under a great master.

<sup>255</sup> Kaufmann notes that this passage also “seems to recall Socrates' claim to be but a barren midwife.” (Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 403)

*All-Too-Human*, where he describes the road to self-knowledge as one of war, espionage, and specifically, one leading to a battle of (self-)occupation:

Man is very well defended against himself ... he is usually able to perceive of himself only his outer walls. The actual fortress is inaccessible, even invisible to him, unless his friends and enemies play the traitor and conduct him in by a secret path. (HH I 491 179-80)

In this we have a beautiful and complex vision of *laying siege to oneself* in the campaign of self-knowledge and overcoming, where the process is thought to become possible only with the secret guidance of both friends and enemies alike. In this case, the friend plays the traitor by aiding in a raid against his own comrade. On the other hand, the enemy is also traitor for doing the same, because he helps his own enemy to conspire against himself—and, to be sure, this is indeed a great help to the cause of overcoming.

This rather confusing interlace of friendship and enmity is easier to comprehend if one sees that, for Nietzsche, the ideal enemy greatly resembles the best friend for the specific reason that both of them wish the best (i.e. an apparent increase in power) for their fellow contestant. Each differs from the other, therefore, only in the mode of contest in which he engages the other. Of these modes there are many, says Nietzsche, just as there are also various types of friends and enemies (e.g. dead or living ones, higher or lower, secret or open, old or new, at different ages, of differing strengths and weaknesses, etc.) And it must be duly admitted that not all enemies are worth having, just as easily as one would admit the same in the case of friends. For Nietzsche, both must qualify for their part respectively by qualifying as opponents, or as worthy contestants (antagonists). That is, whether they oppose as the gentle friend without pity, or whether with the ferocity an enemy who is bent on violence, both of them aim at the overcoming of the one they oppose; for, when one is opposed to himself from the start, when he wishes to storm his own fortress, as above, then this alone makes an *ally* of both friend and enemy alike.

I have already explored to some extent how, for Nietzsche, this process requires a teacher (which all true friends are) who will inflict the wounds of suffering upon the one who is his friend. However, Nietzsche is not talking about a kind of pedagogical sadism here. There is plenty of room in this concept of friendship for joy; and in fact it is central to its success: “*Friend*. – Fellow rejoicing [*Mitfreude*], not fellow suffering [*Mitleiden*], makes the friend.” (HH I 499 180) Still, the reader should take caution against viewing this passage as one indicating that the companionship of friends is simply for “good times only,” such that, as a matter of mere recreation, it would have nothing at all to do with suffering. But of course, nor is it a matter of propping up the other in times of suffering.

Learning *requires* suffering for Nietzsche, and furthermore, it must also make use of friends. But then how can it be that one only rejoices with his friend, but does not suffer mutually with him?

I think Nietzsche would likely answer by pointing out that, while joint suffrage is the surest path toward the spirit of pity, good friends are on the other hand those who can freely rejoice together, though both suffer individually. This spirit points toward the possible conception of a new, opposite alternative to the relations of pity.<sup>256</sup>

But there is much more to be said concerning the friend for Nietzsche in this regard. Once again we must acknowledge that, according to his notion of an ideal friendship, the suffering undergone by one friend is under the best circumstances largely inflicted by the hand of the other. Most helpful in coming to a plainer view of this rather strange relationship is to recall how, for Nietzsche, the major way in which this occurs is in the healthiest forms of love and envy (*Liebe und Neid*), and that this for him begins with revering awe (*Ehrfurcht*). With this in mind it is time to return to the former issue of what is proper in discipleship. For Nietzsche, this has much in common with friendship, since it plays upon a traversal between extremes of devotion and animosity, surrender and command.

This understanding is crucial to the following discussion of how Nietzsche introduced what he took to be the two prevailing doctrines in the culture of education by recounting how he had often entertained a certain youthful fantasy. In the end, no less than at the beginning and throughout, Nietzsche must reject the temptation of surrendering oneself to the formative control of any teacher. But then, on the other hand, he also recognizes that the installment of this same specialized interplay amongst all the talents and interests of an individual's ideal inner "constellation" must be accomplished nonetheless. For this task, the best student does not give himself up slavishly to any other individual in order to be taught, but instead teaches himself *by way* of others; and more specifically, by overcoming the ways of others.

### **3.7 Schopenhauer as Educator, and Nietzsche's *introductio ex phantasia* of the "Perfect Teacher"**

The careful reader will notice that at certain points in his writing (and, I would say, for specific reasons), Nietzsche introduces some crucial themes by using a rather unusual technique. In these cases he speaks in the voice of someone who is ruminating over the occasion of an early life indulgence in some specific, and characteristically "reckless," fantasies of thought. In the course of

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<sup>256</sup> See GS section 338 for a more detailed description of this possibility.

this study, I shall examine two of these.<sup>257</sup> What they have in common most importantly is that both cases are expressive of a thinker who was deeply tempted, as well as fascinated, by the fantasy of surrendering the instinct to fight or resist in one way or another.

On the first of these occasions, Nietzsche brings the reader to consider what might constitute the ideal education when, in the opening pages of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, he reminisces about his youth and how he had entertained the prospect of being relieved of the effort of his own education, of relieving himself *of himself*, as he recalls, by becoming a disciple in the common, mindless sense.

When earlier I used to daydream to my heart's content, I imagined that the terrible effort of educating myself would be taken from me by fate, that I would find at the right time a philosopher for an educator, a true philosopher whom one could obey without further thought, because one could trust him more than oneself. (SE 7)

This dangerous and fanciful thought was also the same one that he says “constantly haunted” Nietzsche throughout his youth like no other. (*Ibid.*)

By discussing his former secret wish for a teacher who would require nothing of him but a kind of slavish love, with its proclivity for “faith” and self-relinquishment, Nietzsche is in essence talking about the temptation of becoming someone who learns primarily by obeying, who admires by forgoing all resistance, and who therefore renders himself incapable of true educative enmity. And although it is the kind of wish that Nietzsche knows must go unfulfilled, his consideration of this secret wish *as a problem* allows him to open up a vista onto varying possible models of education.

Nietzsche’s recalling his indulgence in this discipleship-fantasy gives an opportunity for him to reject it, first of all, and then to further discuss the importance of self-reliance in education. This in effect sets the thematic tone for the essay, which heralds the struggle of the true thinker against the interests of the state and its scholar.

Despite this very individualistic picture of a thinker’s education, Nietzsche nonetheless recognizes that every good self-education also requires some establishment of an educative goal, and hence some schematic idea of how the operation of *Bildung* should be conducted. The fantasy thus also allows him to go on to ask, hypothetically once again, what principles of education a worthy teacher would employ if given full reign over the formation of a student. In his view, there are two major possibilities: this teacher would either mandate the exclusive cultivation of one talent within the student, or else strive to cultivate all of them equally. Finally, he asks in conclusion whether or

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<sup>257</sup> Another such wish-episode can be found in the lines of GS section 276. To my mind, this passage is equally relevant to the task of examining Nietzsche's philosophy of education. I will examine it in some detail later on in this study.

not these two tasks are incompatible with each other, and possibly whether they might be even indispensable to one another.

In the midst of speculating about how the idealized (in effect, the “idolized”) master would manage the growth of a talented disciple who gives himself over completely to the will of his instructor, Nietzsche arrives face to face with a fundamental question of educational theory. For, at the times in his youth when he fantasized about such a teacher, he writes that he had also wondered specifically about “what his [the ideal teacher’s] attitude would be to the two maxims of education which are in vogue today.” The first of these maxims, he says, “demands that the educator recognize the real strength of his pupils at the outset and then direct all his skill, all the nourishment and sunshine, to the goal of helping that one excellence to attain real maturity and fruitfulness.” (SE 7) In his notebooks dating to the time, Nietzsche continues to describe this school of thought in some further detail, referring to it as a “Spartan” approach to education, most likely because of Sparta’s renowned and extreme specialization in martial training.<sup>258</sup> On the other hand, there is the tendency toward generalized training he calls “Athenian,” whereby “the educator should cultivate all existing abilities, tend them and establish a harmonious relationship between them.” (SE 8)

In his extended description of these two prevailing modes of education, a respective shortcoming comes to light in each case. For there he says that the Spartan educator must first “recognize the strength of an individual and then direct all his energies toward developing this strength at the expense of all the lesser strengths: so that education then becomes precisely the supervision of this strength”; meanwhile, the Athenian educator “should draw on *all* the existing strengths and bring them into a harmonious relationship, hence strengthen the weaker ones ... weaken those that are overpowerful.” (UWO 292) The problem in the first case lies in that strength is gained and centralized only “at the expense” of the lesser powers; and herein I will argue lies Nietzsche’s primary criticism of the type of tyranny imposed by Socrates as the standard system of inner organization (i.e. with his establishment of the tyranny of dialectic within his own system of talents and with that of the tyranny of reason more publicly). In the second case, there is an extreme process of leveling off which requires all powers to be brought to the same standing, regardless of whether such equality promises the possibility of any greater generation of power amongst them.

For the purpose of properly exhibiting Nietzsche’s relation to Socrates as an essentially

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<sup>258</sup> See UWO 292. Much more could be said here, though I will not attempt it now; sufficed to say that the profound power of *exposure* was above all the key that the Spartan discovered in the realm of martial education. The entire public community was deliberately exposed, for example, when the destruction of the city walls was sanctioned by its leaders in order to promote the martial skill of its inhabitants; or when young boys were sent off to the woods and encouraged to fend for themselves by any means, including thievery (if caught, they would be beaten whether stealing or not, so that they would never feel at ease).

educative one, as I wish to do, it is of vital importance to see that in spite of its imperfections Nietzsche was far more inclined toward the Spartan educational model, of which Socrates was the most powerful exemplar. By contrast, the Athenian generalist model is quite loathsome, a way fit for the purely mediocre, and one that at best can hope to achieve a type of “happiness” by way of its harmony.<sup>259</sup>

So it is in precisely this way, Nietzsche claims, that “[t]he *weak* natures often are mistaken for the harmonious ones. Quite the opposite, harmony exists when everything is related to a center, to a cardinal force, not when numerous weak forces are operating in concert.” (UWO 295) Here Nietzsche is saying that harmony amongst talents does *not* consist in equality amongst them. In Nietzsche’s view, the supreme centrality of reason in one such as Socrates therefore provided a very powerful mechanism of arrangement within the soul, and also one that achieves a harmony which is superior to that of the Athenian generalist.<sup>260</sup>

Having voiced the suspicion that the two most prevalent maxims of education may not be “opposite” at all, Nietzsche now attempts to amalgamate both of them into a newly rendered principle of organization. This he does by first reducing the previous models down to their most basic and benign structural characteristics, whereby he is at liberty to suggest that “Perhaps the one says only that man shall have a center, the other that he shall also have a periphery?”—and hence it is at this point that he introduces the specific advantage of his own idealized principle. This in turn he attributes to his ideal educator: “[t]hat educating philosopher of whom I spoke would certainly not only discover the central strength, *but would also prevent it from disrupting the other forces.*” (SE 8; italics added.) Despite its being the earliest express formulation of this key idea—an idea that would undergo a distinct reformulation only later on—this statement from *Schopenhauer as Educator* has been virtually ignored within the popular literature on Nietzsche’s philosophy of education. I have made it my goal to explain why this idea is fundamental to understanding Nietzsche’s philosophy of education, as well as how this idea improved over time into a wider philosophy of life.

Nietzsche’s truly remarkable insight in this early work is the realization that the Spartan and the Athenian are, or can be fashioned to be, indispensable to one another. The question concerning the two cultural maxims of education ultimately gives rise to Nietzsche’s own proposed solution,

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<sup>259</sup> Nietzsche adds that the choice between these two models is determined by what is taken as a standard goal for education: that is, either the utility or the happiness of the individual. “The partial ones,” he says, “are more useful, the harmonious ones happier.” He then turns to address the magnified implications of this for a given society: “Immediately this question arises anew: a large community, a state, a people: should it especially cultivate a partial strength or many strengths?” (UWO 292)

<sup>260</sup> Once again, however, this harmony is not yet ideal in its design, and provokes within Nietzsche’s thought a key point of productive opposition (i.e. overcoming) between himself and Socrates, the last “pure” sage.

which is, essentially, the view that all the polyphonic talents, impulses, and habits of the individual ought to be each multifariously ordained—that is, ordained under the auspice of their particular weaknesses, their powers, or even their propensity to distract and dissemble—to serve a single, ‘gravitational’ center of interest: “[a]nd it is precisely through the compulsive and dominating supremacy of this living center,” says Nietzsche, “that a harmonious system of movements in all directions is formed.” (SE 8) This insight prompts him to go on speaking about the task of education metaphorically, as if it were to “transform the whole man into a living, animated system of suns and planets and to discover the laws of this higher mechanism.” (*Ibid.* 8-9) In my estimation, Nietzsche’s articulation of this model reveals his highest contribution to educational theory.

At the very least, it provides a further key to interpreting section 290 of the *Gay Science*, where Nietzsche declares that a perfected inner harmony must be governed by a single, powerful taste. At first sight, this requirement appears to imply a strong endorsement of the Spartan ideology of development, whereby all energies are directed toward the enhancement of a single ability and a single, overriding goal. However, the imagery he uses of establishing one’s inner organization as an “animated system of suns and planets” also permits Nietzsche to stipulate that his system may include a whole myriad of orbital centers and subsystems of movement which, although ultimately revolving around a singularly dominant axis of purpose, are arranged to nonetheless allow for maximal movement “in all directions.” In our own system, for example, the sun might be said to hold a certain tyranny over the planet Jupiter (in the course of its movements, its formation, etc.); but this does not in any way impinge upon the possibility for Jupiter to act as the center of movement for its own precinct of moons. On the contrary, the force of centrality exuded by the sun is actually what makes the orbital harmony of this sub-system possible at all. Figuratively speaking, Jupiter must obey the sun in order to command its moons.<sup>261</sup>

Despite the fact that Nietzsche offered only a rather incipient version of his own educational model in his earlier works, there are some good indications that he had at the time already considered its fuller potential. For instance, after having introduced the apparently opposed maxims of specialization and generality, Nietzsche immediately asks this question: “But should one, because of this [the decree of the second, generalist maxim], force someone who has a definite leaning to the goldsmith’s art to take up music? Was Benvenuto Cellini’s father correct in perpetually forcing his

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<sup>261</sup> Though I do not wish to discuss it at length here, it is interesting to see that Nietzsche also relates this understanding to the proper place of philosophy in a given society, and the happy centrality of the philosophical practice in Ancient Greece: “There is a steely necessity which fetters the philosopher to a true Culture: but what if this Culture does not exist? Then the philosopher is an incalculable and therefore terror-inspiring comet, whereas in the favourable case, he shines as the central star in the solar-system of culture. It is for this reason that the Greeks justify the philosopher, because with them he is no comet.” (EGP PTA 81)

son to play the ‘dear little horn,’ which the son referred to as ‘that damned piping’?” (SE 8)<sup>262</sup> While retaining for a moment the assumed perspective of one who would adhere to the Athenian maxim of generality, Nietzsche admits that, in this case, “one could hardly call this correct in the case of such [superior] talents which express themselves so surely.” In other words, when a student is so obviously inclined toward one special talent, and especially when so adverse to others, then it would seem best in that case to instigate a regime of more specialized (i.e., exclusive) training. As he suggests therefore, a compromise may need to be struck whereby, “perhaps ... the maxim of harmonious development is only to be applied to natures in whom there is admittedly a whole nexus of needs and inclinations, but which when taken individually and collectively have little importance?” (*Ibid.*)

However, Nietzsche quickly rebuts this by calling into question the presumed model of harmony at play in this suggestion. He asks: “[b]ut where do we find harmonious wholeness and polyphonic consonance in one nature, more than in a man such as Cellini in whom everything—perception, desire, love, hate—tends toward a central point of focus, toward a center of energy?” (*Ibid.*) The significance of the movement in thought presaged in this reformulation cannot be overstated. It reflects Nietzsche’s composite model of harmony without equality. As such, it reflects a movement away from the purely negative ideal of a central drive (non-interference), to the highest expression of positive affirmation (mutual enhancement amongst all competing drives and talents). In what follows I will attempt to elaborate on the consequences this important movement carried into Nietzsche’s evolving philosophy of education.

For those who are familiar with his other works, Nietzsche’s choice to use the character of Cellini as a means of illustration here is highly conspicuous. As seen in his text, *Human, All-Too-Human*—the text which, as I have said, ought to be identified as the most pivotal point in the development of his agonistic philosophy of education—Nietzsche invokes the figure of Cellini once again. This time, we see a Cellini who externalizes the special harmony of his inner-constitution, his own “polyphonic consonance,” by applying its principle of arrangement to the production of a work of art.

In the artistic process of stylizing one’s life, it is recommended that all the weaknesses and shortcomings be incorporated into the overall work, to be made beautiful in their aesthetic coordination with the whole. The artist of life, Nietzsche would therefore suggest, should take a lesson from Cellini. Nietzsche recalls that when casting his masterpiece, (the dark sculpture of Perseus in victory, who stands over the body of Medusa, eyes downcast, with a sword in one hand and her severed head upheld in the other), Cellini used a unique method. Caring not for purity, but

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<sup>262</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini was best known as a metal-worker and artist; but he was also renowned (to a somewhat lesser degree) as a talented musician, despite his early aversion to the practice.

rather only for success, Cellini made use of all things available:

[T]he liquified mass seemed to be insufficient, but he was *determined* to produce enough: so he threw into it keys and plates and whatever else came to hand. And just so does that genius throw in errors, vices, hopes, delusions and other things of baser as well as nobler metal ...  
(HH I 258 121)

In this act Cellini is exemplary *par excellence* of the traits required of Nietzsche's student (self-educator): i.e., determination enough to press everything at one's disposal into service, and thus to render all things disposable, *not without* any consideration for what is or is not base, but on the contrary, a determination to follow through with the utilization of baser elements *especially* when this might compromise the "integrity" of the act, or the thought, or the composition.

Thus it turns out that Cellini's unique method of integrating various elements in making art also resembles his own integrative education. Just as Nietzsche suspected, Cellini was better off for having been subjected to training a secondary talent—i.e. music, as with the condemned, newly "artistic" Socrates—even though he despised it and showed less of a natural talent for it. According to Nietzsche's harmonic ideal, this is because talents and drives need not, and should not, develop together peaceably. Ideally, they are productively inimical to each other, and often envious of each other's position, just as contestants must be. Later, in a posthumous fragment bearing the title, "The Great Human Being," Nietzsche goes further in claiming that this possibility is a distinguishing feature of man:

In contrast to the animals, man has cultivated an abundance of *contrary* drives and impulses within himself: thanks to this synthesis, he is master of the earth ... Thus a drive as master, its opposite weakened, refined, as the impulse that provides the stimulus for the activity of the chief drive. The highest man would have the greatest multiplicity of drives, in the relatively greatest strength that can be endured. Indeed, where the plant 'man' shows himself strongest one finds instincts that conflict powerfully ... but are controlled. (WTP 966 566-7)

Beyond its value as a concise rendering of Nietzsche's fundamental formula for human strength and development, this passage gives further insight into the synergistic interplay between an individual's greater and lesser drives. The master drive is stimulated not only by the rivalry of similarly powerful drives (or talents), but also by the "weakening" and the "refining" of its opposite.

What does this mean? First of all, the exercise of power over some inclination in order to

weaken another, without destroying it, is already a further stimulus to power. Moreover, it also creates a wider chasm of observable difference and variability within the collaborative union of one's drives. The lesser drive is then "refined" to become an instrument of contrast, by which the master drive is elevated. This advanced function of personal style is best expressed in another aphorism, this time from *Daybreak*: "To deploy one's weakness like an artist. — If we are bound to have weaknesses, and are also bound in the end to recognize them as a law set over us, then I would wish that everyone had at any rate sufficient artistic power to set off his weaknesses against his virtues and through his weaknesses make us desire his virtues: the power possessed in so exceptional a degree by the great composers." (D 218 135-6) Now, however similar this passage may be to sentiments found in GS 290, there are important differences here. Unlike his schematic for the successful incorporation of weakness, Nietzsche here depicts the need to direct one's energies toward fashioning his character into an elevating example for others, whereby one becomes a work of art in the truest sense. The sight of such a person, or the experience of his personality, induces in the observer the greater degree of desire for those virtues perceived to be lacking in him. It is thus that Nietzsche speaks of Beethoven, with his course, obstinate tone, as an example of one who generates a "ravenous hunger" for more of what is more pleasing in him—i.e., by teasing the listener with little disappointments, and thereby increasingly stimulating the sensitivity of the palate. (*Ibid.*) For Nietzsche, this represents a style of character capable of construing the weighty with the trivial, and harmonizing what is defective with what is desirable.

### **3.8 Style and Harmony**

Let us first recall that Nietzsche respected Socrates for the singularity of his style, (as disproportioned as it may have been), as well as for the final "purity" of his philosophical character, which was a thoroughly polemical one. Like Socrates, Nietzsche also fought against his time and against the ignorant decrepitude he saw within his culture. But there is, all the same, a crucial difference to be found between the moral projects of Nietzsche and Socrates. Dannhauser phrases it well when he says that, prior to Nietzsche, "all previous attempts had in common a belief that values could be discovered, whereas he has found that they must be created ..."<sup>263</sup> This difference carries with it important philosophical consequences, and most notably in the case of Socrates, who constantly sought to bring out the truth which was thought to reside within the soul of an other. "Discovery" of the truth, then, including the truth of value, became with him a new form of inquiry and a new way of knowing. Through the Platonic Socrates, moral value was fixed upon the Good, to

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<sup>263</sup> Dannhauser, *op. cit.*, 38

which everyone strove with every action, whether knowingly or not.

But for Nietzsche, who is concerned primarily with the problems of life, the divergence between the discovery and creation of value becomes most vital at the point of self-understanding, when one decides to know and evaluate the self. And since the ambition to know all things objectively has long been the appointed standard for serious inquiry, it becomes necessary for Nietzsche to address how this train of obsession with objectivity falls short of what seems the greatest human task, the accomplishment of self-knowledge, and to show that here, especially here, the drive to learning-as-discovery must give way to the need for learning-as-creation.

This shift is best illustrated in an aphorism titled “*A matter that becomes clear ceases to concern us,*” where Nietzsche begins with a question—“What was on the mind of that god who counseled: 'Know thyself!' Did he mean: 'Cease to concern yourself! Become objective!'— And Socrates?— And 'Scientific men'?” (BGE 81 80) At first sight at least, this appears to be a criticism of Socrates in his role as model for Nietzsche's “man of theory,” who would dissolve all the questions of humanity into the solution of his strict theorizing. But this interpretation is somewhat one-sided, and seems unlikely to me. For one thing, there is not one, but three separate figures mentioned in this passage: first is “that god” (who is Apollo, speaking through the oracle at Delphi), second is Socrates, and third is “Scientific men.” In this passage, Nietzsche wishes to raise questions regarding how each of these three has understood the practice of that grand prerogative, “Know thyself!” Was Socrates ever in danger of becoming a man for whom his own nature would “cease to concern”? I doubt Nietzsche intended this.

Whatever the case, one thing is certain, which is that Nietzsche himself harbored a new specific interpretation of this command, giving full expression of this interpretation in the second book of *Human, All Too Human*, where he includes the following aphorism: “*Will a self*. —Active, successful natures act, not according to the dictum 'know thyself', but as if there hovered before them the commandment: *will a self and thou shalt become a self*. —Fate seems to have left the choice still up to them; whereas the inactive and the contemplative cogitate on what they *have* already chosen, on *one* occasion, when they entered into life.” (HH II 366 294)

In keeping with this realization, Nietzsche declares in *Daybreak* that he has set himself against a long-established prejudice of belief in the “unchangeability” of character.<sup>264</sup> By this doctrine a human personality appears largely determined and awaits the act of self-discovery; but for him, life is growth, including the growth of character, and it can in fact be consciously “grown” by means akin to those of a skilled gardener, who judges whether and to what extent it would be best to impose a regimentation on the different types of flora:

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<sup>264</sup> See D 560 561. Nietzsche has it that this prejudice was established by the “greatest philosophers.”

One can dispose of one's drives like a gardener and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis ... one can also let nature rule and only attend to a little embellishment and tidying up here and there; one can, finally, without paying any attention to them at all, let the plants grow up and fight their fight out among themselves—indeed, one can take delight in such a wilderness, and desire precisely this delight, though it gives one some trouble, too. (D 560 561)

Here we encounter the familiar motif of self-cultivation as a process of growing (or allowing to grow) different and violently competing species of character, habits, skills, etc. A major point here is that these things are never grown in isolation from one another; another is that under the right circumstances, and with the right “gardener,” their violence may be cooperative. More specifically, in one's garden of talents, the domination of a particular species may not necessarily “choke out,” but rather actually enhance the life of another—and do this only by being dominant. Likewise, the dominant species may itself thrive on the (relative) success of those below it. Thus, for instance, the trees shade the grass with their canopy, while the grass below helps to cultivate the soil for better water retention. To continue the analogy somewhat, one might in this case liken the Socratic tendency for supreme specialization to the power of the weed: a talent so pervasive that it eradicates all others by monopolizing the resources of enrichment, and a plant whose beauty consists primarily in the magnitude of its power as such.

Nehamas espies a similar point in another, political metaphor. The harmony between dominant instincts or talents to which Nietzsche aspires is meant to be superior to one that does not allow for positive agonistic reciprocity. I would add that Nietzsche contested Socrates in the process of arriving at a superior model of harmony: one which allowed for a synergy between the contesting forces of the personality. At this point Nehamas advises that “Nietzsche is very clear about the extraordinary difficulty with which this state of harmony of thought and action can be reached. Success can in this case too be expressed through his political metaphor: ‘*L'effet c'est moi*: what happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy commonwealth; namely, the governing class identifies itself with the success of the commonwealth.’”<sup>265</sup> I think this line of thought is correct; however I am puzzled to see that Nehamas goes on immediately to identify success in this regard to consist for Nietzsche “in having the minimum level of discord among the maximum possible number of diverse tendencies.”<sup>266</sup> Again, I would agree with this concise and poignant description, if only it were added that the minimal level of “discord” must here be

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<sup>265</sup> Nehamas 1985, *op. cit.*, 187; the passage cited can be found in BGE 11 19.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

distinguished for Nietzsche as being the minimal level of deadening (i.e., irreparably “weakening”) discord, when in fact, quite contrary to the explanation given by Nehamas, for Nietzsche there is to be a *maximum* of controlled conflict amongst the greatest multiplicity of drives.<sup>267</sup>

This is also a good indication that, of the three ways of “gardening”—one of which is the technique of not gardening at all—Nietzsche most strongly advocated the value of actively controlling the growth and interaction among talents and instincts. Hence all education, including self-education, would always require some kind of obedience for Nietzsche. This seminal thought was, I think, a necessary accompaniment to the view Nietzsche held that, “[e]ducation runs contrary to the nature of a human being.” As a proof of this, Nietzsche added the following in his notes:

What would happen if one were to allow nature to develop on its own, that is, by means of purely accidental influences: it still would be educated, *accidentally* educated and shaped, but according to the boundless irrationality of nature, among countless specimens one beautiful specimen. Apart from that, innumerable destroyed seeds, destroyed either by the conflict of internal forces or by external influence: i.e., by destruction due either to inner conflict (while the forces grow stronger) or from without, due to a lack of life-giving oxygen, etc. (UWO 292; minor modification)

Now let us recall that Nietzsche began his public career describing Socrates as the quintessential case of, but also the sole remedy for, an imminent destruction that would come by way of “the conflict of internal forces” within his soul, and within the Greek world at large. Later, and throughout his thought, one now observes that this subject continues to occupy Nietzsche, who treats it specifically as a matter of *education*. Specifically, he treats it as a reflection upon the nature of choosing what level of *tyranny* to impose upon oneself in the pursuit of learning. It was after all Nietzsche who wished to enact the “greatest multiplicity of drives” in a maximum degree of sustainable conflict with one another, which is exactly the dangerous condition of the Greeks, according to his view, at the time of Socrates. The Socratic solution was an *educative* one. As a reformulation of contest it was simultaneously a reformulation of learning, because it was a determinate reorientation of inner harmonics. It was both violent and successful, a major point of this being that Socrates was *not* destroyed by the intensity of the inner conflict of instincts—and so might one not also say that he was one of the very few “beautiful specimens” for Nietzsche, despite all his ugliness? Yes, in my view; for I wish to make the case that, in terms of his new and powerful inner

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<sup>267</sup> See section 966 of WTP, cited above.

harmonic, Socrates was a genius in Nietzsche's eyes.<sup>268</sup> But Nietzsche saw a much more diverse genius in Socrates than just his unifying technique of educative harmonics. And thus, in the last portion of this dissertation, I will in fact argue in support of Kaufmann's view that Socrates is none other than that “genius of the heart” described in *Beyond Good and Evil*: the “Pied-Piper” whom Nietzsche praises above all, and whom he insists must remain unnamed.

In my study of his genealogy of *agon*, I surveyed Nietzsche's vision of Socrates as possessor of a most domineering and univocal talent for dialectic in Athens. This was not merely a local affair, however, and in Nietzsche's mind it spoke to a great shift in the process of cultural development at large. Now, after looking at the figure of Socrates from Nietzsche's philosophical perspective of education—i.e., as a univocality of arrangement of talent within the individual—it is finally time to turn to that model of harmony espoused by Nietzsche to overcome the limits of this arrangement.

An aphorism deserving of careful attention in discussing Nietzsche's philosophy of self-formation is that found in section 290 of the *Gay Science*. And despite its familiarity to readers who share a learned interest in this subject, I feel that, given the weight it has carried in the discourse, it is worth citing in its entirety once more. However, I have chosen to divide it into two parts in order to treat the whole according to the distinct, albeit closely related, themes contained in each part. These two themes are, respectively, what might be called the “mutually enhancive integration” of personal style, followed by the theme of “freedom by way of constraint.” Both of these, I submit, must be read with a sustained focus on their educative applications.

*One thing is needful.*— To 'give style' to one's character—a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed—both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime. Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and exploited for distant views; it is meant to beckon toward the far and immeasurable. In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small.

Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a

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<sup>268</sup> One is perhaps reminded of a section in volume one of *HH*, where Nietzsche demonstrates his admission even to the possibility of a “*Genius of tyranny*”, whereby “—When there is alive in the soul an invincible desire for tyrannical rule, and the fire is constantly being fuelled, even a modest talent ... will gradually become an almost irresistible natural force.” (*HH I* 530 183)

single taste! (GS 290 232)

The reader of Nietzsche must understand that although “giving style” to one’s life is an ethical and aesthetic project, above all else it is a matter of education. First of all, the great and rare art he describes here is, in effect, the internalized application of the same principle by which one becomes perfectly resourceful in the appropriation of all experience, including the experience of oneself, under a doctrine of what I have called “learning by all means.” Secondly, by speaking in terms of carrying out the manipulation of first and second natures, and of carrying this out only through a process of “long practice” and “daily work,” Nietzsche underscores the aspect of *training* (or re-training) entailed by the task of self-stylization. In the final chapter, I discuss how Nietzsche conceived of the training process as the protracted reconditioning of instinct, reflex, habit, desire, etc., by way of inventing and adopting certain “second natures,” which, for being introduced as a foreign element in behavior, must remain foreign and somewhat unwieldy until they are fully integrated into one’s “first nature”—i.e., until they themselves become instinctual. This process, Nietzsche advises, is best accomplished by emulating certain methods of training found in the education of a soldier.

This brings us to the second half of GS 290, in which the theme of discipline is predominant. In this case, it is the discipline required of one who sees the necessity of submitting freedom to a particular style.

