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## **Nietzsche's Conception of Friendship**

A Master of Philosophy dissertation by

**Ryan Kinsella**

*University of Notre Dame Australia, July 2007*

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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	5
<b>Chapter One – Nietzsche and Friendship</b>	14
A. Passages on Friendship	15
B. Friends as his Intended Audience	20
C. Nietzsche’s Friends	24
<b>Chapter Two – Nietzsche’s Conception of Friendship</b>	33
A. Human Being as Animal	34
B. Relationships and the Development of the Human Being	40
C. Nietzsche’s Conception of Friendship	44
D. Self-Interestedness and Instrumentality	55
E. Solitude	64
F. Unhealthy Friendship	69
<b>Chapter Three – Friendship and Morality</b>	73
A. Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Morality	77
B. Comparing Nietzsche’s understanding of Friendship and Morality	82
C. Axel Honneth’s Theory of Recognition and Intersubjectivity	86
D. The Unique Role of Friends	90
E. The Moral Implications of Nietzsche’s Friendships	100
<b>Conclusion</b>	103
<b>Bibliography</b>	108

*Abstract*

Interpreting Friedrich Nietzsche's unorthodox conception of friendship is the focus of the following dissertation. In couching his conception of friendship within his naturalistic philosophy of the human person and his morality, I aim to establish the central importance of friendship in Nietzsche's philosophy. An equally important second aim is to demonstrate how Nietzsche's philosophy of friendship is distinctly constructive in contrast to other aspects of his philosophy. These aims are addressed in three chapters: in the first chapter I examine how Nietzsche discusses friendship in his works, in what tone he discusses friendship, and I will briefly discuss how his conception friendship might have been influenced by his own friendships. In the second chapter I describe Nietzsche's friendship, demonstrating how his friendship relates to other aspects of his philosophy, including his naturalistic world-conception and his philosophy of the human person. In the final chapter I discuss how Nietzsche's understanding of friendship is implicitly moral and how his positive interpretation of friendship is distinctly constructive in contrast to his criticisms of morality.

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The following dissertation is the work of Ryan Kinsella and contains no material which has been accepted for award of any degree or diploma in any other institution.

To the best of the candidates knowledge, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the dissertation.

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Ryan Kinsella

July 2007

Among Friends  
An Epilogue

1

Fine to lie in quiet together,  
Finer still to join in laughing –  
Underneath a silken heaven  
Lying back amid the grasses  
Join with friends in cheerful laughing,  
Showing our white teeth together.

Am I right? let's lie in quiet;  
Am I wrong? let's join in laughing  
And in being aggravating,  
Aggravating, loudly laughing,  
Till we reach the grave together.

Shall we do this, friends, again?  
Amen! and *auf Wiedersehn!*

*Human, All Too Human*, 1878

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The friend should be the festival of the earth to you and an anticipation of the overman...  
*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 1883

### **- Introduction -**

Perhaps more than many other philosophers, Friedrich Nietzsche wove his personality and feelings throughout his philosophy, reminding his readers that philosophy is not simply books, ideas and abstractions. Rather philosophy should pervade the daily routines, the most casual interactions and all things that could be too plain for many other philosophers. Nietzsche is a philosopher of life, calling his audience to reevaluate values and to reinterpret themselves. Where long-winded arguments on the nature of truth and morality are less common in Nietzsche's works, more common are short aphorisms and rhymes. (This is not to say that Nietzsche's philosophy lacks larger arguments nor does he disregard topics such as truth and morality. Rather, Nietzsche begins with the seemingly minuscule, and then follows his examination into larger philosophical themes.) In these snippets and aphorisms, he invites his audience to reevaluate the elements of life most intimate to their being, engaging topics such as pity, art, and the topic of this paper, friendship.

As the opening quote suggests, Nietzsche holds a distinctly unorthodox view of friendship, in which laughing, aggravation and silence are all elements of friendship. Nietzsche depicts friendship as a relationship that includes a variety of interactions, some of which are casual and playful and other interactions that are combative and aggravating. By inviting silence, laughter and confrontation into friendship, Nietzsche suggests that a healthy friendship is not an ideal to 'live up to' but rather something that is complex and necessarily includes elements of conflict. The second quote above demonstrates the importance of friendship in Nietzsche's philosophy: he is not simply describing a type of relationship but instead approaches friendship with the understanding that it is an avenue

to the *Übermensch* – the person who leads the most fulfilling life in Nietzsche’s philosophy.

From Aristotle, through to the philosophers Montaigne and Bacon, and to Nietzsche, the notion of friendship continues to invoke philosophical discussion and thought; the most basic formative question being, “what is friendship?” The variety of answers implies that friendship is a complicated issue, even though it is one of the most elemental relationships a person experiences in life. Aristotle, for example addresses friendship in several books of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and yet, as Jacques Derrida notes,<sup>1</sup> Aristotle confronts his audience with an ambiguous declaration: “My friends, there are no friends.”<sup>2</sup> Centuries later, Montaigne paints friendship as almost mystical and beyond the limitations of expression.<sup>3</sup> Bacon argues that friendship is purely instrumental.<sup>4</sup> The interpretations of friendship are so varied that it seems friendship can either be the most sacred and beautiful relationship shared between two people or that friendship is the romanticized label that we give to two people using each other for their own personal gains. Friendship might be a moral action or perhaps amoral, circumstantial or “beyond moral.” Friendship can either aim for impartiality or concede explicit favoritism; and is both argued to be rooted in altruism or contrastingly in self-interestedness.

Aristotle’s treatment of friendship – both pensive and thorough – generally stands as a starting point for those philosophers who investigate friendship. For this discussion

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<sup>1</sup> Derrida, Jacques, *Politics of Friendship*, (trans. George Collins), Verso, London, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (trans. Terence Irwin), Hackett Publishing, New York, 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Montaigne, “Of Friendship,” *Other Selves* (ed. Michael Pakuluk), Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1991, Cambridge, 185-199.

<sup>4</sup> Bacon, Francis, “Of Friendship,” *Other Selves* (ed. Michael Pakuluk), Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Cambridge, 1991, 200-207.

on Nietzsche's treatment of friendship, delineating the key elements of Aristotle's friendship would be helpful in generally describing what I refer to as "orthodox friendship." Elements of Nietzsche's treatment starkly contrast ideas that seem to be "orthodox." For example, "orthodox" friendship can be described as stable and categorically supportive. In other aspects, however, Nietzsche and Aristotle's friendship, share similarities: for example, both Nietzsche and Aristotle agree that friends improve one another, and more or less, in a moral sense.<sup>5</sup> Both in Aristotle and Nietzsche, the process of human flourishing occurs within the context of friends and society. For self-discovery (and ultimately moral refinement), one must attain knowledge of oneself by looking towards friends, which is a conclusion similar to the spirit of Nietzsche's valuation of friendship.

In Aristotle's treatment, there are elements of friendship that should also be considered orthodox because of their prevalence within discussion of the philosophy of friendship, but also because they seem practical. For example, Aristotle notes that the concern of one person must be reciprocated by the other if their relationship is to be considered a friendship. When concern is not reciprocated, then a person is simply expressing goodwill.<sup>6</sup> Aristotle also notes that in friendship, friends are concerned with each others' well-being in-itself.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, one is not truly a friend if he or she cares for another, hoping for some other end; or colloquially, one should not use their friends as means to other ends. Aristotle further expounds that a friend is "another self"<sup>8</sup>, and, as

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<sup>5</sup> Tabensky, Pedro Alexis, *Happiness: Personhood, Community, Purpose*, Ashgate Publishing, Burling, VT, 2003, pp. 147-207.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII, chapter 3, 1155b30 (p. 210).

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII, chapter 3, 1155b30 (p. 210).

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IX, chapter 11, 1166a-1172 (p.245).



Pedro Tabensky summarizes, friends help each other to “more fully realize each person’s own capacities as a rational agent, and so promote each person’s happiness.”<sup>9</sup>

That a person must not have ulterior motives for a friendship and that friends must be equally concerned with one another are aspects that I consider to be philosophically “orthodox.” Moreover, these aspects seem practical and reasonable *in reality* and not just in theory. In this sense, while Aristotle’s treatment is philosophically significant, I argue that his idea of friendship is additionally engaging and holds a certain amount of authority because most people have similar experiences with their own friendships.

If Aristotle’s friendship is “orthodox” and reasonable, then Nietzsche’s friendship can be described as distinctly “unorthodox”, and it is my intention to show how Nietzsche’s is such in this dissertation. For example, Aristotle notes that one should value their friends in-themselves, conversely Nietzsche argues that a person can (and will) use their friends instrumentally as they strive to become *Übermensch*. (This topic will be discussed later in Chapter II, section D.) Aristotle also argues that virtuous friendships are stable,<sup>10</sup> whereas Nietzsche advocates that in a healthy relationship, a person must be willing to risk losing their friendship if it has become parasitic and limits their ability grow.<sup>11</sup>

Nietzsche’s conception of friendship, containing elements of self-interestedness and criticism, is unlike a traditional conception of friendship which includes aspects like altruism, intimacy and compassion. Compared to these traditional interpretations of friendship (Plato’s or Aristotle’s conception, for example) Nietzsche’s friendship is

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<sup>9</sup> Irwin, T.H., “Aristotle”, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (edited by Craig, E.) Routledge, London, 1998. Retrieved August 23, 2007, from <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/A022SECT25>

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII, chapter 7, 1159a5-25 (p. 221).

<sup>11</sup> D §563, 226.

seemingly violent at times, reckless and combative, and in the absence of conceptualizing his understanding of friendship within a broader Nietzschean philosophical context, Nietzsche's friends are more similar to the relationship shared between two enemies than two persons concerned with each others' well-being. Thus, in this dissertation I will demonstrate how Nietzsche's conception of friendship, without traditional elements like compassion and selflessness, encourages friends to reevaluate aspects of their life in which they have become complacent. His conception of friendship, moreover, reflects the fundamental idea within his philosophy that humans are not fixed but moldable and have the potential to develop and evolve. Demarcated by a corrective tone, he prescribes a relationship that intends to bring about the greatest potential within a person through unconventional methods.

At the most basic level Nietzsche evaluates friendship in terms of how well the relationship improves the friends; thus, he places particular emphasis on friends who are critical of one another. True friends, he argues, are not unconditionally supportive but recognize their own selfish motives within the relationship and true friends are willing to sacrifice the relationship in order to better themselves. Dissimilar to the common perception of friendship as encompassing compassion and encouragement, Nietzsche's prescribes a friendship in which friends challenge one another with intent to cultivate honesty and self-mastery. In this sense, for Nietzsche, friends are integral to the most fulfilling aspects of a person's life including self-mastery and self-awareness – both characteristics of the *Übermensch*.<sup>12</sup> Investigating with a view to understanding the peculiar nature of Nietzsche's friendship is what drives this dissertation.

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<sup>12</sup> For example: Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*. (trans. Kaufmann, Walter,) Vintage Books, New York, 1989, VI 324, 255; Z Prologue 3, 12-3; Z II "On those Who are Sublime", 116-7.

As with any aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy, interpretation is required, and so it is with the following treatment of Nietzsche's friendship. Before investigating the combative and selfish friendship that Nietzsche prescribes, however, extensive consideration will be given to how Nietzsche deals with friendship and what Nietzsche means by "friendship." In this sense, the following paper is primarily interpretative. Two significant themes dictate how I interpret Nietzsche's understanding of friendship: first, Nietzsche's philosophy reflects his adherence to a natural interpretation of the world in which humans are animals, and moralities are a creation of humans. I argue that, for Nietzsche, friendship is understood as a relationship shared between two animal-like beings who benefit most from the relationship when acknowledging their nature. A second theme that directs this paper relates to Nietzsche's naturalistic interpretation of people, friendships and the world, in that he also understands people to be both moldable and capable of improvement and regression.<sup>13</sup> For Nietzsche, persons are not fixed but they are organic beings, a culmination of their upbringings, surroundings and evolutionary drives. Thus, the following interpretation of Nietzsche also reflects the idea that, capable of change, humans are influenced by their relationships and particularly their friendships.

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Nietzsche's friendship, while addressed in several quintessential works on Nietzsche (for instance Kaufmann's *Nietzsche* and Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*) has

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<sup>13</sup> For example, GS I 26, 100; GS IV 307, 246.

not received much attention from scholars working on Nietzsche.<sup>14</sup> One likely reason for this neglect might be that there are other aspects of his philosophy that are more appealing for scholars to research, such as Nietzsche's theory of "truth" and his criticisms of morality. Friendship as an avenue of philosophical inquiry, in Nietzsche's philosophy or any other philosophy, is dwarfed to the historically popular concepts of philosophy like theories of truth and morality. In this sense, as friendship is a lesser discussed aspect of philosophy on the whole, Nietzsche's conception of friendship has also received less attention in Nietzsche scholarship. (This argument, of course, is not particular to Nietzsche but applicable to most other philosophers. Aristotle's friendship, while the focus of a notable amount of scholarship, has received much less attention and is generally regarded as being 'less important' than Aristotle's ethics, for example.)

One other reason that Nietzsche's friendship has received less attention is that it is distinctly positive in contrast to other aspects of his philosophy. For many Nietzsche is regarded as a depressing philosopher with nihilistic tendencies; certain passages in the *Genealogy*, for example, explain why one might draw these conclusions. His conception of friendship, however, is equally positive and hopeful as it is also bleak and self-interested. The implication here is that an unbiased examination of Nietzsche's friendship (in which positive conclusions are drawn) contrasts with the generally accepted notion of Nietzsche being a dark philosopher. A base reading of Nietzsche – the reading that primarily focuses on his nihilistic statements – disregards his valuation of friendship; however, in rereading Nietzsche as a constructive philosopher (in regard to

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<sup>14</sup> Kaufmann, Walter, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, Princeton University Press, Random House, New York, 1968, 363-71.

friends), a more interesting conclusion is that Nietzsche was not strictly a nihilist but that he also held a constructive conception of morality.<sup>15</sup>

In couching his conception of friendship within his naturalistic philosophy of the human person and his philosophy of morality, I aim to establish the central importance of friendship in Nietzsche's philosophy. An equally important second aim is to demonstrate how Nietzsche's philosophy of friendship is distinctly constructive in contrast to other aspects of his philosophy. These aims are addressed in three chapters: in the first chapter I examine how Nietzsche discusses friendship in his works, in what tone he discusses friendship, and I briefly discuss how his conception friendship might have been influenced by his own friendships. In the second chapter I describe Nietzsche's friendship, demonstrating how his friendship relates to other aspects of his philosophy, including his naturalistic world-conception and his philosophy of the human person. In the final chapter I discuss how Nietzsche's understanding of friendship is implicitly moral and how his positive interpretation of friendship is distinctly constructive in contrast to his criticisms of morality.

Herein is the value of asking "what is Nietzsche's understanding of friendship?" The question not only provides insight into an under-examined aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy but the answer introduces a more positive interpretation of his philosophy. If moralities rest on untenable and self-alienating principles as Nietzsche suggests, then it is worthwhile to further investigate how he treats friendship – a relationship in which there

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<sup>15</sup> For more on Nietzsche's criticisms of morality, see primary sources: Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1989, *The Twilight of the Idols* (TI). (trans. Kaufmann, Walter.) Penguin Books, New York, VII 1; Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM), (trans. Kaufmann, Walter.) Vintage Books, New York, 1967, Preface 6.

Also, see secondary sources, sources Foot, Philippa, "Nietzsche's Immoralism," *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality* (ed. Richard Schacht), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994, p. 5; Clark, Maudemarie, "Nietzsche's Immoralism and the Concept of Morality," *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality* (ed. Richard Schacht), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994, 15-7.

is no intrinsic good in caring for the other person. The following examination aims to make clear what Nietzsche meant by friendship in respect to his treatment of morality and his commitment to a naturalistic perception of the world.

Significant evidence supports the notion that Nietzsche attributed particular importance to the idea of friendship, and in the first section of the paper I will give textual and biographical evidence in support of this claim.

**- Chapter One -**  
*Nietzsche and Friendship*

In this first chapter of this paper I will show how Nietzsche's philosophy, published works and his personal life demonstrate the importance of friendship in his philosophy. I will also introduce three important reasons why Nietzsche's conception of friendship justifies examination. For instance, there are a number of passages in Nietzsche's work in which he explicitly discusses friendship. I will demonstrate how these discussions are indicative of the importance that Nietzsche placed on friendship in his moral schema. The manner in which Nietzsche addresses his readers – particularly when he addresses them as “[his] friends” or “[his] brothers” – also suggests that Nietzsche relates to his audience as he might relate to his friends. Finally, Nietzsche's life is highlighted by several significant relationships, (eg. Richard Wagner); I will consider and evaluate these relationships in terms of how they influenced the development of his philosophy. It is in the first chapter that I establish the relevance of a discussion on Nietzsche's friendship, beginning with how and where Nietzsche discusses friendship in his philosophy.

## A. Passages on Friendship

Nietzsche explicitly deals with friendship in approximately thirty passages in his major works; however, his interest in friendship is not contained only within these passages but additionally in many other passages and chapters in which he implicitly deals with the nature of relationships. Nietzsche implicitly addresses friendship when he discusses pity, solitude, and virtue. The degree to which Nietzsche implicitly deals with friendship, however, is difficult to define as he pays significant consideration to the human psyche and moral sensations. Nonetheless, there are certain aspects of Nietzsche's thinking that affect and characterize his conception of friendship. The implicit references to friendship, while numerous and telling, are also ambiguous in the absence of further examination into how the passages fit into the context of his wider discussions. The implicit references to friendship also need to be read in comparison with other passages that explicitly and implicitly deal with friendship.

In addition to the implicit references, Nietzsche also explicitly analyzes friendship in many passages and aphorisms throughout his work.<sup>16</sup> It can be inferred from the

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<sup>16</sup> Specifically, according to this research, Nietzsche evaluates friendship in approximately 25 or more instances throughout his philosophical development.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1996, *Human, All too Human, A Book for Free Spirits* (HAH), (trans. R.J. Hollingdale,) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, "Man in Society" §305, 137.

HAH VI §354, 143.

HAH VI §368, 145.

HAH VI §376, 148-9.

HAH VII §378, 150.

HAH VII §390, 151.

HAH IX §491, 179.

HAH IX §499, 180.

HAH IX §559, 186.

HAH X "Among Friends, an Epilogue", 205.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Daybreak (D)*, (translated by Hollingdale, R.J., edited by Leiter, Brian and Clark, Maudemarie), Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997,

IV §225, 137.

D IV §226, 138.

D IV §287, 152.



consistent number of explicit references to friendship, that Nietzsche understood this topic as possessing similar philosophical importance as other, more discussed concepts, such as pity, punishment and revenge. I will now outline the development of Nietzsche's conception of friendship in his works.

*Human, All too Human* is the first work in which Nietzsche demonstrates that friendship is a topic worth discussing. Here his aphorisms and evaluations address how one maintains a balanced friendship, how the ancient Greeks related the term "friend" to "relative," and why a person desires friends.<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche also concludes the first volume of *Human, All Too Human* (published in 1878) with the epilogue "Among Friends."<sup>18</sup> The ideas introduced in *Human, All Too Human* reflect the aim to evaluate a person's experience in the world, including an investigation of religion and religious experiences, art, moral sensations and friends. Beginning with a critical analysis of what it means to be "human, all too human," Nietzsche concludes by acclaiming the life of the "free spirit."<sup>19</sup> The crude assessment of the human experience and his benediction to embrace freedom are driving themes common in *Human, All Too Human*, *Daybreak*, and *The Gay*

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D IV §313, 157.

D V §484, 199.

D V §489, 200.

D V §503, 204.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1989, *The Gay Science* (GS). (trans. Kaufmann, Walter,) Vintage Books, New York, "Joke, Cunning..." §14, 47.

GS "Joke, Cunning...", §41, 57.

GS I §14, 88.

GS I §32, 103.

GS IV §279, 225.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1967, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Z), (trans. Kaufmann, Walter,) Viking Press, New York, 1966, "On the Friend", 55-7.

