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NIETZSCHE ON NATURALISM, EGOISM AND ALTRUISM

by

DERRICK P. NANTZ

Under the Direction of Jessica N. Berry

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I provide an overview of Nietzsche's ethics with an emphasis on showing how his naturalistic approach to ethics leads him to advance an egoistic moral code. I argue that this, though radical in the light of conventional morality, is not irrational, unprincipled, or proscriptive of other-regarding moral considerations. On the contrary, it demands the highest degree of foresight and integrity. While Nietzsche's writings are meant for a select group of people, namely "higher men," whose flourishing may be undercut by their unwitting acceptance of a self-destructive morality. I explain that Nietzsche places the highest degree of value on the life of these individuals, the development of their character, and their flourishing. Further, I explain that Nietzsche extols as a great virtue "bestowing" or "gift-giving," and that he takes generosity to be more frequently practiced under an ethics of egoism.

INDEX WORDS: Friedrich Nietzsche, Naturalism, Egoism, Altruism

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DERRICK P. NANTZ

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used for references to works by Nietzsche. For full details of the works cited see the bibliography at the end of this thesis.

A	*The Anti-Christ*
BGE	*Beyond Good and Evil*
D	*Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*
EH	*Ecce Homo*
GM	*On the Genealogy of Morality*
GS	*The Gay Science*
HAH	*Human, All Too Human*
TI	*Twilight of the Idols*
TSZ	*Thus Spake Zarathustra*
WP	*The Will to Power*

In this thesis I provide an overview of Nietzsche's ethics with an emphasis on showing how his naturalistic approach to ethics leads him to advance an egoistic moral code. I argue that this Nietzschean ethic, though radical in the light of conventional morality, is not irrational, unprincipled, or proscriptive of other-regarding moral considerations. On the contrary, it demands the highest degree of foresight and integrity, and extols as a great virtue, "bestowing" or "gift-giving."

I begin the first section of this thesis by highlighting what I think Nietzsche's task is as a writer, philosopher, and psychologist. I dismiss here the notion that Nietzsche wants no believers. Instead, I point out that Nietzsche's statement "I *want* no 'believers,'" and others like it, are meant in a pejorative sense, signifying that he does not want "believers" of an unscrupulous, dependent nature, who might follow him in the way they would any religious prophet.[1] I point out that Nietzsche's writings are meant for a select group of individuals, namely "higher men," whose flourishing may be undercut by their unwitting acceptance of a self-destructive morality. In sections II and III, I establish that the moral code Nietzsche recommends for higher men is founded on naturalism. I show here that this naturalistic basis leads Nietzsche to place the highest degree of value on the higher man's life, the development of his character, and his flourishing. The value he attributes to the life of the higher man, I suggest, leads Nietzsche to extol as virtues independence, personal achievement, and personal excellence.

In section IV, I explain that Nietzsche's support of these virtues is evident in his account of the "higher men" he admired, particularly, Goethe. Surveying the traits and characteristics of these higher men will help to explicate what Nietzsche views as the highest type of life. Following this, in section V, I turn to one element in Nietzsche's ethics for which he is especially

[1] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce Homo.* [EH] Translated by Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Vintage Books, 1969) "Why I am a Destiny," 1.

misunderstood and condemned—his egoism. By looking at the traits of the men Nietzsche holds highest, I explain why Nietzsche finds such egoism necessary and well justified. After taking a deeper look at Nietzsche's unique brand of egoism, I deal with some difficulties associated with this approach, namely, how Nietzsche is able to account for other-regarding behaviors, such as love, benevolence, friendship and Samaritan assistance. In the final section, I inquire into the concepts of selflessness and altruism, yielding a surprising claim—that Nietzsche takes generosity to be more frequently practiced under an ethics of egoism. By the end of this thesis, I hope the reader comes to a greater appreciation of Nietzsche's ethics and finds his ethics deserving of serious attention, as opposed to the often quick dismissal of his philosophy because one finds his ideas or presentation unpalatable.

I. NIETZSCHE'S TASK

According to Nietzsche, man today is a broken species alienated from nature and from himself, sick, weak, and torn in every direction by the others for whom his morality demands he expend himself: "I walk amongst men as amongst the fragments and limbs of human beings….I find man broken up, and scattered about, as on a battle- and butcher-ground," says his character, Zarathustra.[2] In his writings, Nietzsche examines how man can be so enervated and bereft of spirit, and he diagnoses 'decadent morality' (specifically, Christianity) as the cause of this malignancy. Besides offering a negative analysis of man's spiritual condition, Nietzsche also gives his readers a positive vision, a grand picture of what might be possible for men if only they question their moral values deeply, honestly, and ruthlessly.

In addition to a portrait of the higher man, Nietzsche offers us the sketch of what a moral code of higher men might look like. This is not to say that Nietzsche prescribes this moral code as *universal*, however: "I do not wish to promote any morality…."[3] "I *want* no 'believers,'"[4] Nietzsche says. "'My judgment is my judgment': no one else is easily entitled to it…," he believes the philosopher of the future will protest.[5] But, this is also not to say that Nietzsche does not aim to offer some individuals, namely, the "higher men" whose lives and greatness are being undercut by harmful moral values, guidance and counsel.

Here, a few distinctions may be made on the term 'morality'. In Nietzsche's writings, he overwhelmingly refers to 'morality', i.e. a robust doctrine of universal moral principles that must be obeyed regardless of conditions or circumstances, in a pejorative sense. Nietzsche thinks that

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[2] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* [TSZ] Translated by Thomas Common. (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1999) Book II 20.
[3] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science.* [GS] Translated by Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) Aphorism 292.
[4] EH "Why I am a Destiny," 1.
[5] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil.* [BGE] Translated by Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Vintage Books, 1966) Aphorism 43.

this type of morality is decadent and harmful to the life of the higher man. According to Nietzsche, this is the only type of morality that has been preached so far and it is in this sense of the word that Nietzsche is a self-proclaimed "immoralist."[6] Nietzsche does speak of 'morality' in another sense though, in a more general sense. He speaks of 'morality' in this sense, for example, when he declares decadent morality to be "*one* type of human morality beside which, before which, and after which many other types, above all *higher* moralities, are, or ought to be possible."[7] When 'morality' is referred to in this latter and more general sense, Nietzsche simply means morality as a code of conduct or valuation, a mode for judging the goodness or badness of individuals, or a "discipline of body and mind."[8] I shall use the term 'moral code' for this general sense of morality and save the term 'morality' for the more restricted sense of a robust (and, for Nietzsche, decadent) morality, as this is the sense in which Nietzsche uses the word.[9]

With this distinction in place, we may now turn to the issue of why Nietzsche is opposed to a universal morality. Nietzsche makes these statements for at least two important reasons. First, the moral code Nietzsche advocates is not meant to be robustly universal. Nietzsche is opposed to the morality of decadents that puts all men into one category and declares it knows what is best for them. A universal morality, a morality that speaks to *all*, is, for Nietzsche, a

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[6] For full discussion of Nietzsche's immoralism, I refer the reader to Maudemarie Clark's "Nietzsche's Immoralism and the Concept of Morality" in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality,* ed. by Richard Schacht. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). 15-34. Here she explains that, "[Nietzsche] thinks our current use of the word 'morality' hides from us our prejudices concerning values, and that if we got over these (or perhaps even got them out on the table), there would no longer be any point in restricting the term in the way we do now. But since we do now restrict the term that way, the least misleading thing for Nietzsche to say is that he rejects morality itself, that he is an immoralist." [36 ft. nt. 6] Also see: BGE 202.

[7] BGE 202. Also see: TI "Skirmishes," 44.

[8] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Writings from the Late Notebooks.* Ed. by Rudiger Bittner and translated by Kate Sturge. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). LN 10 [68]

[9] There also exists what can be thought of as '<u>M</u>orality' in a true and universal normative sense. Andrew J. Cohen has pointed out to me here that, in a less robust sense, Nietzsche may embrace such a '<u>M</u>orality'. The following claim, for instance, is universal, and not necessarily in a sense Nietzsche would oppose: *Morality requires that an individual follow a moral code that is consistent with his nature, needs, and desires.* Given Nietzsche's antipathy toward universal morality, pursuing this line of thought is very tempting. Unfortunately, to argue that Nietzsche's moral position is best cast in terms of (at least a weak) universalism would take a great deal more support than space allows and would take us too far afield from focus of this paper.

morality that speaks to *none*. That is to say, a morality proposed as suitable for every person is a morality that must necessarily ignore crucial features about individuals necessary for their well-being: "[L]et us think how naïve it is to say 'this is the way people *should* be'! Reality shows us an enchanting abundance of types," Nietzsche says.[10]

Just as "there are innumerable healths of the body," Nietzsche believes there are innumerable moral codes that best foster a person's well-being and flourishing.[11] Just as we cannot prescribe the meager diet of an elderly woman to a physiologically well-built man, or a spicy, zestful diet to a person with indigestion, we cannot assume that the moral actions and lifestyle appropriate to a person of a weak and diffident nature is appropriate for a person of a strong and confident nature. The specific physical and psychological needs of each particular person must be understood before one can begin to prescribe what is best for him. Ignoring such needs, or demanding actions that run contrary to these needs, ultimately results in inhibiting a person's growth, preventing him from achieving his highest potential, and causing him unnecessary harm and suffering. This is precisely why Nietzsche is opposed to a universal morality.[12]

Nietzsche is most concerned with providing a moral code that will advance a person's life and help him truly flourish. We will see later (in section IV) what flourishing consists of through Nietzsche's description of Goethe, whom he thought achieved this mode of living. For our purposes now, we may understand a "flourishing" life to be one that is rich in spiritual values,

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[10] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols*. [TI] Translated by Judith Norman. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). "Morality as Anti-Nature," 6. Nietzsche has contempt for communism for this very reason: "A legal system conceived of as sovereign and universal…say in accordance with Dühring's communist cliché that every will must accept every other will as equal, would be a principle *hostile to life*, a destroyer and dissolver of man, an attempt to kill the future of man…" [GM II, 11]

[11] GS 120.

[12] Nietzsche is not opposed to suffering as such. In fact, he considers it *necessary* if one is to achieve anything great. He is, however, opposed to suffering that is unnecessary, un-instructive, or that is not a means toward realizing one's 'will to power'.

combined with the feeling and conviction that one is profoundly satisfied with one's life.[13] As Brian Leiter notes, a decadent morality "is harmful because, in reality, it will have the effect of leading potentially excellent persons to value what is in fact not conducive to their flourishing and devalue what is, in fact, essential to it."[14] To this degree, Nietzsche suggests that such a moral code can be thought of as treason to the "higher man's" *nature* (i.e. as *anti-natural)*, insofar as it demands that one suppress one's instincts, ignore one's need for growth, and humble one's pride in what is great about oneself. An 'anti-natural' morality, Nietzsche says, teaches us "to despise the very first instincts of life…[and] looks for the evil principle in what is most profoundly necessary for growth, in *severe* self-love."[15]

While a decadent morality, claiming to be universally applicable, is harmful to the great-souled individual (e.g. Goethe, Beethoven, or Nietzsche himself) it should also be noted that a morality suitable for "higher men" is no less harmful to men incapable of such height. Actions necessary for a man like Goethe "would destroy an average nature," Nietzsche says.[16] "What serves the higher type of men as nourishment or delectation must almost be poison for a very different and inferior type," Nietzsche similarly states.[17] A moral code suited for "higher men" would be just as 'anti-natural' for inferior types because it would demand of them actions which—*by their nature*—are impossible for them. Nietzsche sums up this position nicely in a passage from *The Anti-Christ*:

> Everyone finds his privilege in his own type of being. Let us not underestimate the privileges of the *mediocre*. Life becomes increasingly difficult the *higher* up you go, —it gets colder, there are more responsibilities. […] It would be completely unworthy of a

[13] I do not mean 'spiritual values' here in a supernatural sense, but rather in the sense of values that are deeply meaningful an individual, that affect his happiness and enjoyment of life. Nietzsche often uses 'spiritual' in this sense as part of his mission to revaluate all values.
[14] Leiter, Brian. *Nietzsche on Morality.* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 133.
[15] EH "Why I am a Destiny," 7.
[16] TI "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," 49.
[17] BGE 30.