It will be the strong and domineering natures that enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and perfection under a law of their own; the passion of their tremendous will relents in the face of all stylized nature, of all conquered and serving nature. Even when they have to build palaces and design gardens they demur at giving nature freedom. Conversely, it is the weak characters without power over themselves that *hate* the constraint of style. They feel that if this bitter and evil constraint were imposed upon them they would be demeaned; they become slaves as soon as they serve; they hate to serve. (*Ibid.* 232-3)

The final words of this excerpt raise a crucial question for Nietzsche in matters of human formation, which is: how to serve without becoming a slave? One dimension of Nietzsche’s answer to this question is reflected in his assessment of the limits to be observed in agreeing with or emulating another thinker in the course of his education.<sup>269</sup> The other side of this question, which I will deal

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<sup>269</sup> In this context, the question at hand becomes that of Zarathustra, who asks of his pupils: “Can you go near to your friend without going over to him?”

with presently, concerns the attitude taken toward “serving” a definite code of conduct—one which is instituted by oneself, upon oneself. All in all, this is the question concerning the delicate balance which is to be achieved in the quest for self-mastery.

In the second part of GS 290 Nietzsche shows that the artist of the soul develops the talent of making all things useful to his project. This is not the picture of a *wild* art, however, whose artists would have no discipline, no center, no directed desire, no preference for one type of material over another. Rather, he showed that he believed in the efficacy of *freedom by way of constraint*. Accordingly, Nietzsche is also a thinker who discerned that the abdication of resistance apparent in an act of obeying is often deceptive; for it is vital to see that both “[o]bedience’ and ‘commanding’ are forms of struggle.” (WTP 642 342) In essence, both of these are ultimately reflective of the will to power. To what extent resistance is to be found even in obedience is a theme that runs through much of Nietzsche’s thought. Even in making the choice to obey (and presumably, only when it *is* a matter of choice), Nietzsche maintains that, still, “individual power is by no means surrendered. In the same way, there is in commanding an admission that the absolute power of the opponent has not been vanquished, incorporated, disintegrated.” (*Ibid.*) It therefore seems that, as Nietzsche saw it, one commands another only when complete dominion over that person is not possible. Commanding therefore implies an admission and a type of conformity to the dictates of the one who is commanded, however minimal these might be.

Notwithstanding the particular merits or deficiencies of his thinking on this point, it is clear from this that, much like Heraclitus, Nietzsche is keen to see what bit of opposite nature he can spy in things (i.e. especially in “things of the heart”). Earlier on, for example, while trying to come to terms with the psychology of the student, who is in the constant need for both freedom and a master, Nietzsche reiterates how obeying carries with it its own kind of empowerment, and therefore its own kind of enjoyment. For, “Commanding and obeying both give pleasure: the former when it has not yet become a habit, the latter however when it has become a habit”; and thus, he says, “Old servants under new masters promote pleasure in one another.” (HH II 311 284) The careful reader will notice how this implies, once again, that both commanding and obeying are skills which can be executed with better or worse expertise, depending on how well and how long one has had to *learn* these skills.<sup>270</sup>

From the perspective of the student’s task, this is of special significance. For it is by traversing the different regions between the extremes of command and obedience that one comes to know the various forms of love one must be capable of experiencing and deploying in order to

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<sup>270</sup> Nietzsche also counted it a great misfortune that, from what he could see, “nothing has been exercised and cultivated better and longer among men than obedience ... at the expense of the art of commanding.” (BGE 211 136)

advance in the task of “learning to learn.” Nietzsche reminds us precisely of this educative significance when he refers to the complex nature of a loving engagement between apprentice and master. Whereas the apprentice must learn to express his power of command through obedience, the master meanwhile concedes to the demand of the student for a certain conformity. The student is recognized as one who is not without substance and gravity, capable of obeying well, and as worthy of the compromise a teacher undergoes in agreeing to instruct. In light of this, it becomes clear to Nietzsche that “[t]he apprentice loves the master differently from the way the master loves him.” (HH II 341 290)

But Nietzsche’s repeated insistence on the role of obedience in education not only refers to a relation between two people. Just as important is the obedience one observes with respect to all the constraints of style, such that the self-imposed rules of conduct would impede the freedom of some instincts for the sake of greater freedom overall. Thus, “In an age like the present,” Nietzsche remarks, “it simply adds to one’s perils to be left to one’s instincts. The instincts contradict, disturb, and destroy each other; I have already defined modernism as physiological self-contradiction. A reasonable system of education would insist upon at least one of these instinct-systems being *paralyzed* beneath an iron pressure, in order to allow others to assert their power, to grow strong, and to dominate ... The very reverse occurs. Independence, free development, and *laissez aller* are clamoured for most violently precisely by those for whom no restraint *could be too severe* ...” (TI SA 41 99-100) On the other hand, it should be noted that obedience to constraint is neither available nor really advisable for those who are not equal to its demands. It is in keeping with this notion that Nietzsche assures his readers: “That which one individual needs for his health is to another a cause of sickness”—and it is in just the same way, as he goes on to say, that “many ways and means to freedom of spirit may to more highly developed natures count as ways and means to unfreedom.” (HH I 286 133)

The decisive element in the difference between those who will attain health or freedom and those who become sick or unfree harkens back to the key feature of Nietzsche’s student, which is a shrewdly resourceful, relentless innovation. What is decisive is the talent for making all things useful to learning, and this too can be cultivated. For those who are equal to this demand, and therefore “equal to their accidents,” as Nietzsche would say, all of life and the entire world is a school. Then, he writes, “Your own life will acquire the value of an instrument and means of knowledge. You have it in your hands to achieve the absorptions of all you experience—your experiments, errors, faults, delusions, passions, your love and your hope—into your goal without remainder.” (HH I 292 135) The above phrase “without remainder” should then not be mistaken as merely an emphatic device. In Nietzsche’s philosophy of life it is absolute, I argue, just as much as with the one who loves every

moment and every aspect of fate, again and again, without remainder.

Concomitant with what I have called Nietzsche's "internalized" principle of resourceful utility (i.e., in the case of self-stylization, where one's talents and instincts are optimally arranged) is the simultaneous application of this principle to what is encountered outside of one's own personality. To be more specific, it is a matter of becoming perfectly resourceful in one's appropriation of all new experiences as learning material. As one who adopts these special methods of education, Nietzsche promises that, "During the course of a man's higher education everything becomes interesting to him, he knows how to discover the instructive side of a subject quickly and to specify the point where it will fill a gap for his thinking or an idea can be confirmed by it." (HH I 254 120) This description of the "higher education" points to a mode of learning in which all things become useful and interesting. But the scope of this interest, which is really an endless appropriation, is formally the same as the scope of the joy taken in all things that is effected by the lover of life, such that the comportment of the ideal student is seen to resemble the victorious spirit of *amor fati* in a crucial way.

Good taste for Nietzsche is largely a matter of what one finds stimulating. As a matter of education, good taste would be as broad as possible. The growth of a student depends on the condition that "ever more fishhooks are cast in his direction to capture his interest; the number of things that stimulate him grows constantly, as does the number of different kinds of pleasure and displeasure: The higher human being always becomes at the same time happier and unhappier." (GS 301 241) The omnivorous interest of the higher student is also not only directed upon subjects as they are presented in academia, or even as they are found in common discourse: rather, it is an interest in learning from *all* things and events in life. The reader notices, for example, that Nietzsche personally sought opportunity for learning even in those instances where learning seemed to be most disrupted. In his writings on education, he recommended the same:

*Disturbances while thinking.*— The thinker must regard everything that interrupts his thoughts (disturbs them, as we say) with equanimity, as though it were a new model coming in to offer herself to the artist. Interruptions are the ravens which bring food to the solitary. (HH II WS 342 393)<sup>271</sup>

Similarly, in his thoughts on the inner mechanisms that preside over one's personal

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<sup>271</sup> This is definitely in contrast, (and possibly an implicit reaction), to the expressed sentiments of Schopenhauer, who would complain at great length in his writing about the interruptions of thought, e.g., especially the cracking of a whip heard from the streets down below his place of work.

cultivation, Nietzsche also came to recognize the dynamic nature of human enthusiasm, as well as the way in which this too can be best utilized for the purpose of education. That is, for him it is evident that the attitudes people take toward things naturally change over time, such that they are drawn toward a specific activity in progressively different ways at different times, for different reasons, and to varying degrees.

At one point, Nietzsche extends his philosophy of self-formation to include a consideration of how, as is often the case, a person may vacillate between an intense interest and an equally intense aversion toward something. And this, he says, must also be put to the advantage of the individual student. This is accomplished by what he calls: “*Employing ebb and flow.* – To the ends of knowledge one must know how to employ that internal current that draws us to a thing and then that other current that after a time draws us away from it.” (HH I 500 180) Apparently, there are better and worse ways of being attracted to something (or someone), depending on how this “current” of attraction is utilized. Paradoxically, it seems, it is possible under Nietzsche’s view to stylize the very way in which one draws further away from something in order to bring it closer. Hence, one finds advantage in a need felt for the “flow” away from something if this need is transformed into a resolute denial of it. As such, it remains just as close to the heart as before, i.e. as a stimulating force, but with a new bearing. Once again, I argue that Nietzsche’s comportment to Socrates ought to be read in light of this reflection.

It is in just this way that the love of distance between oneself and an enemy, for example, can actually enhance the feeling of intimacy with the other *as* an enemy. Moreover, I venture to say that it is precisely with this in mind that the reader should read one of Nietzsche’s most seminal thoughts with respect to educative relations between individuals: “*In parting.*—Not how one soul comes closer to another but how it moves away shows me their kinship and how much they belong together.” (GM *Mixed Opinions and Maxims* 251 177) Needless to say, it is the force of such passages which have possessed me to “show” the way in which Nietzsche and Socrates belong together. At present, I will begin by showing how Nietzsche departed from Socrates in terms of adopting a developmental appreciation for what might otherwise be considered damaging, and therefore counter-productive.

### **3.9 On Learning from Defeat: Nietzsche, Epictetus, and Socrates**

*What is best about a great victory is that it  
liberates the victor from the fear of defeat.  
‘Why not be defeated some time, too?’ he says to himself;  
‘Now I am rich enough for that.’*

Despite clear and significant differences, there is still arguably much of the Stoic in Nietzsche's interpretation of Socrates. In the following passage we have Epictetus, for example, who, unlike Nietzsche, seems to recognize only instances of victory in contest, but not those of *defeat*, as events that can serve to excel a proficiency in the skill at hand.<sup>272</sup> Along with Nietzsche, however, Epictetus also understands the practical value of self-assuredness, and sees this to be most perfectly attained with Socrates, the constant victor:

This instant, then, think yourself worthy of living as a man grown up, and a proficient. Let whatever appears to be the best be to you an inviolable law. And if any instance of pain or pleasure, or glory or disgrace, is set before you, remember that now is the combat, now the Olympiad comes on, nor can it be put off. By once being defeated and giving way, proficiency is lost, or by the contrary preserved. Thus Socrates became perfect, improving himself by everything, attending to nothing but reason. And though you are not yet a Socrates, you ought, however, to live as one desirous of becoming a Socrates.<sup>273</sup>

It is a remarkable thing to imagine the personal power that would come with remaining constantly undefeated. As Epictetus indicates, this is the particular "perfection" which Socrates attained for himself over a long course of time in active contest with others. But furthermore, I believe Nietzsche himself would also willingly concede this perfection to Socrates, so long as it were attended by the same qualifications added by Epictetus, which Nietzsche counted as common to attaining perfection at any craft in all but the very best cases.<sup>274</sup> First of these is the observation that Socrates "improved himself by everything"; and second, "that he attended to nothing but reason" (i.e. that he attended to nothing but a single drive, and a single accompanying talent). For Nietzsche, the

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<sup>272</sup> Hence this view, as well as the evidence provided for it, run contrary to the view of Hillesheim, who understands Nietzsche's concept of success in *agon* to be an exclusive matter of outright victory, such that: "the stronger the opponent is ... the stronger and healthier the victor will emerge (i.e. *if he is victorious!*)." (Hillesheim 1973, *op. cit.*, 348)

<sup>273</sup> Section 50 of the *Enchiridion* in Epictetus, *Moral Discourses, Enchiridion, and Fragments*, translated by Elizabeth Carter, Dent and Sons Publishing, London: 1966, 173.

<sup>274</sup> This "best case" would be of Nietzsche's own design, beyond that of Socrates, such that the central talent of one's personality would enhance, rather than interfere with, the lesser talents and instincts. In this case, defeat would certainly play a major role in the development of talent.

first of these points to the utmost value of making educational use of every phenomenon of experience; the second points to the necessity of conceiving a powerful and singular taste with which to establish a central point of orbit in the system of one's talents.

Although he maintained his perfection through perfect undefeat, one may still wish to ask: would Socrates not have been improved by defeat? Of course, as speculative as it is, this question cannot be answered directly; but on the other hand, we can orient our view toward an answer best if we consider *how* Socrates would have been defeated, given the magnitude of his public status and the nature of the contest he championed. Defeat for Socrates would have had to consist in nothing other than a public admission on his part of having *learned* something from his opponent in a way he had not before. That is, it would have been the moment of bringing to an end (though perhaps not *the* end) one sort of learning, just for being the same moment when another sort of learning first took hold of him in dialectic, namely that of *conventional discipleship*, whereby the student receives the view of his teacher without further contest. This would have been an early "death" for him, one could say, although he would have surely lived beyond it. In a sense, it seems, the special perfection of Socrates, which was that of the purely ironic dialectician (at least as Nietzsche described him), required perfection of the very kind Epictetus refers to. The "test" which Socrates was determined to carry out, which was to campaign to find someone who could teach him something, was issued in an ongoing public contest in the streets and at dinner tables; but this contest appears threatened with abolishment in the case that Socrates actually found the one he was looking for. By the same token, and certainly not without its own irony, is that the victory of Socrates consists in the steadfastness of his failure. The sustainability of Socrates' perfection is then extraordinary not only for its nature, but for the scale of virtuosity required in its achievement. On both counts, Socrates positions himself as an inimical personality in the history of philosophy. Nietzsche recognizes this not as a fact, but as a signpost for what is to be overcome. As many authors are quick to point out, it is true that he recognizes this fact with envy, to be sure, but he does so with the active envy of one who deeply understands the nature of good envy, the inflictor of "wounds."

In this particular case, Nietzsche, who is admittedly incapable of equaling Socrates in his own perfection of undefeatability, goes beyond Socrates in opposition to him by making defeat the very means of his own perfection. And thus, to those whom he would ever give the title "*Type of my disciples*" he wishes only the opposite condition of being constantly undefeated: "suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities—I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished." (WTP 910 481) Apart from those defeats encountered in the philosophical world, and beyond those suffered at the hands of others in every life, or even the various afflictions of nature, Nietzsche saw that the most

important arena for contest (and thus for victory and defeat) was internal. Not far off from the above sentiment concerning what “his type of disciples” would require, therefore, is the whole apparatus of martial and gymnastic ascetic practice that Nietzsche had developing in his mind at the time. This apparatus was itself developed for the sake of arriving at the best means of self-discipline in pursuit of empowerment. Perhaps most importantly, it was meant as a schooling in the various related ways of *command* and *obedience*: with respect to oneself, as well as to others, no less than to ideas and ideals themselves. For Nietzsche, the problem of discipleship was pressing and immense. It could not be addressed without considering the problem of how to serve without being a slave, or, how to obey whilst one commands. In previous sections it has been demonstrated that, with respect to educative task of becoming what one is, philosophical teachers are best loved in a masterly way, which is a way that requires learning and includes despising. Internally speaking (i.e., in the self-educative domain of the ascetic), the capacity for command and obedience are each enhanced through contest as well. Like love and hatred, that is, both command and obedience ideally shape and reform the other, while the capacity for both grows stronger, and channels its way into the service of life.

### **3.10 Education for Commanding, Obeying, and Wearing Masks**

Zarathustra introduces the themes of obedience and command in similar terms to those used in the *Gay Science* to relate the typically rebellious and wild mood of those most in need of (stylistic) constraint, who feel the need to lash out in rebellion at any sign of conformity, including routine, tradition, and a general “tidiness” of spirit that comes with the regimentation of style—but, he says, “To rebel – that shows nobility in a slave. Let your nobility show itself in obeying! Let even your commanding be an obeying!” (Z 1 *Of War and Warriors* 75) Since self-stylization is an activity of education, and since all such activity requires exercise of obedience and command (e.g. in the process of asceticism), this statement needs to be clarified.

For Nietzsche not everyone, and in fact very few, are rightly disposed of the talent and commanding sensibility needed to living out his doctrine of education. On the other hand, even these rare spirits are not above the necessity of obeying. For as Zarathustra points out in a speech first of all, he has born witness to the fact that “[a]ll living creatures are obeying creatures.” (Z 2 *Of Self-Overcoming* 137) But this more general pronouncement apparently also bears some relation to matters of self-regulation and self-development: “And this is the second thing,” he continues, “he who cannot obey himself will be commanded. That is the nature of living creatures.” (*Ibid.*) This points to Nietzsche's appreciation for the need of a newly formulated mode of asceticism under which to amass greater levels of self-obedience. Lastly, Zarathustra speaks about the terrible weight of

responsibility taken up in being a commander, both of others as well of oneself: “But this is the third thing I heard: that commanding is more difficult than obeying. And not only because the commander bears the burden of all who obey, and that this burden can easily crush him.” (*Ibid.*) The exact nature of this “burden” is only revealed when Zarathustra goes on to speak of that anxiety that is incumbent upon all those who would experiment with lives for the sake of overcoming, reporting that, “[i]n all commanding there appeared to me to be an experiment and a risk: and the living creature always risks himself when he commands. Yes, even when he commands himself: then also must he make amends for his commanding. He must become judge and avenger and victim of his own law.” (*Ibid.*)

The potentially banal point of saying that ascetic self-discipline entails the twin aspects of both command and obedience appears richer when seen in respect of its potential for introducing the means by which to establish and transgress the laws one provides oneself. Thus, for instance, the freedom and experiment of breaking with routine becomes possible and significant only as a result of having been possessed of the commanding power necessary for establishing a regularity in one’s life.

Ramaekers is an author who correctly approaches the problem of obedience and command from an educational perspective, and in a rather constructive way. Under his view, obedience is to be understood as obedience to the dominant perspective of the day. In terms of education, it is thus a question of *how* this obedience is carried off that counts, and the answer is that it is to be done knowingly and deliberately. By emphasizing the essential “embeddedness” of all human being, he wishes to show Nietzsche as one who understood that, since all human life requires perspective (which is, in a neutralized sense, “the lie”), then there can be no doubt that students must be educated in an effort to facilitate occupying that perspective. They are taught to lie, but they are taught “lying as lying”: perspective as perspective.<sup>275</sup> In this respect Ramaekers agrees closely with Van Tongeren in saying that the student must learn to experience life as the fateful crux between being (in this case, the traditions of one’s own historical context), and the necessity of perpetual becoming.<sup>276</sup> This is to live in the knowledge that the human being is set apart for being undetermined. Ramaekers’ major point is thus to show that one cannot ever make a full departure from one’s historical situation—and even if it were, it could never be done without having been fully “embedded,” or fully engrossed in “the lie” of prevalent cultural valuations.

Foremost among the lessons to be learned from this dynamic is again that both obedience and

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<sup>275</sup> Stefan Ramaekers, “Teaching to Lie and Obey: Nietzsche on Education,” in *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2001), p. 264.

<sup>276</sup> Paul Van Tongeren. Een moraal voor moralisten [A Morality for Moralists], edited by O. De Bleeckere and E. Oger in *Landschappen van Nietzsche. Kunst, wetenschap, leven en moraal* [Landscapes of Nietzsche, Art, Science, Life, and Morality] (Kampen, Kok Agora), p. 114; this is Ramaekers’ reference.

commanding are “forms of struggle.” The final speech of Zarathustra provides insight into this same matter. After relating to his audience the observation that all creatures must obey, especially in their commands, Zarathustra stops to relate his own curiosity on the subject: “How has this come about? thus I asked myself. What persuades the living creature to obey and to command and to practise obedience even in commanding?”—and he answers: “Where I found a living creature, there I found will to power; and even in the will of the servant I found the will to be master.” (*Ibid.*) For Nietzsche, the servant's incapability for becoming master does not extinguish the will to power. It is only transformed. In this particular case, one might speculate that the servant struggles with his obedience in order to transform it into a means by which to bring about the feeling of power; and in this case, it is characteristically a reactive and resentful result, e.g., a *forced* transformative reevaluation of servitude, in light of the virtue of pity, humility, etc. The servant may also bask in the proximal power of the master, and indulge in the feeling power in “protection under authority,” all the while under the auspices of being a “good servant.” It is the empowerment sought out by the weak, the sycophantic—and perhaps it is with this state of heart that the Christian, too, repeats in worship to his shepherd: “Oh Lord, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.”<sup>277</sup>

As Nietzsche also makes clear in other passages,<sup>278</sup> besides each being a form of struggle, the practice of obeying as well as commanding are also both skills which must be learned and perfected. However, both are also fundamentally exercises of the will to power, and both are, accordingly, pleasurable in their own way. When describing the consummate warrior, therefore, Nietzsche indicates that the range between these two activities actually constitutes the field of movement between two types of happiness: and thus,

Here the human face attains to that total spiritualization produced by the continual ebb and flow of the two species of happiness (the feeling of power and the feeling of surrender) ... here there reigns that noble contempt for the fragility of the body and of fortune's favour which pertains to born soldiers; one takes *pride* in obeying, which is the distinguishing mark of all aristocrats[.] (D 60 62)

Here it is tempting to draw a comparison between the happiness of obedience in the servant, described above, and that of the aristocrat, to whom Nietzsche ascribes a universal pride taken in obeying. But the difference has much to do with the fact that the aristocrat is possessed of the power to *choose* the occasion of his obedience, not out of a sense of being coerced or oppressed by another,

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<sup>277</sup> Psalm 23.

<sup>278</sup> For example, in BGE 211 136.

higher being, but on the contrary, out of the luxurious sense of superabundant power, including abundance in the power of self-control. It is thus for example that the aristocrat comes to find pleasure in the refinement of etiquette, which on its own is just as easily viewed as a constraint and as a command to be mindlessly obeyed in the domain of public interaction. Closely related to this is the notion that the rules of traditional forms of public activity can themselves be used in order to create the appearance of grandeur when one performs exceptionally despite a self-imposed constraint. In time, I argue, this Ancient technique came to play a significant role in the development of Nietzsche's own martial, or "gymnastic" asceticism. It is a practice that involves a manipulation of just this sort of "appearance" for Nietzsche, as well as his understanding as to how this relates to the properly agonistic concept of *envy*. This points toward what Nietzsche considered the role of public appearance to be, for better or for worse, in the developmental life of the philosopher.

Thus, especially during his middle period, the reader finds on a number of occasions that Nietzsche expresses his thoughts on how to best go about enhancing the power associated with having a well-developed reputation. Not surprisingly, these thoughts often turn on the related concepts of friendship and enmity as reflected in the respective public acts of kinship and opposition. In this case, the friend remains one who helps in advancing the project of increasing personal power, except that here it is a matter of demonstrating power before others whose opinion one holds in high regard. In *Human, All-Too-Human*, for example, Nietzsche points out that, "Many people mistreat even their friends out of canity when there are witnesses present to whom they want to demonstrate their superiority: and others exaggerate the worth of their foes so as to be able to show with pride that they are worthy of such foes." (HH II 263 276) When considered with respect to the case of Socrates—a case which is called "problematic" for the very fact that Nietzsche alternatively appears as both friend and foe to him—one may surmise that this passage indicates the dual way in which his public ambivalence toward Socrates serves his purpose. That is, while at times he found it best to praise and elevate Socrates, so as to "exaggerate" his own standing in light of this, he would at other times condemn and demean him, so as to demonstrate his own heightened "superiority."

Another passage speaks more specifically to the employment of such strategies by the young competitor in search of great repute. There Nietzsche observes that:

Youths who aspire to increase their reputation for honour and honesty first seek out a man recognized as a man of honour and attack him, their purpose being to be considered his equal by scolding and abusing him—and all the time with the thought that this first experiment at any rate presents no danger, inasmuch as this man of honour would be the last to censure or punish effrontery in pursuit of honesty and honour. (HH II 269 277)

Again, the figure of Socrates is easily brought to the mind of the reader here when it is recalled how Nietzsche's own "first experiment" took place as a book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, wherein Socrates, who was recognized universally as a man of the highest philosophical authority, was attacked and abused at his hand.

Still, the strong sense of Nietzsche's experimentalism in this approach is more easily appreciated than the strange sense in which he uses the term "honesty." Given the context, it is not unreasonable to think that it bears some relation to irony. After all, it is the pursuit of honesty through *effrontery* that he is discussing here: a public experiment in acting, in seeming-as-though, for the purpose of being "considered" the equal of the one who is abused. And moreover, who but Socrates would be the last to censure or punish such public effrontery—the kind of "masking" which could nonetheless also be called "honesty"?<sup>279</sup>

The idea of wearing masks, moreover, along with the art and utility of it—including the advantage of having various masks at one's disposal (Socrates had only one)—is one that often comes to bear on the educational philosophy developed by Nietzsche, who professed the belief that "whatever is profound loves masks." Thus it is imperative to consider how Nietzsche imagined the use of masks when it came to teaching. For one thing, the mask has the effect of altering the character of the teacher's "command," and the student's "obedience." At the same time, it can also raise the problem of wearing a mask when facing oneself.

This latter theme is best introduced with Nietzsche's own illustration in the story of Zarathustra, who is continually engaged in the activities of both student and teacher. At one point along his travels, upon crossing a bridge, Zarathustra is beset by a crowd of degenerates: outcasts and cripples who, according to their demand, would learn something from the traveling teacher standing before them. "Behold, Zarathustra!", says a hunchback on behalf of the rest, "The people, too, learn from you and acquire belief in your teaching: but for the people to believe you completely, one thing is still needed—you must first convince even us cripples!" (*Z 2 Of Redemption* 159) The response is a curious one, but no less adept. Referring to the different types of crippled men that he has come to see in mankind, Zarathustra addresses at once, on my reading, the nature of the best education, as well as the issue of what his teaching is meant to provide.

It is common reasoning, Zarathustra explains to his audience, to think that it can be good to let the blind remain unseeing (so as to avoid ghastly and upsetting sights) and the lame are better to remain lame (to keep their vices from carrying them swiftly away). Zarathustra agrees to this, and

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<sup>279</sup> Also see SE 15-17, where Nietzsche describes the "knightly cheerfulness" of the victor, and the "honesty" of the one who thinks and acts for oneself.

thereby seems to indicate that some people are indeed personally better off without the benefit of his curative teaching. In contrast, he goes on then to express the uncommon and superlative view that such deformities as these in a man's being, (missing eyes, noses, legs), cannot compare to the grotesquery of another kind of cripple in the world, who are, namely: "men who lack everything except one thing, of which they have too much—men who are no more than a great eye or a great mouth or a great belly or something else great—I call such men inverse cripples." (*Ibid.* 160) Here Nietzsche is pointing toward his vision of the noblest educational ideal. It is of little concern, according to that view, to find in one's person a whole host of weaknesses and imperfections; for it is the highest type of stylization to give place to each of these, so that even (and especially) such blemishes "delight the eye" of the beholder when they have been incorporated into an overarching principle of style. The worst cripple is the one who is only one thing throughout, who cannot offset anything against anything.

There is moreover good reason to believe that Zarathustra's commentary on deformation reaches furthest into the twin issue of human formation (i.e., education), especially since the language of the section "*Of Redemption*" is saturated throughout with the language of education. In fact, Zarathustra continues his exchange with these unlikely students by giving a lesson on educative liberation; or more specifically, on how *will* is the great "liberator and bringer of joy," but that the will is itself fettered by the sickly spirit of revenge—and above all the need felt for revenge taken upon a past that cannot ever be changed.

After delivering an impassioned lesson on overcoming such fateful "teeth-gnashing," however, Zarathustra has a very sudden change of heart. It dawns on him that the teaching he has just expounded is not fit for the students before him. Breaking off his speech, he is said look "exactly like a man seized by extremest terror. With terrified eyes he gazed upon his disciples; his eyes transpierced their thoughts and their reservations as if with arrows. But after a short time he laughed again and said in a soothed voice: 'It is difficult to live among men because keeping silent is so difficult. Especially for a babbler.'" But the hunchback, who speaks for his surrounding peers, is not entirely satisfied with this, and wishes to know "why does Zarathustra speak to us differently than to his disciples?", whereupon Zarathustra replies: 'What is surprising in that? One may well speak in a hunchbacked manner to a hunchback!' [*Mit Bucklichten darf man schon bucklicht reden!*]" (*Ibid.* 163)

Notwithstanding the pun intended here between *Bucklichten* (hunchbacks) and *bucklicht reden* (hunchbacked speech), this appears to be a reiteration of Nietzsche's penchant for esoteric and exclusivist teaching, whereby he would naturally speak to a group of cripples—outside the circle of his teaching—differently than he would to those he calls his students. It also points to Nietzsche's

awareness of the need for adaptive means in teaching: in this case, the necessity of using crippled words for a crippled soul, or, perhaps, degenerative means of teaching for a degenerate creature.

This, which I easily believe to be a tenable interpretation of this exchange, gains significance when we observe the second question posed by the hunchback on the heels of the last. It is the question that completes this section of the book by remaining unanswered: “‘Very good,’ said the hunchback; ‘and with pupils one may well tell tales out of school. But why does Zarathustra speak to his pupils differently—than to himself?’” (*Ibid.*) This puzzling turn in the dialogue invites a range of interpretations. For one thing, we can see in it the necessity of “wearing of masks” for Nietzsche’s teacher—as an expedient to learning, yes, but also as a measure taken against disaster in learning. The last question posed by the hunchback is also repeated twice: once with respect to how speaking (and teaching) Zarathustra’s own pupils must be different to how he teaches the poor and deformed; the second time, it is with respect to the difference between speaking to his pupils as opposed to himself. Does the same difference hold in the second case? That is, does the teacher converse with himself differently than with his students because he feels he must keep something from his disciples which he is willing to share with himself? The answer in short is yes. From the perspective of the teacher, as he is being addressed in this context, Zarathustra knows that he must dissimulate the truth in varying degrees and with different methods for the purpose of “educating” others. From the perspective of a student, however, Zarathustra understands that he relates to himself differently than he does to all others because the contest of overcoming is ultimately a self-contest.

With this observation one arrives at the most pertinent implication of wearing a mask before oneself, specifically when one faces himself as a teacher. This implication strikes at the basis of self-education for Nietzsche; for, the internal contest of “putting on different natures” is one which Nietzsche saw to work itself out in the relations of self-obedience through ascetic practice. For him this was the practice of the auto-didactic rebalancing the instincts, habits, and talents by means of employing both restraint and excess. This lends support to Avarim’s argument that self-overcoming consists in the subjugation of one aspect of personality to another, the ability to move from one perspective to another, and to reject one’s self-identity;<sup>280</sup> and Bingham expresses a similar view when he argues that: “This fluctuation of self ... is at the center of a Nietzschean educational project. To teach and to learn are both derived from the ability to be ambivalent about whom one is.”<sup>281</sup> And thus, Bingham concludes that, “The project of teaching and learning, for Nietzsche, is not about affixing one’s self-same self to different points of view. It is about the project of non-identity, the

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<sup>280</sup> Aviram, *op. cit.*, 219–234.