Z I "On Love of the Neighbor", 60-62.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1967, *Beyond Good and Evil*, (trans. Kaufmann, Walter,) Vintage Books, New York, "From High Mountains", 240.

<sup>17</sup> HAH VI §305, 137; HAH VI §354, 143; HAH IX §559, 186.

<sup>18</sup> HAH X "Among Friends, An Epilogue," 205.

<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche uses the term "free spirits" to classify with people who have potential to grow, creativity and other qualities that become associated with the Übermensch. See BGE, 26; HAH VI "Man in Society" §324, 139; Z prologue §3, 12-3.

*Science*. In Nietzsche's own words these works are demarcated by "the common goal [to] erect a new image and ideal of the free spirit."<sup>20</sup>

Throughout the so-called 'middle' works Nietzsche returns to evaluate friendship, demonstrating the unique role of friendship in his "free spirit philosophy." While friendship became a point of analysis in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche continues his evaluation in *Daybreak* and even more so in *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche's treatment of friendship in *Daybreak* is different from other treatments in that he also includes a warning of *unhealthy* friendship.<sup>21</sup> For instance, in passage 225 in *Daybreak* Nietzsche describes how a person who speaks "his" mind often becomes a "burdening acquaintance."<sup>22</sup> In passage 287 he describes the problem of friends honestly understanding each other, and in passage 484, he describes how friends have the potential to constrict one's thinking.<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche's assessment of unhealthy friendship in *Daybreak* tempers the celebration of friendship in *Human, All Too Human*. While a friendship should have the Socratic characteristic of inspiring the ideals of the free spirit, *Daybreak* warns his audience of unhealthy friends – others who hinder growth. I will later show how his treatment of unhealthy friendship helps to distinguish healthy friendship.

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<sup>20</sup> GS, back cover. Quoted in Richard Schacht's introduction to *Human, All too Human* (1996), p. xxi.

<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche does not use the term "unhealthy" or "bad friendship" specifically in any of his works but rather describes his friends as "undesirable disciples" (GS I §32, 103) and "obtrusive [dogs]" (GS IV §312, 249), for example. I have decided to use the word *unhealthy* to describe Nietzsche's negative friendships because it captures the idea that he understood friends as either being conducive or detrimental to cultivating the *Übermensch*.

<sup>22</sup> Aiming to remain consistent with the tone of Nietzsche's original text, I will not change the gender-specific pronouns in the following paper. The issue of how Nietzsche treats gender, particularly in terms of friendship, is another avenue worthy of research; however, this issue is beyond the scope of this paper. Particularly relevant to this discussion is Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "On the friend," (Kaufmann trans., p. 53).

<sup>23</sup> D IV §225, 137; D IV §287, 152; D V §484, 199. Passage D I §226, 138, also refers to the harmful effects of befriending a celebrity – an allusion to Richard Wagner.

Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* also contains a variety of passages that demonstrate the importance of "friendship" in his "free spirit" philosophy and contains passages similar to the passages contained in *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak*.<sup>24</sup> These sections include, for instance, passage 14 in *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche discusses the nature of love, (which contains an interesting comparison to other allusions to Greek friendship.<sup>25</sup>) In regard to "friendship," the tone of *The Gay Science* is slightly different to the prior "free spirit works," demarcated by emphasis on overcoming, sublimation and cultivation – themes characteristic of his later works. If "friendship" in *Human, All Too Human* and *Daybreak* could be described as a return to the thinking of platonic love and a warning of unhealthy friendship, then the "friendship" of *The Gay Science* differs from the previous works in that he relates friendship with ideas of disagreement, "feuding" and conflict. It is in this work that Nietzsche delineates the value of hardship and disagreement in the self-cultivation process.

Reflecting another transition in his philosophical journey, Nietzsche refers to friendship much less frequently in his later works. Friendship is not completely abandoned, however, and he explicitly addresses the subject in several passages of the later works. For example, two of his most concise treatments of "friendship" are contained in his self-proclaimed *magnum opus*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. "On the Friend" and "On Love of the Neighbor" in the first book of *Zarathustra* assuredly stand as the paramount point of reference for his conception of friendship. It is in these two passages that Nietzsche distinguishes the friend as a valuable instrument for the cultivation of the

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<sup>24</sup> One unique passage is "Star friendship" GS §279, 225-6. Here Nietzsche gives a poetic exposition on friendship. Kaufmann relates it to a letter from Nietzsche to Franz Overbeck in November of 1881, see the Kaufmann nt. §8, p. 225 in his translation of *The Gay Science*.

<sup>25</sup> D §503, 204; HAH §354, 143; Z "On a Thousand and One Goals" I, 58; GS II §61, 124.

*Übermensch*, when he says, “I teach you not the neighbor, but the friend. The friend should be the festival of the earth to you and an anticipation of the *Übermensch*.”<sup>26</sup> Here Nietzsche indicates that the importance of “friendship,” as developed in the agenda of his “free spirit” works, remains a valuable aspect of his philosophy in his later works.

Finally, in his later works, Nietzsche returns to “friendship” in his poem “Aus hohen Bergen” at the conclusion of *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which he waits for and invites “new friends” to join him. Later in *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche only briefly refers to “friendship.” Rather, the *Genealogy* contains implicit references to “friendship” by evaluating the reality of moral sensations, such as guilt, obligation, punishment and pity.<sup>27</sup> He also discusses the ethic of self-cultivation in the *Genealogy*, which I will later argue to be an important element of his conception of friendship.<sup>28</sup>

The development of Nietzsche’s conception of friendship reflects his philosophical interests as they changed throughout his works. Most noticeable is his attention to friendship in his middle, “free spirit” works, suggesting that he associated his conception of friendship with his philosophy of life. His later consideration of friendship in *Beyond Good and Evil* and the *Genealogy* demonstrates it was worthwhile to return to and further explore the value of friendship in relationship to his new philosophical interests.

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<sup>26</sup> Z I “On Love of the Neighbor”, 60-2.

<sup>27</sup> eg. GM II §8, 70-1; GM II § 9, 71-2.

<sup>28</sup> eg. GM II §24, 95-6. “Self-overcoming” and “sublimation” is also largely discussed in BGE §9, §212, §229, and in *Zarathustra* throughout the entire work, but also specifically for example “On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions” I, 36-7, “On War and Warriors” I, 47-8, and “On Self-Overcoming” II §12, 113-5.

## **B. Friends as his Intended Audience**

In addition to the implicit and explicit passages on friendship, I argue that Nietzsche's affinity to his audience reflects his interest in friendship. In the following section I will analyze how Nietzsche addresses his audience and the ways in which this illustrates the importance of friendship in his philosophy. Moreover, Nietzsche's relationship with his audience demonstrates his philosophical method and epistemology, rooted in experimentation and perspective. Addressing his audience as "his friends,"<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche employs a different method of philosophizing: rather than systematic arguments with formal language, Nietzsche writes in a personal tone appealing to the sensations of his audience.

At the fore, is the view that Nietzsche uses a tone that is dissimilar to other philosophers who employ more formal language. Nietzsche's tone, in contrast, reflects a concern for his audience by using more colloquial language and making imperative statements that demand action from his audience. The tone of Nietzsche's writing style and his relationship to his audience is relevant to a discussion of his friendship for two reasons; first, Nietzsche often uses a personal tone, in which he philosophizes and prescribes action to both himself and his audience. Second, identifiable in several passages, and especially in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the audience is explicitly addressed as "my friends," suggesting that his audience is not an anonymous third-party but a select group of people.<sup>30</sup> A brief discussion of Nietzsche's audience frames his philosophy – particularly his conception of friendship – as a type of thinking intended for certain persons for whom he expresses concern for their well-being.

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<sup>29</sup> eg. Z I "On Death and Dying", 74.

<sup>30</sup> eg. GM III §14, 121-125.

Nietzsche often uses a personal tone when addressing the audience of his work. For instance, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes in the first person, and instead of conveying his criticisms to the anonymous third-person, Nietzsche philosophizes and prescribes a way of life for the collective audience of both himself and other “free spirits.”<sup>31</sup> Consider the language of the following passage: “Honesty, supposing that this is our virtue from which we cannot get away, we free spirits – well, let us work on it...”<sup>32</sup> “Our,” “we,” “us:” Nietzsche’s language demonstrates that he too is included in his criticisms, and that he seeks to improve other “free spirits” as he would improve himself.<sup>33</sup> The language of *Beyond Good and Evil* is particularly conducive to this interpretation. Other works, such as the *Genealogy*, while still using inclusive language, are less prescriptive and lack the collective responsibility found in *Beyond Good and Evil*. *The Gay Science* contains inclusive language<sup>34</sup>, but it also contains aphorisms addressed to an unknown party, (which do not include himself nor the free spirits he previously addressed).<sup>35</sup> The two audiences can be separated by distinguishing between the ideas he directs toward the “free spirits” and his descriptions of all others. (The “herd” is the language used in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.) When Nietzsche addresses the free spirits, he often uses language that includes himself, like “we” and “us.” When excluding himself – referring to the audience as “they” or “one” – Nietzsche refers to a group of people with whom he feels less affinity. These people might be described as

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<sup>31</sup> eg. BGE §227, 155.

<sup>32</sup> BGE §227; 155-6

<sup>33</sup> An interesting contrast to this idea can be found in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in which Nietzsche implies that he is alone in his thinking as a free spirit. In regard to the will to truth, he says, “And here I again touch on my problem, on our problem, my *unknown* friends (for as yet I *know* of no friend)...” (GM III §27, 161.) In regard to the original German text, see Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, published in *Werke II*, Carl Hanser Publishers, Munich, 1967, p. 287.)

<sup>34</sup> GS §52,115; GS §321, 255; GS §369, 327.

<sup>35</sup> eg. GS §284, 229.

belonging to “the herd,” or they are the “camels” or “lions” of *Zarathustra*.<sup>36</sup> In Nietzsche’s writing there is a clear distinction between the “free spirit” audience, whom he identifies with and prescribes his philosophy for, and all other persons. *Human, All-too-Human*, for example, is almost exclusively written to the impersonal, third person audience. Yet it is clear from the subtitle that his audience is the “free spirits,” (in which he includes himself.<sup>37</sup>) His audience is varied and unique to each book; and considerations as to why Nietzsche chose certain language is noteworthy but beyond the scope of this paper. In regard to the task at hand, it suffices to reach the preliminary conclusion that Nietzsche used inclusive language throughout his works. This language suggests that Nietzsche embraced a certain affinity and concern for his audience.<sup>38</sup> (In contrast, His use of “the herd,” for example, demonstrates a clear distance with other people. Nietzsche anticipated that these people would not understand his work in the way he intended it to be understood.)

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra often addresses his audience as either his “brothers,” “disciples,” or “*friends*.” Zarathustra abandons the comfort of his mountain solitude and “goes under” to the people of the village, as he “overflows” with insight and wants to “become empty again.”<sup>39</sup> The story that follows tells of Zarathustra’s attempts to convey an understanding of the *Übermensch* and the eternal recurrence, and in the

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<sup>36</sup> Z “On the Three Metamorphoses,” 25.

<sup>37</sup> eg. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, published in *Werke I*, Carl Hanser Publishers, Munich, 1967, . §236, “Die Zonen der Kultur – Man kann gleichnisweise sagen...”, 355.

<sup>38</sup> The English translation was used for this analysis of Nietzsche’s use of inclusive and exclusive language, however, it also remains consistent in the original German text. For the original German text: Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Werke I* and *Werke II*, Carl Hanser Publishers, Munich, 1967.

<sup>39</sup> Z, prologue §1, 10.

process, he befriends and makes disciples out of those who listen.<sup>40</sup> The important implication for this paper is to make the point that Zarathustra's relationship to his disciples is similar to Nietzsche's relationship to his audience.

It is also worth noting that Nietzsche's books were often not well received and they were likely read by people who personally knew Nietzsche or knew of him prior to the publication. Beginning with the poor reception of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche quickly isolated himself from the philological community which in turn tarnished his reputation as a scholar. As a consequence, subsequent publications received less scholarly attention, and towards the end of his career he paid for his own publications, aware of his limited audience.<sup>41</sup> The limitations of his possible audience may also have been a reason Nietzsche wrote in a personal tone to a selected group of people – for not many people would likely read his book. His limited audience, however, did not keep Nietzsche from sharing a friendship with them – those who shared in his intellectual freedom and insight *were exactly* his friends, as he understood friendship.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> To what degree Nietzsche equates himself with Zarathustra is debatable, but from the philosophy Zarathustra teaches, it is certain that Zarathustra reflects some core elements of Nietzsche, his philosophy and how he philosophizes.

<sup>41</sup> Schacht, Richard, "Introduction," *Human, All Too Human*, (Nietzsche), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. xii. See also, Schaberg, William H, *The Nietzsche Canon: A Publication History and Bibliography*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996.

<sup>42</sup> GM III §27, 161.



### C. Nietzsche's Friends

A discussion of Nietzsche's treatment of friendship is also worthwhile in the context of his relationship with his peers. Nietzsche records their influence throughout his philosophical works in spite of anecdotes about his extreme solitude, evidence of forged letters, and the blatant rumors haunting Nietzsche's biography. As a result, the infamy of his relationships threatens to become an overly dominating point in this discussion; yet, it is undeniably a necessary element.<sup>43</sup> Those who study Nietzsche must avoid the temptation of granting the biography of his relationships too much influence on how a work should be interpreted. For example, Nietzsche's relationship with Lou Salomé – with whom he shared a seemingly romantic relationship – would be of interest for interpreters trying to understand how Nietzsche treats “love” in his works. Nietzsche's relationship with Richard Wagner also invites examination from interpreters.<sup>44</sup> Heeding temperance in how much focus should be placed on Nietzsche's relationships is key for interpreters; it is also the case, however, that Nietzsche's philosophy of the free spirit and the method in which he philosophizes invites interpreters to pay attention to his biography.

As indicated in the introduction, Nietzsche philosophizes on the most basic elements of daily life and demands that philosophy be efficacious. The spirit of how

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<sup>43</sup> Helpful accounts of his relationships have been sorted in the scholarship of Walter Kaufmann, Löwith, Rudolph Binion, Christopher Middleton, along with many others.

<sup>44</sup> Worth referencing here is HAH II §129, 243 (trans. Hollingdale). Nietzsche clearly thought hermeneutical analysis should be tempered with moderation. Let us hope that we justly interpret Nietzsche's biography with careful “philosophical instruction” so as not to render him “null and void.”

“The worst readers of maxims are the friends of their author when they are exercised to trace the general observation back to the particular even to which the maxim owes its origin: for though this prying they render all the author's efforts null and void, so that, instead of philosophical instruction, all they receive (and all they deserve to receive) is the satisfaction of a vulgar curiosity.”

Nietzsche philosophized is succinctly encapsulated in *The Gay Science*: “I favor any *skepsis* to which I may reply: ‘Let us try it!’ But I no longer wish to hear anything of all those things and questions that do not permit any experiment...”<sup>45</sup> In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche advocates a unique method of philosophizing. Experimentalism, he argues, is the method for the new philosopher (or the “*Versucher*.”<sup>46</sup>) According to Nietzsche’s understanding of experimentalism, a person hypothesizes a world-view and then tests the validity by examining the coherence and consistency of his explanation in light of his other experiences and perceptions of the world. Coinciding with the experimentalist methodology of the *Versucher* is Nietzsche’s epistemology: perspectivism. Briefly, as an epistemological perspectivist, Nietzsche understood “truth” as the intersubjective agreement of many *personal* views. “There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective ‘knowing’; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our ‘concept’ of this thing, our ‘objectivity,’ be.”<sup>47</sup> For Nietzsche, experimentalism and perspectivism reorient philosophy in relation to the individual, and an individual’s experience in the world. Thus, in relying on experience and perspective for knowledge, Nietzsche invites the notion that philosophical perspectives are never divorced from personal experience.

Centrally efficacious to a person’s perspective are his friends, and so aiming to better ascertain his understanding of friendship, I will consider which of Nietzsche’s friends were most influential within his development as a philosopher and I will also consider how these friendships might have changed his perspective. Before considering

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<sup>45</sup> GS I §51, 114.

<sup>46</sup> BGE §42, 52.

<sup>47</sup> GM III §12, 119. See also, Schacht, *Nietzsche*, p. 8-10, and 61-5.

Nietzsche's best known friend, Richard Wagner, it is worthwhile to note that Nietzsche never married nor did he maintain any obviously intimate relationships. This fact may aid in explaining the unorthodox conception of friendship that he developed and also why Nietzsche predominantly focuses on friendship rather than love. It may also demonstrate his conclusion that he did not need marriage or an intimate relationship in his life, and that he maintained a certain emotional distance in his friendships in order for them to remain fruitful. Regardless of whether the lack of intimate relationships in Nietzsche's life was either a cause in his philosophical development or symptomatic of his conclusions, it is equally critical to identify which relationships affected Nietzsche the most, as it is to note the lack of intimate relationships in his life.

More than any other, Nietzsche's relationship with Richard Wagner is particularly well-known because of Nietzsche's early admiration and praise of the composer, and then explicit frustration at the end of his career. Prior to his initial public acclamation of Wagner in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche shared a history with Wagner that was facilitated by proximity and instigated by a common interest in Schopenhauer. Nietzsche sought out Wagner in 1868 when moving to Basel, as Wagner lived not far away in Tribschen.<sup>48</sup> As Nietzsche's visits to the Wagner residence became more and more consistent, he developed his appreciation for the cultural greatness he found in Wagner and his music. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche concludes that Wagner's *Tristan* marks the "rebirth of Greek tragedy" and the "salvation of modern culture."<sup>49</sup>

While Wagner represented the potential greatness for the spirit of a person in the *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche slanders him with his most insulting criticism in his last

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<sup>48</sup> Kaufmann, Nietzsche, 30.

<sup>49</sup> Clark, Maudmarie, "Nietzsche, Friedrich," Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [www.rep.routledge.com](http://www.rep.routledge.com), viewed Dec. 18, 2006.

writings: Wagner had become *decadent*. Beginning with *Human, All-too-Human*, continuing in *The Gay Science*, and then culminating in *The Case of Wagner* and *Contra Wagner*, Nietzsche grew to detest what Wagner represented: intellectual arrogance and an unquestioned commitment to one's nation. In Nietzsche's understanding, Wagner's nationalism and Christian convictions cost him the creative spirit that made him great. Before lapsing into insanity, Nietzsche made it clear that his disappointment with Wagner was not reactionary nor the result of an unsettled disagreement. Rather his disdain for Wagner was an opinion that developed over many years.<sup>50</sup>

One further reason for considering Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner is to understand a transition in Nietzsche's thinking. As Kaufmann portrays their early relationship<sup>51</sup> (his years at Basel and through the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*), Nietzsche celebrated the potential for cultural greatness, the psyche of the artist and the aesthetic theories in Wagner. Parallel in his philosophy was the sense of a different agenda that lacked the polemical tone that demarcated his later thinking. For instance his refutation of morality and religious faith are dominant themes in his later works, occurring at a time after he had ended his friendship with Wagner. Nietzsche also explicates this parallel in the development of his later thinking in the "Preface" to *The Case of Wagner*: "My greatest experience was a recovery. Wagner is merely one of my sicknesses. Not that I wish to be ungrateful to this sickness. When in this essay I assert the proposition that Wagner is harmful, I wish no less to assert for whom he is nevertheless indispensable..."<sup>52</sup> In his own words, Nietzsche interprets his relationship

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<sup>50</sup> Kaufmann, *The Case of Wagner*, "Introduction," 155.

<sup>51</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 30-41.

<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Case of Wagner* (CW), (trans. Walter Kaufmann.) Random House, New York, 1967, 155.

with Wagner as being representative of his earlier, less-matured philosophy. Eventually, after finding fault in his friendships and philosophy, he changes his attention to the philosophical interest that defined his life's work (like his polemics against morality and Christianity.) "Perhaps nobody was more dangerously attached to – grown together with – Wagnerizing; nobody tried harder to resist it; nobody was happier to be rid of it. A long story! - You want a word for it? – If I were a moralist, who knows what I might call it? Perhaps self-overcoming."<sup>53</sup> Here Nietzsche acknowledges Wagner's crucial role in his own "self-overcoming," which later becomes a central theme in his philosophy.