> more profound spirit to have any objection to such mediocrity as such. Mediocrity is needed *before* there can be exceptions: it is the condition for a high culture.[18]

Seeing that a robust universal code is harmful to those to whom it is unnatural, Nietzsche even goes so far as to predict that the "will to a single morality" will amount to "tyranny over other types by that type whom this single morality fits."[19]

Put into context then, Nietzsche's warnings not to interpret him as a *preacher* are precisely not to interpret him as a preacher of a robust *universal* morality, as in that propounded by religion. This is clear from the full context of the passages cited above, and it is especially clear in the "I *want* no 'believers'" passage. For, by 'believer' Nietzsche means individuals who adhere to a morality on the basis of blind 'faith' or convention: "Once a human being reaches the fundamental conviction that he *must* be commanded, he becomes 'a believer,'" Nietzsche states.[20] Later, in *Ecce Homo*, after quoting a passage from *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche explains: "It is no fanatic that speaks here; this is not 'preaching'; no *faith* is demanded here…Such things reach only the most select."[21]

One still may wish to interpret Nietzsche's statement, "I do not wish to promote any morality…,"[22] as literal, as denying all claims to advancing even a general moral code, but this, I believe, is a mistake. Besides clarifying in many instances that his scathing criticisms are directed at "*anti*-natural morality…which is to say almost every morality which has been taught, revered, or preached so far"[23] and "[m]orality as it has so far been understood,"[24] Nietzsche

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[18] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Anti-Christ.* Translated by Judith Norman. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) Aphorism 57.
[19] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*. [WP] (New York: Random House, 1967) Aphorism 315.
[20] GS 347.
[21] EH "Preface," 4.
[22] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science.* [GS] Translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Books, 1974) Aphorism 292.
[23] TI "Morality as Anti-Nature," 4.
[24] TI "Morality as Anti-Nature," 5.

speaks approvingly of "naturalism in morality—which is to say, every healthy morality."[25] He declares in the Preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality* that as for "the problems of morality…it seems that, on the contrary, there are no things which would *reward* one more for taking them seriously."[26] A more explicit passage emphasizing this point can be found in *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche warns higher men in this passage of the morality of pity and at the end of this passage he speaks to them directly of another type of morality, that is, *his morality*:

> [W]hile I shall keep silent about some points, I do not want to remain silent about my morality which says to me: Live in seclusion so that you *can* live for yourself. Live in *ignorance* about what seems most important to your age. Between yourself and today lay the skin of at least three centuries…I want to make them bolder, more persevering, simpler, gayer. I want to teach them what is understood by so few today, least of all by these preachers of pity: *to share not suffering but joy*.[27]

Hence, it seems clear from this passage that Nietzsche does recommend a moral code and that it is a moral code he thinks certain others, namely "higher men," can benefit from. Otherwise, he would not have stated that his moral code would enlighten them and "make them bolder, more persevering, simpler, gayer."[28] Similarly, he would not have openly acknowledged that, "I often ponder how I might advance him [man] and make him stronger, more evil and more profound than he is."[29] As we will see, the difference between what Nietzsche recommends as a moral code and what is *conventionally* called 'morality' is that Nietzsche believes that a *moral code* should be rooted in life and should serve one's life and well-being. In other words,

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[25] TI "Morality as Anti-Nature," 4. See section III of this essay for greater elaboration.
[26] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. [GM] Translated by Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1998). "Preface," 7.
[27] GS 338. Also see: D 103, where Nietzsche says: "It goes without saying that I do not deny—unless I am a fool—that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided or resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done or encouraged—but I think that the one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto*." Also see: LN 10 [68], where Nietzsche mentions that the purpose of his work is to create the conditions under which higher men can exist and have a morality that makes them strong.
[28] Ibid.
[29] BGE 295. A similar statement is found in GS 278: "It makes me very happy that men do not want at all to think the thought of death! I should like very much to do something that would make the thought of life even a hundred times more appealing to them."

Nietzsche believes that life should not be in service of a Morality, but that morality should be in the service of life. I will expand on this further in section III.

A second reason why Nietzsche states that he does not want "believers" is that he does not want to appear to be issuing dogmatic commandments, but rather reasons. Nietzsche believes that a moral code must be reasonable and he believes that its justification and function must be fully understood by the individual who adopts it. An individual must be capable of understanding the moral code he adopts because only he can know if it suits him best, if it fits his nature and benefits his life.[30] The individual capable of prescribing his own moral code must be a gardener of the concepts, judgments, and feelings that enter his mind: "Woe to the thinker who is not the gardener but only the soil of the plants that grow in him!"[31] Just as a gardener must tirelessly work to nurture plants he deems beautiful and beneficial to him and uproot and prevent invasive plants, those which might harm and destroy what he worked to develop, an individual must tirelessly work to nurture certain ideas, habits, and interests that are beneficial to him while discounting and avoiding those which are harmful to him.

In an important passage from *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Zarathustra returns to his solitude and conveys to his disciples that he does not want "believers," but independent thinkers who follow him because they truly understand his plight:

> I will go by myself, my disciples! You go as well, and alone! This is what I want. Leave me now and guard yourselves against Zarathustra! Even better: be ashamed of him! Perhaps he has deceived you…. You admire me: but what if your admiration *subdues* someday? ... You say you believe in Zarathustra? But who cares about Zarathustra! You are my believers, but who cares about believers? You have not looked for yourselves yet: and you found me? That is what all believers are like; that is why belief means so little. Now I call upon you to lose me and find yourselves….[32]

[30] This does not mean that Nietzsche's morality is a form of relativism. Justification for why it is not is provided in section III.
[31] D 382. Also see: TSZ, I 22 [1].
[32] TSZ, I 22 [3]. Also quoted in EH "Preface," 4.

Many statements in this passage seem paradoxical, and without understanding Zarathustra's motive for speaking them they make Zarathustra appear to be a madman rather than a teacher of "higher men." We see in the above passage that Zarathustra is a teacher, but he orders his disciples to go it alone. Zarathustra is followed and admired for his wisdom, but he warns his disciples that he might be deceiving them. He even tells his disciples that they should be ashamed of following him.

It is clear from the end of this passage that Zarathustra is saying these things because he wants to encourage the independence of his followers. Believers who have no independent judgment "mean so little," he says. Interpreted in this light, the above paradoxes become resolved. Zarathustra is a teacher, but one preaching new values, and among these, the virtue of independence. Zarathustra wants people who understand him, not people who blindly follow him. He sends his followers away because he believes they have stumbled upon him before they have developed any sound basis for judging the veracity of what he is saying. For the same reason, Zarathustra warns his disciples that he may be deceiving them. This, perhaps, is something they had not thought about. Until Zarathustra's disciples are capable of making sound judgments on their own, Zarathustra wants little to do with them. He tells his disciples they should be ashamed of him because he wants his followers to reject him so they will turn to themselves for guidance.

The reason we see Nietzsche holding independence in such high regard is that, for him, independence is a prerequisite of virtue. Before virtue can even be acquired, virtue in the sense of "excellence," an individual must, according to Nietzsche, be capable of making judgments independently of others' praise and blame: "Do you want to come along? Or go ahead? Or go

by yourself? … People need to know *what* they want and *that* they want," Nietzsche says.[33] "When ye are exalted above praise and blame, and your will would command all things, as a loving one's will: there is the origin of your virtue," Zarathustra informs us.[34] Nietzsche's point then is fairly simple: just as one cannot gain bodily strength by allowing another to lift weights for him, one cannot develop the sharpness of mind and clarity of thinking necessary for an excellent character by permitting others to do one's thinking for him.[35]

This emphasis on independence is further supported by a passage from the chapter entitled "On the Despisers of the Body" from *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. As Nietzsche envisions a proud, independent man who can "stand bravely on one's own two legs,"[36] he has Zarathustra instruct the following to "higher men:"

> If ye would go up high, then use your own legs! Do not get yourselves carried aloft; do not seat yourselves on other people's backs and heads! / Thou hast mounted, however, on horseback? Thou now ridest briskly up to thy goal? Well, my friend! But thy lame foot is also with thee on horseback! / When thou reachest thy goal, when thou alightest from thy horse: precisely on thy height, thou higher man,—then wilt thou stumble![37]

What Nietzsche is communicating here is precisely that one cannot be a 'higher man,' one cannot be great, if one relies on the efforts and achievements of others. If one tries to escape or tries to find a 'short-cut' around the extraordinary mental and physical effort (and even suffering) it takes to develop an excellent character, one will fall short of greatness. Indeed, one might be taken to some height by following in the footsteps of others, by uncritically adopting the

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[33] TI "Arrows and Epigrams," 41.
[34] TSZ, I 22 [1]. Interestingly, Nietzsche points out that he has followed this advice himself and though it has led him to embrace strange ideas ("strange paths"), the result was overwhelmingly positive because it allowed him to "place myself outside of all praise and blame, independent of all past and present, in order to run after my own goal in my own way." (LN 35 [10]) As to the practical benefits of independence and of having "an overall philosophic justification of [one's own] way of living and thinking," they are stated brilliantly in GS 290.
[35] I do not mean to imply that one person can actually *think* for another, but only that a person abdicates one's responsibility of forming one's own judgments on matters by uncritically accepting the convictions of others.
[36] EH "Why I write such good books," 5
[37] TSZ, IV 13 [10]. Nietzsche also notes in *Human, All Too Human* "Man in Society," 356 that individuals who live in dependency usually hold a secret animosity toward those they are dependent on.

convictions of others on important matters, or by mimicking the actions and mannerisms of others. For higher men, this will not be lasting or sustainable; nor would it likely be satisfying. As we will see in section IV, higher men have a deep need and desire for progress, growth, and personal achievement.

With this in mind, one can best see the overall purpose of Nietzsche's work, perhaps most succinctly stated in a note from his autumn 1887 journal:

> *Not* to make men 'better', *not* to talk some kind of morality to them as if 'morality in itself', or an ideal kind of man, even existed: instead, to *create the conditions* under which *stronger men are necessary*, who in turn will need, and consequently *have*, a *morality* (put more clearly: a *discipline of body and mind*) *that makes them strong*!"[38]

Creating these conditions, it seems, can be done in no other way than by reaching the 'free-spirits' of the world and pulling them away from their self-destructive ideals: "The only means of refuting priests and religions is always this: showing that their errors have ceased to be *beneficial* – that they rather do harm…."[39] This Nietzsche hopes to accomplish by showing individuals in the starkest terms what their current morality is requiring of them and what it will do to them. He aims to show that their morality has,

> waged a *war to the death* against this *higher* type of person, it has banned all the basic instincts of this type, it has distilled 'evil' and 'the Evil One' out of these instincts – the strong human being as reprehensible, as 'depraved'….[I]t has made an ideal out of whatever contradicts the preservation instincts of a strong life; it has corrupted the reason of the most spiritual natures by teaching people to see the highest spiritual values as sinful, as deceptive, as *temptations*.[40]

In this way, Nietzsche's antidote for the destructiveness of morality is to disclose to these higher men the fact that poison has been masked as medicine for their soul—and that these higher men

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[38] LN 10 [68].
[39] LN 15 [74].
[40] A 5. Nietzsche is speaking of "spiritual natures" and "spiritual values" here in a non-supernatural sense. Nietzsche thinks of, and often refers to, earthly values and physical aspects of living things, like man's body, as the truly 'spiritual' and 'holy'. See, for example, TI "Morality as Anti-Nature" 2, where Nietzsche rails Christianity for not seeing the spirituality of the passions. Also, In GS 359 Nietzsche refers to priests and theologians like St. Augustine as "born *enemies of the spirit.*"

take it voluntarily. Revealing this will simultaneously benefit higher men and "put in the pillory the unheard-of quack-doctoring with which under the most glorious of names mankind has been accustomed to treat the sicknesses of its soul."[41]

In this section we have seen that, despite puzzling statements to the contrary, Nietzsche does in fact offer moral advice, albeit to a select group of people he calls higher men. We mentioned that this type of moral advice must be taken as stemming from a moral code rooted in life and the natural world. I pointed out that the type of the moral code Nietzsche recommends to higher men is one that must be carefully considered and independently chosen because it must be tailored to fit the individual who embraces it. It is for this reason that Nietzsche declares that he wants "no believers," that he has his protagonist, Zarathustra, call on his disciples to "leave him and find themselves," and why he stresses the great importance of being "gardeners of one's soul" and "using one's own legs" in one's endeavors.