<sup>281</sup> Bingham 2001, *op. cit.*, 346.

project of being able to reformulate who one is as a result of taking on different points of view.”<sup>282</sup>

Still, however well this may work as a system, and despite its appeal for being so agreeable to Nietzsche's denial of the robust (Cartesian) subject, it has already been pointed out by Jonas that this view is problematic for the fact that Nietzsche frequently speaks of the overman as being who speaks from a particular perspective, with identifiable traits and priorities, in a powerful and assertive way. There appears to be a significant tension here. As I will demonstrate the following chapter, the solution to this apparent tension is to see that Nietzsche sought temporary, though intense and powerful, changes in self-identification. This does imply the power to adopt different perspectives (and different masks); however neither Avarim nor Bingham sees fit to relate Nietzsche's ideas concerning 1) how this should be done, and 2) how and why it is important to accord oneself new patterns of habit and taste. In short, “perspective” should not simply denote some set of opinions or a personal paradigm; instead, educative reform for Nietzsche rather begins and ends with what he calls “the small things of life.” Nietzsche had much to say about the ascetic ideal, and much against it; but by transvaluating the ascetic instinct, he would also attempt to reconfigure the entire character of ascetic practice. He would not only examine, but uproot it, and transplant it out of the grounds of contempt for the body or exhaustion with life. To examine the system of ascetics formulated by Nietzsche in the “martial” spirit, it would first be helpful to consider his thoughts on the pre- and post-Socratic history of internalized agonistics, as well as the relation of the ascetic spirit to pessimism.

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<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.* 346-7.

## Chapter Four

### The Contest of Nietzsche

#### 4.1 Socrates, Schopenhauer, and the Ethos of Asceticism

*I also want to make asceticism natural again:  
in place of the aim of denial, the aim of strengthening ...*

—WTP 915 483

In the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche gives his most thorough study of what he calls “the ascetic ideal.” There he asks: “what is the meaning of the ascetic ideal?—only now does it [this question] become ‘serious’: we are now face to face with the actual *representative of seriousness*. ‘What is the meaning of all seriousness?’—this even more fundamental question may perhaps be trembling on our lips at this point ...” (GM 3 11 117) Among other things, this introduction leads to the suggestion that being “serious,” as the thinker is usually said to be, is itself viewable as something which is rooted in the lineage of an ascetic ideal.

Nietzsche’s historical view is that the noble caste was originally distinguished by the high value it placed on victory over adversity. It was a livelihood which, as he imagined it, “presupposed a powerful physicality, a flourishing, abundant, even overflowing health, together with what serves to preserve it: war, adventure, hunting, dancing, war games, and in general all that involves vigorous, free, joyful activity.” (GM 1 7 33) What would become the priestly-noble class, on the other hand, is thought to have once operated from out of a lack of physical strength, or at least a way by which to demonstrate it, such that the need would be felt to develop a new, spiritual strength with which to compete. Eventually, this type would ascend to a position of control when guilt and pity come to serve as powerful weapons in the hands of powerfully resentful spirits. This being said, however, the place of asceticism in the world still remained a deeply complex issue for Nietzsche, since he saw that ascetic practices vary as widely as the reasons behind them, and all of them are expressive of the will to power, even if it is expressed as a “self-annihilative” sort of will (as in the case of the Indian Buddhist, for example).

Nor was Nietzsche simply opposed to all of these practices. In order to understand the way and purpose for which he held certain ascetic practices to be useful, however, and in order to talk about how he went about the project of transvaluating ascetic practices to become ordered within his own “gymnastics of the will,”<sup>283</sup> it is necessary to see that he saw in asceticism an immense potential for *Züchtung* (cultivation) by way of *Zucht* (discipline).

Like the traditional regimens of clergymen and soldiers, Nietzsche’s own system of ascetic gymnastics also has with it a variety of different technical approaches and a number of different purposes each technique is designed to achieve. For example, what Nietzsche at one point calls “the most needful gymnastic” is really a discreet practice of self-denial. Unlike the holy suffering of the religious zealot, however, in this case the object of denial is not chosen by the gymnast for its being vicious or potentially corruptive to the soul. On the contrary, Nietzsche’s gymnast can often select his objects of denial with an eye to their *insignificance*, rather than for their potential for creating discomfort when forcibly removed. The hidden wisdom of this method has long been ignored, however, and Nietzsche warns that, “[a] lack of self-mastery in small things brings about a crumbling of the capacity for it in great ones,” and hence: “[e]very day is ill employed, and a danger for the next day, in which one has not denied oneself some small thing at least once: this gymnastic is indispensable if one wants to preserve in oneself the joy of being one’s own master.” (HH II WS 305 386-7) With this technique, suffering is appropriated as a means to mastery, rather than as a means to penitence before a God, or as a means of making a show of one’s ingratiating sacrifice. Instead, the gymnast begins by seeing the microscopic life of “small things” as an abbreviated and safer arena for the same type of training and experimentation that will inevitably pervade into the higher activities of life.

Once again, outside of the context of Nietzsche’s other thought on asceticism, this may seem to be a familiar formula for self-mastery. Surely it is not foreign to the aged monastic tradition of ascetic practice, which includes such things obsessive cleaning rituals, debilitating dietary restrictions, and regimented sleeping hours (even when living in isolation).<sup>284</sup> Discipline begins with very basic affairs in the monastery, too, and the hard and sometimes deliberately trivial work accomplished with one’s hands is thought to lead one on to a greater capacity for reshaping spiritual habits, like long periods of prayer and contemplation, the avoidance of wicked thoughts, etc. But the foremost difference between these two modes of ascetic denial is that Nietzsche’s gymnast aims at

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<sup>283</sup> I follow Nietzsche’s lead in using this title, which he gives in WTP 915 483.

<sup>284</sup> It is also clear that asceticism grew in conjunction with broad philosophical movements, such as Stoicism, and not only with “the priest.” Elsewhere I discuss Nietzsche’s vision of the Socratic legacy (with all of its “schools”) as a historical reformation of the *agon*, whereby it becomes increasingly internalized.

self-denial (obedience) for the sake of mastery (command), and although the monk also does the same, this self-mastery is in turn only sought after for the sake of greater servitude (obedience) to some God or greater adherence to some prescriptive doctrine.

I have just discussed one way Nietzsche saw to transform a deficiency into an advantage. In one sense, this “most needful” gymnastic operates through the self-imposition of a constraint. Meanwhile, this description remains one of an entirely internalized agonism, for the simple reason that it can be conducted alone, without the need for any antagonist beyond oneself. Here the method is to devise some deficiency against one’s inclinations in order to use it to acquire an overall measure of self-control. But while such techniques might suffice for the ascetic hermit, it remains that they make no provision for an application within a public world that includes such things as reputations, personal grievances, friendships, etc. Hence, beyond this basic mode of personal self-restraint, for Nietzsche there must be other ways of positive ascetic transformation.

Many of these ways seem to involve a certain mastery over one’s appearance to others, e.g., by controlled public displays of pity, contempt, or ignorance toward another.<sup>285</sup> Nietzsche certainly admired Socrates for exhibiting such mastery, and it should be added that he also manipulated the appearance of his own relation to Socrates in a deliberate, tactical way.<sup>286</sup> One of the more elaborate and interesting of these “public” ways is the attempt to make use of the self-imposition of constraint in *style*. In this case, the outward perception of a deficiency, such as the apparently hindering effect of a given tradition in style, for example, when a writer chooses to adopt an established meter in poetry, is used as an enhancement of one’s accomplishments in the eyes of others. This Nietzsche likens to the image of one who “dances in chains,” and thinks quite fondly of it as an effective educational style of the Greeks. Evidently, what he finds most enviable in their case is how creative innovation seemed to be generated as a force of tension against self-imposed obstacles to a freely given style. Accordingly, Nietzsche advises that,

With every Greek artist, poet, and writer one has to ask: what is the *new constraint* he has imposed upon himself and through which he charms his contemporaries (so that he finds

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<sup>285</sup> For an example of his warning against shows of pity for one’s opponent, as well as what such shows bespeak of their relationship, see HH WS 50 322. Actually, the text *Human, All-Too-Human* is full of evaluative descriptions of such public agonistic “techniques.” In section 260, for instance, Nietzsche also advises that, “If one wishes to honour somebody, one must guard against expressions of agreement,” for the fact that such expressions threaten to “set both parties on the same level.” In other works of this period, such as in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, he also speaks of the value in such acts as intentionally sabotaging one’s own reputation for the purpose of experimentation and learning.

<sup>286</sup> This would be the enactment of the second precept of Nietzsche’s *Kriegspraxis*, which requires compromising one’s own reputation through attacking a person of elevated status.

imitators?) For that which we call 'invention' (in metrics, for example) is always such a self-imposed fetter. 'Dancing in chains', making things difficult for oneself and then spreading over it the illusion of ease and facility—that is the artifice they want to demonstrate to us ... This was the school in which the Greek poets were raised: firstly to allow a multiplicity of constraints to be imposed upon one; then to devise an additional new constraint, impose it upon oneself and conquer it with charm and grace: so that both the constraint and its conquest are noticed and admired. (HH II WS 140 343)

It is also evident that Nietzsche thought of Plato as one who favoured this tactic. The “chains” in which he would dance (and those which, for that matter, he would also dance *out* of), were those of artistic convention. With his own art he thought himself to have outdone all predecessors within the domain of myth and poetry—all in spite of the contempt he expresses for these arts, and only to leave them all behind. Thus did he engage in a specialized contest with the arts of his predecessors, and with art in general. In this light, Nietzsche cites the source of highest strength in art for the Greeks as “[t]hat, which by way of examples in Plato is of special artistic importance in his dialogues, [that which] is usually the result of an emulation with the art of the orators, of the sophists, of the dramatists of his time,” whereby Nietzsche then takes Plato as the character who pronounces that: “Only the contest made me a poet, a sophist, an orator!,” and then asks himself in astonishment: “What a problem unfolds itself there before us, if we ask about the relationship between the contest and the conception of the work of art!—” (EGP HC 60)

Beyond the agonistic *modus operandi* in Plato's use of artistic “chains” in order to publicly overcome art, it is significant that much of what Nietzsche found in Socrates was the control he wielded over his appearance to others in combat. Socrates dazzled others by accomplishing so much in his debates with the most meager of means. The irony perfected by Socrates could be—and many believe it was designed to be—perceived as an outward hindrance imposed upon himself. He himself had “nothing to offer” in the way of wisdom save a special sense for truth, and therefore it appeared that he could not “compete” in the regular fashion of his opponents. As a result, his opponents were forced to conform to his style of play, but all the while with the opposite appearance: i.e., that this was done as a measure of charity for the sake of Socrates.

In a section above on Nietzsche's treatment of “reputation” in its educative role, I sought to show that Nietzsche's earliest attacks on Socrates were describable in terms of what he had to say about making a display of opposition against some well-renowned and respected figure (Socrates being perhaps the greatest of these in the philosophical world) in order to play within the dynamic of repute caused thereby.

Much as he thought Schopenhauer to have been during his own time, and Socrates during his, Nietzsche was a maker of enemies and one who delighted in having others against him. Even so, perhaps he was speaking for himself when he described one of the many advantages in taking on such a disposition:

*Advantageous enmity.* —People unable to make the world see them at their true worth seek to arouse violent enmity towards themselves. They then have the consolation of thinking that this enmity is standing between their true worth and recognition of it—and that many others suppose the same: which is very advantageous for their reputation. (HH I 567 187)

Whatever the case, it was Schopenhauer to whom Nietzsche openly credited the awakening of a truly polemical spirit in the modern world. He was known as the great pessimist, and for this reason a great antagonist of much that surrounded him in his life, so that “even his highest works, because they freed themselves violently, must carry, to a certain extent, the mark of this violence.” (SE 88) The pessimism of Schopenhauer, however, like that of Socrates, remained degenerate in form when compared to Nietzsche's own. Both reflected this comparative degeneracy in the type of ascetic ideal associated with each. From a mature perspective, on the other hand, Nietzsche was also able to recognize with clarity all types of degeneracy, including nihilism, as not only potentially beneficial to the cause of strengthening growth, but even essential to it in all of its historical appearance—and not only as a *cause* for such growth, but also as a contemporaneous *product* of it as such:

As a matter of fact, all abundant growth involves a concomitant process of crumbling to bits and decay: suffering and the symptoms of decline *belong* to ages of enormous progress; every fruitful and powerful movement of mankind has always brought about a concurrent Nihilistic movement. Under certain circumstances, the appearance of the extremest form of Pessimism and actual *Nihilism* might be the sign of a process of incisive and most essential growth, and of mankind's transit to completely new conditions of existence. *This is what I have understood.* (WTP 112 69)

Nietzsche makes clear that the philosopher of the future, whose task it is to redeem the world from its reigning ideal, as well as the very nihilism which is “bound to grow out of it,” would necessarily look quite different from the philosophical heroes of the past. First, they would require “a *different* kind of spirit from that likely to appear in this present age: spirits strengthened by war and victory, for whom conquest, adventure, danger, and even pain have become needs ...” (GM 2 24 96)

It short, it would seem, they are to be exemplary students of the military school of life, according to which one finds that the ascetic drive of the philosopher is bridled and transfigured to become a means of building power and greater reserves of power.

The thinker of this school, who is a warrior by nature, was for Nietzsche one who would need the education accomplished by an asceticism “made natural.” Hence, for this the philosopher of the future would also require a certain disposition along with a certain history of exposure, which he called “habituation to the keen air of the heights, to winter journeys, to ice and mountains in every sense”; and finally, “even a kind of sublime wickedness, an ultimate, supremely self-confident mischievousness in knowledge that goes with great health; it would require, in brief and alas, precisely this *great health!*” (*Ibid.*) Between its elements of asceticism, its polemical bent, and the delight taken in the mischief of intellect, there is much in this description that recalls the ideal philosopher of Nietzsche's *Schopenhauer as Educator*, and indeed, much of what is described here remains a fixture of Nietzsche's ideal student throughout his life, well beyond what he observed in the personal life of Schopenhauer.

Many years after its publication, Nietzsche would admit that the work *Schopenhauer as Educator* was really a book about himself. From this I adduce that the true content of this work is then a treatise of Nietzsche as self-educator. In this way, Nietzsche used the figure (that is, the mask) of Schopenhauer to develop his own conception of the ideal philosophical occupation of life. The title of this work is thus apt after all if we notice that it really accomplishes the end it names, which is to have Schopenhauer serve as educator, by serving as a temporary idol.

Nietzsche ends the first chapter of the book by telling his audience he can think of no better way to “find oneself” than to think of one's educators, that on this day he would so recall Schopenhauer, and that later he would recall others. (SE 6) Would these others recollections then include his ‘Socrates as Educator’? That is, if Socrates really was a model for Nietzsche, as Kaufmann claims, or a teacher for him, as I maintain, then it would seem to make sense to ask why Nietzsche was not prepared to be more forthright about the matter. Essentially, however, this is a reiteration of the same question posed by Nehamas,<sup>287</sup> to which I offer the same response. Nietzsche did acknowledge his indebtedness to Socrates, and even indicated what he had learned from him at *all* stages of his writing. His varied gestures of “gratitude,” which included malice, accorded to their various agonal functions of “drawing near to” and “drawing away from” a particular figure. This I argue is a distinct exemplification of what Nietzsche called *employing ebb and flow* in the service of education. (HH I 500 180) And ultimately, the fact that Nietzsche's uses of Socrates varied over time

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<sup>287</sup> “Why ... did Nietzsche never show Socrates the generosity of spirit, the respect, the gratitude, and even the love he retained for his other educators?” (Nehamas 1998, *op. cit.*, 126)

points to a commonality with his treatment of Schopenhauer, and not the opposite.

Christopher Janaway provides a good example of how Nietzsche's relationship with Schopenhauer can be analyzed in a way that bears out the many various, simultaneous, and sometimes conflicting roles he played in the development of his thinking. In total, he counts nine such roles: Schopenhauer as "consolation," "master," "exemplar," "authority," "philosophical opponent," "antipode," "case study," "educator," and "subtext."<sup>288</sup> However, the distinctions made between the categories in Janaway's report appear somewhat confused. This is a result of a failure to properly identify the overlapping relations that hold between them for Nietzsche: e.g., his notion that undertaking a war with an "opponent" is itself a way of experiencing "consolation," or that becoming an "antipode" is a way of relating to another as one's "educator." On the other hand, this approach features a fairly sophisticated view of Nietzsche's educative relations. It is a view that is multifaceted, based on a constructive strategy, and informed by a willingness to make use of another thinker with a certain level of ruthlessness in the application of what Nietzsche called *Bosheit*. Here, this means Nietzsche would treat the respective legends of Schopenhauer and Socrates with little regard for preserving them from the wrath of irreverence, and little concern for maintaining a true or even coherent rendition of these legends (whatever that would actually entail) at the expense of the opportunity to overcome. Indeed, I would argue that this demonstrates Nietzsche's particular way of betraying his teachers. It is the friendship that best reflects the virtue of Brutus. And when Zarathustra announces to the students before him that "we do not wish to be spared by our best enemies," he expresses the reciprocity that Nietzsche thought should be found between friends, and which would seem to invite a similar treatment.

At one point Nietzsche subjects himself as a simple follower of Schopenhauer, referencing the heroism of his philosophical life, and enumerating the habits and dispositions of such a life as they compared to those of "the scholar," who also passes these days, sadly, for the true educator.

Above all, we should not underestimate the fact that Schopenhauer, who treated sexuality as a personal enemy ... *needed* enemies in order to keep in good spirits; that he loved bilious, black-green words, that he scolded for the sake of scolding, out of passion; that he would have become ill, become a *pessimist* (for he was not one, however much he desired it), if deprived of his enemies, of Hegel, of woman, of sensuality and the whole will to existence, to persistence ... his enemies seduced him ever again to existence; his anger was, just as in the case of the Cynics of antiquity, his balm, his refreshment, his reward, his specific against

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<sup>288</sup> Christopher Janaway, "Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's Educator," in *Nietzsche and the German Tradition*, edited by Nicholas Martin. New York, Peter Lang: 2003, p. 157-9.

disgust, his *happiness* ...”—but then again, says Nietzsche: “So much in regard to what is most personal in the case of Schopenhauer; on the other hand, there is also something typical in him ... (GM 3 7 106)

It is clear from what Nietzsche says here and elsewhere that Schopenhauer derived great philosophical power from his drive against and *away from* the world and the commonality of its interests and distractions (of course, this is not to suggest that a thinker such as Hegel was “common” at all, but only that his popularity was). However, more important to the present study is to uncover just what Nietzsche found typical in Schopenhauer, “the philosopher.” I have already discussed the crucial role of injury and convalescence in learning, as well as the role of the teacher as the one who provides “the wound.” Thus, as a philosopher concerned with self-education above all else, it stands to reason that Nietzsche must address the self-administration of suffering. This in turn leads to a consideration for the issue of asceticism, which was never far from Nietzsche's mind. Suffering, decay, and damage are definitely not only matters of physicality, and it must be noted that it may even go *beyond* the more emotive personal hardships of lived experience, e.g., such as the feelings of loneliness and disappointment felt by those who are let down by friends and loved ones (an experience with which Nietzsche considered himself to be all too familiar). Indeed, as a matter of philosophical disposition, it is quite possible for one to suffer the entire world as a pessimist.

In his *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche portrays Socrates as being at once the most exceptional specimen of humanity, as well as the best single representative of its ruinous inner condition. As Nietzsche famously understood it, moreover, Socrates denounced life as he was departing from it. Herein the apparent problem is that Socrates covertly “suffered life” as a pessimist, and that his life cast a great shadow of pessimism over the future. But why then according to Nietzsche is the historical emergence of a dominating spirit of pessimism with Socrates any less necessary, or any less commendable, than that of Schopenhauer? At one point, Nietzsche refers to the latter as a real force of salvation, when he calls it: “that pessimism which Schopenhauer had to re-teach our age but which is as old as the longing for culture itself.” (SE 57) I argue that the type of pessimism that was perfected and made available by the life of Schopenhauer was indeed necessary, as Nietzsche saw it, primarily for its value as an ascetic force in culture. And while the same can and should be said of Socrates, in neither case did Nietzsche consider this force to be either simply “good” or “bad,” desirable or not. In both cases, it is just that an ascetic legislation of the self is required: a denial and a No-saying to life which is to ultimately serve the interests of life. In his final analysis, Nietzsche would determine that such a force is helpful and needed in the life of an individual just as it is in a society, but that the power of asceticism must be transformed so that it could be made to yield a

newly refined, optimal power of *sublimation*.<sup>289</sup> From the perspective of Nietzsche's martial school, the ascetic power of self-denial is simply too powerful to be dismissed as “decadent,” which in any case does not imply its being “useless.”

In the section of *Twilight of the Idols* titled “Skirmishes With the Age,” Nietzsche describes Schopenhauer’s method of pessimism, which I broadly characterize as “ascetic,” in this way:

[It is] a malicious though masterly attempt to enlist on the side of a general nihilistic depreciation of life, the very forces which are opposed to such a movement,—that is to say, the great self-affirming powers of the 'will to live,' the exuberant forms of life itself. He interpreted Art, heroism, genius, beauty, great sympathy, knowledge, the will to truth, and tragedy, one after the other, as the results of the denial, or of the need of the denial, of the 'will' (TI SA 21 77)

To be sure, if it is appropriate to use the word “ascetic” in regard to what Nietzsche describes as Schopenhauer’s “enlistment” of the highest forces into the service of nihilism, then it also remains that Schopenhauer’s asceticism is still distinct in its application from that found in the typical “self-torturer” of the monastery.

From this vantage, we are better able to identify what Nietzsche saw as “most personal” in the fiercely independent character of Schopenhauer, but also what was somehow “typical” as well, which was a form of the ascetic ideal. As one who took Schopenhauer as his educator, Nietzsche would quickly come to see the special appeal that the ascetic ideal holds for even the strongest philosophical spirit. It is because “[a]scetic ideals reveal so many bridges to *independence*,” he writes, “that a philosopher is bound to rejoice and clap his hands when he hears the story of all those resolute men who one day said No to all servitude and went into some *desert*: even supposing they were merely strong asses and quite the reverse of a strong spirit.” (GM 3 7 107) It is the promise of independence that is attractive to the philosopher, along with the show of strength demonstrated in the resoluteness of one’s “No” to the world. In the second part of this passage one sees that strength is not enough, however; that unlike the “strong ass,” the strength of the strong spirit resides in the ability to grow stronger through struggle (this being the greatest of all talents). Accordingly, the independence of the strong spirit resides in the positive development of style, and not just in distinguishing oneself negatively, i.e., by hastening to become “anything other,” as Nehamas' reading suggests.

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<sup>289</sup> See for example Nietzsche's ambition to fruitfully retrieve “[w]hat has been ruined by the church's misuse of it”: namely, asceticism, fasting, the “monastery,” feasts, courage confronted with one's own nature, and death. (WTP 916 483-4)

Like the typical ascetic monk, Schopenhauer also yearned for the freedom of setting out to live beyond the fringes of “civilized” community, marching or wandering out into the inhospitable realms of solitude and scarcity, but also beyond care for the reproach that constantly issues from those who did not think for themselves. Hence, as a re-fashioner of the ascetic ideal (and thus, as a re-fashioner of the already internalized *agon* of world-religion), Schopenhauer was also caught up in the promise of the desert: as a place of desolation and solitude, it is true—but of an entirely different *climate* and *effect*. Nietzsche explains it in this way:

The *desert*, incidentally, that I just mentioned, where the strong, independent spirits withdraw and become lonely—oh, how different it looks from the way educated people imagine a desert!—for in some cases they themselves are this desert, these educated people. And it is certain that no actor of the spirit could possibly endure life in it—for them it is not nearly romantic or Syrian enough, not nearly enough of a stage desert! To be sure, there is no lack of camels [silly asses] in it; but that is where the similarity ends. (*Ibid.* 109)

In point of fact, Nietzsche finds occasion to describe a number of “desert-settings,” which correspond to an equal number of different ascetic dispositions. For instance, although he often professes the need for periods of solitude in the life of a thinker, Nietzsche rejects the kind of asceticism that drives one to take up residence in the dark, shut-in atmosphere of a cave, which is a place that offers respite from all stimulus and open activity. “And therefore,” he urges, “let us have fresh air! fresh air!” (GM 3 14 125) Apart from the familiar way of a solitary hermit, who keeps hidden and walled-away in the dark ward of his own company, Nietzsche sees that there is another type of solitude, which is a healthier and livelier one. It is found among the open and lonely heights of mountains. Thus, also in stark contrast to the hot, weary, and *debilitating* desolation of a more sandy, “Syrian” desert—the type of desert which represents for Nietzsche the one best of all for making a “show” out of one’s suffering condition—we have the chilly heights and “winter journeys” into the “ice and mountains” of the desert. (GM 2 24 96) There, the cold air hastens one toward vigorous activity, while the heat and the sun tend to drive one down into a state of tired submission. This metaphorical device serves very well in depicting the major difference between the positive and negative senses of ascetic practice for Nietzsche, which basically amounts to the difference between the related phenomena of stimulus and depression.<sup>290</sup> The section to follow is therefore meant to

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<sup>290</sup> I use the word “related” here in order to highlight how Nietzsche can allow that these two forms of asceticism are not necessarily exclusive of one another. An important example can be seen in the possibility of one using periods of debilitating practices of ascetic self-denial, but only under the rigours of a higher and more active ascetic practice, which is

further explore this distinction between the positive and negative modes of asceticism.

#### 4.2 Military vs Monastic Asceticism

When it comes to the educative benefit of internalized contest, Nietzsche is not only concerned with the remote activities of ascetic monks. However, these activities still provide a way of understanding the deeply-rooted ascetic tendencies that are expressed in other domains of life, and also a way of arriving at a transvaluated model of ascetic practice. The seriousness of the ascetic disposition can be read everywhere. Even in the modern city and in the most common places, Nietzsche believes that people continue to experience what he titles “*The craving for suffering.*” (GS 56 118) Most often, he reports, this craving originates in a feeling of boredom with existence and resultant urge to find stimulus unto action. Thus Nietzsche saw the people around him attempting to make problems for themselves and overcome them, and typically doing so in a negative way, he would claim, because they always look first and foremost outside of themselves for the chance to experience opposition. These people appear to demand “not [that] happiness but unhappiness should approach them *from the outside* and become visible; and their imagination is busy in advance to turn it into a monster so that afterward they can fight a monster”—however, Nietzsche is quick to add that, “[i]f these people who crave distress felt the strength inside themselves to benefit themselves and to do something for themselves internally, then they would also know how to create for themselves, internally, their very own authentic distress.” (*Ibid.*) For Nietzsche, a working model for this new form of “authentic” internal distress is precisely what is lacking in the sphere of educative activity: and it is thus that a working school of martial asceticism came to view as requisite for the most fundamental task of culture.

The primary difference between the military and the monastic forms of asceticism indicates the difference between the healthy contest, on the one hand, which serves to accelerate the activity of each contestant—in this case, e.g., a particular habit, instinct, or talent—, and on the other, the contest which aims at totally suppressing the activity of an opposing force, rendering it is powerless, and *being rid of it* thereby.<sup>291</sup>

Moreover, in his psychology Nietzsche recognized that, one way or another, habits and

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actually set up to overcome the perception of necessity in such things as self-neglect and abstinence—in a sense, this is the practice of abstaining from abstinence: i.e., ridding oneself of the need for it (ascetic denial), by actually *indulging* in it. I hope to make this point more clear in what follows.

<sup>291</sup> By emphasizing this phrase I mean to highlight the distinction that, although even Nietzsche is capable of suppressing certain instincts, and even of incapacitating them altogether, it is always only done as a temporary and strategic ploy to strengthen and re-coordinate others.

instincts enter into a sustained competition within *every* human life. In the case of the martial as well as the monastic ascetic alike, there is concerted effort put forward to counteract the prospect of tyranny on the part of any particular habit, instinct, etc. Nonetheless, while in the latter case there is the attempt to suppress some set of habits or instincts, the martial ascetic operates much more positively.

With respect to Socrates, it is important to recognize that Nietzsche actually identified him with the privileged warlike soul and with the *positive* practice of a martial ascetic—rather than with any attempt to stop-up the “baser” drives or with a divisive hatred of the body—for the fact that Socrates did not forcefully *deny* himself anything, but instead turned all of his attention to the practice of a particular talent and instinct for reason. To this extent Socrates was a great exemplar of positive discipline. With Socrates, however, reason became utterly tyrannical because it remained a *permanent* victor within his soul. I would argue further that Nietzsche’s surpassing of Socrates in this regard is ultimately more in keeping with the original Hellenistic spirit of *agon*; for under the latter model the tyranny of excellence in any contestant is encouraged, and even at great cost, but, this excellence having been achieved, the tyrannical contestant is tolerated only for a short time before being replaced with another “rival genius,” for the sake of maintaining the best condition of *agon*. In terms of the internalized contest of the ascetic, one talent replaces another when it has reached maturity. I believe this point will become more apparent in what follows, which is an attempt to explore this notion as it is reflected in Nietzsche’s own system of discipline and cultivation.

Nietzsche reveals much about his thoughts on this matter in book four of the *Gay Science*, where he explains in plain terms that, “[a]t bottom I abhor all those moralities which say: ‘Do not do this! Renounce! Overcome yourself!’ But 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.” (GS 344 204) Here it is significant to see that, while distinguishing his brand of discipline, Nietzsche continues to bear in mind the activity of growing stronger and more skillful in some specific talent, and hence his view is that the ascetic project ought to be conceived just as much as an educative one.

Also close at hand in this thought is the ideal Nietzsche espouses for the life of enhancing experimentation. Once again, it is a dynamic plurality of ability and experience that remains crucial in this type of life, even if in the end this plurality of tendencies, like so many rivers and streams, is meant to lead back to the mutual fulfillment of a singular purpose and a single, centralizing talent. This is the basis for Nietzsche’s repeatedly self-proclaimed passion for the *intense*, the *diverse*, and the *temporary* engagement with certain selected activities. This is why he writes that:

I love brief habits and consider them an inestimable means for getting to know *many* things and states, down to the bottom of their sweetness and bitterness. My nature is designed entirely for brief habits, even in the needs of my physical health and altogether *as far* as I can see at all—from the lowest to the highest ... (GS 295 236-7)

If the reader will allow, as I have argued, that Nietzsche's school of martiality is always to be thought of in parallel with his doctrine of medicality, then it is less surprising to find that he speaks of ascetic necessities as if they were imposed on his life by a violently unsteady condition of health. But then, according to this same doctrine of the martial school, under which one arranges himself to abide by the dictum, *increscunt animi, virescit volnere virtus*, it would seem that good health, and not sickness or injury, is actually what *threatens* to stifle one's growth and development. Indeed, this strange implication is confirmed within the remainder of the same passage, which also illustrates the positive means Nietzsche envisioned for "going without" any particular habit or impulse.

... it [i.e. the habit or talent under practice] nourishes me at noon and in the evening and spreads a deep contentment all around itself and deep into me so that I desire nothing else, without having any need for comparisons, contempt, or hatred. But one day its time is up; the good thing parts from me, not as something that has come to nauseate me but peacefully and sated with me as I am with it—as if we had reason to be grateful to each other as we shook hands to say farewell ... This is what happens to me with dishes, ideas, human beings, cities, poems, music, doctrines, ways of arranging the day, and life styles. *Enduring* habits I hate. I feel as if a tyrant had come near me and as if the air I breathe had thickened when events take such a turn that it appears that they will inevitably give rise to enduring habits; for example, owing to an official position, constant association with the same people, a permanent domicile, or *unique good health*. (*Ibid.*; final italics added)<sup>292</sup>

In light of this passage, and to give a more positive account of what Nietzsche's martial asceticism entailed, I turn again to what might be called Nietzsche's "philosophy of suffering." At one point in his notes on *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche ruminates on the possibility of a new form of ascetic

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<sup>292</sup> Here I would remind the reader of a passage cited earlier, in part one, when I was occupied with the contemporary trend of comparing Nietzsche with Socrates, who was certainly a case of "unique good health" in the extreme. Nietzsche, however, anticipates this, and responds: "I am very conscious of the advantages that my fickle health gives me over all robust squares [etc.]" (GS 3 35) Also see the remainder of the passage cited above: "Yes, 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." (GS 295 237)

practice, and records the following: “[p]rincipal doctrine: the transfiguration of pain into a blessing, and of poison into food, lies in our power”; this principle he names “the will to suffering.” (TI NZ 69 276) This fragment seems to encapsulate a certain tension within Nietzsche’s philosophy. For, the transfiguration of “pain” into “a blessing,” along with the consequent “will to sufferings,” has already been established by Nietzsche as the mandate of the religious zealot, and has also been closely associated with a practiced hatred for the body, the mood of seriousness, and the propagation of influences which run contrary to healthier instincts for life. Thus, in considering Nietzsche’s appreciation for the value of asceticism, and specifically its difference from the ascetic of “negative virtues,”<sup>293</sup> it would be useful to consult some of the thoughts he expressed in the *Gay Science*, during the time when he was most explicitly concerned with the practice of rendering personal “style” in the inner alchemical mode of *amor fati*.