While his relationship with Wagner had public and symbolic value, Nietzsche shared other formative friendships.<sup>54</sup> Lou Salomé, Paul Reé and Elizabeth Förester-Nietzsche are generally the most discussed figures in his life and are worth discussion; however, for the sake of brevity, only a limited mention will be made here. Moreover, while Salomé, Reé and Förester-Nietzsche are the most discussed relationships, Nietzsche also corresponded and spent considerable time with a handful of other academics, graduate students and casual friends. Perhaps the best way to cover the multitude of relations is to recognize certain relationships that were particularly philosophically formative in contrast to the variety of other relationships he shared. For instance, from Nietzsche's letters it is evident that he found Lou Salomé to be someone whom he not only enjoyed as company but also as a colleague and as a free spirit with whom he could discuss his philosophy.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> CW, 155.

<sup>54</sup> The research for this section primarily comes from Kaufmann's *Nietzsche*. Kaufmann's biography is particularly helpful for the study of friendship, as he describes Nietzsche's life primarily in terms of who his friends were at the time. See Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, Chapter 1, "Nietzsche's Life as Background of his Thought," 21-71.

<sup>55</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 47-64.

Of those relationships which had a formative effect – in that Nietzsche found their influence to be personally cultivating – Paul Reé, Jacob Burckhardt and Lou Salomé are the most notable. Burckhardt, a scholar of ancient Greek history at Basel, befriended Nietzsche over a common appreciation of ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy.<sup>56</sup> Nietzsche demonstrated a standing affinity for Burckhardt throughout his entire life, and his last sane letter was sent to Burckhardt.<sup>57</sup> In Burckhardt Nietzsche saw the potential in people to overcome social influences, noticing Burckhardt's discipline.<sup>58</sup>

Nietzsche, Salomé and Reé shared an intellectually fruitful but complicated relationship. Reé and Nietzsche met while studying at Basel, where Reé was finishing his masters thesis on Aristotelian Ethics. From then on, Nietzsche maintained a consistent relationship with Reé that Kaufmann describes as a relationship where both often consulted each other on various works and that “[the relationship] was one of the best things that happened to Nietzsche.”<sup>59</sup> Reé was also the person who introduced him to Lou Salomé in 1882. Upon their acquaintance, Nietzsche was quickly impressed by Salomé's intelligence and passion, and invited her to spend a summer in Tautenberg. He explained that he longed to “teach her” and “confide in” her.<sup>60</sup> The complexity of Nietzsche's relationship with Salomé and Reé, however, then becomes arduous to uncertain (and beyond the scope of this discussion), marked by rumors of marriage

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<sup>56</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Though respectful and courteous, it contained various uncharacteristic and unusual allusions, demonstrative of his forth-coming mental failure. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, (edited and translated by Christopher Middleton.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969, “206. To Jakob Burckhardt, Jan 6, 1889”, 346-8.

<sup>58</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 28; Nietzsche, GS §290, 232-3.

<sup>59</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 48.

<sup>60</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 51-52.

proposals (from both Nietzsche and Reé) and a certain falling out at the end of 1882.<sup>61</sup> However, it is worth noting that a defining characteristic of their relationship was the practice of encouraging and challenging – a characteristic that I will show to be central to his conception of friendship.

This characteristic is particularly evident in the letters Nietzsche sent to Reé, Burckhardt and “dear Lou.” For instance, Nietzsche asks Burckhardt to read *The Gay Science*, valuing his opinion as the verdict for approval.<sup>62</sup> When it was no longer possible to challenge and encourage one another – when the relationship became parasitic – Nietzsche conceded the relationship to solitude and acknowledged the need to part ways. For instance, in a letter to Salomé, he writes “Adieu, my dear Lou. I shall not see you again. Preserve your soul from similar actions and make good to others and especially to my friend Reé what you cannot make good to me any more.”<sup>63</sup> From Nietzsche’s letters, it is possible to notice the consistency between how he treated his actual friends and his philosophy of friendship. Demonstrating the connection between his actual friends and his philosophical writings, his letters demonstrate his aim to challenge and cultivate his friends.

Franz Overbeck, Peter Gast and others also shared friendships with Nietzsche, in varying importance and because of various interests. For Nietzsche, though, these relationships lacked the certain characteristic that distinguished Reé, Salomé and Burckhardt as good friends. Overbeck and Gast (and Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche) made

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<sup>61</sup> The “falling out” at the end of 1882 involves jealousy and misconstrued rumors. The relationship between Nietzsche and Salomé has been a difficult relationship for scholars to interpret because many of Salomé’s letters have been lost. The known-existing letters are published in Middleton’s *Selected Letter of Friedrich Nietzsche*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969.

<sup>62</sup> Middleton, *Selected Letters*, “101. To Jakob Burckhardt, Aug 1882”, 190-1.

<sup>63</sup> “Nietzsche to Lou Salomé, December 1882,” published in Kaufmann, Nietzsche, 57-8.

for enjoyable company at times, but did not necessarily challenge Nietzsche in a way that he desired from his dearest friends. As Kaufmann describes Gast and Förestler-Nietzsche, they were “undesirable disciples” because they were too agreeable and distracted by the proximity of the friendship.<sup>64</sup> Nietzsche reveals his opinion of Gast and Förestler-Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*: “This one cannot say No, and that one says to everything: ‘Half and Half.’”<sup>65</sup> For Nietzsche, friends must be willing to be combative for the sake of improving themselves and each other. Nietzsche uses his relationship with Gast and Förestler-Nietzsche as an example of the poorest type of friends, as exemplars of friends who avoided all disagreement and in doing so, they also avoided any opportunity to better themselves and Nietzsche. He reiterates his disdain for this unhealthy type of friendship in *Ecce Homo*: “One repays a teacher badly if one always remains a pupil only.”<sup>66</sup> Gast and Förestler-Nietzsche remained, for Nietzsche, pupils, and thus never became the type of friends he sought in Reé and Salomé.<sup>67</sup> Nietzsche’s relationship with Gast and Förestler-Nietzsche are fitting contrasts to Reé and Salomé; a more thorough examination of these relationships and his many others demand a longer treatment in a more appropriate discussion. By introducing Nietzsche’s attitude towards the friendships, I aim to demonstrate the similarities between how Nietzsche treated his friends and how he discusses friendship in his philosophy.

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<sup>64</sup> BGE §41, 51.

<sup>65</sup> GS I §32, 103.

<sup>66</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1967, *Ecce Homo*, (trans. Kaufmann, Walter,) Vintage Books, New York, 47.

<sup>67</sup> As mentioned earlier, in the aim of brevity I have simplified the nature of Nietzsche’s relationship with Overbeck, Gast, and Förestler-Nietzsche. From his letters it is evident that he certainly respected and enjoyed these friends more than my summary suggests. Particularly, his relationship with Elizabeth Förestler-Nietzsche, his sister, might be the most complicated relationship in his life, and she undeniably had the most effect on Nietzsche (posthumously.) Kaufmann’s treatment of their relationship (Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 42-64) mainly focuses on Elizabeth’s relationship with Bernhard and the anti-Semitic implications this had on Nietzsche’s work.



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In this chapter I have pointed to evidence that suggests the importance of friendship in Nietzsche's philosophy and in his life, and in doing so, I aim to establish the need to inquire further into "friendship" within the work of Nietzsche. Friendship is woven into the elemental aspects of his philosophy: he addresses friendship and relationship in numerous places of his works, he philosophizes for his friends, and he held relationships that were philosophically meaningful. The argument here is that Nietzsche's conception of friendship is an important aspect within Nietzschean studies, and the attention that he gives to friendship suggests that the next important question is to ask exactly "what is Nietzsche's conception of friendship?" To answer this question I will interpret and analyze the passages that I understand as formative of Nietzsche's conception of friendship, while, on Kaufmann's advice, take into consideration the breadth of Nietzsche's philosophy.<sup>68</sup> Answering the question: "what is Nietzsche's friendship," however, readdresses why a study of his friendship is valuable: Nietzsche's friendship is, in a sense, implicitly moral because it aims to improve both the friend and the befriended.

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<sup>68</sup> Kaufman, Nietzsche, 80. "Indeed, the "sentence reaches out and obscures the meaning of the page" and "the word becomes sovereign and leaps out of the sentence": the "blond beast" is known, and so are the "superman" and "the will to power" – and perhaps a few sentences in which one or the other is referred to. Their meaning, however, cannot possibly be grasped except in terms of their place in Nietzsche's whole philosophy."

**- Chapter Two -**  
*Nietzsche's Conception of Friendship*

The task of this chapter is to explicate what Nietzsche means by “friendship.” Having established the centrality of this concept for Nietzsche, in terms of textual and biographical evidence, this chapter will outline the key concepts within Nietzsche’s understanding of friendship. For Nietzsche, healthy friendship challenges both friend and the befriended to honestly reexamine themselves; a good friendship ‘causes one to stir.’<sup>69</sup> Nietzsche characterizes friendship as a progressive dialectic, in which causing another to suffer in some circumstances is balanced by the potential to cultivate a “higher type”.

Before an adequate explanation of Nietzsche’s conception of friendship can be addressed, it is first necessary to get a sense of the way in which friendship fits with his philosophy of the human person. By reading his conception of friendship as part of his philosophy of the human person, it will be demonstrated that friendship can be suitably understood as a relationship shared between natural beings. The human being – who is firstly understood as an animal for Nietzsche – without a divine mission or held to normative moral standards, must find reasons for creating these meaningful friendships. As a naturalist, Nietzsche calls us to “translate man back into nature,”<sup>70</sup> by recognizing and reevaluating the basic animality of humanity. Disregarding all unsubstantiated and self-alienating metaphysical claims of humanity’s transcendent importance, Nietzsche concludes that a person is firstly an animal and has evolved out of a more primordial animal. Social relationships (and friendships, in particular) play an integral role in a person’s development and ultimately in the progression of humanity.

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<sup>69</sup> Z I, “On Marriage and Child,” 69-71.

<sup>70</sup> BGE §230, 160.

## A. Human Being as Animal

Nietzsche demonstrates that he holds a particular interest in human nature, and current scholars, for example, Richard Schacht, have argued that Nietzsche's philosophy of the human person signifies one of his principal philosophical interests. Schacht characterizes Nietzsche as primarily concerned with "human nature, human life, and human possibility."<sup>71</sup> The inquiry into the basic animality of "der Mensch" is first examined in *Human, All Too Human*<sup>72</sup> but returns as a significant theme in most of his subsequent works.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, before understanding his revaluation of values and the nuances of the *Übermensch*, it is important to recognize that before anything else, the human animal is a product of nature. The animality of humans becomes most clear in the context of being a refutation of prior, lofty philosophies of the human person which rely on the "metaphysical birdcatchers."<sup>74</sup> For Nietzsche, philosophers misconstrue peoples' real existence when they are accorded reason and "spirit" as a transcendental or divine characteristic. As a result of these prior philosophies, humanity has wrongly become preoccupied with "beautiful, glittering, jingling, festive words: honesty, love of truth, love of wisdom, sacrifice for knowledge, heroism of the truthful."<sup>75</sup> In contrast, Nietzsche writes that:

But we hermits and marmots have long persuaded ourselves in the full secrecy of a hermit's conscience that this worthy verbal pomp, too, belongs to the old mendacious pomp, junk, and gold dust of unconscious human vanity, and that under such flattering colors and make-up as well, the basic text of *homo natura* must again be recognized.

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<sup>71</sup> Schacht, Richard, *Nietzsche*, Routledge, New York, 1992, 267. His polemics against religion and traditional morality would arguably be other principal interests, however, these might well be thought of in terms of the former.

<sup>72</sup> HAH VI "Man in Society", 136; HAH IX "Man Alone with Himself" 179.

<sup>73</sup> eg. HAH § 98, 52; GS I §7, 82; GS V §354, 298; GM II §16, 84.

<sup>74</sup> BGE §230, 160.

<sup>75</sup> BGE §230, 160.

To translate man back into nature; to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*; to see to it that man henceforth stands before man as even today, hardened in the discipline of science, he stands before the rest of nature, with intrepid Oedipus eyes and sealed Odysseus ears, deaf to siren songs of old metaphysical bird catchers who have been piping at him all too long, “you are more, you are higher, you are of a different origin!”<sup>76</sup>

For Nietzsche, the nature of an individual is a product of specific temporal, social and natural constraints. In this sense, one cannot refer to an inclusive, general “human nature,” but only to the nature of specific persons whose natures derive from social upbringing, experiences in the world, and the reality of being an animal – dependent on food and shelter and dictated, by biological processes.<sup>77</sup> Nietzsche argues that any other assertion about human nature holds persons accountable to a normative or transcendental ideal that is foreign to our “all too human” existence.<sup>78</sup> Kaufmann succinctly articulates Nietzsche’s critical distinction in contrast to Christian theology: “The monotheism of a *Normalgott* (“God”) suggests that there is a *Normalmensch* (“standard human nature”): a norm to which all men must conform and a bar to the development of individuality.”<sup>79</sup>

A human being, before anything else, is an animal, constituted of instinct, biological and physiological processes, and it is captive to the demands required to survive in nature. It has been a tendency of earlier theologies and metaphysical philosophies to grant human beings transcendental and untenable qualities.<sup>80</sup> Clearly though, a person is not simply “animal” but rather, as Nietzsche asserts throughout his work, human beings have the faculties of reason, language and self-consciousness. For

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<sup>76</sup> BGE §230, 160.

<sup>77</sup> Schacht, *Nietzsche*, 338; Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 267.

<sup>78</sup> eg. BGE §60, 72; Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, 130.

<sup>79</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 308.

<sup>80</sup> This tendency to grant humans undue traits is ultimately a seduction to exercise power. As Nietzsche says, it is a “will to spirit” (BGE §230, 160.)

Nietzsche, a human being is not simply animal but a culmination of highly-evolved and developed organic forces. Nietzsche claims that human beings live in a tension between being animal and something more sublime, so as to remain in a process of transcending their primal nature. He captures the tension of human development in *Zarathustra* when he writes that “man is a rope, tied between beast and *Übermensch...*”<sup>81</sup> For Nietzsche, persons are trapped into their animal nature but they also have the potential to develop into something more than a well-adapted animal.

Similar to the rest of the animal kingdom, human beings evolve like animals but in gaining consciousness and reason, they no longer rely on simple survival instincts and so they have become a unique being. Consciousness, for example, allows a person to develop reason and language, and most significantly, through consciousness, they now have the potential to give context and to gain understanding of their instinctual drives. Their primordial instincts – products of evolution – still function as basic drives within human beings, however, it is when they realize that they can now choose to follow or to ignore these instincts, that they become something more than animal and develop an “illness.”<sup>82</sup>

This new “illness” drives the human being’s development beyond the basic survival nature of an animal:

Man was bound to contract under the stress of the most fundamental change he ever experienced – that change which occurred when he found himself finally enclosed within the walls of society and of peace. The situation that faced sea animals when they were compelled to become land animals or perish was the same as that which faced these semi-animals, well adapted to their wilderness, to war, to prowling, to adventure: suddenly all their instincts were disvalued and ‘suspended.’ From now on

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<sup>81</sup> Z I, 14.

<sup>82</sup> GM II §16, 84. It will later be shown that friends are an integral component in the development of consciousness and reason.

they had to walk on their feet and ‘bear themselves’ whereas hitherto they had been borne by the water: a dreadful heaviness lay upon them ... In this new world [men] no long possessed their former guides, their regulating, unconscious and infallible drives: they were reduced to thinking, inferring, reckoning, coordinating cause and effect, these unfortunate creatures; they were reduced to their ‘consciousness,’ their weakest and most fallible organ!<sup>83</sup>

Human beings’ illness rejects their outgrown primordial instincts, causing the maturation of consciousness and reason; this is the state of the current human animal. In realizing the ‘entangled web of social relations,’ a human being gains awareness of the world and of her situation in the world, which is mediated by consciousness and reason.<sup>84</sup>

Through consciousness and reason, human beings have the ability to generate morals, religions and various other ideals, according to Nietzsche. While animals remain content in their own nature, humanity continues to live in a “mere bundle of unfulfilled possibilities of ‘indeterminate nature,’ and the self ‘abounds in contradictory evaluations and, consequently, in contradictory desires.’”<sup>85</sup> While evolving, human beings now find themselves caught between the tension of declining back toward mere animality and transcending into something more.

Nietzsche leads us to the conclusion that a human being is a collection of natural forces, “molded through the impress of his heredity and the dialectic of his prior encounters with our environizing natural, social and cultural world.”<sup>86</sup> Unlike animals, who act in accordance with their evolved nature and laws of their species, “man is ‘the animal that is still not fixed,’” without a determined nature.<sup>87</sup> The tension in which

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<sup>83</sup> GM II §16, 84; cited in Schacht, *Nietzsche*, 275.

<sup>84</sup> Schacht, *Nietzsche*, 315.

<sup>85</sup> Jaspers, Karl. *Nietzsche*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson: 1965, 130.

<sup>86</sup> Schacht, *Nietzsche*, 312.

<sup>87</sup> Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, 130.

human beings find themselves is not a dualism, but a situation with conflicting and opposing lures and forces. For he is “not only ‘creature’ (‘material, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos’) but [he is] also ‘creator, form giver, hammer hardness, spectator, divinity and seventh day.’”<sup>88</sup> In Nietzsche’s account, human beings and humanity develop according to the historical context, and in the sense, neither a person nor “human nature” is fixed, immutable essences that transcend time.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, Nietzsche’s conclusions are distinctly different to the human nature of Plato or Aristotle, for example, who understood all of humanity, regardless of time, as essentially the same. This difference in human nature bears critical implications on how one understands friendship. If a philosopher understands human nature to be essential, timeless and fixed, then the aim of friendship is to refine one another into the more perfected state of nature. This sense of humanity is characteristic of the classical Platonist, Aristotelian and Christian views of the world. In contrast, Nietzsche – who understands human nature to be dependent upon history and full of potential – prescribes friendship as an element of the development of a person, incorporating elements of conflict and pain, and lacks specific goals (as they are not yet known.) Nietzsche, in contrast to Aristotle or Plato for example, develops his conception of human nature in terms of natural drives and how a person evolves, and his treatment is more of a historical psychology than a philosophy of human nature. The implication here is that Nietzsche does not hold humanity accountable to an archetype but understood humanity’s development to be a dynamic process, driven by the reactions of persons as they experience themselves and other natural constraints. Whereas Aristotle concluded that persons lead the good and virtuous

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<sup>88</sup> BGE §284, 226.

<sup>89</sup> D V§248, 117.

life when they act in accordance with a human's natural disposition, moderating between any extreme tendencies, Nietzsche understood people to be captive to their natural constraints and without a *telos*. Moreover, for Aristotle, the good life results in happiness and avoids pain; however, Nietzsche believes that if a person is to grow into his higher-type being, then her or his life will contain elements of pain and suffering.

What distinguishes human from animal in Nietzsche's philosophy is a worthwhile discussion; however, for this paper, it is only important to establish that human beings are moldable, and they have the potential to develop more complicated attributes (or what Nietzsche might call "higher type traits") or regress back into a more primordial state of existence. Furthermore, included within the constitution of influences that make up a person is friendship. I will address how relationships affect the development of a person in the following section.



## B. Relationships and the Development of the Human Being

Nietzsche argues that a human being, being a constitution of different natural influences, is a continually evolving product of various social, environmental and genealogical influences. Of all these influences, however, a person's relationship to others is perhaps the most efficacious, (particularly in the development of consciousness and conscience.)<sup>90</sup> For Nietzsche, the human animal remained beast until it became necessary to live in a community, and it was at this point – in the presence of other beings – that communication and an individual self-awareness evolved.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, the importance of the relationship in the development of consciousness is not limited to the transition between the animal-species *homo sapien* and the thinking, moralizing self-conscious man of modern times; rather, Nietzsche evaluates relationships in terms of their capacity to cultivate the “herd” as well as aspiring *Übermenschen*. (Nietzsche explains that community and relationships have a variety of adverse effects on persons, including the potential to dull the mind and to perpetuate a general life-denying social mediocrity.)<sup>92</sup> I will later show that, for Nietzsche, a friend plays a pivotal role in the cultivation of self and others. Before focusing solely on friendship, however, I will consider how relationships (including friendships) affect the development of a person. My aim here is to demonstrate that Nietzsche saw relationships as largely influential in the basic characteristics of humans.