In the next section, I shall briefly examine what I believe to be the foundation of the moral code Nietzsche recommends: Naturalism. Better understanding this foundation will help us to see why Nietzsche rejects present day morality, particularly Christianity, and why he recommends such a radically different moral code for higher men, a moral code to be used to improve one's life and genuinely to flourish.

[41] D 52.

II. NIETZSCHE'S NATURALISM

The last passage quoted in the earlier section comes from an aphorism (D 52) entitled, "*Where are the new physicians of the soul?*"[42] A physician of the soul in the pejorative sense, is for Nietzsche, someone who prescribes false cures for the sufferings of a person's soul and who gives "instantaneous alleviations [which] often had to be paid for with a general and profound complaint…[where] [p]ast a certain degree of sickness one never recover[s]."[43] A *new* physician of the soul can be thought of as someone who studies and properly diagnoses diseases and dysfunctions of the human soul—a psychologist.[44] This is clear insofar as Nietzsche takes the "soul" simply to mean "the name of something in the body," i.e. a feature of complex conscious organisms.[45] Nietzsche asks the above question because he looks into the world and finds *no other psychologists* save himself: "Who was a *psychologist* at all before me, and not rather the opposite, a 'higher swindler' and 'idealist'? There was no psychology at all before

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] This seems to be clear too from a passage in *Human, All too Human* [HAH] entitled, "*The Future Of The Physician*," where Nietzsche states: "There is at present no profession capable of being so greatly advanced as is that of the physician; especially now that the spiritual physicians, the so-called curers of souls, may no longer carry their sorceries to the sound of public approval and are avoided by all educated people…. [A] good physician now needs the artifices and privileges of all the other professions; thus equipped he is then in a position to become a benefactor to the whole of society through the augmentation of good works, spiritual joy and fruitfulness, through the prevention of evil thoughts, intentions, acts of roguery (whose revolting source is so often in the belly), through the production of a spiritual-physical aristocracy (a promoter and preventer of marriages), through the benevolent amputation of all so-called torments of soul and pangs of conscience: only thus will he cease to be a 'medicine man' and become a saviour, to which end he will nonetheless require no miracles, nor will he need to have himself crucified." [HAH "Tokens of Higher and Lower Culture," 243]
[45] TSZ, I 4. The full passage states: "[T]he awakened one, the knowing one, saith: 'Body am I entirely, and nothing more; and soul is only the name of something in the body." While there is little room in this essay to expound upon Nietzsche's conception of the soul, it should be emphasized that Nietzsche *does not* conceive of the soul in a Platonic-Christian sense, viz. as "something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an *atomon*" [BGE 12]. For Nietzsche, the soul is something mortal, a feature of a complex organization of matter that disintegrates when one dies. In TSZ, speaking to a tight-rope walker who has fallen to his death, Zarathustra remarks: "[T]here is no devil and no hell. Thy soul will be dead even sooner than thy body: fear, therefore, nothing anymore" (TSZ, "Preface," [6]). That is, when one dies, the first thing to go is the soul, because the soul is the life element of the body sustained by our body's proper functioning and our proper maintenance of it. The important thing for Nietzsche, it seems, is that it is clear that we have a faculty of consciousness, for as humans we are self-aware. We are aware of a plethora of complex drives and affects that form a unity in the human body. Beyond this, science must explain the characteristics of the soul. Therefore, "it is not at all necessary to get rid of 'the soul'…[rather] the way is open for new versions and refinements of the soul-hypothesis." [BGE 12]

me."[46] As a psychologist, Nietzsche takes it upon himself to investigate in a naturalistic manner why man is sick, why he is not flourishing, and why he seems to embrace moral values that cause him harm. In this section, I will address Nietzsche's naturalism and how this forms the basis of what Nietzsche regards as the proper moral code for higher men, i.e. a moral code that assists one in living well.

In a passage from *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche asks his readers if they understand what the Renaissance was. It was a scientific revolution and, effectively, a scientific *revaluation* of moral values. It was a heroic effort, the "one great war, so far," by men of genius and noble character to question what was forbidden, namely, their 'faith' and the mystical view of the universe inherited by them: "[M]y question is its question," Nietzsche says.[47] "*Nitimur in vetitum [We strive for the forbidden]*: in this sign my philosophy will triumph one day, for what one has forbidden so far as a matter of principle has always been truth alone."[48] But the Renaissance has not gone far enough. It has killed God, so to speak, by making belief in God no longer rationally sustainable, but it has not "vanquish[ed] his shadow."[49] We see that the religious establishment too has been "shaken to its lowest foundations; [that] the faith in God has collapsed; [but] the faith in the Christian ascetic ideal is still fighting its final battle."[50] Nietzsche wishes to wage this last battle through his work. He goes so far as to say that his work *Twilight of the Idols* marks this battle: "This little work is a *great declaration of war*" against "*eternal* idols…the oldest, most convinced, puffed-up, and fat-headed idols you will ever find…. And also the most hollow…. But that does not stop them from being the *most fervently believed*."[51]

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[46] EH "Why I am a Destiny," 6. Nietzsche also refers to himself as a psychologist in the Preface to *Twilight of the Idols*.
[47] A 61.
[48] EH "Preface," 3.
[49] GS 108.
[50] GS 358.
[51] TI "Preface".

Nietzsche's appreciation for the achievements of the Renaissance stems from the particular type of naturalism he embraces. Brian Leiter explains that Nietzsche's naturalism can best be interpreted as Methodological Naturalism, a fundamentally methods-based (opposed to results-based) naturalism. This view holds that in forming philosophical theories one should follow the empirical methods of the sciences.[52] Leiter also ascribes to Nietzsche a historical Substantive Naturalism, according to which Nietzsche holds that all and only natural things exist. *Historical* Substantive Naturalists are contrasted on Leiter's account with *contemporary* Substantive Naturalists, in that latter embrace physicalism, the position that all things are not only natural, but also physical (or, at least, supervene on the physical). Both, however, reject out-right supernatural concepts as empirically unfounded and as contradictions to established empirical evidence. Understanding this will help us to understand Nietzsche's perspective. It will help us to grasp why he not only aligns himself with the ideology of the Renaissance to reject supernaturalism, but why he maintains that we must go further in our revaluation, to reject what is 'anti-natural' in our value-judgments and moralities.

Naturalism starts, for Nietzsche, from our experience of the empirical world. The world of our senses is "the only world there is," Nietzsche believes, and our senses are our only access to this world.[53] Nietzsche makes this clear when he states: "The reasons people give for calling 'this' world an illusion argue much more convincingly in favor of its reality,—no *other* reality could ever be proven."[54] The question Nietzsche is raising here is: How is one supposed to prove the existence of a "higher" world of supernatural entities —except by offering *proof*? But, since proof of the existence of something can only be provided by evidence *obtained by the*

[52] Leiter (2002: 3-10). Leiter cites as support for this conclusion aphorisms 13 and 59 of *The Anti-Christ* and BGE 230.
[53] EH "Why I am a Destiny," 8. Also see: TI "The Four Great Errors," 8.
[54] TI "'Reason' in Philosophy," 6.

senses, any act of providing proof must necessarily result in affirming *this* world. Knowledge derived from our experience of the world available to our senses, in other words, can only affirm the world of our senses, and can never provide evidence for a supernatural world, i.e. a world that lies outside of or in contradiction to our senses.

The fact is that supernatural concepts are false constructs and that philosophical systems that trade in such concepts have falsely divided the world into two: "The 'true world' and the 'world of appearances'—in plain language, the *made-up* world and reality," Nietzsche says.[55] While this division between one world, changing and perceived by our senses, the another, perfect and unchanging, a world of 'Forms' known by our intellect alone, was first maintained by Plato, Christianity embraced it enthusiastically, attributing "true" reality to the realm of God and relegating the 'imperfect' "world of appearance" to the realm of man. In doing so, by inventing "God," the priests of this religion (unlike Plato) used the "higher" world "as a counter-concept of life—everything harmful, poisonous, slanderous, the whole hostility unto death against life synthesized in this concept in a gruesome unity."[56] It made men "become *suffering* creatures…feeling that at bottom they are too good and too significant for the earth and are paying it only a passing visit."[57] This "error has transformed animals into men" with supernatural delusions.[58] Nietzsche's question is: "Is truth perhaps capable of changing man back into an animal?"[59]

What Nietzsche (and Zarathustra) want, what they seek, in place of liars, "false-coiners" of value, hypocrites, and weak men, are "higher men," men who "conceiv[e] reality *as it is*,

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[55] EH "Preface," 2.
[56] EH "Why I am a Destiny," 8. See also: A 38.
[57] D 425.
[58] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, All Too Human.* [HAH] Trans. by R.J. Hollingdale. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 519.
[59] Ibid.

being strong enough to do so; this type is not estranged or removed from reality but is reality itself and exemplifies all that is terrible and questionable in it—*only in that way can man attain greatness.*"[60] What Nietzsche means by an individual being "reality itself" in this passage is that insofar as he is a part of reality, both in body and soul, he should—if he wishes to live well and not be at war with his nature—*reflect* this aspect of reality by honoring both his body and soul and not castigating one (the body) as inferior in the way that men have been accustomed to doing under Christianity.

Following his "methods-based" Naturalist approach, Nietzsche also cautions people against putting their feelings, emotions, and wishes above their reason. What are feelings? To Nietzsche feelings are merely subconscious, automatized judgments; they are "nothing final or original."[61] Feelings can be wrong. Far too many people have feelings that 'something bad is going to happen' or have feelings of suspicion, or even feelings of love, that have no rational basis.