In section 304, for example, Nietzsche again praises the discipline and enthusiasm that is necessary for maintaining a unified goal for oneself, the intensity of which allows all other things to simply “fall away,” rather than being stripped away by forcibly maintaining a set of negative virtues, which make a goal out of simply avoiding certain things deemed unwholesome or distracting. With this in view, it becomes easier to see how this could be described by Nietzsche as asceticism made more “natural.” For one thing, that is, it has become a less *conscious* process.

Furthermore, the project Nietzsche mused over in his thought on asceticism especially (though not exclusively) in the later period, was one of transvaluation. This project consisted largely in the sublimation of the ascetic instinct itself; for, as he describes it, it was to be a project of reclaiming, rather than destroying, the primary institutions of ascetic practice. Thus, under the category of “What has been ruined by the church's misuse of it,” Nietzsche includes: asceticism, fasting, the monastery, feasts, courage confronted with one's own nature (or dressing up in “moral” costumes), and death. (WTP 916 483-4) This misuse of ascetic practices is a primary result of a misled agonal tradition which began after the example of Socrates, primarily with the Stoics. However for Nietzsche there is still much value to be derived even from the more negative mode of ascetics as found in the case of the Christian or the ancient Stoic.

In another section of *The Gay Science*, for example, Nietzsche states his belief that greatness can indeed be achieved through following the Stoic by “turning oneself into a castle” and warding off such things as old habits and temptations (presumably when one is “laid siege to” by such things); but this, he says, can leave a person impoverished and cut-off even from himself. Most importantly, Nietzsche advises that such a course will also preclude the opportunity for “all further *instruction*.”

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<sup>293</sup> I take this phrase from GS 304 244: “I do not wish to strive with open eyes for my own impoverishment; I do not like negative virtues—virtues whose very essence it is to negate and deny oneself something.”

For one must be able to lose oneself occasionally if one wants to learn something from things different from oneself.” (GS 305 245) In the very next aphorism Nietzsche shows that, whatever the merits may be of any given lifestyle, his own concern is never for what it is *right* to become (i.e. for all people), but rather for what is required of people in our time, and for what might be *best* during this era. Thus, when it comes to gauging the merits of a hard-edged Stoic asceticism, Nietzsche explains that the Stoic naturally wants to make a show of a talent for becoming insensitive. This, he agrees, can be good as a survivalist technique, and is often advisable for that reason. Meanwhile, to live as an Epicurean is best for those who can expect a safer journey through life, who are predisposed toward art, and hope to have a greater impact, to which Nietzsche adds thankfully that, as moderns, “We are *not so badly off* that we have to be as badly off as the Stoics.” (GS 326 257)

For Nietzsche, this last observation was apparently lost on those who were responsible for the modern tendencies of public education, since, on the whole, it was the Stoic frame of thinking which persisted in its negative approach to character, and which continually subjugated to mediocrity even those characters most prone to the wiles of creative danger and exceptionality. For this reason, much of Nietzsche's work is pocked by critical remarks on the political significance of rearing a people and a culture, as well as on the suppressive state of “education” in his age. In a note from 1887, for instance, we have this damning appraisal: “Education [*Erziehung*]: essentially the means of ruining the exceptions for the good of the rule. Higher education [*Bildung*]: essentially the means of directing taste *against* the exceptions for the good of the mediocre. Only when a culture has an excess of powers at its disposal can it also constitute a hothouse for the luxury cultivation of the exception, the experiment, of danger, of the nuance:—this is the tendency of every aristocratic culture.” (WTP 933 492) Once again, although this passage is taken from the notes of Nietzsche's later life, one can just as well find the same current of thought running through much earlier works, which also centered upon the educative concept.<sup>294</sup>

But then why this consistent emphasis on the aspect of danger that is present within the activity of Nietzsche's ascetic experimentalism? One part of the answer comes from the observation that novel experiences often appear dangerous just for being so unfamiliar (and perhaps also publicly irregular, as with the Cynics), and carry with them the threat, at minimum, of upsetting one's personal sense of balance and the general coordinative ease in living. But then what particular kinds of disruptions were entailed in the curriculum of Nietzsche's new martial asceticism? As he described it, this system would best be thought of as “a gymnastics of the will.” In an unpublished note, he

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<sup>294</sup> E.g., “*From the practice of the sage.*— To become wise one must *want* to experience certain experiences, that is to say run into their open jaws. This is very dangerous, to be sure; many a ‘sage’ has been gobbled up in the process.” (HH II WS 298 386)

speculates that this would have to include:

[A]bstinence and periods of fasting of all kinds, in the most spiritual realm, too; a casuistry of deeds in regard to the opinions we have regarding our strengths; an experiment with adventures and arbitrary dangers ... [e.g.,] One should even devise tests for one's strength in being able to keep one's word. (WTP 915 483)

One notices here first of all, and perhaps with some surprise, that abstinence is included among the devices of the ascetic gymnast. Nevertheless, for Nietzsche there is nothing “purifying” about this kind of fasting. Instead, it is *reorienting*: i.e., an unsteady redistribution of power amongst instincts, which, moreover, also serves for Nietzsche as a possibility for reforming the activity of obedience and command. Thus, fasting in all kinds of ways, including fasting from the company of others, from art, and even from philosophy, can serve to re-teach even the most dominant talent of one's life to obey once again. Likewise, other powers come to prevail for a time, which introduces the need for new activities of coordination, and therefore the experience of novel strength. By the same token, sometimes a fast is also really a rest for Nietzsche's martial ascetic (i.e., “taking a rest” from one instinct by allowing another to prevail<sup>295</sup>); but in all cases it is undertaken for the purpose of increased strength and experiment, which lie together in practice.

In the above passage Nietzsche also prescribes developing “a casuistry of deeds” for the opinions we carry about our own strengths, including “tests” of all kinds. It is therefore not only the passing and surpassing of tests which is at stake here, and not only the increase in ability and a novel re-cohesion of one's faculties. Rather, in this case, it is also the purposeful enhancement of one's own self-estimation. And let us note that in this case a “casuistry of deeds” serves to provide strength by *proving* strength in the success of contest, but then also as a kind of survey over one's own strengths which itself provides self-assurance.<sup>296</sup>

At this point, the issue of strength—what it is, how it is exercised, etc.—becomes a delicate one, and this is due to the level of subtlety with which Nietzsche approaches it. For example, Nietzsche clearly postulates that along with the highest levels of strength must come the highest level of “test,” which would seem to indicate a contest held with oneself for the purpose of enhancement.

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<sup>295</sup> TI MM 6 1; also see HH II 390 325.

<sup>296</sup> For an example of how this process plays out psychologically, one might turn to WTP 800 420, where strength is compounded by recognition of itself in terms of enhanced beauty, simplicity, etc.: “Logical and geometrical simplification is a consequence of enhancement of strength: conversely the apprehension of such a simplification again enhances the feeling of strength ... ”

But since Nietzsche has already identified the real vices of the world to reside in the sentiments of pity and spiritual cowardice, which are conventionally called virtues, and since these things *harm* more deeply than any conventional illness or wound, then, somewhat strangely, they too must be taken up as a propaedeutic. For those who are capable of it, therefore, the question becomes how much *decadence* one can intentionally adopt and survive—decadence, that is, as Nietzsche understood it: as a characteristic of all that people most generally call good, virtuous, and wholesome. Hence, at such a height of power, when all things become ripe for being dispensed in the service of educating such a radical individual, Nietzsche would finally pose the following questions:

[H]ow far to prevail against the conditions that preserve society and against its prejudices?—how far to unchain one's terrible qualities through which most people perish?—how far to oppose truth and reflect on its most questionable sides?—how far to oppose suffering, self-contempt, pity, vice, with the query as to whether one cannot become master of them? (—what does not destroy us makes us stronger)—finally: how far to acknowledge in one's mind the rule, the commonplace, the petty, good, upright, the average nature, without letting oneself be ruined through seduction by the good. The good as luxury, as subtlety, as vice. (WTP 934 493)

Nietzsche prefaces these questions by calling them all “Nothing but questions of strength.” They are questions of strength, to be sure; but more than anything they are questions of strength when it comes to exercise of proper strategic restraint. To treat indulgence in the good as a contest of mingling with the base for the sake of elevation—that is a tremendous exercise of power, says Nietzsche. To actually *indulge* in asceticism, in pity<sup>297</sup>, and in all kinds of self-torture, as if one were indulging in luxury: in a word, the luxury and resource to test one's own *immoralism* and to strengthen it thereby. In this way and in others, I argue, affirmation is everywhere to be found in Nietzsche's philosophy of education. Likewise, *amor fati* is reflected in the realm of education when one affirms one's weaknesses and mistakes, past and present, and is made more powerful (i.e., more joyful), in the process. Apparently, in the type of ascetic practice that makes this possible, it is

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<sup>297</sup> On the important issue of Nietzsche's transvaluation of pity, see this important passage from BGE 293 230: “A man who says, 'I like this, I take this for my own and want to protect it and defend it against anybody'; a man who is able to manage something, to carry out a resolution, to remain faithful to a thought, to hold a woman, to punish and prostrate one who presumed too much; a man who has his wrath and his sword and to whom the weak, the suffering, the hard pressed, and the animals, too, like to come and belong by nature, in short a man who is by nature a *master*—when such a man has pity, well, *this* pity has value.” One notices that this pity is to be offset with wrath, as well as with the capacity for taking up a cause and the forthright activity of a self-obedient mind.

reflected when even former principles of asceticism which were based on the mistaken role of deprivation are affirmed as ways to test the extent of one's innermost resolve against the ideals that are expressed in their demands. In this way, Nietzsche's martial ascetic contest makes an antagonist even of former, depreciated versions of ascetic contest.

Nietzsche's fascination with the philosophical implications of contest started early on; however it is during the middle period that one appreciates the further refinement of this concept's practicable polemical applications as well as its more political reflections. In the later period of his thinking, when Nietzsche had fully digested the problem of asceticism, that is, when he had gone through its psycho-historical origins, back to its roots in the culture of pagan religion, and after he had begun to re-appropriate it into a new agonial construct of education as a more militant or "gymnastic" exercise, he had developed a new brand of ascetic practice.

This practice was likewise meant provide the means for a show of power, to bring one into power, and to bring about a kind of knowledge.<sup>298</sup> Meanwhile, the gymnastic knowledge and militant power, which are won by continuous exercise in excess as well as in restraint, differ greatly from the ascetic practice normally associated with religious renunciation. For, whereas ascetic truth for the holy man signifies divine communion and understanding by means of surrendering the will before God, Nietzsche detects in this a sort of weakness for the sake of weakness, a gesture of payment in pain for divinities who seemed to respect nothing but pain (in the oldest forms of asceticism) and then later on in history, a gesture of the sacrificial good-will which is characterized by enraptured stillness and the release of all tension in the body: both the cause and the effect of overcoming the desires "of the flesh." On the other hand, strength for the militant ascetic *just is* its effects<sup>299</sup>: i.e., the heightened coordination of muscle groups along with that of the psychological faculties<sup>300</sup>; the constant upheaval and re-entwining of various competing drives; an acute sensitivity toward objects of stimulation (whether they be attractive or repulsive in kind)<sup>301</sup>; and, above all, a greater sense of strength.

Despite the fact that Nietzsche does not abandon the practice of ascetic denial, the precepts of Nietzsche's martial asceticism are meant to be experienced primarily as articles of license, rather than

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<sup>298</sup> I.e. self-knowledge, which is gained *exclusively* by way of experiencing limits of "attack and defense" (D 212 134)

<sup>299</sup> As early as the *Genealogy of Morals*, it was clear to Nietzsche that, "A quantum of strength is equivalent to a quantum of urge, will, activity, and it is only the snare of language ... that blinds us to this fact." (GM 1 13 45)

<sup>300</sup> I will develop this point further in the section titled "Physical Culture." In the meantime I offer Mügge's portrayal of Nietzsche's daily life for the reader's reflection: "The simultaneous and equal suffering of his eyes, head, and digestive organs is the most striking peculiarity of Nietzsche's case; all the reflex symptoms, ocular, cerebral, neural, psychic and digestive, depended accurately upon the exact amount of work which he gave his eyes, and were relieved in exactly the same proportion as the amount of walking and physical exercise that he took." (Mügge, *op. cit.*, 93)

<sup>301</sup> See GS 301 241.

of restraint. In this way, the practitioner enters with the attitude of personal *ambition*, whereby one decides to freely engage in the contest of creative experiment, and, accordingly, makes only the following commitment: “To grant oneself the right to exceptional actions; as an experiment in self-overcoming and freedom ... To create control and certainty in regard to one's strength of will through asceticism of every kind ... To learn obedience in such a way that it provides a test of one's self-support.” (WTP 921 487) And although the process of Nietzsche's ascetic gymnast is more positive in comparison to that of the monk or religious zealot for this reason—as well as for the fact that it aims at the optimal incorporation of *all* the phenomena of life—this does not entail that the gymnast simply wills “more of everything,” without any respect for proportion.

All of this implies that it is not outside the bounds of Nietzsche's transvaluated asceticism, and not inconsistent with what he says about his hatred for negative virtues, to actively deny certain instincts even by way of forced abstinence. Once again, there is a difference in this case from the traditional ascetic model of the church. Speaking at one point on his affinity with the practice of artists who abstain from sexual acts in times of great creative output, Nietzsche offers the following clarification: “There is nothing in this of chastity from any kind of ascetic scruple or hatred of the senses, just as it is not chastity when an athlete or jockey abstains from women: it is rather the will of their dominating instinct, at least during their periods of great pregnancy.” (GM 3 8 111) It is telling to see that at this point in his thought Nietzsche was already quite comfortable in talking about the parallels between the creative processes of artists, philosophers, and athletes. To this list we must add the “soldier,” which is the type that becomes more and more prevalent in the Nietzsche's thoughts on education as time goes on.

Eventually, Nietzsche in fact resolves that the martial school of learning is exclusively appropriate to all aspects of personal formation, at one point pronouncing the following wholesale judgment on the requirements of education: “[j]ust as the soldier learns his exercises, so should man learn how to act in life. In truth this unconsciousness belongs to every kind of perfection[.]” (WTP 430 350) In this Nietzsche has expressed an important insight into the nature of educating the instincts, which in turn speaks to the method by which Nietzsche saw fit to undertake the process of self-stylization laid out in GS 290. As he saw it, unconsciousness stood as the mark of mastery in all skills. In educational terms, it denotes for Nietzsche the rearing of a new “second nature,” which ideally enacts itself throughout the performance of an entire life, to the greatest endurable degree of intensity. But then what was it that Nietzsche saw in the method of learning at work in the exercise of a soldier?

During Nietzsche's time as well as typically throughout history, the drill is the method of choice when it comes to reconstructing the instincts of a soldier. Its aim is the accomplishment of

“unconscious” self-mastery. In terms of its experience, such training is often undergone without a complete understanding as to the real place—if there really is an immediate one—of such drills as they are meant to apply other contexts. For this, the soldier’s obedience is all the more transformed and enhanced. For one thing, the capacity for obeying can perhaps itself undergo the enhancing benefits of partial blindness in this way. The soldier also trains under duress, and especially under the threatening prospect of performing badly in the sight of peers; for, as Nietzsche attests, “A cold look or a sneer on the face of those among whom and for whom one has been educated is feared even by the strongest.” (GS 50 114)” Moreover, the will that is required of the student to master the drill, which is itself certainly not without content, is often amplified in proportion to how useless it may seem at the time, for it is, after all, the stark redundancy of a task, and not the effort itself, that can truly drive one to the breaking point. And it is true that the soldier is also often said to have his will “broken”; however, as Nietzsche understood very well, it is only broken in this case for the purpose of strengthening it, if not as a whole, then in some specified and focused manner, as in the characteristically “Spartan” course of education.

Overall, it is once again the power of the unconscious or “instinctual” skill which Nietzsche has foremost in his mind when he writes of the value in learning as the soldier does. For in soldiering the idea is to reform the natural movements of the body (and therefore the mind), which means to develop and incorporate a “second nature” that informs all movement. In the various systems of martial education, one therefore finds a common method of training: short, elaborate, performances of impressive beauty, most often without any obvious potential for a useful application within warfare or any other context. Rank formations teach coordination and working as a system of others, to work in unison, to work with a mind for detail, to train the body to obey, not in spite of, but especially in response to the appearance of exaggerated style, the futility of pomp, and, above all, the audacity of the notion that *dancing*, of all things, is the way to improving martial dexterity. But through all of this Nietzsche is capable of recognizing that “in dance the maximum power is only potentially present, betraying itself in the suppleness and opulence of movement.” (BT 9 59) Artistic martiality is educative first of all because it is expressive: it is made “powerful” by engendering the feeling of freedom in movement therein.<sup>302</sup>

It is also well known that dance, which promoted gracefulness in all movements, was a major part of martial training for the ancient Greeks, along with pankration. The same can be said, and perhaps even more emphatically, with respect to those martial exercises developed specifically for

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<sup>302</sup> For an insightful discussion of this aspect in Nietzsche’s educational philosophy, see Murphy’s conclusion in *Nietzsche as Educator*, University Press of America, Lanham, MD: 1984, which focuses almost exclusively on Nietzsche’s educational motif of the war-dance.

the individual, as opposed to those meant to be performed as a group. In China, the “forms” of the martial family collectively known as *gong fu* are works of educative art forged under the pressure or “agony” of a lifetime spent in combat. The “style” of the master, as it is expressed in a set of forms, is meant essentially as a biography of the individual who created them. By performing them again and again, it is thought that the trainee partakes in the experience of the author, who more originally learned from a long series of encounters, defeats, and victories. This teaching device *synthesizes* martial experience into a short “dance” which is to be performed for the purpose of learning: primarily, this amounts to a retraining of the instincts. With this there is an enactment of combat that can be accomplished all on one’s own, in solitude, and yet, in such cases one is also constantly in the presence of a teacher, i.e., just as in the case of reading, or *performing*, the text of a dead author. This process might be called “*practice in vicarious overcoming*,” since the result is an acquired elegance in movement and coordination, as well as fighting ability (or the ability to “overcome” in any way).

Evidently, Nietzsche also thought of his published texts as a record of his own self-education, and as a biography of his own battles and victories, in which he claimed to speak of nothing in his philosophy beyond his most personal history of contestual becoming. In *Human, All-Too-Human* he announces: “[m]y writings speak *only* of my overcomings: ‘I am in them, together with everything that was inimical to me, *ego ipsissimus* [my very own self], indeed, a yet prouder expression be permitted, *ego ipsissimum* [my innermost self].”<sup>303</sup> Moreover, Nietzsche also evidently felt the same way with regard to the proper way of “learning” his own writing by the drill; for, as he says, “[h]e who writes in blood and aphorisms does not want to be read, he wants to be learned by heart.” (Z 1 *Of Reading and Writing* 67) In this regard, it appears that the aphorist wants to impart his wisdom as something that is duly incorporated into the memory and sensibility of the learner. Having learned a piece “by heart” would then mean having it constantly within reach, just as the musician recalls and plays without effort those pieces of music within his personal repertoire, those which can only be drawn into the heart and become “second nature” by means of repetition. It stands to reason, moreover, that as one concerned with the purposeful (re)constitution of instincts, Nietzsche would be equally concerned with the proper method by which to integrate himself into the very instincts of those he sought to affect.

For Nietzsche, the conscious level of activity should serve as the training ground for habits that would, with time, submerge themselves to become *incorporated* as a physiological pathway, a neurological habit, a new shape of temperament. This also helps to explain why Nietzsche insists that all novel activities begin with a sense of difficulty and pain; for, “[i]n all becoming conscious there is expressed a discomfiture of the organism; it has to try something new, nothing is sufficiently adapted

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<sup>303</sup> From Nietzsche’s preface to *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, HH p. 209.

for it, there is toil, tension, strain—all this *constitutes* becoming-conscious”; while on the other hand, “—Genius resides in instinct; goodness likewise. One acts perfectly only when one acts instinctively.” (WTP 439 243) Not surprisingly, perhaps, Nietzsche goes on to offer a more thoroughly physiological explanation for this, according to which: “Intensity of consciousness stands in inverse ratio to ease and speed of cerebral transmission. Among Greek philosophers the reverse opinion about instinct prevailed: which is always a sign of weakened instincts.” (*Ibid.* 242)

It is reasonable to suppose that Nietzsche has the tradition founded on the life of Socrates close to mind with this observation, since it seems to refer to the hyper-rationalization of philosophy after his time. But this is presumably as opposed to the more positive and instinctual philosophies of the “pure” sages: a group which, oddly enough, also included Socrates, who brought an end to the possibility for such purity, as demonstrated in the case of his most immediate student, Plato. Much of the ordeal undergone in the transition between Socrates and his inheritors, therefore, is to be measured out in its affects upon the relation between conscious and instinctual activity. In the case of Socrates personally, however, the case is rather complicated.

As Dannhauser points out, there is a certain naturalism to be found in Nietzsche’s thoughts on instinct and the will, such that the voice of instinct is promoted as one of positivity and ease in movement. This constitutes another inversion between Nietzsche and Socrates. More specifically, he writes that:

Nietzsche equates the divine voice with instinctual wisdom [while in] Socrates instinctual wisdom appears only as something inhibiting conscious knowing, which is to say that Socrates is a wholly abnormal nature. In productive men instinct is the creative and affirming power, while consciousness is critical and negative, but in Socrates consciousness is the creator while instinct is the critic.<sup>304</sup>

If one can in truth call this a form of naturalism, then it appears to be one Nietzsche holds in common with Socrates, although in an inverted way, which is to say that the voice of instinct remains privileged, “divine” even, but for Nietzsche it does so as the power of action and creativity, rather than one of censure. This represents an initial complication. Just as abnormal and exceptional, however, was the capacity of Socrates to carry out the exercise of logic within dialectic like no other, but to nonetheless do so with the superior ease of one who had already made of it a second-nature. In other words, Socrates exemplified and thus demonstrated the “reverse opinion about instinct” that took hold with the Greeks: namely, that the most intensely conscious and deliberative acts of dialectic

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<sup>304</sup> Dannhauser, *op. cit.*, 62.

could actually help in attaining an instinctual grace in one's thinking. I take this to also be the view of Dannhauser when he offers the further remark that, despite apparently being an operation of consciousness and therefore of an unwieldy, uncoordinated, and unnatural character, still Nietzsche understood that "it [the logical drive of Socrates] manifests a natural power such as we only encounter, to our awed surprise, in the very greatest instinctual forces."<sup>305</sup>

In sum, the dynamic inherent to "first" and "second" natures cannot be conceived without a consideration for the unconscious and the conscious, which amounts to a difference between ease and spontaneity of activity on the one hand, and the hesitancy of uncoordinated activity on the other. Throughout all of this, moreover, Nietzsche is careful to keep one vigilant eye on the physiology of learning. The next two sections are therefore offered as brief discussions on how the agonistic discipline of Nietzsche's philosophical school of education was also in fact meant to be in affect of the whole life: the neurological, dietetic, pedagogical, and even the political.

### **4.3 Physical Culture**

*The strongest in body and soul are the best—Zarathustra's fundamental proposition—;  
from them is generated that higher morality of the creator.*

—TI NZ 52 271

While the religious ascetic may denigrate his physical health or else deny himself any of those things "of the body" in general favour of a more "spiritual" well-being, Nietzsche's ascetic gymnast instead sees that the physical and the spiritual share a relation of mutual reflection and enhancement, rather than one of replacement or even of opposing "balance." In other words, health of the body and the soul grow together, even though this same growth may occasionally call upon these two conditions to be set against each other in various ways. Interpreted in this light, the metaphor of "health" in Nietzsche is at times more of a metaphor than at others. That is, while emphasizing the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of growth that come by way of opposition and sickness, it must not be forgotten that even this kind of growth is attainable, as it was for him personally, through the refined experience of *physical* conditions. Recall that Nietzsche later looks back upon his life and reflects that "This, in fact, is how that long period of sickness appears to me *now*: as it were I discovered life anew, including myself; I tasted all good and even little things, as others cannot easily

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<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

taste them—I turned my will to health, to *life*, to philosophy.” (EH *Why I am so Wise* 2 224) But then, what sort of growth is associated with a new appreciation of “little things”? And what are these things?

Nietzsche suggests that in fact most of all the problems of politics, social organization, and education hinge on a great misunderstanding and despising of the “little things” of life, the effect being that the harmful men of the world have actually come to be seen as the most helpful. (EH *Why I am so Clever* 10 256) This is because such men have succeeded in subordinating the details of life, and especially of physical life, to what have been taken as the “higher” matters of intellectuality, moral virtue, godliness, etc. Nietzsche identifies this as a ruinous mistake, and concludes that, “these small things—nutrition, place, climate, recreation, the whole casuistry of selfishness—are inconceivably more important than everything one has taken to be important so far. Precisely here one must begin to *relearn*.” (*Ibid.*) But this same project of “relearning” was present even in Nietzsche's earliest thoughts on culture and education, and it was drawn up from the example of the Greeks, who were thought by him to have cultivated the most essential mannerisms of life. Thus, even as early as 1872, Nietzsche argued that, “culture should begin in the right place ... the right place is the body, the gesture, the diet, physiology; the rest follows from that. Therefore the Greeks remain the first *cultural* event in history.” (EGP HC 47)

However, when the Ancients practiced philosophy it was, to say the least, nothing that what we would now call “scholarship.” Accordingly, Nietzsche's high praise of the pre-Platonics emphasizes all those qualities of a thinker, and of the prodigious student no less, which are derived from a certain nakedness and naivety. For Nietzsche, these philosophers were original out of necessity. Being without the confining intellectual corridors of a modern educational system, they would take the world as their gymnasium, whereby lessons come by everyday occurrences and are infused directly into the activity of that world, and of that life. But most importantly, such conditions as the Ancients enjoyed required much in the way of *will*. This is a crucial point—one that stands at the ground-level of Nietzsche's entire philosophy of education, which is essentially that: “[t]he great educator like nature must elevate obstacles in order that these may be overcome.” (TI NZ 28 265) But why is this necessary? Nietzsche answers that it is because it is specifically through *willing*, through the exertion of will in all different sorts of coordinative formulations (i.e. between instincts and faculties), as well as all levels of exertion, by which a person is able to attain *freedom*. Again, this is what I have called Nietzsche's “freedom by way of constraint,” and it is essential to his philosophy of education; for as Nietzsche has Zarathustra declare: “Willing liberates: that is the true teaching of willing and liberty—thus Zarathustra teaches it.” (Z 2 *On the Blissful Islands* 111) But to then ask “why?” once more to this explanation leads the reader to consider a proposal stated earlier: namely,

that freedom for Nietzsche is won by honing the craft of self-education, and that the talent for “learning” is the highest and most central talent within the constellation of the ideal student. Zarathustra likewise understands his teaching of “willing” and “liberation” to inform the activity of creation, and specifically self-creation. “To will liberates,” he says later—“for to will is to create: thus I teach. And you shall learn solely to create. And you shall first learn from me how to learn—how to learn well.” (*Z 3 Of Old and New Law-Tables* 16 223)

As I have explained, this range of thought between obstacle, opponent, will, freedom, and the talent for learning was rooted in Nietzsche’s historical interpretation of the *agon* as begun with the Ancients. However, though it is not my purpose to demonstrate that Nietzsche envisioned for the world a system of education which would somehow reanimate a purely “Greek” sense of contest and education, he did seriously consider the implications of such a system in the public world. In *Daybreak*, for example, Nietzsche recalls the quality of education in Germany, and asks admonishingly:

Did we learn to speak or write as they [the Ancients] did? Did we practise unceasingly the fencing-art of conversation, dialectics? *Did we learn to move as they did?* Did we learn anything of the asceticism practised by all Greek philosophers? Were we trained in a single one of the antique virtues and in the manner in which the ancients practised it? (D 195 196; italics added)

Nietzsche's letters also contain remarks suggesting that he thought of such a scenario at least as a worthy fantasy: “And we can become true teachers,” he writes, “only when we lift ourselves out of this [the university] atmosphere by every available means ... So we will throw off this yoke once and for all: for me that's settled. And then we'll build a new *Greek* academy.” (Basel in Dec. 1870, SPL 14) Kaufmann also suggests that Nietzsche’s vision for a new method of education, which would include the rigours of the soldier in training, was inspired largely by the Greeks—and in part by the example of Socrates specifically: “The scattered notes of Nietzsche's last years in which he toys with notions of breeding philosophers and with a caste system in which nature herself distinguishes between the predominantly spiritual ones (*Geistige*), the warriors, and the mediocre mass, are obviously inspired by the *Republic*, no less than are the notes in which Nietzsche suggests that military discipline must be part of the philosopher's education. Yet who among all the great philosophers was a soldier's soldier—except Socrates?”<sup>306</sup>

Nietzsche recognized that the model of cultural education found in the Greeks featured the

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<sup>306</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 401; this is Kaufmann’s footnote. Also see Thiele, *op. cit.*, 169, who reaches the same conclusion.

centrality of *agon*, along with the fundamentality of physical culture. His development of this model included techniques according to the observation that the thinker feeds his thoughts along with his body, that both ultimately strive toward the same thing, and that, despite the fact that the strengths of both must ideally accompany one another, they are mutually enhanced by each other *especially* under the affect of their respective deficiencies. This then is what Nietzsche takes as “the goal,” which is namely: “the higher culture of the whole body and not only of the brain.” (TI NZ 56 273) Echoing the Greeks, this emphasizes the place of physical culture in education as well as the relation between exercise and health. With time, Nietzsche would therefore also become increasingly taken by the need to incorporate physiology into his account of all development, including that of philosophy, such that physicality, with all of its own special domains of discipline, like gymnastics, ascetic practices, and even certain tests of ethical stamina, would continue to stand central in the mind of Nietzsche when it came to the education of a philosopher.

I suggest one important reason for this emphasis is that it is precisely through such practices that greater levels of the *outright exertion* of power can be experienced. At least in the sense that such physical training requires much and is therefore “laborious,” there is certainly a type of “work” done on the part of the learner; but very often the work done in this case is not carried out for any purpose other than that of repotentializing one's power to excel further in the *exertion* of power, as opposed to simply working toward “having” more power.<sup>307</sup> In other words, a large part of physical training is done, not only in order to enhance the performance of some ability or other, but it is instead also a way of extending the ability to employ what strength one has already achieved, to go further into whatever effort is required, and thus, to thereby return back to rest from an increasingly further distance; or, as in the case of certain ascetic practices, to thereby experience recovery from a deeper state of physical denial.<sup>308</sup> A second and more easily apparent reason for Nietzsche's insistence on paying attention to the body and working through the body in education is revealed in how he stresses the importance of unconsciousness in the performance of all activities, presumably including philosophy, and how the art of unconsciousness, which is an educational art, is best learned by training martially. In this way, the art of learning like a *soldier* becomes most appropriate to

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<sup>307</sup> Likewise, Nietzsche would normally speak in terms of “*being*” a quantum of power, rather than of possessing it. See WTP 858 458.

<sup>308</sup> The collected notebooks of Nietzsche's final years of intellectual lucidity are full of attempts to make a contest of nearly every activity. This is once again reminiscent of the Spartans, who, for example, would go to the extreme length of making a contest out of which man could withstand the most brutal flogging (which they called the contest of *diamastigosis*). Such an example does well to illustrate the difference in purpose between the military and the monastic use of pain: for the Spartans it was a contest amongst peers for the sake of reputation and proving strength to oneself. It had least of all to do with any aversion to the body, shame, or “making a humble offering.”