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<sup>90</sup> GS §354, 298; GS II §16, 84.

<sup>91</sup> On this point, Nietzsche is out-stepping the frame of philosophy, moving towards an anthropological discussion. It is important, however, to stress that Nietzsche thought community and relationships play an important role in the evolution of the human being.

<sup>92</sup> Z I “On the Way of the Creator”, 63-5.

In the following passage Nietzsche discusses the importance of shared experience in the development of communication:

Assuming next that need has ever brought close to one another only such human beings as could suggest with similar signs similar requirements and experiences, it would follow on the whole that easy communicability of need – which in the last analysis means the experience of merely average and *common* experiences – must have been the most powerful of all powers at whose disposal man has been so far.<sup>93</sup>

The potency of common experience and community is demonstrated throughout Nietzsche's works, particularly in regard to consciousness, language and pejorative morality.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, it is as a result of socialization that humans became more than animal. Nietzsche argues that consciousness, language and morality all result from the human animals' need to express distress, implore help and make themselves understood.<sup>95</sup>

There are several uniquely human characteristics that result out of relationship, community and socialization. For example, human consciousness and language, Nietzsche suggests, are essential human characteristics that originated out of an animals attempt to give meaning to the frustrations of being animal. Having established a common expression of distress and frustration, humans created a meaningful language by expressing that which is common in the "all-to-human" existence.<sup>96</sup> Nietzsche again explicitly posits the critical function of common experience in the case of human language:

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<sup>93</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §269, 217-220.

<sup>94</sup> "Consciousness" GS §354, 298; "language" BGE §268, 217; "Pejorative morality" HAH §491, 179; GM II §16.

<sup>95</sup> GS §354, 298.

<sup>96</sup> BGE §268, 217.

It is not sufficient to use the same words in order to understand one another: we must also employ the same words for the same kind of internal experiences, we must in the end have experiences in *common*.

On this account the people of one nation understand one another better than those belonging to different nations, even when they use the same language; or rather, when people have lived long together under similar conditions (of climate, soil, danger, requirement, toil) there *originates* there from an entity that “understands itself”—namely, a nation. In all souls a like number of frequently recurring experiences have gained the upper hand over those occurring more rarely: about these matters people understand one another rapidly and always more rapidly—the history of language is the history of a process of abbreviation; on the basis of this quick comprehension people always unite closer and closer.<sup>97</sup>

In the case of language, the socialization of human beings produces a tool that allows for their further cultivation. It is through language that human beings express their perspective on experience, and thus identifying with other’s all-too-human plots in the world. The fundamental point Nietzsche makes here is critical for this discussion: a person’s relationship to another person is a critical element in a person’s development from animal to human and from human to *Übermensch*.

While language and the ability to communicate evolve out the need to relate to others, Nietzsche makes clear that this development is not a “good” in itself. Nietzsche treats the development of language similar to how he treats other aspects of humanity and nature: ideas that are often deemed “good” (in the sense that it has cultivating value) are juxtaposed with its harmful value. Language, for example, gave humans the capacity to communicate understanding; however, Nietzsche also argues that language limits understanding. Nietzsche’s attitude towards the benefits and limitations of language parallels the central theme of Nietzsche’s view of friendship in that nothing is intrinsically “good” or “evil” but all things are often judged in terms of being either good or evil. In the case of community, language, consciousness, relationship and friendship,

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<sup>97</sup> BGE §268, 217.

all have instances of being beneficial to the cultivation of a “higher-type” of humans and corresponding instances that cause a regression of persons. Nietzsche often characterizes things as both healthful and harmful, “good” and “bad,” and some scholars of Nietzsche have attributed this theme to having been influenced by the early Greek philosopher Heraclitus.<sup>98</sup> (The evidence for this Heraclitean theme in Nietzsche’s writing is far too expansive to be adequately addressed in this discussion. Yet establishing the importance of this theme is critical for understanding the essential nature of Nietzsche’s views on “friendship.”) The inseparability of suffering with triumph, health with harm, strife with joy, “Mitfreude” with “Mitleiden” frames how Nietzsche understands the nature of an *all-too-human* existence, including the nature of human relationships.<sup>99</sup>

Likewise, for Nietzsche, the development of a person requires a painful process in which suffering results in health. To explain this idea, Nietzsche uses pregnancy as a metaphor, in which life resolves out of a painful process: as pregnancy includes “illness” and pain before a woman gives birth to new life, the natural development of a person includes elements of conflict, tension and pain – ie. “illnesses.”<sup>100</sup> Like pregnancy, Nietzsche advises that a friend is not only a source of pleasure and companionship, but in order for a friend to aid in the development of an other self, a friend is also a source of tension. It is within the context of this theme that I will begin to discuss how Nietzsche explicitly deals with “friendship.”

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<sup>98</sup> For more on Heraclitus’ influence on Nietzsche see Kaufmann’s *Nietzsche*, 209 and 265. Also, Nola, Robert. “Nietzsche’s Theory of Truth and Belief,” *The Journal of Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Vol. XLVII, No. 4, June 1987, 528.

<sup>99</sup> HAH §246, 117.

<sup>100</sup> D V §552, 223.

### C. Nietzsche's Conception of Friendship

In the previous section I situated Nietzsche's attitude to friendship within his philosophy of the human being and suggested that his understanding of the value of friendship is similar to how he values nature and language. Here I will show that Nietzsche's "friendship" is a relationship shared between persons in which the aim is to cultivate the natural potential in firstly oneself and secondly in the other. In addition, Nietzsche also adds that friendship cannot be rooted in pejorative moral standards or an agenda to selflessly "love" the other or an expression of altruism. Nietzsche argues that friendship rooted in standards and ideals relies on something beyond the limitations of our *all-too-human* existence. Rather, Nietzsche's friendship is not fundamentally selfless but a friend invests in the relationship because he is firstly self-interested. To become a friend or to befriend another reflects the contemptuous processes of nature: the evolution in nature is not an attempt to achieve a perfect world, animal or human, but a forceful development necessitated by the insufficiency of the current state. Likewise, Nietzsche's "friends" are not imitating ideal "friendship," but recognize the interplay of power and the value of conflict.<sup>101</sup>

"On the Friend" from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* represents Nietzsche's unequivocal treatment of friendship. Here, while the importance of the *Übermensch* is overtly expressed compared to earlier works, Nietzsche posits the central value of the "Heraclitean" strife<sup>102</sup> in friendship:

If one want to have a friend one must also want to wage war for him: and to wage war, one must be *capable* of being an enemy. In

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<sup>101</sup> See *The Gay Science* §14 for the interplay of power between friends.

<sup>102</sup> "Heraclitean," in this context, refers to the title of a short prose in *The Gay Science*. GS, *Prelude* §41, 57.

a friend one should still honor the enemy. Can you go close to your friend without going over to him?

In a friend one should have one's best enemy. You should be closest to him with your heart when you resist him...

Compassion for the friend should conceal itself under a hard shell, and you should break a tooth on it. That way it will have delicacy and sweetness...

Are you a slave? Then you cannot be a friend. Are you a tyrant? Then you cannot have friends.<sup>103</sup>

The value of conflict between friends, for Nietzsche, is coupled with honest concern and the aim to cultivate. The temptation of a friend is to always be agreeable, sacrificing one's true opinions and convictions to avoid conflict with another. This is a legitimate temptation, for to become disagreeable and antagonizing means risking a relationship in which one is typically valued and affirmed. For Nietzsche, these types of affirmations demonstrate a lack of character, weakness and they are characteristic of the 'lower-type mentality.'<sup>104</sup>

Most central to Nietzsche's friendship is the aim of cultivating the attributes of the *Übermensch*. For Nietzsche, a friendship entails cultivation of the friend and the befriended through a progressive dialectic. Here friends find fault in each other and then challenge one another, aiming to improve both themselves and their friend. Walter Kaufmann develops this theme in his short treatment of Nietzsche's "friendship."<sup>105</sup> Using *Daybreak* §503 and *The Gay Science* §14 as examples, Kaufmann concludes that "no other modern philosopher has tried so hard to re-experience the spirit of Socrates and his disciples" – the "spirit," he posits, of Plato's *Symposium*.<sup>106</sup> Kaufman interprets the Socratic "spirit" of friendship – or "love" in the *Symposium* – as "fruitful [when] two

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<sup>103</sup> Z I "On the Friend", 55-7.

<sup>104</sup> D §563, 226.

<sup>105</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 363-371.

<sup>106</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 366.

persons strive together to perfect themselves and each other.”<sup>107</sup> He further argues that Nietzsche fully demonstrates this spirit of friendship in *Zarathustra*, noting that “the common thirst for an ideal above’ has become a common ‘longing for the *Übermenschen*’”<sup>108</sup>

Similar to the spirit of inspiring “the good” and “the beautiful” in Plato’s *Symposium*, the aim of Nietzsche’s friend is to cultivate the potential of others. His “friendship,” however, only resembles this Greek love in the method of cultivating. Thus, it is worth further examination to elucidate the similarities between Socratic “love and Nietzsche’s “friendship.” Firstly, Nietzsche supplies ample evidence to support a relation between these ideas. In addition to the passages cited by Kaufmann, Nietzsche refers to Greek friendship and love in a variety of other passages. For instance, in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche remarks: “The Greeks, who knew so well what a friend is (they alone of all peoples have a deep, many-sided, philosophical discussion of friendship; so that they are the first, and thus far are the last, to consider the friend as a problem worthy of solution)...”<sup>109</sup> Nietzsche, however, is not simply rekindling the same spirit of Greek friendship, and acknowledging limitations in this treatment.<sup>110</sup> Nietzsche, rather, is suggesting that friendship is a combination of pure and impure motives, and that a friend may aim to cultivate another, but he may also desire to control the other. “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

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<sup>107</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 367.

<sup>108</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 366; Z I, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” 14.

<sup>109</sup> HAH §354, 143.

<sup>110</sup> “Antiquity lived and reflected on friendship to the limit, and almost buried friendship in its own grave.” Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, (trans. Hollingdale)V §503, 203. Kaufmann, in his citation of this passage in his discussion, omits this sentence.

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>111</sup> Common to both Socratic love and friendship is the aim to better oneself another through discourse. It is a misreading, however, to translate across the “thirst for ideals” in Socratic love to a “longing for the *Übermensch*” in Nietzsche. The similarities between the progressive dialectic “spirit” in Socratic love and Nietzsche’s “friendship” is supported in several passages in his work.<sup>112</sup> To further elucidate the nature of cultivation, however, requires an examination of Nietzsche’s discussion of conflict, hardness, disputation, argumentation and sublimation in relationship.

Most basic to Nietzsche’s understanding of cultivation is the notion that tension and inadequacy drive the evolution of nature and the improvement of the human animal. It is when the human person experiences suffering and frustration that he or she explores the means to improve upon her present situation. Without the suffering and frustration, Nietzsche argues that there would be no compulsion to improve.<sup>113</sup> The necessity of suffering and conflict is made clear, for example in *Beyond Good and Evil* §44:

We opposite men, having opened an *eye* and a conscience to the question where and how the plant “man” has so far grown most vigorously to a height, we think that this has happened every time under the opposite conditions, that to this end the dangerousness of his situation must first grow to the point of enormity, his power of invention and disguise (his “spirit”—) had to develop under prolonged pressure and constraint into refinement and audacity, his life-will had to be enhanced into an unconditional power-will:—we think that hardness, violence, slavery, danger in the alley and the heart, life in hiding, stoicism, the art of the tempter and devilry of every kind, that everything evil, terrible, tyrannical, like beasts of prey and snake-like in man serves the enhancement of the species “man” as much as its opposite does:—indeed, we do not even say

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<sup>111</sup> GS I §14, 88.

<sup>112</sup> For further inquiry into Nietzsche’s treatment of Greek/Socratic friendship, see also D IV §297, 153; GS II §61, 124; Z I “The Thousand and One Goals,” 58.

<sup>113</sup> eg. HAH §246, 117.



enough when we say only that much, and at any rate we are at this point, in what we say and keep silent about, at the *other* end from all modern ideology and herd desiderata – as their antipodes perhaps?<sup>114</sup>

Nietzsche's valuation of opposites places crucial importance on all things that challenge the human species. For it is through overcoming hardship that a person is refined. Moreover, the primacy of strife in progression sheds light on Nietzsche's paradoxical assertion: "Friends, there are no friends! ... Enemies, there is no enemy!"<sup>115</sup> The relationship of friends is one where both laughter and contempt are worth welcoming. Reflecting a larger theme in his philosophy, Nietzsche deconstructs the typical evaluation that friends are implicitly "good" and enemies implicitly "bad," rather it is the case that both friends and enemies are beneficial *and* harmful to self-cultivation.<sup>116</sup>

To develop one's self, then, requires that a person remain open to criticism and embracing hardship as opportunities for growth. Criticism and contradiction are not instances of defeat and hurt feelings, but rather, Nietzsche argues, these are opportunities to cultivate greatness, liberation and high culture:

Everybody knows nowadays that the ability to accept criticism and contradiction is a sign of high culture... But the ability to contradict, the attainment of a good conscience when one feels hostile to what is accustomed, traditional, and hallowed – that is still more excellent and constitutes what is really great, new, and amazing in our culture; this is the step of steps of the liberated spirit: Who knows that?<sup>117</sup>

Moreover, Nietzsche explicitly argues that the arguments and conflicts endured between friends play a necessary role for the cultivation of oneself. This is the role of a friend in a person's life: to become an opposite when the other no longer aims to improve herself.

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<sup>114</sup> GE §44, 53.

<sup>115</sup> HAH §376, 148-9.

<sup>116</sup> As Nietzsche explains in HAH §531, even enemies share an interest in keeping each other alive, for without reciprocated antagonism an enemy ceases to be an enemy and triumph and conquest are no longer possible.

<sup>117</sup> GS IV §297, 239.

Nietzsche poetically explicates this idea in a prose entitled “Heraclitean” in *The Gay Science*:

Only fights yield  
Happiness on earth,  
And on battlefields  
Friendship has its birth.  
One in three are friends:  
Brothers in distress,  
Equals, facing foes,  
Free – when facing death!<sup>118</sup>

In coupling friendship with the warring of the battlefield, this Heraclitean theme is further emphasized.

The friend helps cultivate the human spirit by identifying life-affirming “drives” in both him or her and the befriended. In becoming an opposite or an enemy, the friend establishes an opinion that fundamentally declares ‘I believe your position is inferior and harmful.’ The friend gains a greater sense of her strength,<sup>119</sup> and the befriended either contends the assertion or accepts the fault in her own position. Both, however, benefit when criticism instigates self-examination and cultivates new perspectives.<sup>120</sup>

Cultivating criticism, Nietzsche suggests, is personal and affirming: “... when we criticize something, this is no arbitrary and impersonal event; it is, at least very often, evidence of vital energies within us. We negate and must negate because something in us wants to live and affirm – something that we perhaps do not know or see as yet.”<sup>121</sup> A friend, Nietzsche argues, provides the necessary *perspective* that is needed for one to ‘look away from oneself’ and to see that which requires cultivation.<sup>122</sup> The friend is

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<sup>118</sup> GS Prelude §41, 57.

<sup>119</sup> HAH §317, 138.

<sup>120</sup> GS IV “In favor of criticism” §307, 246

<sup>121</sup> GS IV “In favor of criticism” §307, 246

<sup>122</sup> Z III “The Wanderer”, 153-5.

particularly efficacious in changing the other because a friend knows the other well. A unique characteristic of a friend, in contrast to an acquaintance or colleague, is that a friend discloses certain sides and vulnerabilities that are likely unknown to others. A friend, therefore, has critical insight into the state of his befriended, putting him in a position that allows him to be distinctively efficacious in changing the other.

With new perspective and self-awareness, the friend is also importantly instrumental in instigating the potent creativity that is characteristic of the “free spirit.” Nietzsche pays particular attention to criticism directed at the “herd conscience,” and argues that a friend who criticizes obtrusiveness, laziness, weakness and crudeness – all life-denying characteristics of the herd – is one who becomes a creator of new values.<sup>123</sup> In this case, critical “drives” that were traditionally thought to be harmful, now have important cultivating value. For example, “foolhardiness, revengefulness, craft, rapacity, and ambition,” which are often characterized as harmful, also reject the “herd conscience:”

When the highest and strongest drives, breaking passionately out, carry the individual far above and beyond the average and lowlands of the herd conscience, the self-confidence of the community goes to pieces, its faith in itself, its spine as it were, is broken: consequently it is precisely these drives which are most branded and calumniated. Lofty spiritual independence, the will to stand alone, great intelligence even, are felt to be dangerous.<sup>124</sup>

In this sense these harmful drives are also valuable when they cause one to criticize pejorative social standards. This is not to say that these incendiary values are strictly more important than other, seemingly contrasting values such as forgiveness and pity. Even in Nietzsche’s understanding, these traditional moral values are helpful because they maintain a certain amount of order in society. In contrast, the “strong and dangerous

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<sup>123</sup> Z II “On Self-overcoming”, 113-5.

<sup>124</sup> BGE §201, 113-4.

drives” have important “social utility” because they drive the revaluation of values. In Nietzsche’s opinion, the development of humanity is dependent upon persons who call into question these traditional values that promote mediocrity and moral dullness.<sup>125</sup>

While traditional more values maintain social order, these values have also run their course, and so it is now humanity’s task to reevaluate the moral institutions that restrict humanity’s growth. Without critical friendships, persons remain vulnerable to the life-denying ways of the herd. As Nietzsche advises, a human being is often unknown to himself until he responds to the critical and honest examinations of another:

*Self-observation.*— Man is very well defended against himself, against his own spying and sieges; usually he is able to make out no more of himself than his outer fortifications. The actual stronghold is inaccessible to him, even invisible, unless friends and enemies turn traitor and lead him there by a secret path.<sup>126</sup>

Nietzsche argues that the conflict in relationships allow one to recognize the obtrusive values that hinder him from developing perspective and creativity, (values he associates with the “higher type.”)

Nietzsche further articulates the value of “warring” in friendship in *Thus Spoke*

*Zarathustra*:

We do not want to be spared by our best enemies, nor by those whom we love thoroughly. So let me tell you the truth!

My brothers in war, I love you thoroughly; I am and I was of your kind. And I am also your best enemy. So let me tell you the truth!

I know of the hatred and envy of your hearts. You are not great enough not to know hatred and envy. Be great enough, then, not to be ashamed of them...

You should have eyes that always seek an enemy – *your* enemy. And some of you hate at first sight. Your enemy you shall seek, your war you shall wage – for your thoughts. And if your thought be vanquished, then your honesty should still find cause for triumph in that. You should love peace as a means to new wars – and the short peace more than the

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<sup>125</sup> BGE §201, 113-4.

<sup>126</sup> HAH §491, 179.

long. To you I do not recommend peace but victory. Let your work be a struggle. Let your peace be a victory. One can be silent and sit still only when one has bow and arrow: else one chatters and quarrels. Let your peace be a victory.

You say it is the good cause that hallows even war? I say unto you: it is the good war that hallows any cause. War and courage have accomplished more great things than love the neighbor. Not your pity but your courage has so far the unfortunate...

You may have only enemies whom you can hate, not enemies you despise. You must be proud of your enemy: then the successes of your enemy are your successes too...

Thus live your life of obedience and war. What matters long life? What warrior wants to be spared?