> The inspiration born of a feeling is the grandchild of a judgment – and often of a false judgment! – and in any event not a child of your own! To trust one's feelings—means to give more obedience to one's grandfather and grandmother and their grandparents than to the gods which are in *us*: our reason and our experience.[62]

Honoring our reason and our experience requires recognizing and dismissing supernatural ideas for what they are—the product of feelings and wishful thinking. Ideas suggesting that the universe is a conscious entity, that it is presided over by a super-powerful consciousness, or that it has been constructed for "one purpose" are nothing more than the product of wishful thinking

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[60] EH "Why I am a Destiny," 5. Note that Nietzsche is not implying that reality is or can be "terrible" here, only that it may be felt as terrible to someone ill-equipped to live in it.
[61] D 35.
[62] Ibid. Faith is no more proper a method of acquiring knowledge: "The imperative of 'faith' is a *veto* on science." [A 47] Faith involves believing something to be true in the absence of, or contrary to, evidence. It is 'a pathos', Nietzsche says, that "turns a blind eye to yourself once and for all, so you do not have to stomach the sight of incurable mendacity." [A 9] To be 'faithful' "means not wanting to know the truth" so that one can have the 'freedom' to escape it and the ability to "*se[t]* mountains down where there aren't any." [A 51]

and emotion.[63] "Let's honestly admit to our inclination and disinclinations and resist beautifying them from the palettes of morality. Just as surely as we'll cease to interpret our distress as our 'struggle with God and the devil'! *Let's be naturalistic....*"[64] When we are honest with ourselves and true to the knowledge provided by our experience we will view the world not as mystical and full of inexplicable miracles, but as comprehensible and as a sea open to scientific exploration, open to the senses.[65] Only then will we be able to accomplish Nietzsche's goal of the "de-deification of nature," which will "'naturalize' humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature."[66]

A large part of our inclination toward mystical concepts and away from reason, Nietzsche points out, has to do with the long-standing lack of appreciation of the senses: "People used to see consciousness, 'spirit', as proof that humanity descended from something higher, that humanity is divine; people were advised to become *perfect* by acting like turtles and pulling their senses inside themselves, cutting off contact with worldly things and shedding their mortal shrouds."[67] Nietzsche thinks this was a disastrous error: "The senses do not lie the way the Eleatics thought they did, *or* the way Heraclitus thought they did, —they do not lie at all. What we *do* with the testimony of the senses, that is where the lies begin…"[68] To reject the senses as deceptive only leaves one blind. For Nietzsche, the path to knowledge, to science, to a better understanding of the world, and to any future 'objectivity' is allowing the senses to give their report on the matter (as imperfect as this may be): "*[T]he more* affects we allow to speak about

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[63] GS 109. Also see: GS 346.
[64] LN 1 [90]. Italics mine.
[65] At the beginning of Book Five of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche poetically describes the emotional reaction of the 'free spirits' at hearing the news that "the old god is dead," i.e. that belief in the Christian religion has disintegrated, in the following terms: "At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an 'open sea.' –" [GS 343]
[66] GS 109.
[67] A 14.
[68] TI "'Reason' in Philosophy," 2.

a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our 'concept' of this matter, our 'objectivity' be."[69] The success of science and the advancement of all related knowledge are due to the accumulation of and the collaboration about sense data, that is, that which we are directly aware in perception, Nietzsche believes: "We have science these days precisely to the extent that we have decided to *accept* the testimony of the senses, — to the extent that we have learned to sharpen them, arm them, and think them through to the end. Everything else is deformity and pre-science: I mean metaphysics, theology, psychology, epistemology."[70]

The lack of a methodological naturalist approach is what has led religion to go through history unchallenged, preaching to men that, "you are more, you are higher, you are of a different origin!"[71] "[M]en fell sick with God, and became estranged from man *himself*," Nietzsche says.[72] Therefore, Nietzsche takes it upon himself to "translate man back into nature"—back into his nature as a biological animal.[73] Rudiger Bittner claims this is a metaphor. For Nietzsche, "translating man back into nature" means not "to preserve as much as possible of the text we have before us, as translations do, but instead to recover what that text has failed to preserve."[74] "Translating back" means clarifying what has been badly distorted and misinterpreted in "the basic text of *homo natura*."[75] It means, emphatically, to stop "deriving humanity from 'spirit',

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[69] GM III, 12.
[70] TI "'Reason' in Philosophy," 3.
[71] BGE 230. See also TI "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," 48, where Nietzsche talks about man 'returning to nature', and LN 9 [86].
[72] LN 1 [247].
[73] BGE 230.
[74] Bittner, Rudiger. "Introduction," *Writings from the Late Notebooks.* Ed. by Rudiger Bittner and translated by Kate Sturge. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) xv.
[75] BGE 230.

from 'divinity'" and to place man "back among the animals" as a natural development in the world.[76]

In this section, we have seen that Nietzsche's naturalism consists of a high regard for the scientific revolution of the Renaissance and the advancements of the scientific community since then. I have categorized Nietzsche's naturalism as both methodological, insofar as he aims to follow the empirical methods of the sciences, and as substantive, insofar as he rejects all supernatural concepts as false. We have seen that this type of naturalism has led Nietzsche to embrace the world of our percepts as the only world there is and has led him to maintain that the only way we can gain further, advanced knowledge about this world is by allowing in the 'testimony' of our senses to speak on the matter. To this extent Nietzsche rejects both feelings and ideas not backed by empirical evidence. It has led him especially to reject the view that man is the product of divine forces. For Nietzsche, man is simply a natural development. In the next section, we will see how this naturalistic approach shapes his views on what role a moral code ought to play in one's life.

[76] A 14.

III. NATURALISTIC VALUE AND A NATURAL MORAL CODE

Rudiger Bittner notes that "Nietzsche's naturalism is the commitment to a philosophy that is, from beginning to end, a philosophy of life."[77] This rings true for what holds value for Nietzsche, as well. To begin, Nietzsche explains that it is a "fallacy" and an "absurdity" to condemn life and pronounce it in any way bad. The error of condemning life lies in the fact that "even to raise the problem of the *value* of life you would need to be both *outside* life and as familiar with life as someone, anyone, everyone who has ever lived: this is enough to tell us that the problem is inaccessible to us."[78] Life—our life—simply *is*. It is basic and unquestionable: "'Being'—we have no other idea of this than '*living*'," Nietzsche remarks. [79]

'Life', as Nietzsche understands it essentially involves "an instinct for growth, for endurance, for the accumulation of force, for power: when there is no will to power, there is decline."[80] As a living being, man is faced with a choice—he chooses either to live—and thus to take the requisite actions to sustain and promote his well-being—or he chooses death, i.e. *nothingness*, and perishes quickly by inaction. Nietzsche's naturalistic approach allows him to see that values can be acquired only in life and that it is the phenomenon of life that makes values possible: "[L]ife itself forces us to posit values, life itself evaluates through us, *when* we posit values…," Nietzsche states.[81] If one chooses to live, then, as Nietzsche states, one must "strive to grow…not from any morality or immorality, but because [one] is *living*…."[82]

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[77] Bittner (2003: xvii).
[78] TI "Morality as Anti-Nature," 5.
[79] LN 2 [172].
[80] A 6.
[81] TI "Morality as Anti-Nature," 5.
[82] BGE 259. In this passage Nietzsche is talking about a political society, but explains that a political society, like an individual "will have to be an incarnate will to power" if it is "a living and not a dying body."

Thus, the only "end adequate to life" is one that explains all other ends as a "means to itself…."[83] That is, the only goal proper for man is one that is fully directed at his own flourishing. The fundamental error of all prior non-religious ethics, e.g. varieties of ethics that held pleasure or happiness or contemplation as the ultimate end, was that they failed to see consciousness and its many features as fully natural, as simply a product, "a tool and detail in the whole of life."[84] These moralities failed to see consciousness as a natural development *of life* meant to serve life. In this sense, the error these non-religious moralities have made is that the "*means has been misunderstood as an end: conversely, life and the enhancement of power have been* demoted to a *mean*."[85] With this ultimate end finally realized, Nietzsche sees a way in which he can put 'morality' (in the sense of a 'moral code') back in the service of life and replace the categorical imperative with the "natural imperative."[86]

The conclusion Nietzsche draws from his naturalistic reasoning about value is that for the very reason that values can only be acquired *in life*, religious values must be seen as false and empty. When we adopt false values—supernatural values *or* illusory values (e.g., the common good of humanity[87])—or when we adhere to a false morality (e.g., Kant's system[88])—we achieve *nothingness:* "The criteria that people think indicate the 'true being' of things actually indicate non-being, *nothing*,—people have based the 'true world' on an opposition to the actual world: in

[83] LN 10 [137]. Harry Binswanger makes a similar connection between 'value' and 'life' in "Life-Based Teleology and the Foundation of Ethics" (*The Monist*, January 1992).
[84] Ibid. Nietzsche also refers to consciousness as tool as early as the Summer of 1885 when he says, "consciousness is just a 'tool' and nothing more—a tool in the same sense that the stomach is a tool." {LN 37 [4]}
[85] Ibid.
[86] Nietzsche makes one note in his autumn 1887 journal, simply stating: "Replacement of the categorical imperative by the *natural imperative*." {LN 9 [27]} I do not take Nietzsche mean here an imperative that is categorical, but rather one that is hypothetical—*If* you choose to live, then you must discover and follow certain principles of action that will advance your life and well-being.
[87] See: D 106, 108.
[88] See: A 11.

fact it is an illusory world to the extent that it is just a *moral-optical* illusion."[89] Striving for God's blessing, entrance into heaven, the greatest good for the greatest number, or the categorical imperative is of no value to the 'higher' individual. Therefore, these moral views should be cast aside. Otherwise: "When the emphasis is put on the 'beyond' rather than on life itself—when it is put *on nothingness*—, then the emphasis has been completely removed from life."[90] If our aim in life is to live well and to realize our highest potential, then we must not waste our time on ideas or values that, by definition, will not benefit us.

To Nietzsche, though, supernatural values are more than empty—they are poisonous. Nietzsche is very clear about this throughout his works.[91] Under Christianity, or its 'shadow', secular Christian morality: "[*V*]*alue judgments* are turned on their heads and the concepts of 'true' and 'false' are necessarily inverted: whatever hurts life the most is called 'true', and whatever improves, increases, affirms, justifies life or make it triumph is called 'false'…."[92] These moral concepts are nothing but "malicious counterfeits that exist to *devalue* nature and natural values," Nietzsche adds.[93] "The concept of 'soul', the 'spirit', finally even 'immortal soul,'" for example, was "invented in order to despise the body, to make it sick—'holy'; to oppose with a ghastly levity everything that deserves to be taken seriously in life—questions of nutrition, abode, spiritual diet, treatment of the sick, cleanliness, and weather!"[94] How such moral values came into existence and why men started following them *en masse* is a topic Nietzsche treats in *The Genealogy of Morality*. (I will discuss it briefly in section VI.) What is important for the present discussion, however, is *why* Nietzsche thinks such values are false and

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[89] TI "Reason in Philosophy," 6.
[90] A 43.
[91] A few passages where Nietzsche calls current reigning values, especially Christian values, poison are the following: *GS* 359; *TI* "Skirmishes," 35; TSZ, I 3; and GM "Preface" 6; and A 38, 43, 56.
[92] A 9.
[93] A 38.
[94] EH "Why I am a Destiny," 8.

harmful. Supernatural objects of value are false in two ways. First, they are false because, for Nietzsche, they do not exist—neither God, nor 'pure spirit'; neither Heaven, nor salvation; neither the intended effects of prayer, nor mystical 'faith' exists. They are fabrications, 'lies' even. Second, and more importantly, they are false because they are not actually *values*. That is, these alleged or pseudo-values cannot be values because they cannot be demonstrated to be *valuable* to the life and flourishing of the type of man Nietzsche is concerned with, the "higher man."[95] For, what must obtain in order for an alleged value to be recognized as an actual value is that it be shown to promote the life of the higher man.[96]

Seeing that Nietzsche's perspective on value is person-centered and life-based, it is from this perspective that Nietzsche looks at our current reigning moral values and offers his "*new challenge*," his "*critique* of moral values" wherein "*the value of these values must itself be called into question*."[97] Nietzsche calls for this new challenge because he thinks Christian values have thoroughly corrupted man. Over the span of history, it has made men 'smaller', 'weaker', and has instilled values in humanity that are harmful and destructive:

> How much more did they [the "spiritual" men of Christianity] have to do besides to *worsen the European race*? … Stand all evaluations *on their head—that* is what they had to do! And smash the strong, sickly o'er great hopes, cast suspicion on the joy in beauty, bend everything haughty, manly, conquering, domineering, all the instincts characteristic of the highest and best turned out type of "man," into unsureness, agony of conscience, self-destruction, indeed invert the whole love of the earthly and of dominion over the earth into hatred of the earth and the earthly—*that* is the task the church posed for itself

[95] This does not mean that these values are harmful to those who are not higher men, however. Nietzsche notes: "The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd—but not reach beyond it." [WP 287; also see Hunt (1991: 132-4)] What Nietzsche means by this is that for those human beings who have 'come off badly,' who are ill-equipped to deal with even the most basic demands of human existence, a religion like Christianity is beneficial to them, at least to a certain degree. It helps them justify their suffering and ease their frustrations. Because such people must focus on self-preservation, not growth and mastery, Nietzsche calls Christianity the "prudence of the lowest order." [GM I, 13]

[96] This is what leads Brian Leiter to point out that "when it comes to value judgments pertaining to welfare or prudential goodness—what is good or bad for particular persons—Nietzsche seems to believe there is an objective fact of the matter." [Leiter (2002: 147)]

[97] GM "Preface" 6.