Nietzsche as one who looked to the body for the development of powerful habit-forming, as I have discussed above.

Also not lost on Nietzsche is the deep connection discerned by the Greeks between excellence in strength and beauty, and especially as this relation is naturally expressed in the human body. As early as *Human, All-Too-Human*, he had held the peculiar notion that, “Wenn Einer viel und klug denkt, so bekommt nicht nur sein Gesicht, sondern auch sein Körper ein kluges Aussehen. [When one thinks much and thinks wisely, not only his face but his body takes on a sagacious appearance.]” (KSA MM I 543 328) Later on, Nietzsche would speak of this phenomenon in greater detail, and with greater consideration for the connection between beauty, strength, and coordination of all kinds (i.e., not only of physical grace, but also the coordination required of different talents, desires, and instincts). For example, he would come to see much that was right in the view that “‘becoming more beautiful’ is generally a consequence of *enhanced* strength”; and hence he saw that it is appropriate to think of “[b]ecoming more beautiful as the expression of a *victorious* will, of increased co-ordination, of a harmonizing of all the strong desires, of an infallibly perpendicular stress.” (WTP 800 420)<sup>309</sup>

At this point, Nietzsche had fully conceived of strength, not as some reservoir of “power” in the way that we would imagine a miser possesses his wealth (i.e., as a mass quantity of a simple, homogenous currency); instead, strength is best described as a feeling: “strength as a feeling of dominion in the muscles, as suppleness and pleasure in movement ... strength as pleasure in the proof of strength, as bravado, adventure, fearlessness.” (WTP 800 421) In the world of physical culture, by comparison, one observes that although he may train in any number of exercises and sports, and may even excel in a few, the athlete has only one body. This is significant only to the extent that it points to how, in the physical culture of sport, strength is always a measure of coordination between *subsystems* of the body (e.g., coordinate muscle groups, the functions of the neural and ocular systems, etc.), which, when expressed in physical ability, is most often simply called “athleticism,” and which, at least in his later thoughts, would come close to the conceptual model Nietzsche adopted to describe the coordinative nature of strength. “Pleasure in movement,” is then to be understood above all as a pleasure taken in performing some activity well.<sup>310</sup>

It is therefore the feeling of proven strength that makes for ease in one’s movements, and grace with regard to the “little things” of life. Nietzsche declares accordingly: “I absolutely cannot

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<sup>309</sup> The imagery of a “perpendicular” stress is telling in this instance, since it expresses a tension between opposing directions of stress that are still not purely “opposite” to one another (i.e., not at 180 ° to each other). Rather, they are mutually interferential of each other.

<sup>310</sup> Also see Thiele, *op. cit.*, 69, where moral superiority is compared to the physical superiority of an athlete.

see how one can later make up for having failed to go to a *good school* at the proper time,” and goes on to explain that by the “good” school he means specifically the “hard” school. He argues that the timeliness of one's education as such (i.e. as properly and sufficiently agonistic) is of paramount importance, because one who has reached maturity without having cultivated strength by means of hardness is thereby doomed to a weakness of constitution and a clumsiness in movements: “Such a man *does not know himself*; he walks through life without having learned to walk; his flabby muscles reveal themselves with every step.” (WTP 912 482; italics added.) But Nietzsche also stresses that sudden calamities and years of severe sickness can in some cases serve as strengthening agents later in life. Perhaps, then, it is the condition of having not undergone such calamities which leaves one without hope of “knowing himself” as described above; for, with Nietzsche self-knowledge is characterized by an accompanying ease of movement, a sense of this ease, and strength. According to the above passage, it seems that the individual knows his body best with having lived through testing times, by learning to coordinate personal strengths and accommodate weaknesses, by learning to move well in this way. Then is the “self-knowing” of the philosopher to be any different?

Apparently, for Nietzsche, it is not. In an aphorism from *Daybreak* simply titled “What one knows of oneself,” he likens all self-knowledge to knowledge of one’s own martial capability when it is measured against that of another: “— As soon as one animal sees another it measures itself against it in its mind, and men in barbarous ages did likewise. From this it follows that every man comes to know himself almost solely in regard to his powers of defence and attack.” (D 212 134) Nietzsche had decided at this point that the two typical domains of cultural education—the physical and the spiritual (*Geistige*)—should be thought of as one: that strength is best expressed with a certain ease of movement, and that such ease is the product of self-knowledge, which is derived by way of the martial contest (i.e., the act of “measuring oneself against”).

In extrapolating this line of thought during the period of writing his notes for *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche would likewise become increasingly compelled by the idea that physicality has everything to do with the greatness of *any* art, including those of thought and speech. “Artists,” he says therefore, “if they are any good, are (physically as well) strong, full of surplus energy,” so that they are altogether “powerful animals.” (WTP 800 421)<sup>311</sup> But how strange it must sound to his audience, therefore, when meanwhile he also admits that, to his own mind, “it seems impossible to be an artist and not to be sick.” (WTP 811 428) A familiar Nietzschean confusion arises here; for health and sickness seem to somehow coincide once again, such that physical strength and surplus energy

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<sup>311</sup> Also see WTP 809 427: “All art exercises the power of suggestion over the muscles and sense, which in the artistic temperament are originally active: it always speaks only to artists—it speaks to this kind of a subtle flexibility of the body.”

would be all the same accompanied by sickness.<sup>312</sup>

The artist, therefore, no less than the philosopher, and no less than the athlete or soldier, should practice a careful cultivation of physical habits and exposures. From the perspective of the martial ascetic, things like the basic division of the day, bodily exercise, experiments and tests in all kinds of interpersonal activities, and one's diet (including the disposition taken toward intoxicants, the eating of meat, etc.) should have a central place in the activity of education. As one who saw political "bodies" in such close analogy to the various coordinative groupings of physiological systems within the individual, Nietzsche would also consider this to be the natural mandate of any society oriented toward instituting *agon* as a grounding function. The following section touches upon this elaboration briefly before moving on to address an anticipated objection to this entire program.

#### **4.4 Nietzsche's Vision for the Public Reinstitution of *Agon***

My 'future':—*a rigorous polytechnic education.*  
*Military service; so that, on an average, every man of the higher classes*  
*would be an officer, whatever else he might be.*

—WTP 793 418

*Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius!*  
*Send your ships into unchartered seas!*  
*Live at war with your peers and yourselves!*

—GS 283 230

Nietzsche's intrigue with the re-ordination of *agon* went beyond a consideration for the needs of an isolated, auto-didactic individual. Here I agree with Acampora, who, in the course of her

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<sup>312</sup> I will forgo any lengthy explanation as to how this could be, since I have already discussed the same matter in various contexts. In this particular case, however, I recommend two passages of clarification. First, there is Nietzsche's insistence on the need "To distinguish in *every movement* (1) that it is *in part* exhaustion from the preceding movement (satiety from it, the malice of weakness toward it, sickness); (2) that it is *in part* newly awakened, long-slumbering, accumulated energy—joyous, exuberant, violent: health." (WTP 1012 523) Second, there is Nietzsche's note of caution regarding our conception of health: "Health and sickliness: one should be careful! The standard remains the efflorescence of the body, the agility, courage, and cheerfulness of the spirit—but also, of course, how much of the sickly it can take and overcome—how much it can make healthy. That of which more delicate men would perish belongs to the stimulants of *great* health." (*Ibid.*)

examination of Nietzsche's agonistic philosophy, offers this helpful observation: "It is the formal function of the *agon* and how it seemed to underwrite so many institutions in ancient Greek culture—education, politics, art, and even philosophy—that so fascinated Nietzsche"—and hence I likewise believe she is right in suggesting that, since Nietzsche therefore believed "the *agon* [to serve] as a site where human being gathers its meaning, its value as worthwhile, desirable, and true," we can also recognize that he "did not admire the *agon* merely because it legitimated expressions of power; he was drawn to it because it afforded the basis of meaningful relations among people."<sup>313</sup>

As the ideal locus of public valuation as much as the private, Nietzsche would also venture to consider the way in which the *agon* might be reinstated as the operative function of a given culture. Even in his most mature and personally established thoughts, Nietzsche appealed to the principle of *agon*, not only as a cosmodycy or as an ideal principle of a self-induced internal arrangement, but as the basis for a new political order. With time, even more of the Heraclitean tone of *polemos* appears to figure into Nietzsche's overall conception of *agon*. By the time of his writing *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche had already fully integrated his notions of contest, war, and (martial) asceticism. In essence, at this time it had become apparent to Nietzsche that all activity and all effort is best thought of as a process of contest or of war. For example, among the notes of explanation he gives for his *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche includes one passage which describes the public institution of "*agon* as principle." He begins with a common example of ascetic practice: the deliberate experience of loneliness, an experience which is presumably, though not necessarily, accomplished by means of living in solitude, apart from others. There he recommends that,

Loneliness for a certain time is necessary in order that a creature may become completely permeated with his own soul—cured and hard. A new form of community would be one in which we should assert ourselves martially ... War (but without powder) between different thoughts and the hosts who support them! ... The day divided up afresh; bodily exercises for all ages. *Agon* as principle." (TI NZ 54 271)<sup>314</sup>

Nietzsche conceives here of a new political community that bears out the essentially "martial" disposition of its citizens toward each other. It exemplifies a central principle of organization, and

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<sup>313</sup> Acampora 2002, *op. cit.*, 1.

<sup>314</sup> Nietzsche continued to use this imagery in his latest published works, e.g., "This is war, but war without powder and smoke, without warlike poses, without pathos and strained limbs: all that would still be 'idealism.'" (EH "Human, All-Too-Human" 283-4) Also see "Dawn" 1 in EH, as well as GS 40 107, where Nietzsche indicates a similar direction in social disposition, for the reason that "Soldiers and leaders still have far better relationships with each other than workers and employers."

therefore a central valuation, in its various forms and levels of contest. Moreover, all of these features of contest are marked by a discipline of *activity*: one which concerns itself, not with the suppression of a dangerous impulse, as a reaction to a threat; but rather with the potential enhancement of power which can be fostered amongst the other impulses and traits as they grow into and around such places of deprivation (e.g. of loneliness), just as they might grow, figuratively speaking, into and around the various depressions made in the *solum* of the individual who tends to himself as a gardener.

A political community of this culture, Nietzsche explains, would inculcate the spirit he identifies so regularly with nobility, whereby “asserting ourselves martially” toward each other primarily means taking up the etiquette of contest, or of dignified warfare. This way of comportment is one that does not, for example, allow pity disguised as politeness to interfere in overcoming; but nor does it imply a constant squabbling of every citizen with the other, such that each is perfectly “selfish” and isolated from the other. Nonetheless, Nietzsche understood it to be true that a certain loneliness is always accomplished in the midst of any intense contest, even when one is cooperating with others, for example, since it is only under such conditions that one distinguishes, by victory or defeat, what one is—and then ascends to *become* what one is. For this reason, and by the same token, actively taking part in contest is a way of being honest about one's strengths and weaknesses.

Nietzsche's vision of a new agonistic political order is based upon the etiquette of proper contest. Ideally there is to be a state of constant “war,” he says, but then only one without blood and guns (“powder”). This is for the fact that Nietzsche rather envisions a great war being perpetually fought “between different thoughts and the hosts who support them.” This formulation is less simple than it might at first appear: for example, it is very often that the “hosts” of certain thoughts are also the same as those who are at war with them. In this case we have a certain internalization of contest: what Nietzsche would refer to as the “inner war as 'development,’” which was so personally familiar to Nietzsche, who took his own psyche—including all that is “bodily” about it—as a battle ground of development. (TI NZ 58 274) While this alone is perhaps nothing new in the history of philosophical thought—a history which Nietzsche sees bound in its inception with ascetic practices—it does indicate a direction that is at once new and more ancient. This constitutes much of what would come to characterize the ideal contest for Nietzsche, who came to stand against the *taste* of “the modern man,” who, “dislikes in an artist nothing so much as the personal battle-feeling, whereas the Greek recognizes the artist *only in such a personal struggle.*” (EGP HC 59)

Nietzsche was meanwhile also determined to confront the need he perceived for the future to overcome the grim history of punishment within the civilized world. To this end he examined the underpinnings of guilt, conscience, and restitution, as he describes it, in the way one would examine the entrails of a fallen enemy soldier. At various times, Nietzsche expresses his utmost desire to see a

world without revenge, as well as the *ressentiment* that stands behind it. True to the transvaluative character of his own philosophy, however, he takes hold of the possibility of retaining the institution of punishment *without* being determined by the instinct for revenge. Punishment is to be taken into the contestual framework of a society, and rendered useful. Nietzsche thus decrees that: “We must let ourselves be taught by the evil, and allow them an opportunity of a contest. We must make use of the degenerate.—The right of punishment will consist in this, that the offender may be used as an experimental subject (in dietetics): this is the consecration of punishment, that one man be used for the highest needs of a future being. (TI NZ 54 272) Once again, the “highest needs” of man are associated primarily with such things as diet, or the “small things” of life, which ought to be taken up as the new issues of cultural relevance. As Nietzsche saw it, in fact, the culture based in an acknowledgement of the need for contest in human developmental affairs would even conceive of the love of the sexes (also known as the “war of the sexes” in English) as being like “a contest around the principle in becoming and coming.” (*Ibid.*)<sup>315</sup> And in such an agonal political order, he continues, “—Ruling will be taught and practised, its hardness as well as its mildness. As soon as one faculty is acquired in a masterly manner another one must be striven after.” (*Ibid.*) This last point is especially rich. A telling example of what it would be to engage the training of a new faculty at the moment one acquires some skill in a masterly manner is a perfect expression of Nietzsche’s own proclivity for brief, intense, habits of practice. Of course, this also bears a relation to his own conception of positive ascetics, by way of which all other competing habits fall away in the wake of pursuing a singular, albeit temporary, aim of achieving mastery in some skill.

The positivity of Nietzsche's ascetic as well as that of his vision for a community founded upon the activity of *agon*, consists in the struggle of both to invent a way of making a "yes" of a "no." There is, however, the potential objection that questions whether there is really any definite need for a "no" in the first place, and whether there is any place for a *peaceful* disposition in Nietzsche's student. Has Nietzsche allowed for a transvaluation of this type of spirit as well? These questions are worth exploring, and valuable for their potential to yield further insight into the design of Nietzsche's educational philosophy.

#### **4.5 Saying “No” to Socrates: An Anticipated Objection**

*I am warlike by nature. Attacking is one of my instincts. Being able to be an enemy, being an enemy—perhaps that presupposes a strong nature; in any case, it belongs to every strong nature. It needs objects of resistance; hence it looks for what resists.*

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<sup>315</sup> For further clarification on this rather strange idea, see section 363 of the *Gay Science*.

*I have become one who blesses and one who declares Yes:  
and for that I have wrestled long and been a wrestler,  
so that I might one day have my hands free for blessing.*

— Z 3 *Before Sunrise* 187

As a man who was by all accounts a very gentle and considerate person, it is understandable that the “hardness” of the warlike soul, for which nothing so enjoyable as war and victory, would continue to vex Nietzsche. As one who had arrived at the judgment that this type of soul was best, he could not help but to see within the higher human being the familiar, but no less counterintuitive, duplicity of the capacities for love and hate, friendship and enmity, and finally of hardness and softness (toward oneself, as well as others). I suggest that the attempt to come to terms with admiring the character of Brutus bears some resemblance to this vexation, and thus Nietzsche applauds Shakespeare for the bravery he shows in elevating this character, as he saw it, above all others.<sup>316</sup>

Despite his consistent appeal to the greatness of a polemical ethos, there is no denying that Nietzsche holds a place of admiration for the peaceful character. However he also advises that “peacefulness” as expressed in a calm demeanor is something of a variable nature, and so much so that it can be deceiving when one actually mistakes one of these natures for another. For Nietzsche, this is when:

Two totally different states [are] confounded: e.g., the *calm of strength*, which is essentially forbearance from reaction (type of the gods whom nothing moves)—and the *calm of exhaustion*, rigidity to the point of anesthesia. All philosophic-ascetic procedures aim at the second, but really intend the former—for they attribute predicates to the attained state as if a divine state had been attained. (WTP 47 30)

Turning back to Nietzsche’s imagery of the ascetic’s “Syrian desert,” one would imagine the calm of the wanderer who is lying on the sand, overcome with heat, exhausted, resigning to stillness and ceasing to put up a fight. On the other hand, the peace of mind (and of action) that comes together

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<sup>316</sup> See GS 98 150: “I could not say anything more beautiful in praise of Shakespeare *as a human being* than this: he believed in Brutus and did not cast one speck of suspicion upon this type of virtue.”

with the feeling of invulnerability, proven by contest, grants one the power needed to forgo the need for reactive measures against the antagonists of *any* desert: namely, the power to simply not bother oneself with them.

This last expression of power came to occupy much of Nietzsche's thought within the *Gay Science*. I argue however that it is a misunderstanding to take this to mean that the strongest individuals always either struggle painfully with obstacles and antagonists, or else cease to struggle with them altogether, as a matter of relief from struggle. There is a third way for Nietzsche. In the final analysis, as I have argued, this alternative way is a refashioned *agon*; it is a new educative *Kriegspraxis* that is best exemplified in his treatment of Socrates.

The following passage from *The Antichrist* does well to express Nietzsche's vision of how individuals of his schooling would comport themselves agonally, polemically, but also in a spirit of joy, and, to the reader's surprise, even *kindness*.

The most spiritual men, as the *strongest*, find their happiness where others would find their destruction: in the labyrinth, in hardness against themselves and others, in experiments. Their joy is self-conquest: asceticism becomes in them nature, need, and instinct. Difficult tasks are a privilege to them; to *play* with burdens that crush others, a *recreation*. Knowledge—a form of asceticism. They are the most venerable kind of man: that does not preclude their being the most cheerful and the kindest.<sup>317</sup>

The idea that knowledge itself could be considered a form of asceticism is more easily understood if one recalls that the knowledge of truth, and an abundance of any kind of knowledge, appeared to Nietzsche as a heavy burden and as a major source of grief, which, moreover, people eagerly imposed upon themselves. But then, as demonstrated in this aphorism, there is for Nietzsche more than just the possibility for struggle and the relief from struggle. Here he departs from Schopenhauer. Furthermore, unlike Schopenhauer there is for Nietzsche no possibility for the suspension of the will. However, there is joy. Why then, one might ask, should we make it out as if Nietzsche only talked about struggle? This constitutes the objection at hand. It should be said in response, for one thing, that what is troublesome about the word “struggle” is that it tends to sound tedious, slow, and usually horrible. But contest is enjoyable: struggle is meant to be a “*recreation*,” as above, and not a torture.<sup>318</sup> This again is a large part of the difference between the ascetics of the past and Nietzsche

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<sup>317</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 370; cited from section 57 of *The Antichrist*.

<sup>318</sup> Also recall Nietzsche's description of the Ancients and their epoch: “Combat in this brooding atmosphere is salvation and safety.” (EGP HC 53)

ascetic of the future, as discussed above. In sum, the goal of all of this is always attaining, or making way for, the joy of the overman.

Still, in the face of Nietzsche's vision for the centrality of a warlike *agon* in all the operations of culture—and especially one which revives newly transvaluated ascetic practices—such a broad emphasis on Nietzsche's occupation with the need for hardship, danger, combat, and even illness in the course of one's education threatens to provoke a description of his philosophy as if it were something approaching a kind of systematized sadism. Indeed, beyond his praise for war (at least of a kind), Nietzsche would not deny that the even the torturous asceticism of Catholic monkhood or the regimen of an army soldier were great instruments of teaching. The objection at hand, therefore, is that war is easily agreed to be utterly despicable, wasteful, and horrible beyond justification in the world of reasonable people; and now are we to suggest that Nietzsche advocated the encouragement of warfare in order to rear "fierce thinkers" and "powerful actors"? The answer is that Nietzsche's futural philosophers were to be capable of *many* types of joy, including the joy of a refined polemic; moreover, it is that there was ultimately nothing outside of the polemical for Nietzsche in any case.

Nietzsche acknowledged that war is ugly, and also that this "truth" itself is ugly. However, with the possible exception of Heraclitus, Nietzsche was foremost among canonized thinkers in recognizing that *polemos*—as ugly as we may find it, or as beautiful as it may at times be—is above all a *necessary* feature of the world.<sup>319</sup> Nietzsche was in his own mind the greatest philosopher by being the greatest polemicist: and I would therefore argue that he stayed true (at least) to himself precisely by being a powerful polemicist. So sure of this title was he that he felt the right in *Ecce Homo* to call himself "the annihilator *par excellence*." (EH *Why I am a Destiny* 2 327) However, within the same breath the reader learns that the "*excellence*" implied by this designation does not turn out to consist in living as a wholly opposing, negative spirit. On the contrary, Nietzsche goes on to proclaim of himself that, "I contradict as has never been contradicted before and I am nevertheless the opposite of a No-saying spirit." (*Ibid.*) To make sense of this seemingly inconsistent claim the reader must note that, just as he was so keenly aware of his fate as the thinker who was to be "dynamite," and the herald of a new war, then by his own teaching Nietzsche must have known that *this* fate, like any other, was to be affirmed by him in spirit, and that this affirmation is an implication of the condition of "noble" bravery for him, and a condition of *amor fati*.

Nietzsche did see the necessity of overcoming the crude and debilitating aspects of war. However, as a constant phenomenon in the world of man, he thought that war too must be rendered purposeful in the arena of cultural contest. Thus, in an aphorism entitled "*War indispensable*," while

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<sup>319</sup> Other thinkers of this group, for whom every event is a confluence between striving forces, would include Schopenhauer and Leibniz.

discussing the excessive replenishment of the cultural “energy” that is released and rerouted through new channels of educational agonism, Nietzsche foretells that “—It is vain reverie and beautiful-soulism to expect much more ... of mankind when it has unlearned how to wage war.” (HH I 477 176) Still, one may wish to ask whether Nietzsche was genuinely troubled by the prospect of “unlearning how to wage war.” Here I would argue that, more clearly put, it is primarily the threat of forgetting how to wage war honestly that Nietzsche has in mind; and in considering this point, I think it is helpful to see that Nietzsche also identified a number of transformations within the life of the polemical world-instinct, even well after the time of Socrates. That is to say, even though there has never been a time in (European) history which was altogether without war, and though certainly there is no “danger” of this, Nietzsche holds that the cultures of different times in Europe nonetheless seem to have adapted to the necessity of substituting some alternative source of polemical satisfaction.

Many of what Nietzsche calls the “surrogates of war” have come to pass as the treasured occupations or “pass-times” of peoples throughout history; and, so he says, a great deal can be learned about what comes to replace war in a nation. Gladiatorial combat and the persecution of Christians were sought by the Romans as ways of gaining *new* energies, while the Englishmen of Nietzsche's day, who seem to him to have renounced war, seize upon different ways of retrieving their own “faded” energies, including at bottom, he says, all those perilous treks undertaken by men of science through distant mountains and jungles, and all carried out in the name of science, to be sure, but always stimulated by the adventurous spirit of a war expedition. (*Ibid.*)

It is only in the midst of a corrupt and exhausted society, Nietzsche claims, that “the esteem for war and the pleasure in war diminish, while the comforts of life are now desired just as ardently as warlike and athletic honors were formerly.” (GS 23 96) Whereas the *agon* of modern times appears to progressively more peaceful, i.e. since it aims at mutual benefit amongst contestants and the absence of the instinct for cruelty, Nietzsche urges that this is but a transformation of appearances, and not of essence: “But what is generally overlooked is that the ancient national energy and national passion that became gloriously visible in war and warlike games have now been transmuted into countless private passions and have merely become less visible”—where he adds, in the tone of an apologist, that: “All I concede is that cruelty now becomes more refined and that its older forms henceforth offend the new taste[.]” (*Ibid.* 96-7)

Nietzsche was constantly dogged by the objection at hand, which he often posed to himself at those times when he felt compelled toward renouncing his polemic. Indeed, this objection looms most heavily on those pages where Nietzsche best expresses the dire need for a new polemical being (i.e., in book four of GS). Again, however, Nietzsche addressed this objection in his own way. At the beginning of book four in his *Gay Science*, this opening aphorism sets the tone for the remaining

pages:

*For the new year.*— I still think: I still have to live, for I still have to think. *Sum, ergo: cogito, ergo sum.* Today everybody permits himself the expression of his wish and his dearest thought; hence I, too, shall say what it is that I wish from myself, today, and what was the first thought to turn across my heart this year—what thought shall be for me the reason, warranty, and sweetness of my life henceforth. I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati:* let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. *Looking away* shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer. (GS 276 223)<sup>320</sup>

Here Nietzsche records a second occasion of indulgence.<sup>321</sup> It is a permission for himself on a special day: the first of the year. On this occasion he permits himself the luxury of entertaining what would be his “wish and dearest thought,” and it is the capability of being one who “makes things beautiful,” as Nietzsche puts it, by “learning” to see in a new way. It is therefore an educative wish, pining over the possibility of a new love. He introduces his *amor fati* as if announcing a betrothal, that it be “his love henceforth”; and follows by making not so much a pledge as another statement of wish and intention henceforth, and says: “I do not want to wage war against what is ugly.” But it is too simplistic to suggest that this very important pronouncement (above all a pronouncement of taste), which is immediately related to his conception of *amor fati*, should merely indicate that Nietzsche had in mind the possibility of someone who would numbly love every circumstance equally and without judgment—a condition that would no doubt result in a kind of lifeless quiescence for Nietzsche. The point of this is to say that the end of war upon the ugly would for Nietzsche not be the end of reflection upon it, not an end to his taste for it, and most importantly, *nor would it be the end of waging war altogether.*

Later in book four, Nietzsche again confirms to the reader that thoughts tending toward this wish for relief from the need for warlike activity are thoughts that visit a thinker only during periods of exhaustion and timidity<sup>322</sup>: “One is not always bold,” he says, “and when one grows tired then one

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<sup>320</sup> See EH 3 218. “Every attainment, every step forward in knowledge, *follows* from courage, from hardness against oneself, from cleanliness in relation to oneself. I do not refute ideals, I merely put on gloves before them.”

<sup>321</sup> The first being at the outset of his *Schopenhauer as Educator*, in a reflection on the ideal teacher. Also see GS 313 250.

<sup>322</sup> I.e., just as it is with a given culture, as he says in GS 23, cited above.

of us, too, is apt to moan like this: ‘It is so hard to hurt people—oh, why is it necessary!’” (GS 311 249) On the occasion of his fantasy, pining on the first day of a new year, Nietzsche tells us that he finds himself *alive* and thinking. He states his condition, rather gravely, as one of imperative: “I still think: I still have to live, for I still have to think.” Here the tone is outwardly pessimistic. Life is something one *must* do: there is no escape from its perpetual pressure to do, to think, to struggle and fight, just as there is really, as we say, “no choice” when it comes to the act of defending oneself in war. Nietzsche's wish is then to teach himself an optimism renewed and made stronger for having overcome such an extreme achievement in pessimism. It is *not* the optimism which simply learns to no longer distinguish between what is desirable and what is not. The harmful remains the perfectly harmful, because it is perfectly necessary.<sup>323</sup> Perhaps in this spell of speculation upon what it would mean to love, not unconditionally, but *forcefully*, in the most severe manner imaginable, Nietzsche came to recognize that a war waged upon the ugly is itself ugly, i.e., because it is waged upon the unworthy. Thus war must be “made beautiful” in the view of this new love, as he says, along with everything else that is necessary. Again: are we to suppose that Yes-saying, and even absolute Yes-saying, was for Nietzsche a mere matter of *agreeing* with everything? Certainly not. But then how is war “made beautiful”? The answer is that it is conducted between equals, as a matter of the highest education, according to a new *Kriegspraxis* of the magnanimous soul.<sup>324</sup> On the other hand, when it comes to the unworthy, the low, and the ugly, one opposes in the most appropriate manner by turning away, by “looking away”—that is, by ignoring them, and thereby refusing to render them beautiful by refusing them the new, amorous “sight” which has been learned at great effort.

But I wish to stress that *this is also* war made beautiful, with Yes-saying serving as the utmost tactic of life. This last point is confirmed later in book four, when Nietzsche reiterates the nature of his wish, including the strength and sensibility for looking away and avoiding all *direct* fights against lesser causes: “Let us not contend in a *direct* fight—and that is what all reproaching, punishing, and attempts to improve others amount to. Let us rather raise ourselves that much higher. Let us color our own example ever more brilliantly. Let our brilliance make them look dark ... Let us look away.” (GS 321 254; italics added) Nor must it be assumed that Nietzsche is only talking about fighting *people* indirectly, since to his mind enemies could be conceived of in many forms, including all kinds of doctrines, maladies, and, indeed, for one who is endowed with the questionable “gift” of

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<sup>323</sup> This would seem to confirm the claim of some authors who say that Nietzsche was after all a kind of radical Stoic; but I would say there remain important differences. Here I have in mind Epictetus, who taught the avoidance and trained approval of all things beyond one's control. Epictetus did not, however, go as far as to teach the trained “beautifying” of all necessary things.

<sup>324</sup> As found described in four propositions on EH 232-3, of which my analysis will constitute the next section in this study.

being a prophetic human being, even the future itself can be felt as a great opponent.<sup>325</sup>

Furthermore, one recalls that when it came to the (internal) realm of personal habits, Nietzsche adopted a similar attitude of overcoming without “fighting,” or at least without contending in a “direct fight,” with whatever competing instinct is meant to be suppressed. For Nietzsche, ascetic practice was an ordination of contest and, as such, it is essentially related to both the martial and the medical practice of growing stronger (or simply “getting better” at something). The ailing one (*der Kranke*), however, who suffers either from sickness or from a wound, is an ascetic by circumstance; and therefore the empowering contest of *der Kranke* is not entered into in the same way as it is with the soldier, who, along with the athlete, is an ascetic by discipline. In each case, nonetheless, the ascetic operation always involves the arrangement and balancing of instincts. For Nietzsche, then, asceticism should also be understood as a mode of polemical activity,<sup>326</sup> as when, to use a crucial example, one takes up a posture of defense or attack against some habit, talent, or instinct that dares to endure too long and which threatens to establish itself as “tyrant,” as in the famous case of Socrates.<sup>327</sup>

With this in mind, I argue, one can gain a view of how Nietzsche also transvaluates both *renouncement* and *denouncement* in the same way. Habits and inclinations are not renounced outright: they are not attacked “head on”; for, as Nietzsche testifies, he is well disposed only toward those moralities which “goad” him to practice some skill over and over, day and night, and to occupy all of his available thought and energy: once again, as he puts it, “to think of nothing except doing this *well*, as well as *I* alone can do it.” He continues this explanation by saying that,

When one lives like that, one thing after another that simply does not belong to such a life drops off. Without hatred or aversion one sees this take its leave today and that tomorrow, like yellow leaves that any slight stirring of the air takes off a tree. He may not even notice that it takes its leave; for his eye is riveted to his goal—forward, not sideward, backward, downward ... (GS 304 244)

This expresses well the positive attitude of Nietzsche’s student when it comes to overcoming without

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<sup>325</sup> For this, see GS 316 251.

<sup>326</sup> One is possibly reminded here of Nietzsche’s cautionary assertion that, “Under peaceful conditions the warlike man sets upon himself.” (BGE 81 76) But note that he continues to admire the attitude even of the resentful, life-denying ascetic for being “warlike”; and thus he adds that, “Whoever despises himself still respects himself as one who despises.” (*Ibid.* 78)

<sup>327</sup> See GS 295 236-7. The reader may also recall Nietzsche’s describing the case of laying siege to the fortress of oneself in a campaign of self-knowledge, as well as the Stoic, who makes a castle of himself in order to fend off certain habits and project a certain image, all the while remaining outside his own “inner walls” for being so well-prepared against himself.

renouncing. Likewise, book four of *Gay Science*, which begins with Nietzsche's most elaborate consideration of what it would mean to fight by simply "looking away" (in GS 276), is filled with further ruminations on the polemical mode of life more generally: that is, as it involves other people, such as would-be-enemies, popular tendencies toward gross misinterpretation, or the ugly ideas of the weak and the loud (anti-Semitism, for example).