I do not spare you; I love you thoroughly, my brothers in war!<sup>127</sup>

The contentious relationships of *Übermenschen* reside in warring, filled with multiple perspectives and conducive to creativity. Nietzsche makes the analogy that the spirited tension between fellow *free spirits* is similar to tension between the vaults and arches of architectural masterpieces, filled with “assurance and beauty.”<sup>128</sup> As vaulted arches are magnificent in being supported with great amounts of tension, a person is refined into greatness when an analogous tension is thrust upon him by friends.

In relating friends to enemies, Nietzsche demonstrates the value in looking beyond traditional assessments of friendship. Whereas enemies are evaluated in terms of the hurt they inflict upon another and friends are evaluated in terms of good brought to the befriended, Nietzsche argues that his audience must reevaluate the value of enemies and friends. The passages cited above further suggest that for Nietzsche, enemies are often more capable of cultivating the potential in one another and that friends are suspiciously harmful to the development of a person when they coddle one another with compassion and charity. Nietzsche’s view complicates the seemingly antithetical nature of enemies and friends by charging friends “to go to war” against one another and

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<sup>127</sup> Z “On War and Warriors”, 47-8.

<sup>128</sup> Z “On Tarantulas”, 101-2.

warning that love can make one “barbaric” like an enemy.<sup>129</sup> (For Nietzsche, love becomes barbaric when one obsesses over the beloved.) This complication, however, calls into question the plausibility of Nietzsche’s friendship, as a warring friend seems counterintuitive to most persons’ understanding of friendship. Nietzsche aims to resolve this complication by arguing that the common understanding of friendship, in which friends demonstrates care for the other and avoid “warring,” is an understanding rooted in a misinterpretation of the actual relationship. In Nietzsche’s interpretation of friendship, friends are not as wholly invested as they appear to act, and conversely, enemies do not entirely hate each other.<sup>130</sup> For Nietzsche’s claim to stand close scrutiny, it requires that he further explain how friends who war with another are also invested in the well-being of one another and maintain an actual friendship. (Nietzsche indicates that the reality of warring friends is a reality yet to be actualized and reserved only for the *Übermenschen*.)

In addition, the complication of the enemy-friend also demonstrates a consistency within his philosophy that in order for humans and humanity to evolve, it is necessary to reevaluate what is valued as “good” and what is valued as “bad.” Nietzsche’s friendship, integral to the development of humans, is also harmful when pandering to weakness and, it is healthful when it utilizes painful, incisive honesty to help one recognize their weaknesses. Nietzsche’s juxtaposition of friends and enemies builds on his theory that the development of humans and humanity are driven through a process that is painful and sometimes destructive. He also demonstrates that for humans to develop, it is further necessary to reevaluate the value of seemingly “good” and “bad” effects in one’s life. Nietzsche has only constructed a convincing case for a new type of friendship, however,

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<sup>129</sup> GS Appendix, “Songs of Prince Vogelfrei,” *Song of a Theocritical Goatherd*, 361.

<sup>130</sup> See also, HAH IX §531, 183; D III §202, 120-2; D IV §313, 157; GS III 169, 201; Z I “On War and Warriors,” 47-8; Z I “On the Adder’s Bite,” 68.

if it is actually plausible for friends to “war,” criticize and behave like enemies, yet maintain enough decency within the relationship such that persons trust in their friends’ concern. Nietzsche’s friendship is not only contentious and painful but he is even more unorthodox in his views by emphasizing the value of friends being self-interested. Thus, it is further necessary to explore the plausibility of an actual Nietzschean friendship by questioning how a friendship will subsist without the compassion, altruism and intimacy contained in traditional conceptions of friendship.

#### D. Self-Interestedness and Instrumentality

Through disputation and criticism, the free-spirited friend aims firstly to improve himself.<sup>131</sup> Unlike Socratic love in which the friend challenges the other because it is intrinsically good to inspire love for higher goods, Nietzschean friendship is based in egoistic motives. Moreover, distinctly antithetical to the Kantian morality, Nietzsche posits a form of friendship in which friends are not treated as ends in themselves. Friends can only have instrumental value because a person is only capable of being self-interested, Nietzsche argues, and those who claim to be “selfless” are being dishonest with themselves. Nietzsche responds to moralities (like Kant’s, which argue for a person’s individual rights or value) by suggesting that these moralities deny that persons are fundamentally interested in protecting themselves. While a person may *claim* to act selflessly and to treat others as ends (rather than means), it is impossible to believe that they are *more interested* in the other than their own self.

Like Kant, Aristotle raises concerns about friends who are used as means to an end. Aristotle distinguishes between those *philia* (friendships) who are treated instrumentally and those who are valued in-themselves. For Aristotle, instrumental *philia* (as Pedro Tabensky refers to this type of Aristotelian friendship) are less desirable than virtue friendships because the utility of the friendship is valued more than the friendship itself.<sup>132</sup> As Aristotle explains, instrumental *philia* are self-interested:

Therefore, those who love for the sake of utility love for the sake of what is good for themselves, and those who love for the sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant to themselves, and no in so far as the other is the person loved but in so far as he is useful or pleasant.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> GS IV “New Caution” §32, 254.

<sup>132</sup> Tabensky, *Happiness: Personhood, Community, Purpose*, 159.

<sup>133</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8, chapter 3, 1156a10 (p. 211).



At the heart of Aristotle's claim is the concern that instrumental *philia* are fundamentally dishonest because their interest in one another is dependent upon their degree of utility. Moreover, any action deriving from dishonest motives lacks virtue. Nietzsche, too, similarly values honesty but he argues that it is impossible for a person to honestly act selfless. Rather than acting selfless, Nietzsche advocates that friends ought to concede that their concern for one another is limited by each own's self-interestedness. Having acknowledged their motives, friends are able to move forward in the relationship, trusting that both parties are now being honest with one another – honestly selfish. Here Nietzsche's conception of friendship is dependent upon the premise that persons are first self-interested and unable to act selflessly.

The selfishness that Nietzsche posits, however, is not a maniacal egocentrism or a form of Hedonism. Rather it is a self-interestedness that benefits others in cultivating one's own character, as it is expressed here: "I teach you the friend and his overflowing heart. But one must learn to be a sponge if one wants to be loved by hearts that overflow."<sup>134</sup> When one has an abundance of creativity and exudes other higher-type traits, then he has the capacity to honestly befriend another. An unready friend – one who is both needy and parasitic has the potential to dull another and stifle creativity by being pitiful and demanding attention.<sup>135</sup>

The egoism in Nietzsche's friendship is rooted in his view that persons have the potential to develop, and a certain amount of egoism is central to the development of persons. Nietzsche is careful to distinguish between an egoism in which a person is naturally self-absorbed in a form of narcissism and the self-interestedness that he

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<sup>134</sup> Z "On Love of the Neighbor", 60-2.

<sup>135</sup> eg. GS I §40, 107; GS IV §312, 249.

associates with the *Übermensch*. Egoism as self-obsession is enslaving in the sense that persons are unable to understand anything beyond themselves. Nietzsche, in contrast, advocates that persons who learn to understand others are given the reciprocated opportunity to learn about themselves. He explains that persons are capable of maintaining their own self-interestedness and investing in understanding others to a healthy degree, only if their relationships provide them with a different perspective of themselves. Here again Nietzsche is unorthodox in his conception of friendship by maintaining that a person's care for a friend is slightly insincere because the care is mediated by an underlying self-interestedness. In this form of higher-type egoism, a person does not live to please others or for others, but developed persons "give style to their character" by living for themselves. Furthermore, in Nietzsche's organic account of humanity, human development is driven by the individual efforts of persons who react to the frustrations and constraints in their lives; for Nietzsche, this task is dependent on the fact that a person is firstly self-interested. This conclusion, however, may have several problematic implications.

A critical difference between Aristotle's "orthodox" friendship and Nietzsche's friendship is the most apparent when considering how friendship affects other people. For Aristotle, friendships represent the smallest subcategories of societies, and in this sense, friendship is fundamentally political and how a person interacts with their friends has larger societal repercussions.<sup>136</sup> Nietzsche's treatment of friendship, in contrast, seems to be strictly apolitical, without reference to the larger implications on society. (Moreover, Nietzsche's philosophy in general seems to be apolitical.<sup>137</sup>) While divergent

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<sup>136</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII, chapter 1, 1155a5-25 (p. 207).

<sup>137</sup> Leiter, *Nietzsche*, 292-3, footnote 7; Nietzsche, BGE §207, 117.

in their implications, however, both Nietzsche and Aristotle derive their understanding from similar premises. For instance, both Nietzsche and Aristotle understand persons to be natural beings, affected by their environment, including the natural world in which they live, their society, community and friends.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, Nietzsche, like Aristotle, suggests that friends hold a particularly unique role in effecting the moral development of others.<sup>139</sup>

The contrasts between Nietzsche and Aristotle conclusions (despite holding similar premises) represent their fundamentally different philosophical aims, specifically in terms of morality. For Aristotle, moral (virtuous) action leads to both personal happiness and subsequently, political happiness, and this is the *telos* of persons: to live virtuously.<sup>140</sup> Thus, it follows from Aristotle's aims that friends play a critical role in building a virtuous moral state, as both friendship and the political state share the same moral ends. (For Aristotle, justice, or just action, is a primary virtue that connects friendship and the state.) Nietzsche's interest in morality, in contrast, pertains to the development of individuals (ie. human flourishing) and he clearly demonstrates that he is not interested in constructing a system which would instruct individuals how to be moral. Accordingly, for Nietzsche, the aim of friendship is ambiguous in terms of specific moral gains. (For example, Nietzsche does not argue that friendship develops justice, selflessness or any other specific virtue.) Nietzsche does find value in friendship; the value of friendship, however, is limited to the betterment of individuals, friendship does

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<sup>138</sup> For example, Z "On the Flies in the Market Place", 53; Tabensky, *Happiness: Personhood, Community, Purpose*, 150.

<sup>139</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8, chapter 4-5, 1166a-1167a30 (p. 245); Z I "On the Friend", 55-7; Z I "On War and Warriors", 47-8.

<sup>140</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, chapter 13, 1102a5-25, (p. 29); Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV, chapter 5, 1126a3-8 (p.105).

not have a traceable political value, and friendship is not a subcategory of encompassing morality.

While Nietzsche is keen to describe the motivations and psyche of persons and the temperament of society, he is not interested in theorizing on politics.<sup>141</sup> Positing the view that humans are firstly self-interested, however, has certain implications which are directly pertinent to how a society functions. Thus, it is worthwhile to consider how these problematic implications might call into account the plausibility of Nietzsche's human nature. For instance, if a community consists of persons who have realized their self-interestedness, then it is hard to imagine how the community would organize and represent the variety of persons' interests. It seems unlikely that a community of self-interested persons would remain honest to their self-interestedness while also complying with their community's needs. This implication illustrates that Nietzsche's philosophical interests were limited (and did not include politics.)

The self-interestedness of friendship reflects one of Nietzsche's criticisms of morality in the sense that altruism and acts of pity, charity and self-sacrifice are understood fundamentally as unnatural and thus inhuman. Even if an altruistic utopia were made manifest, he predicts, the human animal would "dream of nothing but the happy, loveless past, of divine selfishness, of how it was once possible to be alone, undisturbed, unloved, hated, despised on earth, and whatever else may characterize the utter baseness of the dear animal in which *we* live."<sup>142</sup> As Nietzsche posits here, the all-too-human reality of the human animal is a life that is naturally solitary, self-interested, and so it is worth celebrating as such. For the self-interestedness that Nietzsche finds

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<sup>141</sup> Leiter, *Nietzsche*, 292-3, footnote 7. Leiter is particularly convinced that Nietzsche was not interested in politics, cautioning that Nietzsche scholars avoid reaching political conclusions.

<sup>142</sup> D II §147, 93.

valuable is not a self-obsession or narrow-mindedness, rather he finds value in persons who recognize the limits of their understanding and strive for individuality by being self-creators. Nietzsche's position here, however, is one that remains to be actualized. While he develops the idea of humans being self-interested throughout his works, he describes that the process of recognizing one's self-interestedness is reserved for those aspiring *Übermenschen*. If Nietzsche is to be correct in this view, then it still remains a general task of humanity to further understand the meaning of care and compassions – drives that appear can be accepted as sincere but which Nietzsche finds to be suspiciously decadent. Nietzsche, however, makes an important distinction between the life-denying, selfish drives and general good nature. Nietzsche writes that friendliness and courtesy are seemingly selfless but “in fact there really is not much about them that is selfless,” and “have made much greater contributions to culture than those much more famous expressions of this drive, called pity, charity, and self-sacrifice.”<sup>143</sup> Altruistic and selfless acts, rather, lack evidence in Nietzsche's worldview and he finds that persons are firstly interested in themselves than anyone else.<sup>144</sup> (He concludes that moral ideals, like altruism, tend to be more life-denying rather than spirit-giving.<sup>145</sup>) Nietzsche expresses the unnatural and life-denying spirit of selflessness in the passage “On the Spirit of Gravity” in *Zarathustra*:

Not, to be sure, with the love of the wilting and wasting: for among those even self-love stinks. One must learn to love oneself – thus I teach – with a wholesome and healthy love, so that one can bear to be with oneself and need not roam. Such roaming baptizes itself ‘love of the neighbor’: with this phrase the best lies and hypocrisies have been perpetrated so far, and especially by such as were a grave burden for all the world.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> HAH I §49, 38.

<sup>144</sup> GS III §119, 176 “No Altruism!”

<sup>145</sup> eg. BGE §56, 68.

<sup>146</sup> Z “On the Spirit of Gravity”,.192-3.

In his rejection of selflessness and his evaluation of ego, Nietzsche argues that the “higher-type’s” relationship to others is selfish. He bases this argument on three claims: there are no selfless actions, the ego is natural and thus good, and the selfish ego benefits others (particularly the other “higher-types.”)

For Nietzsche, even seemingly selfless actions stem from the ego. While this does not rule out the possibility that a may intend to act out of selfishness, in Nietzsche’s view it is impossible to act purely selfless. Arguments for altruism and selflessness, then, are dishonest in their understanding of human motives – in his words, “unegoistic [actions are] more fabulous than the phoenix.”<sup>147</sup> For “no man has ever done anything that was done wholly for others and with no personal motivation whatever; how, indeed, should a man be *able* to do something that had no reference to himself, that is to say lacked all inner compulsion (which would have its basis in a personal need)? How could the ego act without the ego?”<sup>148</sup> Thus, to adequately understand acts of selflessness, particularly in the case of friendship, requires examining egoistic motives. Yet, it is still the case that persons sincerely believe in selfless acts – how then does Nietzsche understand these actions? These “selfless actions” are either an expression of power and superiority, an opportunity to receive applause, a chance to “realize how fortunate we are,” a relief from boredom or a desperate attempt to cure our own all-too-human vulnerability by helping another.<sup>149</sup> None of these actions, though, are purely altruistic.

The nonexistence of selfless actions is clear in Nietzsche’s writings; it is additionally evident that he found egoism to be naturally healthy. Egoism, for Nietzsche,

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<sup>147</sup> HAH §133, 71.

<sup>148</sup> HAH §133, 71.

<sup>149</sup> D II §133, 83-4. Examining Nietzsche’s treatment “pity” is pertinent to his conception of moral compulsions. D II §110, 65-5.

is founded in the “primordial law of things” and is part of the “nature of all social relations.”<sup>150</sup> As a naturalist, then, egoism is inherently good, and so it is that there Nietzsche’s conception of friendship contains a normative component in that he judges persons to be more fulfilled in recognizing their natural motives. In this sense, Nietzsche is making a value judgment similar to those whose morality he critiques. He suggests, however, that he can make this judgment because he has more correctly understood the nature of persons while those he critiques have misinterpreted the nature of persons. The ego’s natural potency constitutes the “good man” because without it, he “flees from himself, hates himself, does harm to himself.” Rather, the “good man” is first “benevolently and beneficently inclined *towards himself!*”<sup>151</sup> So it is through the exercise of ego that the human person behaves according to his natural disposition.

Finally, Nietzsche draws the important implication that the egoism of the “free spirit” indirectly benefits other “free spirits.” The selfless person passively relates to others and compromises or denies her own spirit for her companions. In contrast, the “free spirit” – who appreciates the strength of the ego – exercises ego-centered drives, and thus instigating the combative progressive-dialectic that cultivates *Übermenschen*.<sup>152</sup> “It is an *additional* instance of his egoism, this artfulness and self-limitation in intercourse with his equals—every star is a similar egoist, he honors *himself* in them, and in the rights which he concedes to them, he has no doubt that the exchange of honors and rights, as the *essence* of all intercourse, belongs also to the natural condition of things.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> BGE §265, 215.

<sup>151</sup> D V §516, 207.

<sup>152</sup> D V §552, 223.

<sup>153</sup> BGE §265, 215.

Here Nietzsche explains that the egocentrism of one individual “star” is contagious and inspiring to other individuals with the potential for similar greatness.

In elucidating the critical elements of Nietzsche’s “egoism” and his rejection of pure selflessness, an important conclusion follows in regard to this discussion on friendship, that is, it is always the case that the relationship shared between two friends originates in a primary selfishness that seeks self-benefit. If the “friends” are disposed towards the mentality of the “free spirit,” then the ego of the friend is not possessive and dominating, but provides an opportunity to engage in the dialectic that cultivates “higher-type” thinking.

In relationship and friendship, the subjective experience of an individual is given primary importance in Nietzsche’s philosophy. As indicated before, Nietzsche values the selfish ego of an individual as the factor that governs how a person relates to another. In addition to governing how a person relates to another, Nietzsche poses the more primary question as to whether they should even relate to others at all. While the human animal evolved out of a necessitated communal living experience, Nietzsche clearly argues for the value of solitude, particularly in the life of the *Übermenschen*.



## E. Solitude

For Nietzsche, societies on the whole and social relationships threaten to become restrictive – a case made throughout his works but particularly in *Zarathustra*. Society is “poisonous” and harmful; solitude, on the other hand, is where the air is “raw and strong.”<sup>154</sup> Thus, the social individual risks joining the parasitic “herd,” who develop a common mentality and limit creativity by establishing shared values. Nietzsche articulates this in an earlier work: “When I am among the many I live as the many do, and I do not think as I really think; after a time it always seems as though they want to banish me from myself and rob me of my soul – and I grow angry with everybody and fear everybody. I then require the desert, so as to grow good again.”<sup>155</sup> Solitude is an opportunity to escape from this weariness, fear and frustration; Nietzsche warns, however, that the process of liberation is painful and uneasy.<sup>156</sup>

Beginning with an assertion of independence, the self who seeks solitude must be determined to leave the herd mentality. As Nietzsche explains in *Zarathustra*, the “free spirit” will declare, “I will no longer have a common conscience with you.”<sup>157</sup> The declaration in itself is only the beginning of an agonizing path in which the “free spirit” must unlearn the common conscience and develop the ability to recognize how society conditions his perception of the world and himself. Nietzsche stresses that this is reserved for the strongest and most spirited.<sup>158</sup> At the point of liberation the “free spirit” is faced with daunting but necessary questions, calling him to be his own creator of value and meaning. “Can you give yourself your own evil and your own good and hang your

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<sup>154</sup> Z “On the Flies of the Market Place”, 53.

<sup>155</sup> D V §491, 201.

<sup>156</sup> D V §524, 208; GS I §50, 114; GS III §182, 203.

<sup>157</sup> Z “On the Way of the Creator”, 63-5.

<sup>158</sup> BGE §29, 41.

own will over yourself as a law? Can you be your own judge an avenger of your law? Terrible it is to be alone with the judge and avenger of one's own law. Thus is a star thrown out into the void and into the icy breath of solitude."<sup>159</sup> The "free spirits" who affirmatively respond ultimately face a lone existence, isolated from the comforts of communal life. Those who lack the spirit to endure solitude eventually become "bored, disgusted, and despise themselves."<sup>160</sup> For these persons, "solitude becomes poison."<sup>161</sup>

Brian Leiter, in his book *Nietzsche on Morality*, thinks that a "higher person's" relationship to another is always instrumental, limiting interactions with others by living a life of solitude.<sup>162</sup> Nietzsche explains this, Leiter notes, in *Beyond Good and Evil* §273: "A human being who strives for something great considers everyone he meets on his way either as a means or as a delay and obstacle – or a temporary resting place." Moreover, "free spirits" who maintains a certain distance from their friends (like Nietzsche himself) learn of a deeper appreciation for their friends. Continual proximity to friends, in contrast, limits the friend's perspective on their relationship, particularly when the conversations and routines of the friendship remain the torpid; solitude, however, is an opportunity to gain perspective. Nietzsche suggests that there is value in being reminded of one's "all too human" nature and that persons becomes weary (and ultimately dulled) if they remain in continual company of others. Even being in the company of one's healthiest friends should be balanced with a certain amount of solitude, in Nietzsche's

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<sup>159</sup> Z "On the Way of the Creator", 63-5.