> and had to pose, until in its estimation "becoming unworldly," "unsensual," and "higher men" were finally fused together into one feeling.[98]

Rather than producing great individuals, "The church sends all 'great men' to hell, it fights *against* all 'greatness of man'."[99] Nietzsche makes a note in the *Nachlass* that "men fell sick with God, and became estranged from man *himself*."[100] What Nietzsche means by this, at least in part, is that the almost millennia-long influence of Christianity has made man's instincts—strength, 'will to power', 'independence', pride and joy—atrophy, giving way to the decadent instincts promoted by Christianity, obedience and "herd mentality,"[101] as well as others more harmful, like self-deception[102] and self-abnegation.[103]

To put it mildly then, Nietzsche does not think that 'morality' benefits one's life in the least. But this does not mean that he does not think a 'moral code' can serve one's life and help to bring one a high degree of flourishing. We need an explicit moral code because we need both to be informed about what objects and actions will promote our life and flourishing and to be justified in this belief. In a passage from the *Nachlass*, Nietzsche makes both these points, addressing the latter one first: "Man, in whatever situation he may find himself, needs a kind of valuation by means of which he justifies, i.e. *self-glorifies*, his actions, intentions and states towards himself…. Every natural morality is the expression of one kind of man's satisfaction

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[98] BGE 62. Also see A 3. Nietzsche similarly states in A 3 that Christianity's value system turned "the more valuable type" into "the *paradigm* of the terrible; —and out of terror, the opposite type was willed, bred, *achieved*: the domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick animal: man the Christian."
[99] WP 871.
[100] LN 1 [247].
[101] In BGE 199, Nietzsche says that "considering, then, that nothing has been exercised and cultivated better and longer among men so far than obedience—it may fairly be assumed that the need for it is now innate in the average man, as a kind of *formal conscience* that commands: 'thou shalt unconditionally do something….'" Also see: GS 328.
[102] EH "Why I am a Destiny" 7. Nietzsche says that "self-deception" toward Christian morality has "become instinctive."
[103] In A 54, Nietzsche says that the "man of faith… instinctively holds a morality of self-abnegation in the greatest honor." Also see: TI "Skirmishes" 35.

with himself…."[104] Nietzsche continues, addressing the former point, "…and if one needs praise, one also needs a *corresponding* table of values according the highest esteem to those actions of which we are most capable, in which our real *strength* expresses itself."[105] Because what higher men are capable of are great accomplishments and ceaseless progress and advancement in their life, these men need a 'table of values', i.e. a moral code, which affirms their nature. Any other moral code, a code that espouses simplicity, humility, or obedience, for example, would run contrary to that of which he is 'most capable'. It would be treason to the higher man's nature and (to continue with the analogy from D 382), over the course of time, would permit harmful weeds to overtake the once thriving garden of the higher man's soul. For, "[l]ike those of the body the chronic sicknesses of the soul arise very rarely from one single gross offence against the rationality of body and soul but usually from countless little unheeded instances of neglect."[106]

The only way the higher man can develop such a moral code, however, is to "place himself outside morality: for morality has essentially directed itself toward the opposite goal—to hamper and destroy that magnificent development where it was in progress…. [T]o do that they must acquire a new appreciation of themselves which enables them to condemn, and possibly destroy, life in this highest plenitude."[107] Higher men must question and re-evaluate morality. They must ask not, 'what can I do to be moral'? But, 'how can a moral code advance my life'? Higher men must reject any "anti-life morality" on principle and substitute it with "naturalism in morality – which is to say…*healthy* morality."[108] By replacing commandments and 'thou shalts' with principles of a life-affirming moral code, one will find how high they will

[104] LN 35 [15].
[105] Ibid.
[106] D 462.
[107] LN 5 [98].
[108] TI "Morality as Anti-Nature," 4.

ascend and how "some rule of life is served by a determinate canon of 'should' and 'should not', some inhibition and hostility on the path of life is removed this way...."[109]

Indeed, prior to Christianity, in 'state of nature' conditions, the instincts for life, for power, and for growth were strong in such individuals and they satisfied this drive in the only ways they knew how—exploiting, conquering, robbing, and destroying. During this time working to survive and fighting off one's neighbor was not something that could be avoided. Conflict was ubiquitous and the consequences of attempting to avoid conflict and competition were far too clear—death. These conditions made one strong.

When conditions changed, however, this instinct atrophied in some men. Nietzsche describes this development in the following passage:

> [T]he continual fight against ever *unfavorable* conditions is…the cause that fixes and hardens a type. Eventually however a day arrives when conditions become more fortunate and the tremendous tension decreases; perhaps there are no longer any enemies among one's neighbors, and the means of life, even for the enjoyment of life, are superabundant. At one stroke the bond and constraint of the old discipline are torn: it no longer seems necessary, a condition of existence…. Variation, whether as deviation (to something higher, subtler, rarer) or as degeneration and monstrosity, suddenly appears on the scene…. The dangerous and uncanny point has been reached where the greater, more manifold, more comprehensive life transcends and *lives beyond* the old morality; the 'individual' appears, obliged to give himself laws and to develop his own arts and wiles for self-preservation, self-enhancement, self-redemption.[110]

This 'self-preservation' Nietzsche speaks of at the end of this passage is not a preservation of one's body as necessary for his sustenance, for this is already secured by his new favorable circumstances. Instead, Nietzsche is referring to self-preservation of the soul. The "greater" type of man, as stated above "give[s] himself laws and develops his own arts and

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[109] Ibid. Nietzsche addresses how commandments have inhibited man's growth in D 107: "And if the *reason* of mankind is of such extraordinary slow growth that it has often been denied that it has grown at all during the whole course of mankind's existence, what is more to blame than this solemn presence, indeed omnipresence, of moral commands which absolutely prohibit the utterance of *individual* questions as to How? And To what end? Have we not been brought up to *feel pathetically* and to flee into the dark precisely when reason ought to be taking as clear and cold a view as possible! That is to say, in the case of all higher and weightier affairs."
[110] BGE 262.

wiles…" for the sake of the preservation and enhancement of his soul.[111] His life requires that he follow this path of self-progression or he will slowly and unwittingly fall into a state of decadence. The 'greater' or 'higher' man recognizes this and acts accordingly, as a matter of prudence. He unceasingly strives to create and acquire power, control, and mastery of his world. He ensures that he follows courses of action that hone his skills and develop virtues that keep both his mind and body in a state of strength and vibrancy.

This, precisely, is the function of virtue for Nietzsche, to maintain and promote one's life: "The most basic laws of preservation and growth require…that everyone should invent his *own* virtues, his *own* categorical imperative."[112] Inventing one's own virtues are necessary because each individual is different with regard to what desires and capacities speak loudest in him. Virtue, for Nietzsche, then can be thought of as self-directed action that promotes one's well-being. It is the opposite of a morality of obedience that declares: "Do not do this! Renounce! Overcome yourself! […] I do not like negative virtues—virtues whose very essence it is to negate and deny oneself something," Nietzsche declares.[113] For Nietzsche, virtue is *positively* motivated. It develops out of the combination of strong passions and lofty goals: "Thy implantedst thy highest aim into the heart of those passions: then became they thy virtues and joys."[114] The virtuous person directs his highest passions toward a determinate goal that advances his life. This is what makes his actions meaningful and good—good because one knows that his action advances his life. Zarathustra has the following advice to give about virtue:

> [B]e not afraid to stammer about [thy virtue] / Thus speak and stammer: 'That is *my* good, that do I love, thus doth it please me entirely, thus only do I desire the good. / Not as the law of a God do I desire it, not as a human law or a human need do I desire it; it is

[111] Ibid.
[112] A 11.
[113] GS 304.
[114] TSZ, I 5.

> not to be a guide-post for me to superearths and paradises. / An earthly virtue is it which I love….[115]

We see here that Zarathustra praises deep love of one's virtue, not because it is commanded by God or is the dictated by law, but because it brings one good for oneself, because it helps to advance his life and desires.

We have seen in this section that Nietzsche takes a naturalistic approach to the subject of value as well as to morality, both in condemning 'morality' and in advocating a moral code that is rooted in life and 'earthly virtue' and is aimed at the flourishing of individual human beings. We have seen that for Nietzsche, values can only be acquired in life and that, therefore, in living his life the only goals proper to man are ones that are fully directed at advancing his life and well-being. We made clear that from this perspective the values of 'morality' must be seen, not just as false and empty, but also as destructive and inimical to a flourishing life. This is not to say that all moral codes are harmful. Nietzsche thinks that higher men need a discipline of body and mind and that a code of values can help develop this by defining virtuous action and guiding us down a path of personal well-being and flourishing. We have seen that the reflections and revaluations Nietzsche offers on the subjects of value and morality are aimed at offering higher men guidance as their greatness and well-being may likely be thwarted by their acceptance of a false moral code that calls for them to renounce and sacrifice their greatness.

In the next section, we will look at the features and constituents of the human beings Nietzsche calls higher men. I agree with Thomas Brobjer here when he states that, "[i]n Nietzsche's discussion of other men, such as Goethe, Napoleon, Plato, and Rousseau, we are perhaps closer to the Archimedean point of his philosophy than at any other time."[116] Surveying

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[115] Ibid.
[116] Brobjer, Thomas. "Nietzsche's Affirmative Morality: An Ethics of Virtue," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 26 (2003) 64-78. 72.

the traits and characteristics of higher men will give us a concrete picture of what Nietzsche is aiming toward and what he views as the highest and best features of man. With this established it will be much easier to understand Nietzsche's revaluation of egoism and altruism and see why Nietzsche recommends egoism and condemns altruism for higher men.

IV. HIGHER MEN

A "higher man," first and foremost, must be someone whom Nietzsche believes has "turned out well." What this means Nietzsche states explicitly:

> What is it, fundamentally, that allows us to recognize *who has turned out well*? That a well-turned out person pleases our senses, that he is carved from wood that is hard, delicate, and at the same time smells good. He has a taste only for what is good for him; his pleasure, his delight cease where the measure of what is good for him is transgressed. He guesses what remedies avail against what is harmful; he exploits bad accidents to his advantage; what does not kill him makes him stronger. Instinctively, he collects from everything he sees, hears, lives though, *his* sum: he is a principle of selection, he discards much. He is always in his company, whether he associates with books, human beings or landscapes: he honors by *choosing*, by *admitting*, by *trusting*…. He believes neither in 'misfortune' nor in 'guilt': he comes to terms with himself, with others; he knows how to *forget*—he is strong enough; hence everything must turn out for the best.[117]

The person who has "turned out well" thus exhibits at least three important qualities: (1) He accepts reality for what it is and does not try to fabricate it. (2) He recognizes and advances his own well-being. (3) He is efficacious, i.e. he is capable of achieving what he intends to achieve.[118] I shall take each of these in turn.

First, to live in harmony with reality requires that one think in harmony with reality. This involves all of what was mentioned in the above section on naturalism. It means, to repeat, that "[the higher man] conceives reality *as it is*, being strong enough to do so; [and thus that] this type is not estranged or removed from reality but is reality itself …."[119] It means that one has an instinct for "nature-idolatry," or, in other words, a deep respect for the laws of nature and the discoveries of science, almost in the same manner in which religious men have respect for their god(s).[120] In the passage quoted above Nietzsche says that, "[the higher man] believes neither in 'misfortune' nor in 'guilt': he comes to terms with himself." This means the higher man does

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[117] EH "Why I am so Wise," 2.
[118] These traits roughly correspond with those outlined by Leiter in *Nietzsche on Morality* (Routledge, 2002) 115-25.
[119] EH "Why I am a Destiny," 5.
[120] TI "Skirmishes," 49. Nietzsche says this of Goethe.

not view life as a burden or as something to be lamented. He recognizes that the conditions of his existence are fixed and he faces existence squarely. Further, he does not blame "existence" for his lot in life because he knows that blame is a moral concept applicable only to moral agents. "None of our aesthetic and moral judgments apply to it [i.e. universe]," Nietzsche says. [121] Rather than buy into supernatural gimmicks like that of 'original sin', which demand that he live his entire life in atonement for the mere act of being born, the 'higher man' accepts reality for what it is and *loves it*: "A spirit like this who has *become free* stands in the middle of the world with a cheerful and trusting fatalism in the *belief* that only the individual is reprehensible, that everything is redeemed and affirmed in the whole—*he does not negate anymore*…"[122] Rather, he affirms his life and wills the best in it.