In a crucial aphorism from the same book, written in a similar tone to the opening passage of book four, Nietzsche once again recounts a specific moment of reflection, and again he decides that what is best in life is joy and laughter. In this case, however, he makes it more explicit than he did in GS 276: firstly, that this is closely related to the notion of living an ascetically experimental life; secondly, it is that he is *not* talking about the renunciation of war—rather just the opposite:

*In media vita* [In Mid-life].— No, life has not disappointed me. On the contrary, I find it truer, more desirable and mysterious every year—ever since the day when the great liberator came to me: the idea that life could be an experiment of the seeker for knowledge—and not a duty, not a calamity, not trickery. —And knowledge itself: let it be something else for others; for example, a bed to rest on, or the way to such a bed, or a diversion, or a form of leisure—for me it is a world of dangers and victories in which heroic feelings, too, find places to dance and play. '*Life as a means to knowledge*'—with this principle in one's heart one can live not only boldly but even gaily, and laugh gaily, too. And who know how to laugh anyway and live well if he does not first know a good deal about war and victory? (GS 324-255)

As if to confirm this last point to himself as well as to his readers, Nietzsche chooses to follow this aphorism with the next, rather notorious passage: "*What belongs to greatness.*— Who will attain anything great if he does not find in himself the strength and the will to *inflict* great suffering? Being able to suffer is the least thing ... But not to perish of internal distress and uncertainty when one inflicts great suffering and hears the cry of this suffering—that is great, that belongs to greatness." (*Ibid.*) Kaufmann's footnote on this passage reminds the reader of how, ironically: "The distress that this section caused some of Nietzsche's first readers illustrates his point." From this observation, one may detect an acknowledgement that some wounds are self-inflicted in the very act of hurting others, for example, by denouncing with one's work the faith of a loved one (such as Nietzsche's own mother), or more generally, by running the risk of being misunderstood when it comes to the method and motivation of one's polemical enterprises. This constitutes suffering the wounds of waging war, when this means primarily that one is wounded internally by the conscience of having hurt others,

including those held closest. I would argue finally therefore that the following aphorism, which is clearly an important statement on the nature of good discipleship, must also be read with the above point in mind:

*Undesirable disciples.* —What shall I do with these two young men! cried a disgruntled philosopher who ‘corrupted’ youth as Socrates had once done; they are unwelcome students. This one cannot say ‘No,’ and that one says to everything ‘Half and half.’ Supposing that they adopted my doctrine, the former would *suffer* too much, for my way of thinking requires a warlike soul, a desire to hurt, a delight in saying No, a hard skin; he would slowly die of open and internal wounds. And the other would make some personal compromise with every cause he represents and thus compromise it; such a disciple I wish my enemy. (GS 32 103)

What the reader will notice first of all in this is that Socrates is identified in his role as teacher, and as “corruptor”—(though Nietzsche’s use of this term in quotation marks seems to give some indication of irony). “The philosopher,” who takes after Socrates, is explaining the nature of an ideal relationship between teacher and student. Not surprisingly, his speech involves reference to “enemies” “war,” and “internal wounds.”

The student incapable of saying “No” would suffer most of all, not for having to withstand the assaults of others—for that is the easy part, Nietzsche would say—but rather for having to abide by the dictates of a warlike soul, which include the need to hurt others, and suffering the pain of being misunderstood by others when one attacks. The second student is worse than the first type who cannot say “No,” since the former can presumably at least say “Yes”; meanwhile the third type, who would *only* say “No,” is nowhere considered, presumably because such a one could never be counted as a “disciple” in the first place, because obedience would be out of the question to begin with. The second type is the worst because these individuals compromise even those causes or ideas which he supports by being weak in his “Yes-saying,” e.g., by letting such causes and ideas take hold of him and transform his nature, rather than the reverse.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> For an interesting comparison to Nietzsche’s typology of discipleship, see GS 106 163, where he considers the self-inflicted agony that accompanies the disciple who wages war which says “No,” not only as a matter of obedience to the “doctrine” described above, but specifically *at* the doctrine of the master, who decries that: “‘The tree needs storms, doubts, worms, and nastiness to reveal the nature and the strength of the seedling; let it break if it is not strong enough. But a seedling can only be destroyed—not refuted.’ When he had said that, his disciple cried impetuously: ‘But I believe in your cause and consider it so strong that I shall say everything, everything that I still have in my mind against it.’ The innovator laughed in his heart and wagged his finger at him. ‘This kind of discipleship,’ he said then, ‘is the best; but it is also the most dangerous, and not every kind of doctrine can endure it.’”

Nietzsche's is the *martial* school of life; and so it would seem to remain a great challenge for his readers to reconcile this fact with the affinity shown for a "lightness of spirit" in his writings. This tension reaches its apex in the fourth book of the *Gay Science*, not long before Nietzsche would execute that which I interpret to be his greatest act of war (in GS 340) against Socrates, in order to bring him to his greatest feat of learning (in GS 341). Above, I have included reference to a number of passages from book four which appear to both praise and decry warfare. The following is a good example of the same tension: "I welcome all signs that a more virile, warlike age is about to begin, which will restore honor to courage above all ... To this end we now need many preparatory human beings ... human beings who are bent on seeking in all things for what in them must be *overcome*; human beings distinguished as much by cheerfulness, patience, unpretentiousness, and contempt for all great vanities as by magnanimity in victory and forbearance regarding the small vanities of the vanquished ... accustomed to command with assurance but instantly ready to obey when that is called for[.]" (GS 283 228) Again, just as in GS 276, what is most striking in this passage is that Nietzsche is not speaking outside the need for war. During this period it is the need for war of the right kind, conducted in the right spirit, that is of greatest concern for Nietzsche.

One way of gaining further understanding on this point is to recognize that martiality is not itself about "fighting." From the perspective of Nietzsche's philosophy of education, it is most essentially about training and development. All contests can be engaged in a martial spirit, directed by the *Kriegspraxis* that is bent on attaining greater health by way of war; and thus, all contests are events of educative import to the degree that they strengthen the contestant. This helps to explain why the relation between the historical figure and his reader should be conceived of as a contest, as Nietzsche must have, since he insisted that no study of history ought to go without enhancing the life of the student, i.e., without aiding the capability for action.

But there is no obligation to conceive of this model of thought as another version of glorifying so-called "manly virtue": with all of its rancor, its vain tests of strength, and the smug, self-congratulatory repose of having discovered the inexhaustible thrill of the hunt and kill, with the exclusive claim to "fraternity" that may often accompany this. Nor is the thesis driven at in this dissertation, proposed as a clarification of Nietzsche's own view, to be construed as an allegation that this is, after all, what people really have a taste for in philosophy. All the same, it may be admitted that this is one aspect of it; but let us also give due consideration to the notion, not foreign to Nietzsche, that fighting is actually the lowest degradation of war. Let us consider, for instance, how all throughout the world (and all throughout the various "worlds" of social human existence) the most effective way to fight an opponent is most often to disarm. It is not in this case a manly taste; it is a human taste, and, most importantly, for Nietzsche it is inescapably involved in the production of

good taste. For the *agon* is all pervasive in human affairs, even within those between friends and lovers.

Let us also consider that, when it comes to human interaction, Nietzsche understood that exerting one's will upon another can take many forms, including the attempt to induce an impression about oneself in another, being needful of another (and being needed by others), presuming to issue a command, or, even more commonly, to make a request of another, even if only for an answer to a question, which is always a hidden form of command. Even the desire to appear worthy as a student in the eyes of a teacher should be seen as expressive of the will to power over another, as Hillesheim has pointed out.<sup>329</sup> It could be argued that this carries implications in even the most benign interpretation of Socrates, since at one point Nietzsche also makes the assertion that, “[i]n fact, interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something.” (WTP 643 342)

Let us recall that love is a power that must be learned in one way or another, and that the love to which Nietzsche's student aspires is not at all the opposite of the feeling that one has toward an enemy. Indeed, Nietzsche suggests that love is best arrived at, best *learned*, not simply by deciding to love all things of life—i.e., without a preparatory sojourn in circumstances of great opposition—but rather as a power and a talent that grows like any other. Thus, he says, “[a] full and powerful soul not only copes with painful, even terrible losses, deprivations, robberies, insults; it emerges from such hells with a greater fullness and powerfulness; and, most essential of all, with a new increase in the blissfulness of love.” (WTP 1030 532)<sup>330</sup> Then again, the promotion of a polemical *ethos* within an individual also includes more than the mandate of constantly *launching attacks* as a source of joy. For instance, one sees that it also extends the rare privilege of happily *letting others attack*, even of taking pleasure in this, and thereby demonstrating a state of health which allows for a maximum of such “parasites” in this way. This is critically important. Speaking personally, Nietzsche says, “When I hear of the malice of others against me—isn't my first reaction one of satisfaction? Quite right! I seem to be saying to them—I am so ill-attuned to you and have so much truth on my side that you

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<sup>329</sup> “The student who excels in his class assignments does not do so out of a disinterested desire to please his teacher but to exert his power over him.” (Hillesheim 1973 *op. cit.*, 346) On this note, there is the following passage from *Daybreak*, where Nietzsche describes how, whenever one has wished to demonstrate his ability, “but thus he did not enjoy this success inasmuch as he delighted his neighbour, rather inasmuch as he *impressed* himself on the soul of another, altered its form and ruled over it according to his will. The striving for excellence is the striving to overwhelm one's neighbor, even if only quite indirectly or exclusively in feeling, or even if only in one's dreams. There is a long line of degrees of this secretly desired overwhelming, and a complete list of these would come near to constituting a history of culture ...” (Hillesheim's translation, *ibid.* Originally from KSA M 113 102)

<sup>330</sup> Shortly after this, Nietzsche goes on to mention Dante's sign over the gate of his Inferno, which reads: “I, too, was created by eternal love.”

might as well have a good day at my expense whenever you can!” (GS 311 249)

Submission can also be an act of war, Nietzsche is prepared to say—and it can even be an act of dominance. It is even among the most pervasive of human exchanges: a kind of preemptive submission to the will of another, e.g., as in the case of a premature apology, which has the affect of stifling the recipient's range of reactions in favour of being gentle and obliging, so commonly employed in order to gain favour and opportunity with a prospective acquaintance, be it friend or foe. This could be seen to happen even in the most refined circles of social exchange, where people communicate the willingness to submit to each other in their posture and speech, or in their willingness to allow interruption, for example, or in how they give up their space to the other. However, from the perspective of one who recognizes in every action the will to power, the invitation to assume dominance over another in such cases implies an obligation, for example, to take up company with a lesser soul, to carry the weight of the conversation, etc., just as much as a bout of self-deprecation can oblige an audience to offer soothing compliments. For guilt, along with its skillful application, is one of the most tremendous forces to be utilized in the shaping of world culture according to Nietzsche. Such being the case, even generosity can be a very powerful weapon.

When it came to his own educational development, Nietzsche would conceive of it as a “war” which had its own internal and external dimensions. He wished to disestablish himself as the shrine to all idols, to tear down all of his own inner-temples, and to slay along with them all of their thoughtless, ceremonial priests (including even such seemingly trivial or “small” things as his own persistent habits). Outwardly, he would challenge the idolatry of those who did not pay attention to the “smell” of decay upon all of their own mummified idols. But what means did Nietzsche use in the course of his philosophical education, this “war” of his? For one thing, he was perhaps the most murderous amongst philosophers, the most “nihilative.” And Socrates? Perhaps the most tactful, for doing the most with least, and also the most resilient. Both were greatly effective, to be sure; and Nietzsche empowered himself by taking on an opponent who could never be in danger of being “murdered” at the behest of any Brutus, and whose greatness could only itself become amplified in proportion to the antagonism provided by Nietzsche—like two knives sharpening each other with their clashing. This is the ideal established in Nietzsche’s new practice of warfare. The following section therefore aims at clarifying the way in which Nietzsche finally formalized this practice, along with how this practice found application in the case of Socrates.

#### **4.6 The Four Major Precepts of Nietzsche’s *Kriegspraxis*** **(as Illustrated in the Campaign Against Socrates)**

*Thus there are thousands of delights in this war, including the defeats  
of which the unpoetic souls, the so-called prose-men, do not know a thing ...  
War is the father of all good things; war is also the father of good prose.*

—GS 92 145

The reference to Heraclitus in the above passage from the *Gay Science* is evident enough. But to say that war is the father of all “good” things, including defeat, is also a further elaboration upon the Heraclitean view, which holds that war is the father of all things whatsoever, and even that the world itself is a war. Still, compared to the more original and cosmological perspective of Heraclitus, Nietzsche’s is a refinement that is not so distant that these two perspectives should be incompatible with each other. On the contrary, it is Nietzsche’s own incessant occupation with the view of the world as a surging tempest of competing will(s) that suggests these two views are best thought in tandem with each other. But what makes for the “good prose” he speaks of, which is the product of war?

In the preface he gives to his book, *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche is full of enthusiasm for the project at hand: “—what a joy this is,” he writes, “for an old psychologist and Pied Piper like myself in whose presence precisely that which would remain silent, *must betray itself*.” Here Nietzsche describes his treatise as “a recreation, a ray of sunshine ... Maybe, too, a new war? And are we again cross-examining new idols? This little work is a great declaration of war[.]” (TI Preface xviii) To the common sensibility it may be a wonder that something that sounds as comforting and hopeful as a ray of sunshine could be compared to the promise of a “new war,” which typically sounds much more of desolation and despair. But then, it is always a joyful recreation for the malicious spirit to “cross-examine” the purported truths of idols, and to wage war in this way, just as it was for Socrates. I have argued accordingly that in his most pointed “attack” on Socrates, Nietzsche reaches highest in his emulation of him. This is precisely what has failed to reach the understanding of all commentators so far. That his war is to be an activity of convalescence, too, points toward Nietzsche’s attitude toward Socrates as a teacher (see the section above titled “Socrates as the Teacher Who Wounds”). It is within the context of his campaign of war against Socrates that Nietzsche introduced this quizzical description of how a war is to be waged in good spirits. At this point the question most in need of an answer is therefore no longer: why does Nietzsche prescribe “war”? Instead, it is: what sort of war should one choose to undertake, according to Nietzsche?

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche attempts to sum up the nature of his own practice of warfare in four

propositions.<sup>331</sup> The first article of conduct to be observed in this practice, he writes, is a personal insistence on setting out to attack only causes that are “already victorious.” This proposition reflects Nietzsche’s emphasis on the need for worthy opponents, and his disdain for taking up lesser struggles.

This insistence can also be found in the more observational terms of Nietzsche’s earlier writings. He had previously remarked, for instance, that, “It is only the most irritable and covetous devotees of the feeling of power [for whom] it is perhaps more pleasurable to imprint the seal of power on a recalcitrant brow—those for whom the sight of those who are already subjected (the objects of benevolence) is a burden and boredom”—and he reasons that, on the other hand, “An easy prey is something contemptible for proud natures. They feel good only at the sight of unbroken men who might become their enemies and at the sight of all possessions that are hard to come by.” (GS 13 87) Again, this ethos entails a quest for friends who are capable of providing enmity. It runs antithetical to the compulsion for pity as well as for warring against what is too low. Nietzsche thus concludes with a reminder as to *his* version of the bonds which tie friends together: “Against one who is suffering they are often hard because he is not worthy of their aspirations and pride; but they are doubly obliging toward their *peers* whom it would be honourable to fight if the occasion should ever arise.” (*Ibid.*) Evidently, however, to say that the best fight arises between equals of tremendous power does not necessarily mean that the best victory is won or lost arbitrarily—i.e., by the narrowest of margins—as one might expect in such cases. For, on the contrary, Nietzsche had already decided during his early thoughts on education that such a condition is not indeed characteristic of what he calls “*The proper way to win*”; and thus, he declares, “—One ought not to want to win if one has the prospect of overtaking one’s opponent by only a *hair’s breadth*. The good victory must put the conquered into a joyful mood, it must possess something divine that does not *put to shame*.” (HH II WS 344 392)<sup>332</sup>

The second precept of Nietzsche’s *Kriegspraxis* is phrased as another personal claim. It states that he would only ever attack causes not ordinarily in danger of being attacked by others. That is, his war is to be waged only when his own fight is bound to be an “unpopular” one, in the sense that he would remain without any allies in it—“so that I stand alone,” as he says, “so that I compromise myself alone.—I have never taken a step publicly that did not compromise me: that is *my* criterion of doing right.” (EH *Why I am so Wise* 7 232) Appended with a hyphen, and not at all entailed by what

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<sup>331</sup> Also see D 556 560, where Nietzsche offers an earlier rendition of what were then called “*The Good Four*,” which included the characteristics of honesty, bravery, magnanimity, and politeness, as they are expressed in the polemical activity of a thinker. It is not however my suggestion that these two lists of four directly correspond to one another.

<sup>332</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that the *elenchus* of Socrates is one associated with the end of “shaming defeat.”

came before it, the last sentence is somewhat startling. It is to say that Nietzsche not only refuses to wage any war by which people other than himself would be implicated and “compromised”—but further, it is also that he would wage war *only* if he himself would certainly be compromised in the process. But wherefore this strange necessity for endlessly compromising oneself in battle?

Not only may this recall the status of dialectical manners prior to Socrates (i.e., “they were regarded as bad manners, they were compromising”), but one can also see that the imperative of this second precept, which accords no less than a personal criterion for “doing right” in Nietzsche’s mind, is also reminiscent of a highly refined ascetic function that he found commendable among philosophers during the time of writing his *Genealogy of Morals* and during the period of *Human, All-Too-Human*. Reflecting on the this issue early on, he writes:

There is a *defiance of oneself* among whose most sublimated expressions some forms of asceticism belong ... Thus some thinkers profess views that evidently do not serve to increase or improve their reputations; some practically conjure up the disrespect of others for them, although it would be easy for them to remain highly respected, simply by keeping still. (HH I 137 135)<sup>333</sup>

By invoking this passage in comparison with the second precept of Nietzsche’s *Kriegspraxis*, I wish to draw out a crucial point in understanding Nietzsche’s second feature of right polemical engagement. The point is to see that Nietzsche always coupled his war and defiance against another with a concomitant war against himself, that is, by provoking ridicule, hostility, etc. His infamous war with Socrates certainly allowed him this. As the legacy of interest in his work demonstrates, by his choice of this universally revered opponent, as well as the means by which he conducts war against him, Nietzsche becomes one who is sought out as an enemy himself. He compromises himself, as an act of war against himself, in order to entice even further enmity against him on the part of others. He makes an obstacle of his own actions, that is, as a matter of further test.

Nietzsche’s third proposition is this: “I never attack persons; I merely avail myself of the person as a strong magnifying glass that allows one to make visible a general but creeping and elusive calamity.”<sup>334</sup> With fairness, some might question Nietzsche’s right to make such a claim.

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<sup>333</sup> The passage continues by saying, in terms no less reflective of Nietzsche’s own reputation, that “Others recant former opinions and are not afraid of henceforth being called inconsistent: on the contrary, they exert themselves to that end and behave like exuberant riders who like their horse best when it has gone wild, is covered with sweat, and shying.” (From *Seventy-Five Aphorisms*, GM 171)

<sup>334</sup> To provide an example of this, Nietzsche adds: “Thus I attacked David Strauss—more precisely, the *success* of a senile

After all, as the one who made reference to things such as his plebian descent and ugly face, did he not express his criticism for Socrates in the most personal way? And if so, how can this be reconciled with Nietzsche's third order in carrying out proper warfare? Again, this is partly explained by the value accorded to the choice of Socrates as an enemy by the requirements of Nietzsche's first and second orders, i.e., in that he provided an exceedingly powerful and popular adversary. Meanwhile, certain features of Socrates as an individual person also provided a way of getting at the real threat Nietzsche saw pervading the tradition of thought in the aftermath of this individual. As the fourth and final proposition of Nietzsche's *Kriegspraxis* dictates, moreover, there is ultimately nothing "personal" in this at all.

Nietzsche's last proposition stipulates that his type of war is not born out of a common sense of animosity: "Fourth: I only attack things when every personal quarrel is excluded, when any background of bad experiences is lacking. On the contrary, attack is in my case proof of good will, sometimes even of gratitude. I honor, I distinguish by associating my name with that of a cause or a person: pro or con—that makes no difference to me at this point[.]" (EH *Why I am so Wise* 7 232-3) Assuming a certain level of consistency on the part of Nietzsche, this would seem to preclude one from surmising that Nietzsche fought against Socrates because he really bore him ill will or that he "hated" him in any simple way. As the above passage attests to, this fight would indicate just the opposite, namely his "good will" toward him. Thus in light of Nietzsche's final proposition of warfare, the theories of those such as Nehamas lose some credibility, since they rest heavily on the notion that the war he waged against Socrates was motivated by a highly personal feeling of jealous contempt.<sup>335</sup>

At one point Nietzsche identifies the task of the philosopher, at least potentially, as being primarily a matter of providing the utmost "test" for the limits of humanity, and thereby of enhancing the conditions of its existence: that is, "[o]ne can conceive of philosophers as those who make the

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book with the 'cultured' people in Germany: I caught this culture in the act. Thus I attacked Wagner—more precisely, the falseness, the half-couth instincts of our 'culture' which mistakes the subtle for the rich, and the late for the great."

<sup>335</sup> For a good discussion of this point, see Siemens' conception of Nietzsche's "attack" as a more neutral "binding of names": "The binding of names is at the same time the forging of a *genealogical* bond, where Nietzsche's opponent is a figure from the past, as often they are. In preserving the opponent's name it expresses an interest in historical or genealogical *continuity*. Attack, then, far from intending the absolute negativity of destruction and oblivion, intends to *affirm* the opponent in forging a bond of continuity with it." Herman Siemens, "Umwertung: Nietzsche's 'War-Praxis' and the Problem of Yes-saying and No-saying in *Ecce Homo*," in *Nietzsche Studien*, vol. 38 (2009): p. 194. Siemens also identifies several key features which are common to the Greek *agon* and Nietzsche's war-praxis: "the presupposition of equality in the face of the enemy"; "the antagonism towards tyranny"; and "the aim of mastery or provisional victory between the contests, rather than the absolute victory of annihilation ... All of which suggest very strongly that the underlying model for Nietzsche's war-praxis in EH is the *agon*." (*Ibid.* 195)

most extreme efforts to *test* how far man can *elevate* himself.” (WTP 973 511) Is it fair to think that Nietzsche conceived of Socrates in this way? If so, is it possible to identify the nature of the test provided by Socrates for the elevation of one who undertakes it? I argue that the answer to both of these questions is “yes.” The test provided by Socrates was the contest of emulating his own exemplary response to the “test of his time,” whereby what qualified him as what Nietzsche called “the highest type of free man” was the strength of his position, of his self-mastery, as a successful “counter-tyrant” for the imposing forces of instinct. (TI SA 38 95)<sup>336</sup>

In terms of its accordance with the spirit of contest in Greek antiquity as it was described by Nietzsche, this development is ultimately laudable and necessary.<sup>337</sup> Thus it was that the Socratic spirit took its place against the Dionysian in the contest of culture (BT 12 77) in order to form a new orientation of conflict, and to give rise to a whole new concert of creative possibilities, some of which would derive their eventual promotion from a period of suppression. It is then not so surprising to find that Nietzsche stylized himself as a counter-acting agent in this contest, not simply by “taking sides against” Socrates, but by reorienting the contest under the precepts of new agonistic principle—that is, one which transcends the device of establishing a “counter-tyranny” that quells rather than promotes the level of strife among the figurative subjects of this tyranny. What remains, therefore, is to fully elucidate Nietzsche’s own formulation of contest by giving consideration to those aspects specifically derived from his ongoing *agon* with the figure of Socrates.

#### **4.7 The Contest of Nietzsche**

*Men have to learn to pay homage no less than to feel contempt.*

—GS 100 156

In previous sections I have considered Nietzsche’s treatment of ascetic practices, specifically

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<sup>336</sup> Long after writing his *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes the situation of Socrates this way: “Once decay has reached its climax along with the infighting of all sorts of tyrants, the Caesar always appears, the final tyrant who puts an end to the weary struggle for sole rule—by putting weariness to work for him. In his age the individual is usually ripest and culture therefore in its highest and most fruitful stage ... in truth they merely need peace from the outside because they have enough unrest and work inside themselves.” (GS 23 97) Here Nietzsche is talking about the way of tyranny, in the state and in the soul. Socrates is the tyrant in a time of a great excess of energy and inner unrest. Nietzsche, once again, is then a type of Brutus.

<sup>337</sup> Recall that for the Ancients only a “second genius” was sufficient for disrupting the imposition of tyranny within any given contest.

in light of their historical basis and with respect to the prevalence of the “negative virtues” inherited by the culture of education. I have also briefly indicated Nietzsche’s own vision for the personal and public reformation of educational contest. With respect to Socrates, I wished at the same time to observe that, although Nietzsche does see him to stand at the beginning of those various dynastic cults of reason which would induce the learned world to adopt such virtues of denial, and which would finally *deny* the legitimate value of physical culture, Socrates himself was not of this type in Nietzsche’s eyes. Accordingly, although the model of cultivation exemplified and embodied by Socrates was one of extreme specialization, it was nonetheless positive in character, and never exclusive of the physical. As the last of the pure sages, however, who were completely self sufficient and original, the death of Socrates was the dawn of the Socratic schools; it also left behind a new exclusivity of taste that was increasingly lacking in physicality, as the practice of philosophy became more purely theoretical. This for Nietzsche was Socrates-as-destroyer. Although he was the final and greatest of the pre-Platonics, Socrates was also the figure whose transformative existence would preclude the continuance of the same philosophical tradition he consummated with his life.<sup>338</sup>

The later ascetic contest of the Christian would include the physical, but was disparaging of it, and purely consumed with the elevation of the spiritual at the expense of the physical—all under the guidance of negative ascetic virtue. By comparison, through his philosophy Nietzsche did his utmost to elevate the status of the body, and thus he formulated a new contest of martial ascetics; but he also fashioned a new mode of philosophical contest, which would include the weight owed to the physiological within the realm of moral discourse (e.g., by way of genealogy), as well as what he took to be a new mode of philosophical contest between thinkers and ideas (by way of a new *Kriegspraxis*). My argument is that Nietzsche’s treatment of Socrates was exemplary of this new formulation—but then, his antagonism of Socrates was also fruitful in terms of his own learning. At least part of what Nietzsche learned through his contestual relation to Socrates was wisdom with regard to attaining “mastery” in any skill,<sup>339</sup> as well as the creation and application of a new standard for enmity. Nietzsche thus learned much from Socrates regarding the ideal of *agon*, and therefore

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<sup>338</sup> For Nietzsche’s portrayal of Socrates as destroyer, see HH I 262 123-4: “With the Greeks everything goes quickly forwards, but it likewise goes quickly downwards; the movement of the whole machine is so accelerated that a single stone thrown into its wheels makes it fly to pieces. Socrates, for example, was such a stone; in a single night the evolution of philosophical science, hitherto so wonderfully regular if all too rapid, was destroyed.” Also see the following passage from the early period, where Nietzsche remarks that “the philosopher [of old] protects and defends his native country. Now, since Plato, he is in exile and conspires against his fatherland.” (EGP PTA 82-3) Though I will not argue the case here, I am inclined to think of Plato’s role as the purveyor of Socratism in quite a similar manner to Nietzsche’s portrayal of Paul as the founder and ruinous purveyor of public Christianity.

<sup>339</sup> HH 361 PN 53

much about attaining mastery in the skill of *learning*, which is highest the highest of all skills. In what follows, my aim is to restate and reinforce this case, beginning by recollecting some of the points of contact between Nietzsche and Socrates, before going on to redress the larger issue of what this means in terms of Nietzsche's more general reformulation of philosophical contest.

Although he was certainly very familiar with their texts, one notices that when compared to the most popular commentators and emulators of Socrates from ancient times—like Xenophon, Epictetus, or Diogenes of Sinope, for example—Nietzsche tends to give much less consideration to the legend of Socrates who was famous for his physical prowess, his meritorious reputation as a warrior, or for his ability to be completely at ease in extreme conditions of discomfort and poverty. Instead, Nietzsche chooses to fashion his portrait of Socrates as one of an extreme and disproportionate *talent*. It is fitting, therefore, that much of the criticism he directs toward this portrait bears upon the problems that accompany having a singular talent, and specifically upon one that dominates so thoroughly within the course of its development that it carries with it the effect of enhancing its own powers at the expense of all others.<sup>340</sup> But for Nietzsche, such a heightened development is also nearly unthinkable without the imposition of an adequate level of inner-discipline, which in the most powerful cases can verge on the tyrannical character, and which can cost much personally. Perhaps Nietzsche's aversion to such a state helps to explain why he would go so far as to report an intense personal anguish at merely witnessing the sight of an advanced talent in its exhibition. He gives a rather curious description of this experience in an anecdotal aphorism from *Human, All-Too-Human*:

*Recognition of talent.* — As I was going through the village of S. a boy began cracking a whip with all his might—he had already advanced far in this art, and knew it. I threw him a glance of recognition—in my heart, however, I found it *very painful*.—So it is with the recognition of many talents. We are well disposed towards them when they cause us pain.  
(HH I 172 171)

The reader is left to speculate about the exact nature of experiencing pain like this. Is it to be understood as the invigorating pain of a healthy envy? Under my interpretation, this would make

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<sup>340</sup> In order to effect the strategy of this portrayal, Nietzsche needed to ignore, for example, the report of Xenophon that Socrates was fond of such things as playing the flute and dancing. This was necessary because the engagement of Socrates in these practices would constitute an instance of exercising other, more artistic, talents. Nietzsche's Socrates would instead betray his inner artistic sense only at the very end of his life, as if it were a matter of a final bad conscience (i.e., the new bidding of his Daemonic voice), and also as the heralding of greater possibilities in other times (i.e., Nietzsche himself, the "artistic Socrates").

sense in the case of Nietzsche's treatment of Socrates when he is examined as a radically singular talent, and one which would translate historically into a singular cultural taste for rationality. Then again, may it also be that this pain comes from the recognition of all the personal strife that would have been required in the conditioning of an ability like this? After all, Nietzsche was one to emphasize the need for strife, and eventually he observed that, "If one has a talent, one is also its victim"; for, as something that requires energy, he saw that a talent consumes its possessor, and again, that "one lives under the vampirism of one's talent." (WTP 814 431) Even here, however, there is no danger that the reader would need to think of the pain Nietzsche has expressed in this aphorism as an accompaniment of pity, rather than of envy, because for Nietzsche the co-suffering of pity is never a disposition by which one is "well-disposed." It is my contrasting view that Nietzsche experienced the pain and the "wounds" of envy with respect to the consummate ability of Socrates to *endure*, seemingly with ease, and happily, the total vampirism of his dialectical talent. I believe this interpretation works to further clarify Nietzsche's strategy of setting aside Socrates with regard to his most popular characteristics, and instead focusing his emphasis on the powerfully obsessive nature of his talent.