<sup>160</sup> GS V §359, 314-5.

<sup>161</sup> GS V §359, 314-5. Nietzsche further articulates this threat in *Zarathustra*, "On the Way of the Creator," but the time will come when solitude will make you weary, when your pride will double up, and your courage gnash its teeth. And you will cry, 'I am alone!' The time will come when that which seems high to you will no longer be in sight, and that which seems low will be all-too-near; even what seems sublime to you will frighten you like a ghost. And you will cry, "All is false!"

"... With my tears go into your loneliness, my brother. I love him who wants to create over and beyond himself and thus perishes" (Z I "On the Way Creator," 63-5).

<sup>162</sup> Leiter, *Nietzsche*, 115.

opinion. “A: But why this solitude? – B: I am not at odds with anyone. But when I am alone I seem to see my friends in a clearer and fairer light than when I am with them; and when I loved and appreciated music the most, I lived far from it. It seems I need a distant perspective if I am to think well of things.”<sup>163</sup> The temperamental nature of friendships has the two-fold quality of being both potentially beneficial to the friend and the befriended.

Nietzsche’s positive valuation of solitude and the instrumentality of friends are rooted in his criticism of society. Nietzsche criticizes the communal life as being conducive to dulling the creative spirit and to creating a herd instinct.<sup>164</sup> Solitude offers liberation from the diseased society, allowing the “free spirit” to exercise an “independence of the soul.”<sup>165</sup> Yet it is not explicitly clear that solitude *in itself* is conducive to higher-type cultivation.

Between sociable and solitary natures there exists this distinction (presupposing they both possess spirit!): the former will be happy, or almost happy with a thing, whatever it may be, from the moment they have found in their spirit a communicable and pleasing way of expressing it – this will reconcile them to the Devil himself! The solitary, however, have their enjoyment or their torment of a thing in silence, they hate a clever and glittering display of their innermost problems as they hate to see their beloved too carefully dressed: they gaze at her with melancholy eyes, as though becoming pretty to the suspicion she wants to appear pleasing to others! This is the jealousy which all solitary thinkers and passionate dreamers feel towards *esprit*.<sup>166</sup>

Nietzsche asks “where one should build one’s house” – in either solitude or community:

If you feel yourself great and fruitful in solitude, a life in society will diminish you and make you empty: and *vice versa*. Powerful gentleness, like that of a father: - where you are seized by this mood, there found

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<sup>163</sup> D V §485, 199-200.

<sup>164</sup> Z “On the Flies in the Market Place”, 53.

<sup>165</sup> GS II §98, 150.

<sup>166</sup> D V §524, 208.

your house, whether it be in the midst of the crowd or in a silent retreat.  
*Ubi pater sum, ibi patri.* (Where you live well, live there.)<sup>167</sup>

Furthermore, there is not sufficient evidence in Nietzsche's work to definitively say that a person's sublimation into an *Übermensch* is entirely independent or necessarily dependent on others. Nietzsche clarifies the issue somewhat by noting that everything is worth sacrificing for the "independence of the soul!" – even if it requires sacrificing "one's dearest friend."<sup>168</sup> Critical to a person's development into becoming *Übermensch*-like is the ability to overcome both the fear of being alone and the desire to live in community and dependent upon others. In this respect, persons have not developed the self-interestedness needed to assert their own selfhood when they are driven by the egoistic passions like the fear of being alone, thus needing to live in community. These persons obsess over their fears and they are controlled by the instincts characteristic of the herd. In contrast, only those developing into the *Übermenschen* can overcome the herd instinct by recognizing their own self-interestedness and then continually calculating the value of living in solitude and amongst friends

Nietzsche articulates the moderation between the solitary and communal life in the story of Zarathustra, who leaves his solitude, "weary with wisdom" and returns to community ("goes under") to "give away and distribute... [and] become empty again."<sup>169</sup> When Zarathustra realizes that he is received as the "mean between a fool and a corpse" and that "[his] sense does not speak to their senses," he leaves the communal life.<sup>170</sup> Zarathustra toils through the cycles of solitude and an overflowing compulsion to return, through the conclusion of the story when he has befriended and cultivated the

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<sup>167</sup> D V §473, 196.

<sup>168</sup> GS II §98, 150.

<sup>169</sup> Z Prologue 1, 9-10.

<sup>170</sup> Z Prologue 7, 20-1.

*Übermensch*. Returning to his cave once again, “he ... felt a desire for the good air outside and for his animals – and he wanted to slip out.” Zarathustra represents the balance of solitary and communal living, and relating to others both instrumentally and with concern. A strict prescription for a life alone or a life in dialogue with others does not cultivate the spirit of the *Übermensch*. Human cultivation, rather, is driven by reacting to the varying states of community and solitary living. As Nietzsche advises: “*Ubi pater sum, ibi patri*” (“Where you live well, live there.”)<sup>171</sup> Likewise, relationships with others are not solely instrumental nor do they wholly result from an abundance of spirit. Rather, the relationships of the *Übermensch* are formed according to whatever best cultivates the “free spirit” in firstly oneself and secondly others.

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<sup>171</sup> D V §473, 196.

## F. Unhealthy Friendship

Perhaps Nietzsche's conception of healthy friendship is most clear when he contrasts the former with the friendship of the lower-type. Friendship rooted in antagonism and selfishness is reserved for the "higher men,"<sup>172</sup> the "free spirit" of *Human, All Too Human* or the *Übermensch* of *Zarathustra*. All other friendship – "herd" friendship – is a constitution of power struggles, rooted in acts of pity and misdirected moral compulsions.<sup>173</sup> Clarifying his criticisms of friendship and his conception of unhealthy friendship – like Nietzsche's moral polemics – draws important distinctions between pejorative acts that enslave a person and acts conducive to self-mastery and self-cultivation. Characteristic of all unhealthy friendship, however, is that it stifles the cultivation of "free spirits," by limiting discussion, creativity and the potential for human greatness. Aelred of Rieraulx, for example, describes a relationship nearly antithetical to Nietzsche's conception of friendship and very similar to the "unhealthy" friendship he warns his audience of. In *De Spiritali Amicitia*, Aelred of Rieraulx advocates a friendship that is rooted on the Christian ideals of unconditional and eternal love, and he advocates a relationship in which friends never use one another for selfish ends.<sup>174</sup> In contrast Nietzsche's friendship is ultimately selfish and the relationship is dependent upon how it cultivates one another. Like Nietzsche's unhealthy friendship, Aelred of Rieraulx's friendship is elementally similar because of the emphasis placed on unconditional – and uncritical – support for one another, and these friends value someone more than himself or herself. The friendship of Aelred of Rieraulx and his unhealthy

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<sup>172</sup> BGE §228, 157.

<sup>173</sup> See D II §110, 65-6; D V §484, 199.

<sup>174</sup> Aelred of Rievalux, "Spiritual Friendship, (De Spiritali Amicitia, Book I), *Other Selves* (ed. Michael Pakuluk), Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1991, Cambridge, 129-145.

friendship are the archetype of Nietzsche's concerns because of how this type of friendship limits and restricts a person's ability to grow; however, Nietzsche recognizes that a friendship reaches this unhealthy state in a number of ways and for various reasons.

For example, Nietzsche warns that friendship originates in the insecurity of being alone, the same insecurity in which the "bad conscience" originates.<sup>175</sup> "But during the longest period of the human past nothing was more terrible than to feel that one stood by oneself. To be alone, to experience things in isolation, neither to obey nor to rule, to be an individual – that was not a pleasure but a punishment..."<sup>176</sup> The companionship of another – the unhealthy friend – became the remedy for this all-too-human state.<sup>177</sup> These types of friends advance the herd mentality, not creativity or spirit. Along with friendships that originate out of fear of being alone, Nietzsche is also critical of needy friends. "Not to remain stuck to a person – not even the most loved – every person is a prison, also a nook...One must know how *to conserve oneself*: the hardest test of independence."<sup>178</sup> When a friend becomes dependent upon the other for happiness, then it is necessary for the *free spirit* to renounce the friendship.<sup>179</sup> Passive friends and agreeable ones are also "undesirable": "This one cannot say 'No,' and that one says to everything 'Half and Half...'"<sup>180</sup> Finally, friendship rooted in the virtues of selflessness and pity are "privately harmful" because they "deprive a human being of his noblest selfishness and the strength for the highest autonomy..."<sup>181</sup> Nietzsche maintains that in order for persons to develop, it is necessary that they concede that they are firstly selfish

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<sup>175</sup> GS III "Herd Remorse" §117, 175.

<sup>176</sup> GS III "Herd Remorse" §117, 175.

<sup>177</sup> GS III "Herd Remorse" §117, 175.

<sup>178</sup> BGE §41, 52.

<sup>179</sup> D V §489, 200.

<sup>180</sup> GS I §32, 103. Kaufmann notes that Peter Gast and Elizabeth Nietzsche-Förestor are the "undesirable disciples" to whom which he refers. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, p. 46.

<sup>181</sup> GS §21, 92.

beings, and in realizing their motives, they are then capable of relating to their friends. This is not to say that Nietzsche advocated for a person to be narcissistic or obsessively self-interested – for Nietzsche, this is the egoistic mindset of herd instinct, rooted in fear. Rather, Nietzsche found that healthy friendships subsist when both parties concede that they are firstly self-interested. Even Aristotle, who warns of undesirable extremes such as selflessness and selfishness, concedes that no one loves another more than himself. (Yet for Aristotle wellbeing of the self is bound up with the wellbeing of the other.) Nietzsche, like Aristotle, agrees that friendships are only efficacious (in either developing virtue or cultivating the *Übermensch*), when the friends are firstly invested in their own well-being.

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This chapter began by setting Nietzsche's friendship into the context of naturalism by first demonstrating that human beings are first animals and how they relate to others is a function of their nature. In finding humans to be naturally combative and destructive at times, he also posits that the healthiest friends reflect a similar state of tension. For Nietzsche, the healthiest – and thus, valuable friendship – is one that reflects the tension within nature, and so the friendship includes antagonism and criticism because of its value in cultivating one's self. Also characteristic of the healthy friendship is the self-interestedness of friends and the requisite phases of solitude and independence in the relationship.

What, then, is this friendship that Nietzsche posits, where friends are unreliable, selfish and absent? The better question might be, rather, "is this really even *friendship*?"



Returning to haunt us is Nietzsche's infamous assertion: "Friends, there are no friends!" While Nietzsche's view is demonstrably unorthodox compared to other traditional conceptions of friends, his conception is rooted in an entirely different set of values and reflects his understanding that human nature is not fixed but moldable and filled with potential. In this sense, Nietzsche's treatment of friendship is similar to his treatment of morality and other social norms in the sense that he aims to deconstruct any presumed, common understanding. While radically dissimilar to traditional understandings of friendship, Nietzsche is not introducing an all-together new idea; rather, he asks his audience to set aside any previous conceptions of friendship and reevaluate its worth according to an entirely new set of values. In Nietzsche's understanding, he reevaluates friendship to be fundamentally selfish, potentially antagonistic but also conducive to inspiring self-cultivation.

In the following chapter I will discuss how Nietzsche's friendship is not only reinterpreting the worth of friendship but that he is implicitly arguing for a moral worth of friendship.

**- Chapter Three -**  
*Friendship and Morality*

Friendship is not only an important aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy of the human person, but it is also an aspect of his philosophy that implicitly deals with morality. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will investigate the relationship between Nietzsche's understanding of friendship and his moral philosophy, and I will demonstrate how his treatment of friendship results in certain moral implications that clarify some aspects of his moral philosophy. The chapter begins by first addressing how friendship and morality have been related in other philosophies, using the work of Michael Pakaluk, and then turning to how Nietzsche's treatment of friendship relates to his conceptions of morality. Recognizing similar criticisms and goals between these two aspects of his philosophy, it is suggested that, while not one in the same, there is an important relationship between these two ideas in Nietzsche's thinking. What is possible, however, is that Nietzsche's critique of morality and his conception of friendship are distinct expressions of a single theory of value. For both his conception of morality and his conception of friendship demonstrate that both are critical aspects in human development. Thus, in this final chapter, I will describe how these two ideas relate within his philosophy, particularly in regard to how they effect the development of a person.

Inarguably evident within Nietzsche's works are his criticisms of morality. For a variety of reasons, Nietzsche contends that conventional morality is unfounded, misdirected and unhealthy for human development, and as a result, some scholars have concluded that he is a nihilist and that concern for another person is not part of his philosophy. His treatment of friendship, however, is notably more constructive, and thus

it provides an interesting avenue in which to analyze how Nietzsche understood relationships. In contrast, a discussion on Nietzsche's morality would consider how he thought a person should relate to everyone – not just her or his acquaintances. In this sense, the conclusions of this discussion are limited to the nature of relationships within Nietzsche's philosophy, thus avoiding the impossibly complicated discussion of how he may have held a positive construction of morality. If Nietzsche is positing a friendship in which friends are concerned for one another, as the prior evidence suggests, then it is worthwhile to reexamine Nietzsche's philosophy of morality in light of his conception of friendship.

Common to both friendship and morality in general is the shared theme that a person is invested in the well-being of another person. While not one in the same, the aims and nature of friendship and morality are similar enough to warrant further consideration of how these two ideas might be related. Michael Pakaluk explains the moral nature of friendship in the introduction to his *Other Selves: Philosophers and Friendship*. According to Pakaluk, a philosophy of friendship is one particular discussion in ethics.<sup>182</sup> Pakaluk argues that any discussion of friendship is directly or indirectly rooted in moral theory, and any positive construction of friendship requires making the similar distinctions used to differentiate between deontological, teleological and virtue ethics. For example, Aristotle's primary discussion on friendship occurs within the *Nicomachean Ethics*, his paradigmatic treatise on his virtue ethics, because Aristotle found friendship to be a specific practice of the moral life.<sup>183</sup> (Friends, Aristotle argues,

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<sup>182</sup> Pakaluk, Michael. *Other Selves: Philosophers and Friendship*, Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis, 1991, preface vii.

<sup>183</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VII and IX, (trans. Terence Irwin), Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis, 1985.

are intimately part of the good life because they are the other selves that inspire virtue and self-love in one another.) In addition to a philosopher's moral theory, Pakuluk notes that specific ideas like impartialism, universalism, consequentialism, altruism and egoism all become formative ethical themes that play a particularly important role in any conception of friendship.<sup>184</sup> Thus, understanding a philosopher's treatment of friendship involves interpreting how themes within their moral philosophy are developed with their conception of friendship. In Nietzsche's case, relating morality and friendship might be argued to be more complicated than with other philosophers. Nietzsche addresses the issues raised by Pakuluk like impartialism, universalism, consequentialism, altruism and egoism but complicates these ideas by using them to explain why, on his interpretation, morality fails to improve people.

Moreover, as is the case with many other aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy, there is an obstacle in interpreting his writing; it is also the case in regard to Nietzsche's constructive moral theory. Nadeem Hussain, in his article "Honest Illusion: Valuing for Nietzsche's Free Spirits" (2007), argues that there are uniquely difficult "interpretative constraints" when considering "how Nietzsche's free spirits are supposed to engage in a practice of valuing."<sup>185</sup> Nietzsche's criticisms of morality are prevalent throughout his works and thus a systematic interpretation has been much more plausible. However, his valuation of morality – that is, the instances in which he instructs the "higher type" in how to create new values – occur less frequently and are often more dubious to interpret than other aspects of his philosophy. The crux of this problem is that Nietzsche instructs

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<sup>184</sup> Pakuluk, Michael, *Other Selves: Philosophers and Friendship*, p. vii – xiv.

<sup>185</sup> Hussain, Nadeem J.Z., "Valuing for Nietzsche's Free Spirits", *Nietzsche and Morality* (edited by Leiter, Brian and Sinhababu, Neil), Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, p. 158.

*Übermensch* to create new values (morals),<sup>186</sup> but conversely argues that there are no moral facts – only moral judgments that lack moral objectivity.<sup>187</sup> Thus, his audience is left with confounding problem of creating (moral) values that lack validity, and Nietzsche interpreters must delineate how an *Übermensch* should value and what an *Übermensch* should value. The answers to these questions are a worthwhile topic for another discussion; for the remainder of this dissertation, however, I will argue that Nietzsche's treatment of friendship compliments an investigation into his constructive moral claims and possibly provides a less ambiguous avenue for this discussion.

Before addressing the moral themes in Nietzsche's friendship, I will discuss how Nietzsche treats morality in general.

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<sup>186</sup> Z Prologue, 10; Hussain, "Valuing for Nietzsche's Free Spirits", 158.

<sup>187</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Twilight of the Idols/ The Antichrist*. (trans. Kaufmann, Walter.) Penguin Books, New York, 1989, "Improvers of Mankind", 67; Hussain, "Valuing for Nietzsche's Free Spirits", 159.

## A. Nietzsche's Philosophy of Morality

There is evidence to argue that Nietzsche is strictly a nihilist, an immoral or amoral philosopher, and reading him otherwise is arguably problematic. Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, for instance, has charged Nietzschean scholars with the question of whether Nietzsche is a nihilist, and answers to this question remain varied and inconclusive. Maudemarie Clark, for example, argues that Nietzsche's immoralism is qualified in certain meanings within certain contexts. For instance, Nietzsche is certainly an immoralist when he calls into question the value of all morality in his preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Clark argues that he is strictly an immoralist if we understand morality as a system of rules that governs how humans ought to act. Nietzsche, however, is not rejecting morality understood as just rules or prohibitions.<sup>188</sup> Brian Leiter, in contrast, distinguishes Nietzsche's rejection of morality as a rejection of morality in the pejorative sense – that is, morality as it is detrimental to the cultivation of human creativity and spirit.<sup>189</sup>

Pedro Tabensky, as another example, analyzes Nietzsche's criticisms of morality as it relates to friendship in his *Happiness: Personhood, Community, Purpose*. Tabensky uses Nietzsche to demonstrate the detrimental effects of individuals who assert a radical autonomy from their community: a condition that he describes as liberal individualism and thus, moral pluralism.<sup>190</sup> In rejecting traditional values and morality, Tabensky argues, Nietzsche leaves his subject without any means to derive a purpose in life.

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<sup>188</sup> Clark, Maudemarie. "Nietzsche's Immoralism and the Concept of Morality," *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality* (ed. Richard Schacht). University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: 1994, 15-16. Read further in Clark for more discussion on the variety of interpretations of Nietzsche's immoralism.

<sup>189</sup> Leiter, Brian. *Nietzsche on Morality*. Routledge Publishing, New York: 2001, 74.

<sup>190</sup> Tabensky, *Happiness: Personhood, Community, Purpose*, 183, 187.

Tabensky's analysis is similar to the criticisms raised by many Nietzsche interpreters who conclude that his rejection of morality is a consonant endorsement of nihilism. Scholars like Clark and Leiter have shown that Nietzsche's revaluation of traditional values does not preclude morality – or necessitate nihilism. Instead, in reevaluating traditional morality, Nietzsche is calling his audience to not simply inherit their values, but rather, people give meaning to their values when they recreate them on their own accord. Ironically, Tabensky concludes that Nietzsche “invites us to construct an Apollonian fantasy in order to conceal the meaninglessness of it all”, when Nietzsche is aiming for the exact opposite.<sup>191</sup> Rather, Nietzsche calls his audience to deconstruct the moral ideals that they have assumed to be true – ideals he finds meaningless and pejorative – and offers a truly *meaningful* edict: one cannot inherit values from another philosopher or religion, for example, but an individual must create their own values if they are to have meaning. (Tabensky correctly notes that Nietzsche offers a daunting starting point, in which a person cannot assume anything to be true, and particularly God.)