The higher man thus takes reality for what it is and acts accordingly. He takes his life for what it is and acts accordingly. Despite unfortunate circumstances (e.g. Nietzsche's sickness, or Beethoven's deafness) the higher man strives to live well. He strives to live to his highest potential.[123] In doing so, he strives to follow Zarathustra's instruction that it is "better…to be foolish with happiness than foolish with misfortune, better to dance awkwardly than walk lamely. Even the worst thing hath good dancing-legs: so learn…to put yourselves on your proper legs! So, unlearn, I pray you, the sorrow-sighing…."[124] The higher man does not live prostrate, wallowing in misfortune and staring at the ground in unfocused disbelief. Nor does he accept unearned guilt and look to the heavens for a "thou shalt"—he is not a 'believer'.[125] He thus lives

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[121] GS 109.
[122] TI "Skirmishes," 49.
[123] This has led Thomas Hurka to "take it as uncontroversial that Nietzsche's positive moral views fall under the general heading of what is today called perfectionism." ["Nietzsche: Perfectionist" *Nietzsche and Morality*, edited by Brian Leiter and Neil Sinhababu. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 9-31.]
[124] TSZ, IV 13[19].
[125] See: Section I of this paper. Also see: GS 347.

passionately and fully with a "noble soul" whose "egoism…does not like to look 'up'—but either *ahead*, horizontally and slowly, or down: *it knows itself to be at a height*."[126]

Secondly, the higher man looks after his own well-being. He is profoundly concerned with it. He is concerned with it, Nietzsche might say, as a matter of instinct. As Nietzsche states in his answer to 'who has turned out well', the well-turned out person "has a taste only for what is good for him; [and] his pleasure, his delight cease where the measure of what is good for him is transgressed."[127] Incidentally, this is probably why Nietzsche speaks to the higher men who have gone astray, because at their core they desire what is healthy, beneficial, and best for themselves.

Third, the higher man is efficacious. He is efficacious, or successful at living, importantly *because* he possesses the qualities described above. He is successful at life *because* he looks at the world in naturalistic terms, *because* he is strong enough to face existence in this way, and *because* he maintains his physical and spiritual health by acquiring values that are most beneficial to him. In Nietzsche's description of Goethe, perhaps the 'highest man' to have existed, he explains that Goethe,

> put himself squarely in the middle of [life]; he did not despair, and he took as much as he could on himself, to himself, in himself. What he wanted was *totality*…he disciplined himself to wholeness, he *created* himself…. Goethe conceived of a strong, highly educated, self-respecting human being, skilled in all things physical and able to keep himself in check, who could dare to allow himself the entire expanse and wealth of naturalness…[and who] knows how to take advantage of things that would destroy an average nature.[128]

As a '*totality*,' an individual whose mind and body are a unity and whose thoughts, feelings, and actions are in harmony, a higher man is suited to attain spectacular heights of achievement. The harsh and disciplined nature of these higher men toward themselves enables

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[126] BGE 265.
[127] TI "Skirmishes," 49.
[128] Ibid. Also see: the section on the higher men in A 57.

them to accomplish great tasks because their morality instructs them to do so. It instructs them that such is beneficial to their lives:

> I am well disposed toward those moralities which goad me to do something and do it again, from morning till evening, and then to dream of it at night, and to think of nothing except doing this *well*, as well as *I* alone can do it. When one lives like that, one thing after another that simply does not belong to such a life drops off…like yellow leaves that any slight stirring of the air takes off a tree.[129]

[129] GS 304.

V. EGOISM

A. Nietzsche's Particular Brand of Egoism

Now that we have in view a portrait of the "higher man," we are in a position to appreciate Nietzsche's peculiar brand of egoism. Understanding what type of virtues Nietzsche's "higher man" possesses and how he acquires them puts us in a position to see why Nietzsche believes egoism is necessary for the "higher man" to reach the height possible for him.

Ethical egoism is the thesis that an action is morally right or good just in case it promotes the self-interest of the agent who performs it. Conceptually, egoism does not say *what* is in one's self-interest or *how* to achieve this self-interest, but only that one should strive to satisfy one's own self-interest. In the section below, I provide an account of Nietzsche's egoism. I do not wish to be taken as providing a defense of ethical egoism in what follows; I only wish to establish that Nietzsche is an ethical egoist of a unique variety and to clarify how his egoism relates to his naturalistic approach to morality.

Nietzsche's insistence on egoism as a methodological approach to morality stems from his naturalism. This is clear from an interesting passage in *Zarathustra*, where he remarks: "'Ego', sayest thou, and art proud of that word. But the greater thing—in which thou are unwilling to believe—is thy body with its big sagacity; it saith not 'ego,' but doeth it."[130] Nietzsche's statement here expresses that striving for self-preservation and growth is something that comes naturally for our body. The body is sagacious, Nietzsche believes, because, for the most part, the functions of maintenance and growth are functions that come automatically or instinctually. While such behavior must be classified as amoral, it is seen by Nietzsche as

[130] TSZ, I 4.

unconsciously life-promoting and therefore "sagacious."[131] Nietzsche believes that an individual's mind should likewise be focused in this way: "At the risk of displeasing innocent ears, I propose: egoism belongs to the nature of a noble soul…. The noble soul accepts the fact of its egoism without question mark."[132]

The case for egoism also stems from the fact that Nietzsche believes "morality never has inherent value."[133] Instead, as we established in the previous section, a moral code must be instrumental. It must serve a person's life, which is the source of all value.[134] Otherwise, it will harm his life. Likewise, Nietzsche thinks nothing ever has inherent value, i.e. value apart from a valuer, or value 'in itself'. "Through valuation only is there value; and without valuation the nut of existence would be hollow," Nietzsche states.[135] This does not mean, of course, that just because something is valued by someone then it is *ipso facto* valuable. Rather, it means that the existence of a valuer is a necessary condition, not a sufficient one, for something to have value. For something to truly be a value one must also show that it promotes the valuer's life. This is made starkly clear when Nietzsche asks: "[W]hat are our valuations and tables of moral values really worth? *What results from their rule?* For whom? With regard to what? – Answer: for life."[136]

A clarification should be made here between a moral code that *promotes* an individual's life and one that *strictly preserves* a person's life. The former is a moral code of which

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[131] For two related passages, illustrating the instinct for self-preservation and growth in natural life, see: LN 11 [111]; LN 14 [174].
[132] BGE 265.
[133] TI "Skirmishes," 37. Also see: LN 9 [86].
[134] In LN 11[83] Nietzsche states: "The whole of *conscious* life, the mind including the soul, including the heart, including goodness, including virtue: in whose service does it work? In that of the greatest possible perfection of the means (means of nourishment, of enhancement) of the basic animal functions: above all, of the *enhancement of life*."
[135] TSZ, I 15. Also see: A 11. Nietzsche seems to think that nothing has inherent aesthetic value either as he states in GS 299, "How can we make things beautiful, attractive, and desirable for us when they are not? And I rather think that *in themselves* they never are." (italics mine)
[136] LN 2[190].

Nietzsche approves, a moral code that advances one's life and well-being. The latter is decadent, a morality of stagnation, which does not urge one forward, but keeps one 'hanging on to life'. It is not a means to growth, but to *strict preservation*. It is not egoistic, but destructive for the higher man, because it does not promote his life. For the higher man, like "[e]verything that lives," shows "most clearly that [he] does everything possible *not* to preserve [him]self but to become *more*…."[137] Unfortunately, as I explained in section III, the instincts of many human beings have been corrupted to the point that they either do not know what is best for themselves and the prefer things that cause harm to them.[138] This is especially true in light of two things: (1) Our reliance on consciousness,[139] and (2) Christianity's deep-seated negative influence on our culture and, hence, on our upbringing and ability to discern those objects which are most beneficial for us. Of those that "represen[t] the descending development, decay, chronic degeneration, and sickness," Nietzsche states that, "the minimum of decency requires that [they] *take away* as little as possible from those who have turned out well."[140]

As stated above, egoism instructs one to be committed to one's life and to ensure that all of one's actions contribute to one's life. Nietzsche, as we have seen, has some positive notion of what this commitment involves for higher men. In order to discover *what* course of action this requires, one must understand himself deeply and discover the passions and interests that speak loudest within him, for everyone differs in this regard. This is necessary, for Nietzsche, in order to determine what choices and actions will bring one the greatest self-fulfillment.

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[137] LN 14 [121].
[138] As a reminder, Nietzsche states: "I call an animal, a species, an individual corrupt when it loses its instincts, when it chooses, when it prefers things that will harm it." [A 6]
[139] "Consciousness is the last and latest development of the organic and hence also what is most unfinished and unstrong. Consciousness gives rise to countless errors that lead an animal or man to perish sooner than necessary…." [GS 11]
[140] TI "Skirmishes," 33. In a harsher passage Nietzsche says that we should "demand that degenerate life be ruthlessly pushed down and thrown aside…." [TI "Skirmishes," 36]

Under Nietzsche's moral code, egoism makes clear that higher men have a rigorous path to follow. Being egoistic, for Nietzsche, requires constant thinking and learning. It means rising above "*the great majority [who] lacks an intellectual conscience*," to whom "it is not contemptible to believe this or that and to live accordingly *without* first becoming aware of the most certain reasons pro and con."[141] In positive terms, it means being "determined to scrutinize our experiences as severely as a scientific experiment—hour after hour, day after day. We ourselves wish to be our experiments and guinea pigs."[142]

Egoism also demands perpetual creation and achievement with one's full, *long-range* life purpose in mind. This is what "greatness" involves and it is what higher men should strive for. It is "precisely strength of the will, hardness, and the capacity for *long-range decisions* that must belong to the concept of 'greatness'," Nietzsche maintains.[143] In another passage Nietzsche states concisely: "It's care for the future promised in him which gives the well-constituted individual such an extraordinary right to egoism."[144]

This makes clear that Nietzsche's version of egoism is *not* akin to hedonism, the moral principle that pleasure is the highest good, or, what might be seen as short-range egoism, the view that at any time one's emotions are the sole standard for determining what is good for one. Nietzsche's egoism demands purpose, knowledge, and a richness of values for higher men, with their *long-range* life purpose in mind. In fact, one objection against Christianity and conventional morality, which has taught that the essence of a moral life is to be concerned with indiscriminately helping others in need, is that the demands of such a moral obstruct and prevent individuals with long-range goals from achieving these goals. How, in other words, can one

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[141] GS 2.
[142] GS 319.
[143] BGE 212. (Italics mine).
[144] LN 14[29]. This passage is from the notes Nietzsche took for the aphorism on "*The natural value of egoism*" found in TI "Skirmishes," 33. Also see: WP 962.

accomplish anything great if one must give the needs and wants of others *primary* importance, but one's own needs and desires a second, third, or an even lower rated status? Indeed, the great-souled individual is capable of an abundance of generosity, but he is capable of this *only after his soul has become great*, and only to the extent that he permits such generosity.[145]

Furthermore, it may be asked why one must strive to justify the actions one intends to take for oneself, but must remain silent on what an altruistic morality demands of him? In regard to such a backwards standard, Nietzsche asks:

> Is the nature of the *truly moral* to lie in our keeping in view *the most immediate and most direct consequences to others of our actions and deciding in accordance with these consequences*? But this, though it may be a morality, is a narrow and petty bourgeois one, a higher and freer viewpoint, it seems to me, is to *look beyond* these immediate consequences to others, and under certain circumstances to pursue knowledge even though one realizes that our free-spiritedness will at first and as an immediate consequence plunge others into doubt grief and even worse things.[146]