From Nietzsche's perspective, instincts and virtues may also victimize their subjects. And although his phrasing of the matter may be unorthodox, I hold that Nietzsche does share in common with previous philosophers, including Socrates, the belief that reason may serve, and can be made to serve better, as the instinct responsible for arranging a balance amongst all other instincts, virtues, and talents—even if this "balance" is what would otherwise be called entirely lop-sided, and therefore even when reason itself "outweighs" the others and takes position as the dominant instinct, (i.e., exactly as it was in the case of Socrates). Likewise, Nietzsche reminds us that virtues, too, can occupy an autocratic position, and that a long-enduring tyranny of any particular virtue could be problematic, although not necessarily valueless. To Nietzsche's mind, therefore,

[O]ne would have to notice that virtues ... are usually harmful for those who possess them, being instincts that dominate them too violently and covetously and resist the efforts of reason to keep them in balance with their other instincts. When you have a virtue, a real, whole virtue (and not merely a mini-instinct for some virtue[!]), you are its *victim* [bist du ihr *Opfer!*]. (GS 21 92; exclamation points reintroduced to reflect the original text in KSA FW 21 391)

For an example of this, and in what appears to be a personal reference, he speaks of how the classical virtues are even often acknowledged by onlookers to be potentially harmful—and yet, as he observes,

it remains true that: “One praises the industrious even though they harm their eyesight or the spontaneity and freshness of their spirit.” (*Ibid.*) In other words, that one’s eyesight or personal vigor may be *sacrificed* to the cause of a virtue (or to the instinct for that virtue), is commonly understood to be a good and admirable thing. But for Nietzsche this constitutes the state of the greater instinct using up the energy of the lesser; and though it is admirable, and indeed necessary at some times, it is a model of internal arrangement that stands in need of overcoming.

In the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche announces that “even the Greeks,” and Socrates in particular, must be overcome. *This* he attempted in the same passage (GS 340). Furthermore, I argue now that it was by virtue of Socrates and his seemingly impenetrable visage of optimism that Nietzsche arrived at the ultimate resolution of *amor fati* (GS 341). This is the most positive aspect of Nietzsche’s attack on Socrates: that the unmasking “defeat” of Socrates provides the way to discovering what would be required of the one, who, beyond even Socrates, could withstand the test of the eternal return.

To begin with, I suggest that there is much to be learned by comparing Nietzsche’s treatment of Socrates at different stages of his thought. As mentioned previously, Nietzsche confesses early on that he feels so “close” to Socrates that he finds himself forever fighting a fight with him, and so throughout this dissertation I have examined a number of instances where Nietzsche demonstrates this. These encounters are punctuated with praise as much as they are with derision of Socrates, depending on what is meant to be accomplished at a given time, as well as the given stage of development in Nietzsche’s thought concerning animosity and education. A telling example of this can be seen in how his developing vision of contest is reflected in the reorientation of his attack upon Socrates between the time of *Birth of Tragedy* and *Twilight of the Idols*. In the first case he treats him as the new adversary of Dionysus, a demi-god, as something verging on a guiding force of nature; whereas in his *Twilight*, Socrates was attacked as a most extraordinary man, but a man nonetheless: a powerhouse of talent, and, much unlike a god, he was sick, and held to be judged in terms of his physiology, for which even the testimony of an ancient physiognomist was thought appropriate.

The most distinct lessons of Socrates are those which reveal new ways of thinking about mastery in learning, in the disposition one takes toward life, and in new modes of discipleship. To illustrate the first of these, the reader will recall that from “*The experience of Socrates*,” and specifically as this experience extends to the issue of attaining “mastery” in some particular skill, it was Socrates who instructed Nietzsche with regard to the danger of being deceived by one’s own achievement of mastery, i.e., when the educative specialist confuses himself for the consummate generalist. Perhaps even more significant was the lesson Socrates provided, by his example, of how it is with the life of one who turns his whole legion of competing energies toward a single instinct, and a single ability.

At the heart of the present thesis is also a discussion of Nietzsche's thoughts on the relations of friendship and enmity as they would be practiced in the hands of a true self-educator, as well as how they were practiced by Nietzsche himself. Ideally, such an educator makes use of all encounters, relationships, and all things in general without remainder. In this way, the divergence between learning from one's superiors and one's inferiors becomes somewhat akin to the difference between learning from defeat as opposed to victory. For Nietzsche, then, being defeated well—i.e., in an empowering way—is a contest in itself. On the other hand, the same can be said for being the victor of a contest. It is the occasion for the enhancement of the feeling of power, and therefore an opportunity for learning. But the ability to enhance one's powers by constant engagement with inferiors must in fact be a much more difficult task. It is the ability properly belonging to the teacher, acquired, in a philosophical context for example, by having the power to win any argument with grace: to react in ways that will not damage beyond the recuperative powers of the student. Nietzsche is fond of pointing out that Socrates was a constant superior and a constant "defeater" in the domain of public interrogative dialectics.

So then how was he as a teacher? Let us approach this question by way of a more specific one, which is once again the guiding question of this dissertation: how was Socrates as a teacher of Nietzsche? By the criteria cited above, we should say that he was of a unique and highest type of teacher for Nietzsche; for, as a student of extraordinary strength in overcoming, he was never beyond the point of recuperation from Socrates, never without the power to undo this idol, who was considered a hero of philosophy without peer, and from whom would flow the widest channels of moral philosophy. Chapter two of the present thesis examined the status of Socrates in terms of his legendary character. As a decorated warrior, as a dialectician without equal, and as a being of super-human constitution, Socrates took on the appearance of being *invincible* to those who were familiar with him; and as a being who, despite his poverty and even eventual public condemnation, continued on as a great lover of life and the most cheerful of sages—most pointedly during the trial at which he would goad the jury into ordering his execution, during his refusal to escape his sentence, and the time leading up to his own death—, Socrates would appear to most, including Nietzsche, to be *insuperable (unüberwindliche)*.<sup>341</sup>

It is perhaps for this reason, I argue, that the single most powerful example of how Nietzsche's own development was shaped and expressed through his evolving treatment of Socrates

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<sup>341</sup> The reader may also recall Nietzsche's earlier description of "the simplest and most imperishable mediator-sage, Socrates. The roads of the most divergent philosophic ways of life lead back to him; at bottom they are the ways of life of the different temperaments, determined by reason and habit, and in all cases pointing with their peaks *to joy in life and in one's own self*." (See my full citation of Koffman, above; emphasis added).

can be found within the changing nature of the reflections Nietzsche offers, at different times, on the famous event of his death. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Socrates died exceptionally well, and above all, peacefully. Nietzsche speaks at that time of the reported change in the nature of his daemonic voice, and the birth of an artistic Socrates at the end of his life. By contrast, by the time of his *Gay Science*—a science developed of warfare, especially as shown above in my consideration of book four—Nietzsche instead uses his death scene as an opportunity for overcoming Socrates. This should be read, as Kaufmann claims, as nothing less than the height of his adulation for him, and it represents the supreme instance of his own “Brutus complex.”

Nietzsche apparently believed that the true test of a master would center on the way that that individual would articulate the *end* of something: most importantly, his own life. As an indication of this criterion, he reveals the following: “*Knowing how to end.*—Masters of the first rank are revealed by the fact that in great as well as small matters they know how to end perfectly ... The best of the second rank always become restless as the end approaches and do not manage to slope into the sea in such proud and calm harmony as, for example, the mountains at Portofino—where the bay of Genoa ends its melody.” (GS 281 227)<sup>342</sup> But again, by contrast, in the early period it seemed as though Nietzsche also wished to gain something in a straight-forward way (i.e., in terms of model and imitation) from the example set by Socrates when it came to facing the end of life. An important passage touched upon in chapter one bears this point out well. In section 13 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche writes: “That he was sentenced to death, not exile, Socrates himself seems to have brought about with perfect awareness and without any natural awe of death. He went to his death with the calm with which, according to Plato's description, he leaves the Symposium at dawn, the last of the revelers, to begin a new day, while on the benches and on the earth his drowsy table companions remain behind to dream of Socrates, the true eroticist.”<sup>343</sup> In the *Gay Science*, however, Nietzsche considers the event of his death as a great failure. It is an application of the gay science of warfare

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<sup>342</sup> Also see section 36 of GS: “*Last words.*— It will be recalled that the Emperor Augustus—that terrible man who had as much self-control and could be as silent as any wise Socrates—became indiscreet at his own expense when he uttered his last words. For the first time he dropped his mask by implying that he had worn a mask and played a comedy: he had played the father of the fatherland and wisdom on the throne—well enough to create the illusion! *Plaudite amici, comoedia finita est!* [Applaud, friends: the comedy is done!] The idea of the dying Nero—*qualis artifex pereo!* [What an artist perishes with me!]*—*was also the idea of the dying Augustus: an actor's vanity, an actor's garrulity! Truly the opposite of the dying Socrates!” I interpret this to reflect how Nietzsche viewed “the slip” of Socrates’ tongue at the time of his death as a momentary and *revelatory* reaction to the horror of living existence, as compared to the simple vanity of an actor who could not stand to take his leave without first taking a bow.

<sup>343</sup> Also recall my treatment of BGE 191 in chapter one. There Nietzsche discusses how Socrates, “with the taste of his talent, had initially sided with reason,” and his suspicion that, “in the end” and “at bottom,” Socrates had secretly overcome himself in this respect, seeing finally that the other instincts ought to also “receive their due.”

and contest. In short, *Socrates fails the test of life* in GS 340. Nietzsche therefore did not overcome Socrates in the sphere of dialectics, and nor did he, strictly speaking, in strength of argumentation at all. Instead, Socrates was defeated as a contestant, and as the *highest* contestant, in the “test” of Nietzsche’s eternal return. Then, he overcame him by way of the exemplar *in persona* of Zarathustra.

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche relates that, for him personally, the realization of *amor fati* was precipitated by a deep experience of an absolute antagonism, which was what he called the “heaviest weight” of the whole of existence upon him. This is when everything threatens to become oppressive to anyone who has experienced the monotony of its infinite recital in the unfolding of an eternal return. Under this condition of antagonism, it becomes possible to see that, along with knowing the truth of the world as revealed by the demon, every experience could become one of an eternal hell. By his own testimony, it was only in the face of this possibility that Nietzsche could attain the theoretical perspective of *amor fati*.

Let us therefore remember as well that the eternal return scenario was for Nietzsche primarily a vehicle for the lesson of *amor fati*. That is to say, it is only one way of arriving at the ultimate “test,” the passing of which would prove the best type of soul, which is capable of loving life altogether. Let us suppose then that the same demon revealed to another soul that existence is inexorably foul, and that all existence is the suffering of the foul. This would amount to another, similar “test,” considering the plight of the pessimist, who in effect suffers the whole world. This is because the true pessimist manages to see that one must suffer even his happiest moments, of which there may be many, so that *amor fati* again serves as the highest solution to the predicament of life. It seemed to Nietzsche moreover that the greatest pessimist would require a fair number of these moments throughout his life in order to develop as such; and in this sense, the horror of pessimism—of Socrates, of Schopenhauer, and of others—may be viewed as a matter of good opportunity. For Nietzsche, once again, something like the horror of an eternal return was necessary for the realization of *amor fati*. But even Socrates was evidently unprepared to love life when the moment of his death arrived to him. This moment provided for him the ultimate contest (or “test”) of spirit for one who had projected the “best state of soul,” Socrates, who fails. Nietzsche actually made claim to have surpassed him here, to be sure, and this claim has been highly disputed; but we can say at least that his claim to have *understood* the life of *amor fati* remains uncontested, and that he took great pride in this. Nietzsche himself found it hard to conceive of someone, if any at all, who could ever attain *amor fati* without such a severe antagonism, i.e., the greatest weight of experience. He understood that such creatures would perhaps no longer be called “man” at all, and would be come upon by birth (perhaps as a matter of “breeding”), rather than private philosophical contests such as these. These creatures are hard to conceive (in the double sense). But we might nonetheless think of someone who is joyful

by disposition, and not by educative art, which always involves contest for Nietzsche.

As I argued in chapter one, Nietzsche understood the nature of his “advantage” over Socrates in terms of his superior capacity for illness.<sup>344</sup> In the Epilogue to *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, we also have this reminder that *amor fati*, the greatest achievable health of spirit, was itself a new vitality generated out of an ill constitution: “*Amor fati*: that is my inmost nature. And as for my long sickness, do I not owe it indescribably more than I owe to my health? I owe it a higher health—one which is made stronger by whatever does not kill it. I also owe my philosophy to it. Only great pain is the ultimate liberator of the spirit ...” (NCW PN 680-1) And, no doubt, the story of the months spent in Sils Maria just before that splendid and clear-skied January in Genoa demonstrates the learning Nietzsche would experience as a matter of “convalescence”: from conditions of cold, forced physical exercise (often for more than eight hours a day), nausea, extreme headaches and unbearable stomach pains, and, at that time, even the wish for *death*.<sup>345</sup> To Franz Overbeck, on September 18 of 1881, he writes: “I have already summoned death as a doctor and hoped yesterday would be my final day—”<sup>346</sup> Here the allusion to Socrates (or to the portrait Nietzsche would very soon compose of him) is unmistakable. At one time, that is, Nietzsche also wished to be finished with life—as if it were a *disease*. But in the *Gay Science*, wherein he has overcome this view and arrived at the solution of *amor fati*, Nietzsche consciously displaces himself from the role of the thinker who was at that time revealed to have “suffered life” as an illness in section 340. Socrates takes his place—not because he is weak or vulnerable, but precisely because Socrates has always appeared the most invulnerable and the most joyful, for which reason Nietzsche introduces him with praise for his life in every aspect.<sup>347</sup> The point in this crucial aphorism is that *even he* could not properly bear life.

Thus the joy of *amor fati* is itself a lesson learned through contest. Socrates, who all along seems the most powerful lover of life, and most likely to succeed in the “test” which Nietzsche imposes (called the “eternal return”), is ultimately exposed by it to be one who would, if tested by it, *suffer* at the idea of life in an eternal return. (GS 340) Even the wisest sage of life, Socrates, for whom Nietzsche expresses reverent admiration in the same aphorism, is shown by the depiction of this scene to have wanted “to be done with life,” despite all previous appearances, and he would *not*

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<sup>344</sup> See my treatment above of Nietzsche’s preface to GS, especially where he speaks of the traversing of different modes of health as the art of transfiguration which *is* philosophy to him. (Second preface to GS (1886), 3 35)

<sup>345</sup> For a rich description of the Nietzsche’s inspiration for the philosophy of *amor fati* during his “*Sanctus Januarii*” of 1882, see Rüdiger Safranski’s chapter, “Eternal Recurrence and the *Gay Science*” (especially p. 233-5), in *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, translated by Shelley Frisch, W.W. Norton and Company, New York: 2003.

<sup>346</sup> Rüdiger, *op. cit.*, 233.

<sup>347</sup> Nietzsche’s portrayal of Socrates as a secret pessimist was meant to score at the heart of the legacy that followed from his life; for, he says, “Socratic culture is rooted in an optimism which believes itself omnipotent.” (BT 18 110)

wish to repeat it. Now, says Nietzsche, we must overcome *even* the Greeks: that is, even the greatest amongst them—and it is at this precise moment in the text that he introduces the eternal return (in GS 341), and exceeds Socrates by passing the test which he evidently could not, by arriving at the solution known as *amor fati*.

It would seem that, at the moment of his death, Socrates rejoiced in finding his chance to finally let go of the hold he had maintained over all the raging impulses that were violently competing within his soul. This is the suggestion of Souladie, who imagines even more specifically that “Ce n’est qu’à l’instant où son bas ventre, qui représente le ‘lieu des passions sensuelles,’ est anesthésié par le poison, que lorsque sa libido n’a plus besoin d’être tyrannisée par la raison, que Socrate peut cesser son bavardage dialectique qui ne visait qu’à contrôler ses passions, et être enfin véridique.”<sup>348</sup> But what is more, for the Platonic Socrates this release was seen as a *permanent* end, and therefore a kind of release from the obligations of the sensual, and of the living in general:

Ayant vécu une vie exemplaire, Socrate serait assuré de ne plus voir son âme se réincarner une nouvelle fois, de ne pas avoir à vivre de nouveau. Il faut ici noter l’opposition absolue entre cette volonté de ne pas vivre de nouveau, que Platon prête à Socrate, et la doctrine de l’éternel retour, telle qu’elle est présentée dans *Le Gai savoir*, selon laquelle on doit parvenir à vouloir revivre sa propre vie une infinie de fois.<sup>349</sup>

Socrates embraced his death in the *Gay Science* out of exhaustion with life, and with an aversion for the recurrence of life. This is precisely where Nietzsche surpasses Socrates, who, as an enemy to Nietzsche—i.e., as the one who provided the best opportunity for the conception of a perfect attack, as the one who would succumb *only* to the very *greatest* weight, since he appeared the most invulnerable to it, as he in whom it is most difficult to see what is to be overcome—allowed Nietzsche to achieve what lay beyond Socrates’ own noble and warlike disposition, i.e., that disposition demonstrated in “everything he ever did or said.” This is friendship. There is no ill will here. Moreover, it is the way to affirmation, and to joy, and greater health, and to Yes-saying, and to war. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche claims to have achieved these things. I would argue, perhaps more conservatively, that one can see at least how he achieved the conception of all this, which is a philosophical victory. The actual life of *amor fati*, on the other hand, would be a more comprehensive victory in this sense.

Next, after introducing the idea of the eternal return along with the amorous wisdom it

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<sup>348</sup> Souladie, *op. cit.*, 39.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.* 32.

imparts (by way of contest), Nietzsche marks his final overcoming of Socrates with the narrative of a new, tragic philosopher. This is the Socratic antipode, Zarathustra, who first steps out of his cave to address the sun itself, and in speaking thus, refers to the state of his own superabundant wisdom as being like a special state of sickness.<sup>350</sup> It is a condition that is thought by Zarathustra, at least at first, to be curable only through the therapeutic release of *teaching others*, who, with “hands outstretched,” receive the lesson of the eternal return and *der Uebermensch*. In the next line Nietzsche confirms that it is exactly this lesson he has in mind, along with the lesson concerning the proper incorporation of defaults in the “stylization” of one’s life, when he writes: “I want to give away and distribute until the wise among men enjoy their folly once again and the poor their riches.” (*Ibid.*)

Nietzsche's own *agon* is characterized by the centrality of adversity; and it is, more specifically, adversarial. His style is accordingly driven by the portrayal of interplay between *adversaries* of a dramatic scale, as though their various philosophies represented so many different and opposing ways of life, sensibilities, historical destinies, and dispositions. Instead of defining and counterposing concepts toward one another in the empty space of metaphysical speculation, as was the tradition of “serious” thought in Germany, Nietzsche develops the personae of great historical figures—not only philosophers—into a literary space where it seemed all sorts of genius could signal at each other over vast distances. It is true that Nietzsche disavowed the “will to system”; but the interlocution made possible in the case of Nietzsche did itself comprise a sort of system, even if only a kind of mythological system, in which extraordinary individuals, the archetypes of various significant responses to life, meet and would make themselves known. Nietzsche also succeeds Socrates and his tradition—that is, the tradition of equivocation between knowledge, virtue, and happiness—in engaging moral discourse on his own (physio-psychological) terms. In doing so, he needed to first succeed in forcing his opponent to allow itself to be compellingly described in this language, for example, to be shown as a scourge to Western civilization in its having contaminated the *gut instincts* of its people. For this he used the person of Socrates, who, according to his views on proper warfare, served as a “magnifying glass” for this calamity. By overcoming the prevalent language of morality in this way, by ‘going deeper’ in the most anti-metaphysical sense, Nietzsche succeeds, finally, in overcoming the *agon* of moral discourse, once again, by fashioning his own.

If the quality of this fashioning is a function of how strong his opponent is, how strong the allure of the (essentially Socratic) *agon* of moralizing discourse can be, then it becomes clearer how Nietzsche not only talks about, but actually *does*, draw upon the strength of having enemies in his work. Like Socrates, though perhaps more self-consciously, Nietzsche’s project involves a reformulation of *agon*. He reports himself to have needed such enemies as urgently as one would a

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<sup>350</sup> “Behold, I am sick of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey ...” (GS 342 275)

close friend in his developmental process—and so, “That is why we immoralists require the *power of morality*: our instinct of self-preservation insists upon our opponents maintaining their strength—all it requires is to *become masters of them*.” (WTP 361 291) But it must be borne in mind that, as Nietzsche viewed it, mastery over one's opponent should be viewed as a matter of being in a position to be best empowered by that person or circumstance (or idea).<sup>351</sup> This sets the conditions for the nature of friendship for Nietzsche; it in fact represents the singular conditions under which real friendship can occur at all. It is pure mutual animosity, or synergistic mastership.

Now it would seem that while considering opposition from the perspective of martiality, one speaks of “enemies”; but when considered from the perspective of medicality, one thinks rather of “ailments” and “incapacities” as oppositional forces. When these are taken together, finally, Nietzsche’s metaphor may speak of “wounds” suffered at the hand of one’s enemy. But not the enemy, nor the ailment, nor the wound is purely negative for Nietzsche, and each is necessary to the extent that one has become a thriving student of life. Nietzsche’s own professed enemy, the decadents of the world, are treated accordingly, just as “decay” in the biological sense should be understood as integral to all processes of becoming, and appreciable above all in the process of over-coming.

*The concept of decadence.*— Waste, decay, elimination, need not be condemned: they are necessary consequences of life, of the growth of life. The phenomenon of decadence is as necessary to life as any increase and advance of life: one is in no position to abolish it.

Reason demands, on the contrary, that we do justice to it. (WTP 40 25)<sup>352</sup>

According to Nietzsche, therefore, the extremely negative, or the extremely degenerate, proves just as vital to healthy growth as the positive. Neither instance of these is to be rejected, therefore, so long as it is generative of a powerful bias. What is weak is in the end what is neutral, mediocre, and without sufficient energy; and hence, Nietzsche reasons that, “One should never even include weaker natures in the educational plan; they will not be of much significance either in a positive or a negative way.” (UWO 292) Given the status of Socrates in the history of thought, Nietzsche had no doubt that his attack on him would be perceived as outrageous, self-celebratory, etc., and this was done on the part

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<sup>351</sup> “... for a warlike philosopher challenges problems, too, to single combat. The task is *not* simply to master what happens to resist, but what requires us to stake all our strength, suppleness, and fighting skill—opponents that are our *equals*.” (EH *Why I am so Wise* 7 232)

<sup>352</sup> Very curiously, Nietzsche ends this aphorism with a suggestion, placed between brackets, as to how this “contagion” might be quelled: “(The cure: e.g., *militarism*, beginning with Napoleon who considered civilization his natural enemy.)” (WTP 41 26) There is also a letter in which Nietzsche speaks similarly of “*décadence*, a word which for us, it goes without saying, is meant not to condemn but only to describe ...” (Nice Winter 1884-5, SPL 83)

of his own educational plan.

At the same time it is also true that Nietzsche, as a literary figure, has been engaged in similar fashion by his critics, that is, at least in terms of “ruthlessness.” This indicates some reason to believe that Nietzsche has succeeded at inscribing himself into the guts and machinery of critical philosophical discourse, even if only regarding himself (i.e., only and especially if Nietzsche alone is “compromised” in it). Mügge makes a similar point when, in a brief section of his book entitled “A Critique and an Appreciation,” he recalls the critical approach once advocated by a leading literary authority, and it comes across as familiar to the reader of Nietzsche:

Ephraim Lessing, the Nestor of German literary critics, says somewhere that a miserable poet should not be criticised at all; towards a mediocre man one ought to be mild and indulgent; but a great poet, a genius, should undergo the most rigorous, the most merciless criticism. If one were to measure Nietzsche's claim solely by this rule, it would be impossible to doubt the greatness of this herald of revolt. Few philosophers, and no writers, have ever been so severely criticized. No abuse has been too strong, no praise sufficiently high—according to the standpoint of the critic.<sup>353</sup>

Is it fair to say that, at least on a more personal level, Nietzsche succeeded in going beyond the Socratic tradition of philosophical *agon*? Did he perhaps rather remain partitioned by the dictates of an essentially Socratic dialectical tradition? By asking *this* question, in any case, rather than the question which has been asked until now in the philosophical discourse concerning Nietzsche's relation, and even his “fight,” with Socrates, one can go much further. That is, the discussion until now has only resulted in going so far as to ask whether or not we can declare with certainty—whatever the worth of a such a declaration might be—that Nietzsche defeated Socrates as an opponent, or even, as Nehamas and Dannhauser suggest, that the reverse is true. But this work has hitherto been carried out as if it were clear what philosophical defeat always implies, and the question is posed as if there were only one sense in which the *agon* of the philosophical tradition has conducted itself. Socrates remains undefeated in this regard, as he will for eternity, as a retired champion. And in this regard, furthermore, the public retirement of Socrates in Athens was perhaps most in keeping with what Nietzsche describes as the original spirit of the Homeric contest, after all, since it was due in large part to the undefeatability of Socrates in *his* arena of dialectic. Thus the greatest contestant, and perhaps only the greatest, actually grows weary of the contest, and seeks respite in permanent retirement; and at times, even though Nietzsche was capable of seeing the

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<sup>353</sup> Mügge, *op. cit.*, 281.

*necessity*, and certainly the *beauty*, of Socrates' life in Greece, he does not condemn the Athenians outright for putting Socrates to death, to which the man himself did not object, and from which he did not retreat.<sup>354</sup>

#### **4.8 On Nietzsche's Secrecy Regarding Socrates, and Kaufmann's Thesis Regarding Socrates as the "Philosopher" Dionysus**

*To be able to afford a secret enemy—  
that is a luxury for which the morality of even  
elevated spirits is usually not rich enough.*

—GS 211 208-9

*The way I am, strong enough to turn even what is most questionable  
and dangerous to my advantage and thus to become stronger.*

—EH *Why I am so Clever* 6 250

In considering the secrecy and dissimulation that Nietzsche undertook in his treatment of Socrates, I turn first to the underlying project of the *Birth of Tragedy*, both as it was described at the time of its publication, and then later on in *Ecce Homo*. In both cases the project remains bound to a particular treatment of Socrates: a treatment which amounts to a relationship of learning, and one which, as such, can only appear according to a convergence of outright and secret friendship (i.e., explicit and implicit praise) as well as open and secret forms of enmity. Accordingly, I also argue in favor of Kaufmann's view that Nietzsche secretly identified Socrates as the highest model of soul, the so-called "Genius of the Heart."

In the midst of the book, Nietzsche explains openly that the project at the heart of his *Birth of Tragedy* is one of a learning return to the Greeks, and as one which was meant to announce and make way for humanity's reunion with the spirit alive *before* the death of tragedy. He therefore argues that,

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<sup>354</sup> I take this to be in keeping with Nietzsche's description in BT 13 85: "In this dilemma his accusers, when he was brought before the Athenian forum, could think of one appropriate form of punishment, namely exile ... When finally death, not banishment, was pronounced against him, it seems to have been Socrates himself who, with complete lucidity of mind and in the absence of every natural fear of death, insisted on it."

For us, who stand on the watershed between two different modes of existence, the Greek example is still of inestimable value, since it embodies the violent transition to a classical, rationalistic form of suasion; only, we are living through the great phases of Hellenism in reverse order and seem at this very moment to be moving backward from the Alexandrian age into the age of tragedy. (BT 19 120)

But if this is true, and we are passing with Nietzsche backwards from the time of dead tragedy to the time when it was alive, then it stands to reason that the point to be passed through is none other than *Socrates* (the alleged murderer of tragedy), for which reason Nietzsche reminds us that, “we cannot help viewing Socrates as the vortex and turning point of Western civilization.” This, I argue, is why Socrates before all others the Greeks, remains the “supreme teacher” (*allerhöchsten Lehrmeister*) who is needed now more than ever. (*Ibid.* 121) In this project of retrieval, Goethe, Schiller, and Winckelmann went the furthest, according to Nietzsche; but even they failed to learn the real secrets of the ancient teachers.<sup>355</sup> Hence, what Nietzsche calls his “most urgent” question always remains: “Toward what does a figure like Socrates point?” (BT 14 89)

In what was originally the final section of the *Birth of Tragedy*, Socrates is a genius and the great fertilizer of ancient Greece. Nietzsche tells us there that it is because of Socrates that the Greeks could pretend to what he calls “the special place among the nations which genius claims among the crowd.” (BT 15 91) Now, for the reader who is prepared to understand what he says next as reflective of Nietzsche’s particular school of learning, I argue it is neither difficult nor even surprising to see that, following this remark of high praise, he goes on to lament how, until now, “None of the later detractors was fortunate enough to find the cup of hemlock with which such a being could be disposed of once and for all: all the poisons of envy, slander, and rage have proved insufficient to destroy that complacent magnificence.” (*Ibid.*) It is also significant to see that this passage was written into the introduction attending the section that immediately follows after Nietzsche’s reinterpretation of the death of Socrates. At that time, his death was used to point toward an “artistic Socrates”: a creature who took shape at the end of a long reign as the despotic logician finally coming to feel a great sense of “void” and “loss” within his life. Still, however, Socrates died well in the *Birth of Tragedy*. It would not be until many years later that Nietzsche would “find his hemlock,” that is, when he would administer a brew of poison that would put Socrates to a new death, but still

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<sup>355</sup> Not surprisingly, Nietzsche chooses martial terms of description for this, remarking that “even these heroic fighters failed in some crucial points to penetrate the secret of Hellenism and establish a permanent bond between German and Greek culture[.]” (BT 20 121)

without any real need for lesser the forms of envy, slander, or rage.

Even though Nietzsche's treatment of the death of Socrates was generally positive in the *Birth of Tragedy*, in the preface he added to this book in 1886, Nietzsche would retroactively express his infamous suspicion—a suspicion which was not to be employed until 1882—that the death of Socrates revealed something crucial to his nature, and indeed, something that seemed to indicate a concealed vulnerability to life. In this later preface he considers the mind of Socrates. "Might it be," he asks, that it "was simply the human mind terrified by pessimism and trying to escape from it, a clever bulwark erected against the truth? Something craven and false, if one wanted to be moral about it? Or, if one preferred to put it amorally, a dodge? Had this perhaps been your secret, great Socrates? Most secretive of ironists, had *this* been your deepest irony?" (BT Preface 1 5) Again, it is clear that this could only have been written by a post-1882 Nietzsche, since he had not yet administered to Socrates his own hemlock of eternal return. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche would oppose Socrates in another way, and put him to death as an idol by other means. He would condemn him in very like manner to the Athenians of his own time, as the over-thrower of gods, but also as the one who brought the death of tragedy itself.

Like his Athenian judges, moreover, Nietzsche identified Socrates as the seducer of youth. Worst of all, and despite the protests of Socrates, it seemed to Nietzsche that those who were bound by his spell displayed a tendency for a kind of discipleship that was akin to simple idolatry. Even his best students were slavish; and it is Plato who is foremost in his mind when he speaks of Socrates and his famous death as the foundational events for an enduring Socratism. For, in his view "Socrates in his death became the idol of the young Athenian elite. The typical Hellenic youth, Plato, prostrated himself before that image with all the fervent devotion of his enthusiastic mind." (BT 13 85-6) Thus, as one moves forward through ancient history from the original and pure (*einseitig*) sages to the hybrid (*veilseitig*) types, beginning with Plato, we simultaneously move past the "end" of tragedy for Nietzsche. This in turn is reflected in the type of discipleship Socrates would tend to inspire by his own inimitable greatness. Thus it is a telling fact, Nietzsche says, that "[h]is success was such that the young tragic poet Plato burned all his writings in order to qualify as a student of Socrates." (BT 14 87)<sup>356</sup> Now, with Nietzsche, we are moving back through the age of the hybrids, back through the final pure sage, Socrates, and into the birthplace of tragedy. For his part, Nietzsche in effect does the opposite of prostrating himself. He rather takes the advice of that one teacher who had "corrupted the youth like Socrates," and accords to the martial doctrine of education: i.e., not a simple yes, not "half and half" or "on and off," but rather a no *as* a yes. (GS 32 103) That is, Nietzsche instead sacrifices

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<sup>356</sup> "Erfolge, dass der jugendliche Tragödiendichter Plato zu allererst seine Dichtungen verbrannte, um Schüler des Sokrates werden zu können." (KSA GT 14 92)

Socrates in the tragic manner of Brutus. It is thus he exceeds Plato as the “disciple” of Socrates.