The question of how Nietzsche is an immoralist requires further inquiry beyond the scope of this paper but there is more than sufficient scholarship on the matter to suggest that Nietzsche is not strictly a nihilist. The aim here is to develop the moral implications of Nietzsche's friendship; the aim is not to reconstruct Nietzsche's friendship in terms of morality. There is no explicit evidence in his works that indicates he had intended for his conception of friendship to be the foundation of his “higher morality,” and so my aim is not to treat Nietzsche's friendship as an understanding of morality unto itself.<sup>192</sup> Rather, as Pakaluk suggests, there is a strong relation between a

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<sup>191</sup> Tabensky, *Happiness: Personhood, Community, Purpose*, 186.

<sup>192</sup> Schacht, Nietzsche, 466-9.

philosopher's conception of morality and friendship. In the most basic sense, morality and friendship are ideas that deal with the well-being of self and persons' relationships to others and society. It is far from the case that morality and friendship are one in the same, or that friendship is a subcategory of morality. Nonetheless, both friendship and morality share similar themes, and so it is necessary to consider how these ideas are related. In Nietzsche's case, his conception of friendship is affected by his criticisms of morality and evaluation of the *Übermenschen*. Before identifying the moral implications of Nietzsche's friendship, I will consider how his critique of morality influences his conception of friendship. To further explain Nietzsche's critique of morality, I will employ the research of Brian Leiter in his work *Nietzsche on Morality*.<sup>193</sup>

Nietzsche's treatment of morality within *On the Genealogy of Morals* is the focus of Leiter's *Nietzsche*. Within this text Leiter posits the claim that Nietzsche continues his "revaluation of values" and calls into question prior attempts to achieve human excellence through moral principles. Leiter argues that Nietzsche's central claim is that prior moralities are misguided and ineffective, and ultimately compromise the natural excellence of the human species. Nietzsche is not concerned with all morality in general, Leiter argues, nor is he concerned with only Christian, Kantian, Utilitarian or European morality. Nietzsche, rather, is concerned with "morality in the pejorative sense (MPS);" that is, Nietzsche examines the detrimental effects that morality has on the self, others and society on the whole.<sup>194</sup> Leiter surmises that Nietzsche brings four basic charges against morality understood in this way. First, Nietzsche rejects MPS because it encourages mediocrity and devalues excellence. Second, Leiter argues that Nietzsche

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<sup>193</sup> Leiter, Brian. *Nietzsche on Morality*. Routledge Publishing, New York: 2001.

<sup>194</sup> Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 74.



rejects MPS because it originates in a hatred of the most privileged people in society. Nietzsche charges that moralities are created by those who are “weak,” “slaves,” or “mediocre” because they resent the influence and lifestyle of the upper-class. Leiter next argues that Nietzsche rejects MPS because it claims to be universally applicable. Finally, Nietzsche also rejects morality because it relies on certain metaphysical and empirical presuppositions that are philosophically untenable.<sup>195</sup>

The core of Nietzsche’s critique is his claim that normative morality is detrimental to the flourishing of “higher men” (or the “*Übermensch*” in his *Zarathustra*.) Aiming to determine what might promote flourishing among the “higher type,” Leiter describes the basic characteristics of this category of person. The “higher men” hold a combination of five sufficient characteristics: the “higher type” is (1) solitary and uses others instrumentally, (2) driven towards the completion of a unifying project, (3) healthy and resilient, (4) self-reverent, and (5) one who affirms the “eternal recurrence.”<sup>196</sup> MPS, in contrast, restricts the cultivation of these characteristics. The implication is that Nietzsche endorses a “revaluation of values,” and believes that the central aim of morality should be to protect and promote the flourishing of the “higher type.”

For Leiter, Nietzsche’s critique of morality reflects his belief in naturalism and that all things unnatural are harmful to the cultivation of humans. In the next section, I will show that Nietzsche’s criticisms of morality are similar to his evaluations of

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<sup>195</sup> Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 77.

<sup>196</sup> Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 115-125.

The eternal recurrence is part of Nietzsche’s philosophy that prescribes how persons can give metaphysical value to their life without measuring this value in terms of any transcendent metaphysical system. To do so, persons must ask themselves, “How would I live now if I knew that I was to live the same life again and again for all of eternity?”

friendship in that both demonstrate Nietzsche's belief that human nature is refined and develops through a natural process, driven by pain and criticism.

## B. Comparing Nietzsche's Treatment of Friendship and Morality

Valuing nature and what he sees as natural conflict and dialogue, Nietzsche criticizes unhealthy friendship for reasons similar to how he criticizes pejorative morality. For example, Nietzsche describes, and warns his audience of, parasitic friendships in which friends avoid causing any strife in the relationship by only affirming and never disagreeing with the other.<sup>197</sup> It is these types of friendships that Nietzsche describes with contempt and the types of friendships that are most susceptible to the same criticisms as Nietzsche's evaluation of pejorative morality. This "unhealthy friendship," as it relates to pejorative morality, encourages mediocrity and pity, and originates out of the needs of the "weak," avoids confrontation, and creates debts between friends.<sup>198</sup> In this sense, Nietzsche's criticisms of pejorative morality are applicable and parallel to his descriptions of "unhealthy friendship," and so it is worth investigating further the relationship between Nietzsche's treatment of morality and friendship. Here again it is important to reiterate that the aim of this paper is not to develop Nietzsche's "new ethic" nor is it to argue that Nietzsche's friendship is a form of morality. By comparing Nietzsche's criticisms and praises of friendship and morality, however, I aim to demonstrate how there are moral implications to his friendship.

In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche draws a connection between personal relationships and morality when he evaluates the feelings of guilt and obligation in relationships:

To return to our investigation: the feeling of guilt, of personal obligation, had its origin, as we saw, in the oldest and most primitive personal relationship, that between buyer and seller, creditor and debtor: it was here that one person first encountered another person, that one person first *measured himself* against another. No grade of civilization however low, has yet been discovered in which something this relationship has not been

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<sup>197</sup> GS I §32, 103.

<sup>198</sup> GS I §32, 103; GS IV §312, 249; D II §133, 83-4.

noticeable. Setting prices, determining values, contriving equivalence, exchanging – these preoccupied the earliest thinking of man to so great an extent that in a certain sense they constitute thinking *as such*: here it was that the oldest kind of astuteness developed; here likewise, we may suppose, did human pride, the feeling of superiority in relationship to other animals, have its first beginnings. Perhaps our word “man” (*manas*) still expresses something of precisely *this* feeling of self-satisfaction: man designated himself as the creature that measures values, evaluates and measures, as the “valuing animal as such.”<sup>199</sup>

In this passage Nietzsche’s concern is that moralities reflect humanity’s preoccupation with evaluating, measuring and comparing persons to each other. Beginning with the most basic feelings of guilt and obligation, Nietzsche argues that persons presume that it is natural to compare and evaluate the “worth” of others. Empowered to pass judgment on others, persons construct normative standards and thereby create moralities. This presumed judgmental nature is rooted in the most basic and personal relationships, in which persons develop a sense of guilt, obligation and indebtedness – all characteristics which Nietzsche uses to describe unhealthy friendship.<sup>200</sup>

As an unhealthy friendship invites criticisms similar to pejorative morality, Nietzsche also prescribes friendship and morality with similar goals. On this account, Nietzsche is not a nihilist, as he suggests that a new ethic is possible if the aim is to cultivate the characteristics of the “higher type.” Nietzsche suggests that this new ethic would hold radically different goals and methods than pejorative moralities, and instead, conflict would be welcomed if encourage growth in one another. Nietzsche hypothesizes on the basic themes of this new morality in the *Genealogy*:

The attainment of this goal 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; it would require habituation to the keen air of the heights,

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<sup>199</sup> GM II §8, 70.

<sup>200</sup> GM II §8, 70; HAH VI §330, 139.

to winter journeys, to ice and mountains in every sense; it would require 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!*

... this man of the future, who will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this Antichrist and antinihilist; this victor over God and nothingness – *he must come one day.* – <sup>201</sup>

As with the similarities between his criticisms of morality and friendship, his prescription for new morality parallels his praises of healthy friendship. As suggested earlier, Nietzsche gives friendship his highest valuation when it challenges complacency and encourages both the friend and befriended to more earnestly evaluate their self. This healthy friendship exists only in a contemptuous state of warring and challenging one another.

Nietzsche also encourages a similar attitude toward social norms and friendship, advocating for persons to be critical of their assumed roles and to avoid complacency. In his “revaluation of values,” Nietzsche addresses a number of issues that he claims plague society, including German politics and nationalism, Wagner and the artistic movement he represents, religion and religious people.<sup>202</sup> His criticisms, however, are not an attempt to hold society to any normative standards. Rather, Nietzsche is proposing an attitude and certain mindset that encourages his readers to be reactive to, and critical of, the social elements that preserve pejorative morality. It is within the context of this attitude that Nietzsche finds hope for “the herd” and it is also the attitude that Nietzsche prescribes for the most capable people: the “higher type,” the *Übermensch*. Most pertinent to this

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<sup>201</sup> GS II §24, 96.

<sup>202</sup> eg. BGE §263, 212; GS §104, 161; BGE §188, 101.

discussion is the parallel between the moral attitude that Nietzsche encourages in his revaluation of values and the attitude that he praises in the healthy friendships.

Nietzsche argues that a healthy friendship includes painful disagreement, if friends come to a clearer perspective as a result of the conflict. Whilst this understanding of friendship might seem problematic, I will use Axel Honneth's research to explain how this type of relationship is possible within Nietzsche's philosophy.

### **C. Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition and Intersubjectivity**

As described earlier, the friendship that Nietzsche finds to be most valuable is a friendship in which both the friend and the befriended are invested in their own health. On Nietzsche's interpretation healthy friends approach their relationship willing to sacrifice emotional security and the conventional comforts of the friendship if self-betterment is at stake. In his book *The Struggle for Recognition* (1949), Axel Honneth expresses a similar understanding of friendship in which persons mature and develop a greater sense of the self through their interactions with others. While Honneth is primarily concerned with the philosophy of Hegel and George Herbert Mead in his *Struggle for Recognition*, his treatment of relationships is noteworthy because of the similarities between his understanding of relationships and Nietzsche's conception of friendship. Like Nietzsche, Honneth is also concerned with development of a person, and his theory on self-recognition is particularly helpful in explaining how Nietzsche's conception of friendship could be actualized. In considering Honneth's theory of recognition, I aim to further explain the type of healthy friendship that Nietzsche advocated.

For Honneth, a person is naturally in need of respect, confidence and esteem, and these needs are satisfied by virtue of our relationships with others. In examining and comparing the philosophies of Mead and Hegel, Honneth investigates how relationships and social struggle affect the development of a person. He notes that "...both thinkers interpreted social struggle ... in such a way that social struggle could become a

structuring force in the moral development of society.”<sup>203</sup> Like Nietzsche, Honneth evaluates social struggle as being integral to personal development. Honneth concludes that the highest attainment of self can only be gained through relationships:

The possibility for sensing, interpreting, and realizing one’s needs and desires as a fully autonomous and individuated person – in short, the possibility of identity-formation – depends crucially on the development of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. These three modes of relating practically to oneself can only be acquired and maintained intersubjectively, through being granted recognition by others whom one also recognizes.<sup>204</sup>

Honneth develops his thesis in terms of the relationship between a mother and he employs the psychoanalytical research of Donald W. Winnicott. In this type of relationship discussed by Winnicott, both the mother and infant are dependent upon each other but also struggle for autonomy. Realizing that their own autonomy is dependent upon the recognition of the other, both the mother and infant test their independence. Here Honneth describes a relationship similar to Nietzsche’s friendship in which friends both resist and embrace the criticism and perspective of the other. Common to both Honneth and Nietzsche is the idea that relationships have central value in self-development and that the self-development is characterized by an organic struggle of dependency and resistance.

Honneth concludes that all relationships rooted in love reflect the early mother-child model because this is a person’s only understanding of how one should care for another. Furthermore, Honneth interprets Hegel and Mead as believing that the threads of society – the politics, familial relations, and people who relate over shared values –

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<sup>203</sup> Honneth, Axel. *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts* (J. Anderson, trans.), MIT Press, Cambridge, 1995, 93. A phrase omitted from this quotes indicates that Honneth understood Nietzsche and Mead and Hegel as valuing social struggle differently.

<sup>204</sup> Anderson, Joel, “Translators Introduction,” *The Struggle for Recognition* (by Alexander Honneth,), xi.



can be traced back to the model of relationship shared between mother and child.<sup>205</sup> For Honneth, these relationships are also moral in the sense that there is normative judgment about the legitimacy of social arrangements and that these relationships are necessary for the development of a social consciousness that is capable of making ethical judgments.

... because this relationship of recognition prepares the ground for a type of relation-to-self in which subjects mutually acquire basic confidence in themselves, it is both conceptually and genetically prior to every other form of reciprocal recognition. This fundamental level of emotional confidence – not only in the experience of needs and feelings, but also in their expression – which the intersubjective experience of lover helps to bring about, constitutes the psychological precondition for the development of all further attitudes of self-respect.<sup>206</sup>

Here Honneth suggests that intersubjectivity is not necessarily morally substantial in itself but that it is integral to the development of the social consciousness (which *is* morally substantive.) Likewise, Nietzsche values friendship for similar reasons in that he concludes friends to be central to self-cultivation. In this sense there is also a normative component to Nietzsche's philosophy in that he distinguishes between friendships that are conducive to cultivation (healthy friendship) and friendships that are parasitic and detrimental to self-development.

Honneth's theory of self-recognition also describes how a relationship can be fundamentally selfish but *equally* beneficial to both parties. On Nietzsche's account of friendship, one befriends another because there is benefit for himself or herself by treating the other as a friend. In this sense, Nietzsche's friendship might be argued to be fundamentally selfish. An examination of a selfish friendship, however, begs the question if whether what is being described is truly friendship: that is, is one truly a friend if his concern for the other is rooted in his own self-betterment. For Nietzsche,

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<sup>205</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 95.

<sup>206</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 107.

persons can be concerned for one another but ultimately concern is for oneself because both gain a greater understanding of her or himself as a result of the friendship. On Nietzsche's account friends can only be self-interested, and if a person is not interested in bettering themselves, then there is nothing for the friend to gain. A person who wants security and companionship might be fully interested in protecting themselves but they do not have any aims of bettering themselves – these are the not the type of self-interested friends of Nietzsche's concern. Rather, he advocates a friendship in which each person is fully invested in bettering itself, aiming to develop the qualities of the *Übermensch*. It is these persons who strive for excellence that indirectly effect and cultivate their friends. For Nietzsche, then, a friend must remain fully self-interested, and if he is not interested in bettering himself, then he cannot be a friend.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> D V §516, 207.

#### **D. The Unique Role of Friends**

Honneth's theory of self-recognition raises another critical moral implication for Nietzsche's account of friendship. Honneth, in his analysis of self-recognition, places considerable emphasis on the relationships, and in particular, Honneth argues that it is through others –the “intersubjective relationship” – that persons come to understand themselves. Nietzsche, likewise, claims that friendship entails a contrasting interplay in which friends hold each other accountable and honest to themselves and nature. (It is this healthy friendship that is conducive to producing the *Übermensch*.) While a person may interact with many “others,” a friend, in particular, plays a unique and critical role in self-development.

Persons share relationships with a variety of others throughout their lives, including such complex relationships as parent-child relationships, romantic relationships, and more simple relationships, such as one's relationship to her regular barber and childhood companions. How a person relates to the other, however, is markedly different in each of these kinds of relationships. As persons relate differently in each of these types of relationships, Nietzsche explains that each has a variety of effects on a person's development. Nietzsche does not give a formal classification for different types of friends, but he suggests that there are certain friends who are acquaintances, those who are enjoyable at times, those who express concern for each other, and those who are often only tolerated and who are kept at a certain distance.<sup>208</sup> In such relationships, a friend only has a partial understanding of the other, limited by what thoughts and feelings are shared between each other. In this “friendship,” each friend

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<sup>208</sup> GS I “Undesirable disciples” §32, 103

manufactures how he or she understands each other.<sup>209</sup> These types of friends are more interested in maintaining the security of the relationship, and they are not interested in “warring” or engaging in the kind of conflict that Nietzsche attributes to the healthy relationships shared by *Übermenschen*.<sup>210</sup> There is no urgency to confront any faults of the other or the inadequacies of the relationship in this type of friendship, and so it is natural that a person begins to ignore and dismiss these friends as they become inconvenient, burdensome or intolerable. Most importantly, the type of friendship that Nietzsche is referring to here is not of the type that is particularly conducive in developing a person.

Rather, the healthy friendships in which friends are willing to “go to war”<sup>211</sup> with one another are markedly different from the unhealthy friendships that Nietzsche describes. A healthy friendship aims to cultivate the characteristics of the *Übermensch* within each other, and so these types of friends relate to each other in a way incomparable to all other friendships. The type of friendship that Nietzsche values is one in which friends know much about each other; the greatest friend will understand the befriended better than any other person (possibly including even their own self.) The persons with the greatest potential to become healthy friends are given privileged insight into the characteristics that define one another, and in this sense, they are the people who are most able to evaluate and interpret their friend’s actions and intentions. While many others evaluate and interpret the actions of their acquaintances, only one’s closest friends reserve a unique understanding of the befriended – an understanding that is unmatched by

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<sup>209</sup> D IV 287, 152.

<sup>210</sup> Z I “On War and Warriors”, 47-8; D IV 309, 156.

<sup>211</sup> Z I “On the Friend”, 55-7; Z I “On War and Warriors” , 47-8.

any other outside perspective.<sup>212</sup> Honneth describes this kind of friendship as being a unique relationship in which subjects experience themselves through the other and enter into the “shared experience of an unselfconscious conversation or an utterly unforced moment together.”<sup>213</sup> It is this honesty within friendship that Nietzsche finds to be uniquely instrumental in the development of a person.

The role of a friend as an aid in divulging the true nature of oneself is related to a more encompassing moral theme within Nietzsche’s philosophy of the human person. As discussed earlier, the human person is a complex culmination of evolution, comprised of a variety of instinctual drives. At first a person’s nature might be incomprehensible but eventually the evolved person – one who aspires to become *Übermensch*-like – comes to understand his nature and why he feels certain desires and compulsions. A person who assumes these instinctual drives to be unknowable lives in confusion and frustration because he cannot understand himself; this person is captive to his own nature. The instance when a person realizes that she can now choose to follow or to ignore her instincts, then a person becomes something more than animal and she develops an “illness.”<sup>214</sup> Here a person overcomes part of their animality and, in terms of Honneth’s theory, they further develop their own individuality. Animals remain content in their own nature, however, ‘the diseased humanity’ continues to live in a “mere bundle of unfulfilled possibilities of ‘indeterminate nature,’ ‘abounds in contradictory evaluations and, consequently, in contradictory desires.’”<sup>215</sup> This is the plot in which a person finds

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<sup>212</sup> HAH IX §491, 179.

<sup>213</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 105.

<sup>214</sup> BGE §62, 74; GM §6, 20; GM II §16, 84.

<sup>215</sup> Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, 130.

herself: ‘more than’ animal but in the process of becoming, caught between the tension of declining back toward animality and subliming on towards ‘more than’ person.