We find a similar passage, albeit one more typical of our everyday affairs, in a later aphorism:

> If we take the decisive step and enter upon the path which is called our 'own path', a secret is suddenly revealed to us: all those who have hitherto been our friends and familiars have imagined themselves superior to us, and are now offended…they know, it seems, what the right path [for us] is!...The more malicious declare us to be vain fools and seek to blacken our motives…What are we to do? My advice: to inaugurate our sovereignty by promising all our acquaintances a year's amnesty in advance for their sins.[147]

These passages, particularly the last, illustrate that egoism is not attacked merely because certain individuals are afraid that an egoist will be ruthless or unprincipled and may bring to him harm, or even ruin. Rather, egoism is attacked in these cases because of its self-seeking *as such*. It is the desire for independence, and for standing outside 'the herd' that is objectionable. Why does 'herd mentality' oppose egoism? It opposes it because the herd needs strong, productive

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[145] For, there comes a time when higher men must keep their "parasites" in check, so to speak. See: TSZ III 12 [19].
[146] D 146 (italics mine).
[147] D 484.

individuals to live off, in order that they may survive. Zarathustra warns higher men of this parasitic relationship:

> Where the strong are weak, where the noble are all-too-gentle—there buildeth [the parasite] its loathsome nest; the parasite liveth where the great have small sore-places. What is the highest of all species of being, and what is the lowest? The parasite is the lowest species; he, however, who is of the highest species feedeth most parasites.[148]

We have seen that Nietzsche's egoism demands a great deal from higher men. We have also seen that Nietzsche believes that higher men are justified in their egoism because their morality is well-reasoned, principled, and developed with 'care for the future' in mind. We have also seen that such egoism is objectionable to 'lower natures' or 'herd types', and that it may even bring them harm, because these types depend on, like a parasite to its host, higher types for their guidance and sustenance.

B. Reinterpreting "Altruistic" Deeds in Terms of Egoism

Perhaps the two greatest difficulties in accepting Nietzsche's call for egoism are (1) the worry that dedication to egoism might lead to others' being exploited, harmed, even enslaved to the ends of the higher types; and (2) accepting how egoism and other-regarding behavior, such as benevolence, love, friendship, heroism, and Samaritanism (assisting others in emergencies), can be compatible. In this section I shall try to articulate how these things can be part of an egoistic life on Nietzsche's account.

To begin with, Nietzsche seems to believe that there is a legitimate and a non-legitimate basis for egoism: "Self-interest is worth as much as the physiological value of the selfish person: it can be worth a lot or it can be worthless and despicable. Individuals can be seen as representing either the ascending or the descending line of life. This gives you a canon for

[148] TSZ, III 13[19]. Also see TSZ, I 12.

deciding the value of their selfishness."[149] If a person is of the "ascending line of life," that is, if he says "yes" to life and values life, then his selfishness is a good because it promotes his life. If one represents the opposite type of person, "a descending development, decay, chronic degeneration, disease…then he is of little value and in all fairness should be taking away as little as possible from those who have turned out well. He is really just a parasite on them…."[150]

Examples of two types of people who do not have a right to egoism in Nietzsche's view are: (1) those who desire to better themselves through supernatural wish-fulfillment; and (2) those who seek to better themselves by means of pseudo-egoistic action. Both of these types of people, we will see, act on the basis of an irrational selfishness, which is a desire to do what is in one's best interest, but in which clear and rational thinking is entirely absent from the one's process of considering what is best for oneself. Nietzsche elaborates upon the former in two aphorisms, D 215 and A 43. Both of these aphorisms highlight the irrational selfishness of those with a supernatural view of the world. These people "think well of themselves that the laws of nature are constantly *broken* for their sake."[151] They think, for instance, that God will change the state of affairs of the world for their sake, if only they pray hard enough.

Such individuals do not sacrifice themselves as their morality demands, but only appear to sacrifice themselves, and instead give up something of minor importance for something of greater importance, namely, "the ecstatic thought of henceforth being at one with the powerful being."[152] Speaking to such people Nietzsche says: "The truth of the matter is that you only *seem* to sacrifice yourselves: in reality you transform yourselves in thought into gods and enjoy

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[149] TI "Skirmishes," 33. In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche also describes this division: "Another selfishness is there, an all-too-poor and hungry kind, which would always steal—the selfishness of the sick, the sickly selfishness." I, 22 [1]
[150] Ibid.
[151] A 43.
[152] D 215.

yourselves as such."[153] Nietzsche points out the strange irony here that Christianity, which condemns selfishness, has won so many converts to its side by appealing to the selfishness, "vanity," and "intoxication," of its adherents through the promise of blessedness, happiness, prosperity, and eternity. "'Salvation of the soul' – in plain language: 'the world revolves around *me*'…," Nietzsche remarks.[154]

The second type of person, on Nietzsche's view, who has no right to egoism is the person who acts under what Nietzsche calls "pseudo-egoism." This type of person at root does nothing for his ego and has no real ego. Instead his actions and half-efforts are directed, as Nietzsche says, for "the phantom of [his] ego," that is, for a pseudo-self.[155] The type of person described here is a person who does not initiate independent thought and therefore never develops any real convictions or values of his own, but borrows or copies convictions, goals, and desires from others. This 'pseudo-egoistic' person "dwell[s] in a fog of impersonal, semi-personal opinions, and arbitrary, as it were poetical evaluations, the one forever in the head of someone else, and the head of this someone else again in the heads of others: a strange world of phantasms…. [N]o individual among this majority is capable of setting up a real ego, accessible to him and fathomed by him."[156] As this person fails to think and act on his own judgment, he too must be thought of as a parasite on others, a parasite on the thinking of others. While thinking that he is acting egoistically, the pseudo-egoistic individual is in all actuality "rescuing himself from

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[153] Ibid.
[154] A 43.
[155] D 105.
[156] Ibid. Also see: TSZ, I 16 and Richardson (1996: 161). The pseudo-egoist Nietzsche identifies also bears close affinities with Ayn Rand's "second hander" portrayed by the character Peter Keating in her novel *The Fountainhead* (657-8). For more on this resemblance see: Hunt, Lester H. "Thus Spoke Howard Roark: The Transformation of Nietzschean Ideas in *The Fountainhead*" [unpublished manuscript, http://philosophy.wisc.edu/hunt/nietzsche&fountainhead.htm (12-3)].

himself *in others*," rescuing himself from the torment of his own inner emptiness and self-doubt.[157]

Seeing that neither of these people has, in Nietzsche's view, a legitimate claim to egoism, we can turn from them to those who do have a legitimate claim, i.e. to the higher men, and inquire whether we can answer our worry that they might be permitted to exploit or harm others. In a passage from *Daybreak*, Nietzsche explains that when one feels power, the way one wants to express this feeling is "to bestow, to mock, to destroy—all three out of a basic drive."[158] Nietzsche argues that originally men sought power by means of cruelty. Cruelty is one of "the oldest festive joys of mankind."[159] "Seeing-suffer feels good," Nietzsche says, but "making-suffer [feels] even more so—[This] is a hard proposition, but a central one, an old powerful human-all-too-human proposition, to which, by the way, even the apes might subscribe."[160] Indeed one way in which many people today still strive for distinction in society is by making "the next man outwardly or inwardly *suffer*…[by] striving for domination over [him]."[161]

It should be stated up front that it is impossible to work past these statements of Nietzsche's to make out a fixed 'thou-shalt not' harm others principle in Nietzsche. Nevertheless, it must be made clear that Nietzsche emphatically does not think that a Hobbesian state of nature is the best of all social conditions. Nietzsche is in favor of civilized life and of some type of (relatively free) political structure. Together with the transition from the wilderness to society, must come, Nietzsche thinks, a change the mode in which one satisfies one's desire to inflict suffering and cruelty. Individuals should, under these new conditions,

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[157] D 516.
[158] D 356. Also see: D 30.
[159] D 18.
[160] GM II, 6.
[161] D 113.

"robbers and conquerors," Nietzsche declares, only if they "cannot be rulers and possessors."[162] As Bernard Reginster notes, "Nietzsche observes, many people actually wish to be dominated and would oppose no resistance to those who seek to subjugate them—namely, those to whom he attributes a 'slavish' disposition."[163]

Moreover, in aphorism 13 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche in fact professes that harming others signifies that *we lack power*. It is a sign that we are still dependent on *others* for the fulfillment of our needs, suggesting, perhaps, that we may no longer need others to fulfill these basic urges of cruelty and suffering. In addition, Nietzsche suggests, harming others is an imprudent means of achieving power because harming others often brings "new dangers and uncertainties for what power we possess, and clouds our horizon with the prospect of revenge, scorn, punishment, and failure."[164] This does not mean harming others is outright objectionable, but rather that is just impractical and opens one up to many dangers in the long-run. Under civilized conditions, conditions where individual is generally free to live independently, rather than fight and conquer for one's survival, the best route the 'ideally selfish' person can take to promote his life and well-being is to be a creator.[165] This person would direct his attention to his own creative abilities and care for these abilities, as Nietzsche suggests, as if it were a child growing within him. He would care for his passions, ideas, and goals as if he were in a state of pregnancy. He would constantly monitor his progress and prospects for the future so that they

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[162] GS 283.
[163] Reginster (2007: 35).
[164] Ibid.
[165] This conclusion can be drawn not just from the type of men Nietzsche admires and holds to be the exemplars of greatness, but also can be supported from a passage in *The Gay Science* that says, "Let us stop thinking so much about punishing, reproaching, and improving others! We rarely change an individual… Let us rather raise ourselves that much higher. Let us color our own example ever more brilliantly. Let our brilliance make them look dark. No, let us not become darker ourselves on their account, like all those who punish others and feel dissatisfied. Let us sooner step aside. Let us look away." [GS 321]

may "*come to a happy fulfillment*," while throughout displaying a mood of "pride and gentleness."[166]

A civilized society, a society where higher men are able to rise and are capable of being admired, is possible where "men are actually similar in strength and value standards and belong together in one [socio-political] body," but, Nietzsche thinks, the urge to appropriate, overpower, and impress one's self on others will still be present.[167] In order to express this urge such a society makes peace within its borders, but does not cease to express its basic internal drive to conquer and overpower. It merely redirects these drives abroad from the 'next man' to the societies and cultures of other men. This is necessary because, just as an individual must express his feeling of power if he is to live and grow healthily, so a culture or society must express its feeling of power it if is to combat stagnation: "Even the [political] body within which individuals treat each other as equals…if it is a living and not a dying body, has to do to other bodies what the individuals within it refrain from doing to each other: it will have to be an incarnate will to power, it will strive to grow, spread, seize, become predominant—not from any morality or immorality but because it is *living*…."[168] If we do not express this 'will to power', Nietzsche tells us, our drive to conquer and appropriate will be directed inward to ourselves in an act of 'bad conscience,' or "will to self-maltreatment."[169]

Despite Nietzsche's insistence that an urge to conquer, appropriate, and overpower needs to be expressed, one need not interpret this in a literal manner, as in an act of war or physical conquest. As just stated earlier, conquest, power, and even the infliction of suffering is, for

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[166] D 552. Also see: TSZ, IV 13[11], where Nietzsche similarly states: "In your self-seeking, ye creating ones, there is the foresight and foreseeing of the pregnant! What no one's eye hath yet seen, namely, the fruit—this, sheltereth and saveth and nourisheth your entire love. Where your entire love is, namely, with your child, there is also your entire virtue!"
[167] BGE 259.
[168] Ibid.
[169] GM II, 16-17.

higher men, best accomplished in other ways. Indeed, Nietzsche asks, "Who will attain anything great if he does not find in himself the strength and the will to *inflict* great suffering?"[170] But this suffering need not be interpreted as the product of physical harm. Without great difficulty, one can make others suffer without causing them physical harm, merely by dissatisfying their expectations, for example. Therefore, if we take seriously Nietzsche's statement (in GS 13) that hurting others is a sign that one lacks power, we can still interpret the concepts of conquering, growing, overpowering foreigners, and the infliction of suffering in a non-physical sense. Within a society of great men and great achievements, 'conquering,' 'overpowering,' and inflicting suffering on other nations and cultures can be performed culturally and intellectually in the sense of forcing these others to see, on their own terms, the undeniable greatness of one's own values and accomplishments. The ultimate success of such accomplishments might be understood in the sense in which it is said that Greece conquered Rome culturally, despite the reverse occurring militarily. Although Greece came under Roman occupancy, Romans developed an intense admiration the accomplishments of Greece, particularly its philosophical and literary achievements.