Nietzsche makes it clear in the *Birth of Tragedy* that he, like Plato, is thinking of Socrates as a dramatic character, who is employable in different dramatic modes. In section 14, Socrates is identified as the “dialectical hero” of the Platonic drama, and is there also said to be not unlike the typical “Euripidean hero.” (BT 14 88) Moreover, in section 12 Nietzsche also calls Socrates “the new Orpheus,” who was to be “torn to pieces by the maenads of Athenian judgment.” (BT 12 82) But then how is Socrates also Orpheus? And what is the significance of this identity? First of all, the connotation of musical practice is evident, to be sure. More importantly, Socrates in this shape is meant by Nietzsche to represent a bridge between Apollo and Dionysus, since Orpheus is associated with the cults devoted to both of these deities.<sup>357</sup> Nietzsche confirms that he is entirely conscious of this same implication of calling Socrates “the new Orpheus” when he goes on to describe how it was Orpheus who, by being successful in “putting the overmastering god [Dionysus] to flight,” in fact also brought about the real proliferation of the Dionysian. Explicitly following the narration of Orpheus’ tale, that is, Nietzsche recounts that: “The latter [Dionysus], as before, when he fled from Lycurgus, king of the Edoni, took refuge in the depths of the sea; that is to say, in the flood of a mystery cult that was soon to encompass the world.” (BT 12 82) Most importantly, this positions Socrates as the progenitor of the Apollonian and the Dionysian alike. It also positions Socrates as a Dionysian figure, since he becomes the face of he who is to be torn to pieces (i.e., first at the hands of the Greeks, then by Nietzsche).

Under Nietzsche’s hand, Socrates, who is the new Orpheus, is once again sacrificed in the *Birth of Tragedy*. It would therefore seem that Socrates takes the shape of a tragic figure in Orpheus. And here it must be as it always is in the case of tragedy, as Nietzsche saw it, whereby, “[t]he hero, the highest manifestation of the will, is destroyed, and we assent, since he too is merely a phenomenon, and the eternal life of the will remains unaffected.” (BT 16 102) As in all tragedies as Nietzsche understood them, moreover, it is not Socrates “the man” who is sacrificed, but rather the demi-god, the hero, who acts as a representative, or what Nietzsche would call a “magnifying glass” in his *Kriegspraxis*. In fact, in the original tragedy of the time prior to Euripides, the hero of every play, no matter who it may be, was always Dionysus.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Specifically, in the words of Apollodorus, which were evidently well-known to Nietzsche: “Now Calliope bore to Oeagrus or, nominally, to Apollo, a son Linus, whom Hercules slew; and another son, Orpheus, who practised minstrelsy and by his songs moved stones and trees ... Orpheus also invented the mysteries of Dionysus, and having been torn in pieces by the Maenads he is buried in Pieria.” Apollodorus (Pseudo Apollodorus), *Library and Epitome*, translated by Sir James George Frazer, Oxford University press, Cambridge MA: 1921, 1 3 2.

<sup>358</sup> “... up to Euripides, Dionysos *remains* the sole dramatic protagonist and that all the famous characters of the Greek stage, Prometheus, Oedipus, etc., are only masks of that original hero.” (BT 10 66)

This leads to the rather odd implication that Socrates would serve for Nietzsche as an incarnation of Dionysus, whose death in this case would reenact the original spirit of tragedy. That this implication appears so improbable is of course due to the extreme opposition, and not the identity, which Nietzsche depicts between the Socratic and the Dionysian. Nonetheless, there are other grounds upon which to believe that Nietzsche actually identified Socrates with Dionysus-become-philosopher.<sup>359</sup> This is the conclusion reached by Kaufmann, whose argument I will elaborate in an attempt to further illustrate some implications of my own.

In the case given above, as in others, Nietzsche employs a device of ironic secrecy when it comes to Socrates. I have already argued that Socrates was both an “open” and a “secret” enemy for Nietzsche.<sup>360</sup> Indeed, by his own description of how the highest opponents are best engaged, there is to be expected some level of ambivalence, and even deception, on the part of Nietzsche-the-antagonist.<sup>361</sup> It is thus for example that Nietzsche’s highest praise for Socrates as a teacher is couched within the very declaration of a brutal and humiliating attack on him in *Twilight of the Idols*, or likewise, just before he puts Socrates to a new and uneasy death in the *Gay Science*. Elsewhere, the intense and *explicit* secrecy Nietzsche shown in his treatment of Socrates is most apparent between sections 11 and 12 of the *Birth of Tragedy*, which is already well into the course of the book, and nearing the end of the original version which had culminated in adoration for Socrates. Using such leading phrases as “before giving his name ...,” and “the other of whom I am thinking ...,” etc., Nietzsche teases the reader in these sections as to the identity of the figure, the divinity, about whom he is about to speak.

At one point, when he is looking back at the text *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche also

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<sup>359</sup> For a good discussion of how it is plausible to see Socrates as a Dionysian figure in Nietzsche’s work, see Church, *op. cit.*, where he gives a myriad of reasons for holding this view: “As Pierre Hadot points out, ‘Plato in his *Symposium* surrounded Socrates with a whole cluster of Dionysiac symbols’. In the *Symposium* we are faced with a Socrates who seems to channel and control the Dionysiac, that is described by Nietzsche. Socrates seems immune to the effects of the Dionysian drive: no matter how much wine he drinks, he cannot get drunk. Twice in the dialogue Socrates is presented as transfixed, transported as in a Dionysian reverie, and Aristodemus claims that these ecstasies often overcome Socrates. (*Ibid.* 699) Socrates’ speeches also “excite a ‘ravishment’ even if they are delivered by someone else. Socrates, like the music of the satyrs who follow Dionysos, sends listeners into a frenzied ecstasy. After pulling his interlocutors into the Dionysian experience, Socrates justifies their lives with his own beauty.” (*Ibid.* 700) Moreover, Church reminds the reader that “Alcibiades compares Socrates to one of the ‘Silenus-figures that sit in the statuaries’ shops’, those that contain images of the gods within them. Socrates especially resembles the satyr Marsyas whose divine music causes ecstatic transports, and who was skinned alive after challenging Apollo to a music contest.” (*Ibid.* 699-700) Finally, Church also expresses the belief that the title “pied-piper” suggests Dionysus.

<sup>360</sup> Title terms from GS 169 and 211, respectively.

<sup>361</sup> Properly speaking, Socrates would need to be called the “protagonist,” for the fact that he spoke first.

forbids anyone to guess at the identity of the one he speaks of while he attempts to reveal, in cryptic fashion, the secret nature of the project he had in mind during the time of writing the *Birth of Tragedy*. There he speaks again of that figure with whom he found himself constantly engaged throughout his life, and of whom he felt he needed to make a sacrifice in his first book:

For just as happens to everyone who from childhood has always been on his way and in foreign parts, many strange and not undangerous spirits have crossed my path, too, but above all he of whom I was speaking just now, and he again and again—namely, no less a one than the god *Dionysus*, that great ambiguous one and tempter god to whom I once offered, as you know, in all secrecy and reverence, my first-born—as the last, it seems to me, who offered him a *sacrifice*: for I have found no one who understood what I was doing then. (BGE 295 234-5)

But who, above all, should we say crossed Nietzsche's path "again and again" as the most dangerous, and also as the "most questionable phenomenon of antiquity"?<sup>362</sup> To be sure, Dionysus was the "great ambiguous one" and tempter *for* whom he made a sacrifice in *The Birth of Tragedy*. On the other hand, I think it hard to deny that it was Socrates *of* whom he made a sacrifice in that book. More precisely, it was Socrates-as-Orpheus, the tragic figure incarnate of Dionysus himself, who would be sacrificed in that book. But is that: Dionysus sacrificed to Dionysus? Socrates sacrificed to Socrates? It is not inconceivable. For, whoever was to be "torn to bits" at the hands of Nietzsche in that text, it was bound to be Dionysus in the guise of a protagonist (in this case, "Orpheus," who bridges the Apollonian and Dionysian in his conflicting affiliations with both). Moreover, if we can agree with Kaufmann's thesis that it is *Socrates* who represents Dionysus-become-man (i.e. the "Genius of the Heart," as argued below), then should we say that Nietzsche sacrificed Socrates, out of reverence for Socrates? As an act of love, and a declaration of affinity? With one eye on the reverence that is enacted in the virtue of Brutus—for whom Caesar is Rome, and he who dies for Rome—I believe this is also no longer inconceivable. And what does Nietzsche mean by saying that he made such a sacrifice not only in reverence, but also "in all *secrecy*"? If it is true, as he says, that no one has understood what he was really doing at that time, then I would argue that this misunderstanding is likely due to the special secrecy with which he paid his reverence for this figure—for, as I have attempted to show, the greatest versions of these things belong together for Nietzsche.

It is worth pointing out, as Kaufmann has rightly done, that Socrates is introduced by

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<sup>362</sup> In Golfing's translation, "the most problematic character among the ancients." (BT 13 84)

Nietzsche as a kind of deity upon the earth, as a “demi-god.” Socrates was that power which “drove Dionysos from the tragic stage,” and through Euripides he exercised a daemonic compulsion. In this case, therefore, “[t]henceforward the real antagonism was to be between the Dionysiac spirit and the Socratic[.]” (BT 12 77) Socrates was thus no mere man, but an immortal who continues to bespeak his spirit throughout the ages after him, for it is he who eclipses Apollo as the new antagonist of Dionysus. But then what is the nature of *this* divine antagonism, and what kind of *agon* was carried out in it? And what does it mean that Socrates drives Dionysus from the stage, only to be reintroduced and sacrificed *as* an incarnation of Dionysus, when Nietzsche attempts to resuscitate the spirit of tragedy?

In answer to the latter question, one recalls that with Nietzsche *Birth of Tragedy* we are passing backwards from the time of dead tragedy to the time when it was alive, for which reason we cannot avoid a dramatic confrontation with Socrates, who originally drove Dionysus *off* of the stage, and who should succeed in bringing him back on, as always, as a *guise* for him. In answer to the former, we see that Nietzsche describes the nature of the antagonism as it originally occurred between the Dionysian and the Apollonian drives earlier in the text. Here he clearly characterizes these two drives in terms of an ideal model of agonistic development:

[T]wo creative tendencies developed alongside one another, usually in fierce opposition, each by its taunts forcing the other to more energetic production, both perpetuating in a discordant concord that *agon* which the term *art* but feebly denominates. (BT 1 19)

In this we have a portrayal of that antagonism which yields the mutual improvement of its participants. Needless to say, this process greatly resembles and encapsulates what I take to be Nietzsche's key insight into the nature of agonistic educational development. In light of this, and along with the fact that it is Dionysus who is figured as one such participant, the need to gain a thorough appreciation of what it means arises, for instance, when Nietzsche takes up the following epithet in *Ecce Homo*: “I am a *disciple* of the philosopher Dionysus; I should prefer to be even a satyr to being a saint.” (EH Nietzsche's Preface 2 218; emphasis added) Apparently, there are two workable interpretations to consider in this case, both of which I argue result in reaffirming my picture of Nietzsche as the agonistic student of Socrates.

First of all, this statement on the part of Nietzsche is significantly unique, for it is the one and only passage whereby he pledges himself as any sort of “disciple” to any other.<sup>363</sup> As Kaufmann

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<sup>363</sup> More exactly speaking, the above passage from EH 218 is a strategic reiteration of the same declaration made originally in BGE 295. The nature of this “strategy” is meant to be made explicit in what follows.

observes, however, such a philosopher does not in fact exist, and this seems to suggest that Nietzsche ultimately pledged allegiance to no one at all. At the same time, nonetheless, the pledge itself would imply Nietzsche's own engagement in the “discordant concord” of the Dionysian-Socratic *agon*, which, under his analysis, has occupied the world from the time of antiquity. He would therefore represent the rival *par excellence* in respect of Socrates, the perfect “friend,” “enemy,” and agonistic rival. Hence, with this first interpretation, which is by far the less controversial of the two, we arrive at a picture of Nietzsche as one who, as such, was likewise propelled to ever greater “energetic productions” by means of his struggle against Socrates. Essentially this is the picture I have set out to describe in depth with this dissertation.

If, on the other hand, one believes that Kaufmann is correct in the provocative answer he gives to the title question “Who is Dionysus?”, then the case appears quite different, and a new interpretation is required.

In his pursuit of this title question, Kaufmann refers the reader to section 295 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which contains a detailed description “Dionysus as a philosopher.” Though he admits that he also sees much of Goethe in the description given there, he surmises that it is actually none other than *Socrates* to whom we must accredit the secret identity of the god-become-philosopher. This identity is made a “secret,” that is, insofar as Nietzsche explicitly forbids anyone to make conjectures on who it might be. More precisely, Nietzsche once again engages in taunting the reader in *Beyond Good and Evil* when he hesitates on about the true identity of the “genius of the heart,” admitting finally that he is speaking of Dionysus-become-philosopher. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche concludes his explanation for “why he writes such good books” by reciting his long and cryptic description from section 295. At this point, much later in his life, and having once again renewed his oath of discipleship to Dionysus, he revives and refurnishes the secret of his identity with a new declaration that the “genius of the heart” still has another, unrevealed name. There he says bluntly: “I forbid any surmise about whom I am describing in this passage:” (EH *Why I Write Such Good Books* 6 268)<sup>364</sup>

Kaufmann's response is this: “we need not conjecture if we remember that Nietzsche called Socrates the 'Pied Piper of Athens'—in *The Gay Science*, right after saying: 'I admire the courage and wisdom of Socrates in all that he did, said—and did not say.'” He thus reasons quite compellingly that the same admiration Nietzsche expressed in *The Gay Science* for the Pied Piper, Socrates, is equally expressed in section 295 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, where Dionysus-as-philosopher is described as:

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<sup>364</sup> “— ich verbiete übrigens jede Muthmassung darüber, wen ich an dieser Stelle beschreibe.” (KSA EH *Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe* 6 307)

The genius of the heart, as that great hidden one has it ... the Pied Piper ... whose voice knows how to descend into the depths of every soul ... The genius of the heart ... who teaches one to listen, who smoothes rough souls and lets them taste a new yearning ... The genius of the heart ... who divines the hidden and forgotten treasure, the drop of goodness ... under the ... thick ice ... The genius of the heart from whose touch everyone goes away richer, pressed by the goods of another, but richer in himself ... opened up ... less sure perhaps ... but full of hopes that as yet have no name.<sup>365</sup>

Given that Nietzsche saw Socrates as the one who “shared in every temperament”<sup>366</sup> (and who thus struck a chord in every heart); as the one who wrought a new and captivating philosophical taste into the world; as the one who would discover that which was otherwise covert in the minds of his interlocutors; and finally, as the one from whom one departs “richer in himself” as a result of being pressed by him in contest, it is easy to see what is compelling in Kaufmann's claim. What is more: if he is right in this assessment, which is strictly forbidden by Nietzsche, then Socrates must be identified as Dionysus-as-philosopher. This startling and counterintuitive revelation would then make Nietzsche's late pledge of discipleship—however secret it may have been, and despite his reasons for keeping it secret—a powerful testament to Socrates, the true educator of his life. From this perspective, it is therefore encouraging to recall once more how in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche follows up his pledge to Dionysus immediately by stating his preference for being a “satyr” rather than a “saint”—for it was Socrates who was originally described as a “satyr” and a “buffoon” in *Twilight of the Idols*, and Nietzsche who would later confess his desire to be both, and even the reality that he may already be both.<sup>367</sup> As such, Socrates was ugly in Nietzsche's eyes, as he insists on pointing out; but one should recall that it is the ugliness of the Dionysian satyr: all pudgy and crafty, playful and deformed. It is the ugliness which is sublimated in the tragic plays of Ancient Greece, and even by Euripides himself.

Nietzsche's pledge of discipleship to Dionysus is unique, but it is not the sole occasion on which he broaches the issue of discipleship, and in fact it is not even the only time it is mentioned within the preface to *Ecce Homo*, where this pledge is located. This warrants further investigation. To begin, I submit that if Nietzsche's own preface should give any indication of the thematic content to follow after it, then there should be little doubt after reading it that his thoughts on education held a

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<sup>365</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 410-1. I have followed Kaufmann's citation of the passage here, including his use of ellipses.

<sup>366</sup> See my treatment of this characterization in the section on Nehamas' view in chapter one.

<sup>367</sup> See EH *Why I am a Destiny* 1 326, where, in a remarkably similar fashion, he writes: “I do not want to be a saint, rather a buffoon. Perhaps I am a buffoon.”

central position there, including his thoughts on the essential relation that education bears to his notions of friendship, enmity, and war. This, I argue, is precisely why Nietzsche chooses to end the introduction to *Ecce Homo* by citing, in its entirety, Zarathustra's final and most profound speech to his students on the true nature of discipleship.

Now I go alone, my disciples, You, too, go now, alone. Thus I want it. Go away from me and resist Zarathustra! And even better: be ashamed of him! ... The man of knowledge must not only love his enemies, he must also be able to hate his friends. One repays a teacher badly if one always remains nothing but a pupil ... Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only *when you have all denied me* will I return to you. (EH Nietzsche's Preface 4 220)

Certainly Nietzsche has spoken at length about the necessity of “loving one's enemies” and “hating one's friends” in other contexts. However, what is found most revealing about Zarathustra's speech to his students here, as well as the fact that Nietzsche uses the speech to introduce his book, is that he definitively associates “the man of knowledge,” *the learner* in particular, with the necessity of implementing this practice.

But if this is really the nature of true discipleship for Nietzsche, described by him at length just three pages after calling himself a “disciple” of Dionysus-as-philosopher, and if, moreover, Socrates can indeed be identified as Nietzsche's unnamed philosopher of Dionysus, then we arrive at an intriguing corollary. In his “resistance” and “denial” of him, Nietzsche is then again, as I have held, the disciple of Socrates in accordance with his own agonistic philosophy of education. As audacious as this second interpretation might seem, I can see no other alternative to it besides the first, which I have already discussed: namely, that Nietzsche's pledge is simpler than this, as he thereby becomes the divine opponent of Socrates in the essentially educative *agon* of “energetic production” and “concordant discord” established between them.

Kaufmann is right when he stresses the importance of reading *Ecce Homo*, but for reasons somewhat different from those that have emerged in the present study. As an autobiographical text, it serves to delineate Nietzsche's own understanding of how he had developed intellectually throughout his life. To put it more plainly, he is reflecting there upon the course and method of his own education; and in *this*, I argue, lies the true richness of Kaufmann's claim to know that *Ecce Homo* best exemplifies Nietzsche's conception of Socrates as his “model.” Through his efforts, Kaufmann has succeeded at illuminating Socrates' role as educator to Nietzsche by showing that Nietzsche understood himself to be his emulator in some key respects. But this success happily leads to another, since it has effectively stationed Socrates-the-teacher in such a close and secure proximity to the

thematic content of Nietzsche's last work, which details the philosophy of war and contest by which he had reared himself into the highest echelons of thinking; or, in other words, the philosophy of education by which Socrates would have to be *opposed* as a teacher, and would therefore be “emulated” in the sense of the word denoting not mimicry but surpassing. This helps to explain why it is at this moment, after reaffirming his own brand of obedience as the “disciple of the philosopher Dionysus” in the preface to his book of reflection on his own development that Nietzsche chooses to proclaim his own formula for growth and development - “The strength of those who attack can be measured in a way by the opposition they require: *every growth is indicated by the search for a mighty opponent ...*” (EH *Why I am so Wise* 7 232; emphasis added).

## Conclusion

For Nietzsche, the prevailing duty of mankind is an educative one. This is because education is the means of cultivating genius, and this is no less than the means for culture itself. But then again, it is not just that Nietzsche's particular brand of education should be thought of as "the polemical one," the methods of which resemble those of a soldier. For, as Nietzsche points out, there are many ways of soldiering; and furthermore, even the educational procedure of the mediocre should be thought of in terms of warfare. This is made clear in the pages of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, for example, when he distinguishes his type of student from those of the "rank and file" masses of present day schooling.<sup>368</sup> By setting his own philosophy of education apart from what is typical in this way, Nietzsche instigated what he saw as a positive reformulation of contest and philosophical polemics. According to his own "school," to make use of a "No" as a "Yes" is utterly positive, and serves as the foremost tactic in a radical course of education. It is in this way, I have argued, that Nietzsche's polemic against Socrates must also be understood as a *creative* activity.

Throughout book two of the *Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes of his discovery that the "reputation," "name," and "appearance" of things and people constitute what is really effective in them, and practically become what is actually "essential" in them. With this in mind, he reminds himself of his task as a powerfully creative force, and the concomitant need for waging war as such: "We can destroy only as creators," he writes, "—But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new 'things.'" (GS 58 122) It was the design of his contest with Socrates to create new things—and of these most importantly, new ideals (the artistic Socrates, *amor fati*, the genius of the heart, etc.) along with a new way of having ideals (or idols)—and to do so without there ever being any danger of destroying Socrates or of compromising anyone but himself. As Nietzsche explains in his *Kriegspraxis*, as well, this personal "compromise" was designed as a necessary feature of his contest.

In orchestrating his own campaign of education, and in doing so by means of adversity, Nietzsche thought of himself as carrying out a certain tradition of Greek philosophical practice. Here,

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<sup>368</sup> See SE 80-1, where Nietzsche discusses the "crossroads" at which the times now stand, with the alternatives being two different types of education, and thus two types of soldiering. In terms of "cultural warfare," Nietzsche depicts the lower of these two as campaigning against the other, and out of a bad sense of envy: i.e., "... those who go along the first way mock him because the going is harder and often dangerous, and they try to bring him down to their level." This reflects the attitude of an unhealthy envy, and constitutes a great deal of the thematic content within *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*.

he takes after one such as Epicurus, for example, who is reported in *Beyond Good and Evil* to have forged himself in a healthy adversity (with “rage and ambition”) against Plato and his followers. (BGE 7 14) When thinking of Nietzsche’s contest with Socrates, which also served as a way of carrying out a contest with Socratism (and the other masks of “Platonism”), one must also recall that this adversity was steeped in a condition of envy, which *did include* ambition, and that his ambition, like that of the Ancients, also included the ambition for fame. From Nietzsche’s view, once again, this is in keeping with the same tradition of philosophy.<sup>369</sup> However, there is some danger in proceeding too rashly along this line of reasoning: i.e., by once again simply measuring out Nietzsche’s level of “success” at his inheritance of fame. Speaking to the motivation behind Nietzsche’s attacks on Socrates, and according to this same reasoning, Lampert issues the following appraisal for the consideration of the reader:

And if the adversary is 'the one turning point and vortex of all so-called world history,' who, through his intoxication of his followers, could transform a local event in Athens into world history and give his imprint to millennia, then the one who wins the victory over him wins a world-historical victory that will for millennia be hailed as the beginning of the new epoch.<sup>370</sup>

I would argue that this line of thinking is problematic only as long as it is not also made clear that such a thought is reflective only of Nietzsche’s mode of intention—or, even more precisely, of his agonistic *method*. That is, the fame and prestige of his opponent was only one criterion for his *agon*. Moreover, the appearance that he was almost sure to fail against one so formidable as Socrates was another criterion. Once again, the question at hand is not whether Nietzsche was the “victor” of his contest with (his) Socrates in fame or influence. Rather, from an interpretive standpoint, most significant is that Nietzsche portrayed himself, as he portrayed Socrates: as a victor, as one standing in history as an event compared to which all other things can occur as “before” and “after,” and most importantly, as a new specialist and *innovator* of contest, who created a contest beyond the limits of Socrates: i.e., in his capacity for the love of life, and as a specimen of the greatest “health.”

Nietzsche’s own responses to the various charges raised against him of having “lost” his war with Socrates have been cited in chapter one of the present thesis. Finally, however, one more such charge can still be found in Kaufmann’s essay on “Nietzsche’s Admiration for Socrates.” There,

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<sup>369</sup> For a good example of this, see EGP HC 56: “We do not understand this attack on the national hero of poetry [i.e. the attack of Xenophanes upon Homer] in all its strength, if we do not imagine, as later on also with Plato, the root of this attack to be the ardent desire to step into the place of the overthrown poet and to inherit his fame.”

<sup>370</sup> Lampert, *op. cit.*, 231.

Socrates appears as the victor in light of his good health and long life once again, when Kaufmann makes the judgment that, “Nietzsche's general failure to equal his hero could hardly be illustrated more frightfully than by his own creeping death.”<sup>371</sup> In my view, this is only a variation on the familiar claim that Nietzsche could never adequately compare to Socrates. In sum, Nietzsche’s response to this comes when he assesses that it is *he*, and not one such as Socrates, who enjoys a *greater* health, i.e., by learning to be sick in a healthy way, by learning to move between different states of health and thus between different philosophies, and thereby growing “stronger” in his own way. Nonetheless, what appears more challenging in Kaufmann’s characterization is the subtle (yet obvious) fact that the defeat and the “failure” of Nietzsche’s death could never have possibly helped him in growing stronger spiritually. But then, this is only to say that in this case “*Was mich nicht umbringt*” did not include his complete neurological breakdown and a resultant loss for the capacity to “die well.” Thus, there is nothing in Kaufmann’s charge that is at all inconsistent with Nietzsche’s claim to have superseded the physically robust—a claim which rested on his ability to render victory from failure and health from sickness. From this perspective, it is unfitting to describe Nietzsche’s “creeping death” as a defeat in his contest with Socrates, since his debilitation would leave him without the opportunity to face his own death, and therefore without the opportunity to participate in this final “test” of life, as Socrates had. This is to say that, with the moment of his collapse, Nietzsche died too early, and ultimately his own “last words” would be framed by the intervening device of his sister.

Again, the question cannot be whether Nietzsche’s influence has at last “measured up” to that of Socrates (which it has not), since the influence he sought to effect was directed precisely against the wayward influence of Socrates: that is, by effecting a remedy that would, in the end, greatly resemble the affliction. Moreover, aside from his very personal engagement with Socrates, Nietzsche also saw himself as “fighting this fight” on behalf of modernity itself. In this way, his overcoming of Socrates is reflective of the cultural need to overcome the dominion of an idol.

Largely, Nietzsche’s thought represents an attempt at recovery from the death of God; but at the same time it also represents a recovery from the figure of Socrates, who is said by Nietzsche to be a figure who casts his shadow “ever farther into the world” with the setting sun. These two projects of recovery are by no means unrelated. Primarily because it was Socrates who first ordained the divinity of knowledge, David Allman also suggests this when he writes of how, “In sum, the death of God betokens the passing of Socrates' reign over the spiritual order of Western civilization.”<sup>372</sup> Likewise, Nietzsche was not concerned solely with his own educational rivalry with Socrates. In the project laid

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<sup>371</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 403.

<sup>372</sup> Allman, *op. cit.*, 116.

out in the *Birth of Tragedy*, as well, Nietzsche is not only urging his own transformation toward the “artistic Socrates” of the future. In that book and throughout his corpus, he is forecasting the need to overcome the discipleship of culture that has grown around the ideal of Socrates as theoretical man. His own treatment of Socrates, which included malice, denouncement, as well as praise, was therefore what he saw as required for such a transformation. This was something new in the discourse of philologists and philosophers, and something that would bring about a new *Kampf* from the ranks of the scholarly world, as Nietzsche was aware. But then, he also intended his treatment of Socrates to be a *coherent* one, after all, and an *enlivening* one. “Tell the philologists that my Socrates is all of a piece,” he writes in a letter to Erwin Rohde, “I feel so strongly the contrast between my description and the others, which all seem so dead and moldy.”<sup>373</sup> As Nietzsche saw it, the philosophical world would be just as unfamiliar with and ill-equipped for his interpretation of Socrates, which had always been a matter of pursuing an educative project, both as an individual and as one who lived on behalf of a culture. In another letter to Rohde from two years prior, when speaking about the lecture series he was to offer on “Socrates and Tragedy” that same winter, Nietzsche announces: “I love the Greeks more and more; there is no better approach to them than the tireless education and cultivation of one’s own small person.”<sup>374</sup> It was in this way that even so early on Nietzsche had sought the way for his own personal education, his own philosophical cultivation, by way of teaching his thoughts on Socrates.

It has been the argument of this thesis that, in overcoming Socrates personally, Nietzsche succeeded in deciding on what truly could be the highest state of man. In overcoming Socrates publically, he attempted to counteract the “Socratism” that still pervades the ideals of theoretical man, disguised as he found them to be in the will of scholarship and throughout the common practice of the Christian religion. However, even Socratism and the legacy of theoretical man remained great for Nietzsche in an important sense, since these were seen by him as a needed remedy for the ailments of an era. Hence, as Kaufmann points out: “Socratism is considered [by Nietzsche] dialectically necessary—in fact, as the very force that saved Western civilization from an otherwise inescapable destruction.”<sup>375</sup> The problem for Nietzsche was therefore not that the Socratic ideal as it has held sway was “wrong,” but properly impermanent, and waiting to be overcome. Meanwhile, it should be recalled that the various elements of the man “Socrates” which were adopted historically into the broadest sentiments of consciousness were not exactly what Nietzsche idolized in his

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<sup>373</sup> July 16 at Basel, 1872. From *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Christopher Middleton, Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 1969, p. 98.

<sup>374</sup> January at Basel, 1870, *Ibid.* 83.

<sup>375</sup> Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 406.

Socrates<sup>376</sup>; although, as I have maintained, Nietzsche also admired these attributes as well.<sup>377</sup>

But neither the Christian disdain for the physical (with its contest centered upon the exhortation of physical torture), nor the Stoic quest for the type of perfect invulnerability that came so naturally to Socrates, would attain to the ideal of personal *power* expressed in Nietzsche's martial school of life. Thus the preeminent Stoic and inheritor of the Socratic legacy, Epictetus, decrees in his book of lessons on life that, "a man should look upon himself as an enemy, and one in ambush."<sup>378</sup> "Yes, but also one who is at your throat," Nietzsche might well have added. In effect, this response would illustrate the transvaluation of ascetic practice from the time of the Ancients, who proceeded by "making castles of themselves," to his own practice of self-overcoming—for Nietzsche *wanted* to be overrun by his higher self, rather than to be protected from his "lower" self. Self-overcoming therefore did not consist for him in warding off the excessive or vicious self, because this was to his mind merely negative virtue, which had long since formed the basis for a Christian ascetic model, and for the ideal for self-development at large. Instead, Nietzsche's positive asceticism called for the assassination of the weaker self, in keeping with the primary principle of life, as well as his principle for the love of life:

Life—that is: continually shedding something that wants to die. Life—that is: being cruel and inexorable against everything about us that is growing old and weak—and not only about *us*. Life—that is, then—being without reverence for those who are dying, who are wretched, who are ancient? Constantly being a murderer?—And yet old Moses said: 'Thou shalt not kill.' (GS 26 100)

With this, we see the sense in which Nietzsche's transvaluation of asceticism (along with the common nature of the self-educative project) also constitutes a type of transgression of the Christian command not to "kill." With Moses, this commandment came down from the hand of God on the mountain; and with Abraham, as it happened, this commandment struck to the heart of his own encounter with God up on the mountain, where he had just been relieved of the ultimate task and "test," which was to kill his most beloved. By contrast, Nietzsche's war waged against his idols, and the murder of the one he loved best, is a testimony to his aspiration for the virtue of Brutus.

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<sup>376</sup> Kaufmann has already cited Nietzsche's emulation of Socrates' joyful malice (*Bosheit*). To this I would add Nietzsche's emulation of Socrates as the "most secretive of ironists," (BT Preface 1 5) which is most apparent in the very exposition of his attitude toward him as such.

<sup>377</sup> For example, his courage, his concern for truth, and his ability to harness all personal energies under a single yoke.

<sup>378</sup> Epictetus, *op.cit.*, Enchiridion 48 272.

Ultimately, his admiration for Socrates did not stop him from putting him to new deaths in the course of his own project of self-overcoming, as well as in the project of overcoming “man as he is” more generally. Thus the one who killed Socrates anew was Nietzsche, to be sure, but then also a new Socrates, who commanded a new order of love and learning.

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