To become “more than man,” a person must “overcome” herself”: she must become an *Übermensch*.<sup>216</sup> Aiming to define who is an *Übermensch*, Nietzsche asks, “what is the ape to man? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the *Übermensch*.”<sup>217</sup> Unlike animals which lack self-awareness and reason of humans, the human person developed ideas like God, heaven and hell, principles of justice, so as to remedy their insecurity of realizing their finite, all-too-human plot. The construction of these self-effacing ideas – Nietzsche’s “bad conscience”<sup>218</sup> – fundamentally results in a person losing her sense of self. Rather than trying to apprehend their basic animalistic drives – that is, their true self – persons instead create realities and fabricate faculties, thus fashioning a more meaningful existence. Having lost a sense of self, it is the task of those who are capable to overcome the temptation of creating a false identity by coming to terms with their true nature.<sup>219</sup> Kaufmann surmises Nietzsche’s idea of the how a person overcomes himself and becomes *Übermensch*-like: “the unphilosophic and inartistic mass remain animalistic, while the man who overcomes himself, sublimating his impulses, consecrating his passions, and giving style to his character, becomes truly human – ie. the *Übermensch*.”<sup>220</sup> Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* is not an ideal being for which one should aim; an ideal person is antithetical to Nietzsche’s philosophy because it holds persons accountable to a fixed moral standard. Rather, Nietzsche describes (and applauds) the

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<sup>216</sup> GM II §24, 96; GM III §27, 161.

<sup>217</sup> Z prologue §3, 12-3

<sup>218</sup> GM II §16, 84.

<sup>219</sup> D IV §301, 304.

<sup>220</sup> Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 270.

*Übermensch* as being one who is critical of her or his social context, remaining wholly immersed in social surroundings but continually striving to understand their nature, (even when social norms tempt him or her to become uncritical and dormant.)

In Leiter's *Nietzsche*, he argues that, for Nietzsche, the incomprehensibility of human drives leads to a critical flaw in how a person understands themselves and morality.<sup>221</sup> Because a person's motives are not fully transparent, it is impossible to assess the moral worth of this person's actions. Yet, while Nietzsche finds the incomprehensibility of self to be problematic for morality, he also suggests that there is a normative value in coming to understand oneself. Understanding one's drives is characteristic of the *Übermensch* and it is how one overcomes oneself and "gives to style to his character."<sup>222</sup> For Nietzsche, this self-understanding is critical for a meaningful 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 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 feeling, too, finds 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 ever gaily, and laugh gaily, too. And who knows how to laugh anyway and live well if he does not first know a good deal about war and victory?<sup>223</sup>

The "heroic" stand to gain much by coming to terms with their nature and learning to understand their drives. Nietzsche demonstrates the value in understanding oneself by installing this as a recurring theme in his philosophy.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Leiter, *Nietzsche*, 101-104.

<sup>222</sup> GS IV "One thing is needful", §290, 232.

<sup>223</sup> GS IV "In media vita" (In mid life) §324, 255.

<sup>224</sup> eg. D IV §301, 304; D §116, 72; D §129, 81.

Relationships, and particularly friendship, play a critical role in how persons come to understand their own drives. For example, Nietzsche argues that a person is able to conceal many of his motives to himself but the friend is uniquely efficacious because he holds a distinctively intimate perspective of the other.

*Self-observation.*— Man is very well defended against himself, against his own spying and sieges; usually he is able to make out no more of himself than his outer fortifications. The actual stronghold is inaccessible to him, even invisible, unless friends and enemies turn traitor and lead him there by a secret path.<sup>225</sup>

It is only the persons with the unique understanding of the befriended that are truly their friend. Nietzsche places special emphasis on the distinction between the intimacy of healthy and unhealthy friendships, suggesting that friendships have the potential to cultivate another only when a certain level of intimacy is established between friends.<sup>226</sup>

A true and healthy friend, holding the unique understanding of the befriended, is solely able to challenge and possibly cause cultivation in the befriended. It is because of the unique role of a friend that Nietzsche places particular emphasis on friendship as being an integral part in the cultivation of the “higher type.” For Nietzsche, friends are the distinct other that know enough about one another so as to be uniquely efficacious in their criticisms and evaluations of the other.<sup>227</sup> Nietzsche’s healthy friendships are a particularly important part of his moral philosophy because of their ability to effect how a person develops. All other relationships – while valuable to some degree – lack the efficacy needed to change those invested into the relationship. Healthy friends, however, invest enough of themselves in one another such that it is possible (and likely) for these friends to effect one another through evaluation and criticism.

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<sup>225</sup> HAH IX “Man Alone with Himself” §491, 179.

<sup>226</sup> Z III “The Apostates”, 179.

<sup>227</sup> GM III §12, 119.



For Nietzsche, the moral relationship shared between healthy friends depends upon honest and intimate knowledge of another and, with this unique knowledge, friends will hold each other accountable for their self-destructive behavior. Here it is worthwhile to ask what a friend would need to know about the other in order for them to make criticisms that are helpful and valuable to self-cultivation. Nietzsche reasons that one is unable to be fully self-accountable because his self-knowledge is limited to one's own perspective. In a sense, he is too close to himself and so he is unable to have the perspective need to recognize certain dispositions as self-destructive. The friend, rather, is the person outside of the self who knows the other more intimately because of their outside perspective. What Nietzsche does not discuss, however, is the type and extent of the understanding that a friend must have of another before he is able to be critical of his friend's shortcomings. Moreover, a friend brings biases to the relationship that skews his perspective and thus his ability to be critical of his friend.<sup>228</sup> The most important of these biases is that a friend is firstly self-interested (according to Nietzsche) and so any criticisms offered are likely to benefit the friend who criticizes rather than the friend who receives the criticisms. A friend then must receive the criticism knowing that they are biased by his friend's own self-interest. This does not, however, wholly negate the value of the criticism because it is still possible that a person may use a friend's perspective as a starting point for self-examination. For example, a person may be frustrated because his friend is spending less time with him, causing him to become critical of his friend's laziness. In this case, the person offers the criticism from a biased and self-interested standpoint, yet it is still valuable for the friend who receives the criticism if she

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<sup>228</sup> Nietzsche does not advocate that a friend be directly combative with his or her criticism. Instead Nietzsche cautions friends to share their criticisms by carrying themselves in such a way that the other is aware of their feelings. See "New Caution," GS IV §321, 254.

reexamines how she spends her time. In this sense, one must not discount the value of criticisms issued by seemingly unhealthy friends. In order for healthy friendships to have moral value, however, there must be criteria for what type of understanding friends must have of each other. For instance, healthy friends must understand each other in such a way that they are able to assess, evaluate and criticize one another, while conveying their thoughts in such a way that their friends will be responsive to their criticisms.

The type of understanding needed for a healthy friendship develops out of trust, in gaining a repertoire of experiences and history, in engaging in laughter and sadness, and in ultimately being comfortable with sharing aspects of him or herself, reserved only for their truest friends. Friends, however, do not disclose the most intimate aspect of themselves because they appreciate the *Übermensch* qualities in the other. Rather, friends disclose the most honest and intimate aspects of themselves after the relationship has matured and the friends have developed a comfortable trust with one another.

The beginnings of relationships are often demarcated by common, shared experiences; for example, settings conducive to instigating relationships are the workplace, the school playground, bars and restaurants. Characteristic of these adolescent relationships are friends laughing together, commiserating over their dislikes, and bonding over a common goal, for example. In terms of Nietzsche's philosophy, these relationships contain elements of unhealthy friendships in which friends conform to be like one another and avoid confrontation in order to maintain stability within the relationship. This is the mentality and approach to friendships that children experience in grade school in which the aim is simply to "fit in."<sup>229</sup> Friendships do not just begin with

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<sup>229</sup> A helpful counter example to the grade school children who try to "fit in" are the children who engage in sports. On the playing field, regardless of the sport, players often better each other by competing with

this type of interaction (that is, the interaction similar to Nietzsche's "unhealthy friends") but friendships are also *maintained* by this type of interaction. Here is a critical fault in Nietzsche's treatment of friendship. Friends cannot only war with one another; rather, friends must relate to each other like Nietzsche's "unhealthy friends" and act in such a way that is antithetical to the healthy friendship that Nietzsche advocates. In this sense, Nietzsche's understanding of a healthy friendship seems to entail characteristics of his understanding of an unhealthy friendship.

If Nietzsche's conception of friendship is to be possible, one must maintain a friendship while willing to be antagonistic and judgmental towards their friends. So it is appropriate to ask Nietzsche's audience if it is possible to maintain the type of friendship that he advocates. Calling to mind past experiences and their feelings toward their current friendship, Nietzsche's audience must identify how they have been affected by their friends. Inconsistencies in Nietzsche's conception of friendship become apparent if one decides that Nietzsche's conception of the critical, healthy friendship is dissimilar to their experiences with their closest friends. Nietzsche suggests that when a critical (but healthy) friendship becomes difficult to maintain, then it is necessary to establish a certain emotional distance, such that the friend remains tolerable but uniquely insightful. If friends are unable to be both critical and emotionally distant, then Nietzsche has incorrectly understood how healthy friends will relate. For friends who are emotionally distant are unlikely to be effective in challenging one another because they are unable to establish the trust needed to sustain the relationship. Rather, it is necessary to develop a

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one another and trying to defeat them. Childhood sports work particularly well with this analogy in the sense that much of children lack athletic skills and abilities, and it is through competition that they are made into better athletes. This is the type of friendship that Nietzsche advocated: a relationship in which parties are invested in the competition and it results in the betterment of both parties.

certain amount of “unhealthy” support in order for their judgments to be effective. While Nietzsche argued for a healthy friendship in which friends aim to better themselves and one another through hardness and conflict, it is an unlikely relationship because it requires friends to be mainly critical and emotionally distant.

### **E. The Moral Implications of Nietzsche's Friendships**

Nietzsche's friendship – whilst possibly indicative of his understanding of a constructive morality – cannot be understood as a “new Nietzschean ethic” – Nietzsche's friendship is clearly rooted in the self-betterment of both the friend and the befriended, and in this sense, his friendship contains parallels to what might be considered moral action. The scope of his friendship, however, is also limited to specific and individual relationships, and so it is problematic to conclude that Nietzsche's treatment of friendship contains the basis of a new ethic. (An ethic, in contrast to a friendship, explains a person's relationship to other people in general whereas a philosophy of friendship explains the moral, or amoral, relationship between two people.) Even though Nietzsche's friendship contains moral implications, his philosophy of friendship is not a parallel for a broader ethic. A friend is invested in the betterment of the other but the friend does not *owe* his friends anything. Moreover, falling within the scope of a morality or an ethic are issues dealing with just and proper action in politics, culture and social trends – all of which are ideas beyond the scope of the moral implications of Nietzsche's friendship. The healthy friendship that Nietzsche values does not imply a moral system or an ethic; rather, Nietzsche values an ethical *approach* – an ethical more – to how we might better understand friendships.

In valuing friendship and how friends approach friendship over the friend in-itself, Nietzsche marks a critical distinction in the moral implications of his friendship. For Nietzsche, the health of the friendship is more valuable than the person who one befriends in terms of self-cultivation. In this healthy friendship, then, a person must maintain a friendship in which there exists earnest communication and in which he aims

to better one's self. Correspondingly, a friend must not attach himself to the other in such a way that the health of the friendship would be compromised. In this sense, Nietzsche signifies an important, underlying element of his friendship in that the relationship – being intangible and a non-being – is valued over the friend, an actual human being, and the friendship is only valuable insofar that the two individuals who comprise the relationship are bettered by each other's company.

While Nietzsche's evaluation of healthy friendship is evidently not intended as a morality unto itself, there are elements of his friendship that are implicitly moral in content; namely, a primary concern of friendship is deciding whether the relationship is detrimental to or helpful to the development of the person. With the aim to develop "higher type," Nietzsche describes a friendship in which persons remain ultimately selfish but they reach out to one another because there is a common potential for self-betterment. The process of befriending – understanding, evaluating and challenging one another – is ultimately valued over the friend in itself, and so it is worth losing a friend in order to maintain the integrity of a healthy friendship. Rather than specific types of actions, Nietzsche advocates a *more* in which friends adhere to being critical of one another and sacrifice the friendship as it becomes parasitic. Here again Nietzsche demonstrates how his conception of friendship is unorthodox by arguing that, in terms of human development, a person's ability be critical of a friend is more valuable than this person's resolute care for a friend. Friendship that requires that persons care for their friends as the foremost priority, in Nietzsche's philosophy, is not friendship. Instead, he argues that friends offer much more to each other when they recognize self-

interestedness, when they desire to grow in self-understanding, and when they are willing to invite this growth at the cost conflict.

## Conclusion

The friendship that Nietzsche values most is distinctly unorthodox in contrast to prior treatments of friendship that include ideas like unlimited selflessness and unconditional support. Nietzsche agrees that, while these types of relationships exist, this friendship is more worthy of criticism than praise. The persons in these friendships, Nietzsche charges, are complacent and dishonest with themselves, and they promote weakness rather than strength and character. In contrast, Nietzsche praises friends who divulge their weaknesses and faults to the other and friends who are willing to disagree and “war” with each other. This healthy form of friendship, he claims, is rooted in the aim to promote strength in character and this accomplished when persons strive to reach the most earnest understanding of him or herself – an understanding that includes the awareness of one’s greatest faults, tendencies and shortcomings. Nietzsche demonstrates the value of healthy friendship throughout his works, however, he suggests that his healthy friendship is uncommon and reserved for individuals with unique potential (ie. the potential of developing in the *Übermenschen*.) In actuality, Nietzsche recognizes, friendships often contain characteristics of both his healthy and unhealthy friendships. Moreover, clearly his aim is not construct an ideal of friendship with which *Übermenschen* evaluate their success, not he is creating a dichotomy of good and bad friendship. (Both these aims are antithetical to Nietzsche’s greater effort to deconstruct the dichotomous relationship of what is good and bad, and his attempt to reevaluate ideals.)

Nietzsche anticipates that this type of friendship is so foreign to most people that he questions if whether this is truly friendship. In an allusion to Aristotle, Nietzsche



analyzes the assertion, “friends, there are no friends.”<sup>230</sup> Here he addresses the meaning of true friendship.

Of friends. – Only reflect to yourself how various are the feelings, how divided the opinions, even among your closet acquaintances, how even the same opinions are of a quite different rank or intensity in the heads of your friends than they are in yours; how manifold are the occasions for misunderstanding, for hostility and rupture...

... Through knowing ourselves, and regarding our own nature as a moving sphere of moods and opinions, and thus learning to despise ourself a little, we restore our proper equilibrium with others. It is true we have good reason to think little of each of our acquaintances, even the greatest of them; but equally good reason to direct this feeling back on to ourself. – And so, since we can endure ourself, let us also endure other people; and perhaps to each of us there will come the more joyful hour when we exclaim:

‘Friends, there are no friends!’ thus said the dying sage;  
‘Foes, there are no foes!’ say I, the living fool.<sup>231</sup>

For Nietzsche, “there are no friends” if the friend conceals his opinions in order to maintain an amicable relationship.

The aim of true friendship is not to maintain congeniality; true friends aim to be honestly critical of themselves, the other and their relationship. Not all people or all relationships are capable of true friendship; however, Nietzsche values friendships that risk antagonizing one another in order to cultivate self-understanding, strength of character and a more authentic relationship. Nietzsche finds value in traditional attributes of friendship like compassion and care; it is imperative, however, that these attributes do not restrict friends from offering their earnest evaluations of one another. (Nietzsche warns, however, that friends are often tempted to value compassion and care more than the potential for growth, and thus devaluing the friendship.) Nietzsche recognizes that the friendship he celebrates is drastically different from a common understanding of

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<sup>230</sup> Derrida, Jacques, *Politics of Friendship*, (trans. George Collins), Verso, London 1997, 27.

<sup>231</sup> HAH VI “Man in Society” §376, 148-9.

friendship, and so it is possible that the relationship he describes is not even “friendship” – he is describing something beyond friendship.<sup>232</sup> Nietzsche suggests that it is necessary to deconstruct the common understanding of friendship and then re-evaluate friendship in terms of how friends cultivate strength and understanding within each other. For Nietzsche, it is worth risking “unhappiness” if it is possible that one will gain a more honest and thorough understanding of one’s self. Nietzsche’s friendship, while characterized by friends who share honest criticism and who are willing to war for sake of self-betterment, it is also a relationship in which a person stands to gain much for her or himself. In Nietzsche’s terms, healthy friends work to refine him or her own self – and one another indirectly – in such a way they become similar to the *Übermensch*, who Nietzsche valued as the being with most character and strength.

As the aim of human development and friendship, the *Übermensch* is the person who is “faithful to the earth,” recognizing his or her basic animal nature and embracing what it means to be an ultimately natural, animal-like being.<sup>233</sup> Thus, the *Übermensch*, and those who befriend those who aspire to be like the *Übermensch*, are wary of “otherworldly hopes,” philosophies and moralities that presume untenable metaphysics.<sup>234</sup> They also invite criticism and conflict because, Nietzsche argues, criticism and conflict “overcome” the older values and thought that promotes mediocrity and weakness.<sup>235</sup> Strong, spirited and capable of greatness, Nietzsche gives the *Übermenschen* the task of overcoming humanity’s mistakes by demanding a revaluation

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<sup>232</sup> In this sense, Nietzsche is approaching friendship in a way similar to how he approaches “good” and “bad,” and “good” and “evil” in his work *Beyond Good and Evil*. In this work Nietzsche argues that evaluating things in terms of dichotomous terms of “good and evil” is a simplistic and an insufficient moral interpretation, and it is a worthwhile task to deconstruct these interpretations.

<sup>233</sup> Z prologue 3, 12-3.

<sup>234</sup> Z prologue 3, 12-3.

<sup>235</sup> Z II “On Self-Overcoming”, 113-5.

of values and calling others to a radical and honest self-awareness. Nietzsche concisely explains the plot of the *Übermensch* in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

... toward spirits strong and original enough to provide the stimuli for opposite valuations and to revalue and invert “eternal values”; toward forerunners, toward men of the future who in the present tie the knot and constraint that forces the will of millennia upon *new* tracks. To teach man the future of man as his *will*, as dependent on a human will, and to prepare great ventures and overall attempts of discipline and cultivation by way of putting an end to that gruesome domination of nonsense and accident that has so far been called “history”—the nonsense of the “greater number” is merely its ultimate form: at some time new types of philosophers and commanders will be necessary for that, and whatever has existed on earth of concealed, terrible, and benevolent spirits, will look pale and dwarfed by comparison...<sup>236</sup>

Central to the present discussion is Nietzsche’s *Übermenschen* and the dire situation in which they find themselves. Nietzsche prescribes his healthy friends the weighty task of cultivating the *Übermenschen*-like qualities within another and inspiring one another to reevaluate the enslaving dispositions within their own lives. Thus, Nietzsche’s friendship plays a central role in what he sees as the “new task” of the *Übermenschen* and a basic aim of humanity.

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In this dissertation I have sought to establish the crucial role of friendship within Nietzsche’s philosophy by demonstrating how the untraditional role of the critical, selfish, warring friend cultivates a type of person that holds particular value in the development of humanity. In the first chapter I identified where friendship appears in his works and suggested that his attention to friendship indicates its importance within his philosophy. The second chapter explicated Nietzsche’s understanding of friendship and it is here that I described what he exactly means by “friendship.” Thus, in chapter one

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<sup>236</sup> BGE 203, 117-8.

and two I primarily *interpreted* how Nietzsche treats friendship. Having interpreted his account of friendship, in the third chapter I established the moral content of friendship as Nietzsche understands it.

Nietzsche's attitude toward friendship is unorthodox, and yet can be argued to be constructive. So it is that he is also markedly hopeful of a person's ability to overcome a destructive past in the companionship of a friend. Consistent with his natural interpretation of the world and human beings, Nietzsche's healthy friendship relies on the fact that persons are organic, moldable beings who are capable of being cultivated and refined through criticism. In this sense, healthy friendship is an implicitly moral relationship in Nietzsche's philosophy because friends are uniquely instrumental in cultivating self-betterment. As a philosopher who was known for being hermit-like, critical of morality, God and Christianity, his attitude toward friendship is both similar to his critical tone and yet it is also conspicuously positive. Unlike his polemics against traditional morality and the Christian God, Nietzsche demonstrates how he is a philosopher of life by identifying the value in a friendship's potential to cultivate strength and character in both self and other. Containing elements of both "laughter," "aggravation," and "silence," friendship is also the "festival of the earth" as Nietzsche describes, and most importantly, it is "anticipation of the *Übermensch*."

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