It should be noted that defending the position that Nietzsche's higher men would or should eschew acts of physical force is not my task here. Doing this would require a much more extensive analysis than I allow for here.[171] My aim in this section has simply been to show the reader that Nietzsche's higher men, the highest exponents of egoism, are not crooks or thieves, but, often, are artists and architects. It is only a "clumsy psychology of bygone times" that could understand cruelty only in terms of "the sight of the sufferings of *others*."[172] A rarer and higher

[170] GS 325. Also see: TSZ, II 2.
[171] Explaining away certain passages where Nietzsche seems to call for very harsh measures for the decadent and diseased, such as, A 2; LN 2[205]; TI "Skirmishes," 36, would certainly be in order.
[172] BGE 229.

form of power-seeking and cruelty can be found in knowledge, art, and other forms of creation. In such endeavors, the pursuer of knowledge, for example, possesses a "drop of cruelty" insofar as he forces himself, through discipline, to seek the truth wherever it leads, even down avenues that go "against the inclination of [his] spirit, and often enough also against the wishes of his heart—by way of saying No where he would like to say Yes…."[173] He has the courage and strength to pursue knowledge, not because knowledge is an end in itself, but because his acquisition of knowledge is a means to higher goals and ideals that are life promoting.

The artist, particularly the Greek tragedian, for example, "poetized in order to conquer," and sought victory in competition "to make [himself] superior and to wish this superiority to be publicly acknowledged'."[174] Architects too sublimate their feelings of power, as "[b]uildings are a visible manifestation of pride, the victory over gravity, the will to power…."[175]

Such exemplars of egoism, dedicated to their own personal acquisition of power, typically go unnoticed. The common interpretation of the egoistic individual is that he is an unprincipled villain. It is difficult for most people to see how the passionate, egoistic individual could be self-disciplined and could "strictly and subtly…obe[y] [a] thousandfold laws" on the basis of a moral code rooted in self-interest.[176] For most of these people the egoist has been depicted as a crook, a thief, and a monster. The apologists of self-sacrificial morality, Nietzsche says, "preached for thousands of years" the idea that "'selfishness is the misfortune of your life'," and in the process "harmed…selfishness and deprived it of much spirit, much cheerfulness, much sensitivity, much beauty; it made selfishness stupid and ugly and poisoned it."[177] This had

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[173] Ibid. Also see: BGE 230 and EH "Preface," 3, where Nietzsche says, "Philosophy, as I have so far understood and lived it, means living voluntarily among ice and high mountains—seeking out everything strange and questionable in existence...."
[174] HAH "Of First and Last Things," 170.
[175] TI "Skirmishes," 11.
[176] BGE 188.
[177] GS 328. Also see: TSZ, III 10[3].

to be done, of course, in order to paint a convincing but false alternative picture, one in which the egoistic life was made to appear much more uncertain, devoid of meaning, and undesirable than the life of blind-faith and self-sacrifice. Nietzsche notes this when he exclaims that the preachers of morality "knew very well of the over-rich happiness of the [passionate] kind of human being, but they kept a deadly silence about it because it refuted their theory according to which all happiness begins only after the annihilation of passion and the silencing of the will."[178]

Having argued that under Nietzsche's egoism peaceful relations among equals can be maintained, I shall now try to show how dispositions and relations one ordinarily thinks of as altruistic, e.g. benevolence, love, friendship, heroism, and Samaritanism (i.e. assisting individuals in emergencies), are in fact best expressed egoistically according to Nietzsche. I said earlier that Nietzsche *generally* objects to one's treating others coercively and forcefully for prudential reasons—specifically, so that one is not dependent on them and does not find himself the target of their revenge. Nietzsche provides, however, a deeper, positive reason for why fairness, admiration, and honor are morally proper. The reason is found in the following passage: "[T]his refinement and self-limitation in its relations with its equals—every star is such an egoist—it honors *itself* in them and in the rights it cedes to them."[179] What Nietzsche is saying is that if I honor myself and my own accomplishments, then when I honor others and their accomplishments, I do so on the basis of some fact about me. This, in fact, is why failing to admire greatness is tantamount to "self-betrayal!"[180] Moreover, as Nietzsche indicates, the fact that one gives up the ability to perform certain coercive actions on others in society is *not* a

[178] GS 327.
[179] BGE 265.
[180] BGE 275.

sacrifice among men of equal power. Rather, "the exchange of honors and rights is of the nature of all social relations and thus belongs to the natural conditions of things."[181]

Nietzsche's view of love is likewise egoistic. Before we can love another we must be "honest with ourselves and know ourselves very well."[182] We must be able to "stand bravely on [our] own two legs" and have confidence in the deeply rooted values and talents we have acquired through a properly selfish life.[183] Such is needed because in order to love someone we must admire them, and to admire we must see and honor in them some aspect of our self. Without doing so, we are either "incapable of love," that is, we have no values of our own that we can admire in others; or we are undeserving of love, that is, we possess no values for which others might admire us.[184]

Nietzsche's view of love applies to both friendships and romantic relationships and is an aspect of his general view that the 'ideally egoistic' person should deal with others instrumentally. Brian Leiter affirms this view stating that the higher man treats others instrumentally because "he is consumed by his work, his responsibilities, his projects."[185] Nietzsche best reveals this view when he writes: "[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 as a temporary resting place."[186] This is affirmed in his earlier work, *Human, All too Human*. Nietzsche remarks here that most friends and acquaintances are "ladders"; that is, they are a means to our growth and development.[187]

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[181] BGE 265.
[182] D 335.
[183] EH "Why I Write such Good Books," 5.
[184] Ibid. Also see: D 79.
[185] Leiter (2002: 117).
[186] BGE 273.
[187] HAH "Man in Society," 368.

Not all relationships are instrumental in the sense of "temporary resting place," however, some relationships stand the test of time. This happens when "the possessive craving of two people gives way to a new desire and lust for possession—a shared higher thirst for an ideal above them…*friendship*."[188] I take Nietzsche to mean here that while romantic love often begins as a "lust for possession…[a desire] to live and rule in the other soul as supremely desirable," this lust can mature into a genuine friendship, an "ideal above them," that honors the crucially valuable role each individual plays in the life of the other.[189]

While the Nietzschean egoist values his friends instrumentally, it is important to see that this should not be taken to mean that the Nietzschean egoist values the pleasure and enjoyment these others bring him *alone*, as if such pleasure and enjoyment can be easily be obtained elsewhere. It does not mean, as Tara Smith notes, that the egoist values his closest friends "only with a cavalier, throwaway attitude."[190] Most of us understand clearly that a friend or spouse is not easily replaceable. The deeper one's relationship becomes, the more irreplaceable a friend or romantic partner will become. Difficulty understanding the difference here lies in an often made equivocation over 'instrumental', Smith explains:

> [T]hings can be valuable only in relation to some person for some end. And the ultimate end by reference to which we can determine things' value is an individual's life. *Nothing can be objectively valuable that does not contribute to this end in some way.* 'Instrumental' value however typically denotes a circumscribed, often short-term, means-end relationship…the connotation of disposable tools, items to be used and then…suggest[ing] indifference to the things themselves, as if they are valued solely for their consequences and are completely interchangeable with other things that could serve their utilitarian function equally well. This is not an accurate portrait.[191]

An instrumental relationship simply means that we choose to bring certain people into our lives as friends and romantic partners because they enhance our lives and fulfill certain needs of ours.

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[188] GS 14.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Smith, Tara. "Egoistic Friendship," *American Philosophical Quarterly,* 42:4 (October 2005), 273.
[191] Ibid. 272.

The fact that someone is "prepared to make any sacrifice" for his/her romantic partner signifies not that his attitude is altruistic, but that it is perhaps "the most ingenuous expression of egoism."[192]

In a similar way, Nietzsche argues that acts we would ordinarily identify as instances of benevolence, heroism, and Good Samaritanism are not incompatible with egoism. These acts of helping others are not, for Nietzsche's egoist, acts of altruism because they are not motivated by concern for the interests of others, but by one's self-interest alone:

> [P]eople praise 'heroism' because of a hero's indifference to his own well-being, his devotion to an idea, a great cause, a fatherland: but this is a misunderstanding…. A hero pours out, pours over, consumes himself, does not spare himself, -- fatalistically, disastrously, involuntarily, as a river is involuntary when it overflows its banks. But because people owe a lot to these sorts of explosions, they have given them a lot in return, for instance, a *higher type of morality* [in the pejorative sense]…That is, in fact, the way human gratitude works: it *misunderstands* its benefactors.[193]

Likewise with acts of benevolence and Samaritanism. When they are performed by higher men we find that the source of motivation is primarily egoistic. There is a small difference between benevolence and Samaritanism, however. Individuals who act heroically usually benefit others secondarily or accidentally, Nietzsche points out. When one brings oneself to fight in a heroic way for a cause, one's focus is on fighting for one's values, not rescuing one's neighbors from an undesirable situation. The benefit these others receive from the hero's success is purely secondary. In acts of benevolence, however, others are not accidental but direct recipients of our actions. According to Nietzsche, they are the recipients of benefits the egoist intentionally uses *as a means* to his own ends:

> We benefit and show benevolence to those who are already dependent on us in some way (which means that they are used to thinking of us as causes); we want to increase their power because in that way we increase ours, or we want to show them how advantageous

[192] GS 14.
[193] TI "Skirmishes," 44.

> it is to be in our power; that way they will become more satisfied with their condition and more hostile to and willing to fight against the enemies of *our* power.[194]

A Good Samaritan act, or act of emergency assistance, Nietzsche reasons, can be performed for many reasons. Only "thoughtlessness" leads one to believe that a Good Samaritan act is performed strictly out of pity. The ideally selfish person performs such acts "not consciously thinking of [himself] but doing so *very strongly unconsciously*."[195] Seeing another in grave danger often offends our taste and "makes us aware of our impotence... [or] cowardice, if we did not go to assist him…. [It may also] constitut[e] a signpost to some danger to us; and it can have a painful effect upon us simply as a token of human vulnerability and fragility in general."[196] In order to demonstrate our strength and efficacy and to dismiss the threatening feeling of impotence and the painful feeling of 'human vulnerability', we act almost instinctively to resolve this emergency.

We have seen in this section, then, that Nietzsche's brand of egoism is a principled form of egoism aimed at a healthy, passionate, productive, and meaningful life. We have also accounted for how certain common sense actions and relations commonly thought of as altruistic can be, and properly should be, egoistic. In this next section, I will turn to Nietzsche's view of altruism specifically and then address why Nietzsche thinks acting altruistically and having altruistic relationships is harmful to an individual.

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[194] GS 13.
[195] D 133.
[196] Ibid.

VI. ALTRUISM

A. Nietzsche on the Origins and Evolution of Morality

For Nietzsche, altruism is an outgrowth of the ascetic ideal. It is a moral principle that demands self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Nietzsche's judgment about altruism, as of self-sacrifice in general, is that it is an unnatural and self-destructive ideal. Placing value on self-sacrifice leads one, like it led Schopenhauer, to say "no" to life and to oneself.[197] It drives one to look upon "the proud and well-turned out human being who says Yes, who is sure of the future, who guarantees the future…[as] *evil*--," and to do so in the name of *morality*.[198] For this reason Nietzsche is "quite suspicious of the so-called 'selfless' drives, […] of all 'neighbor love' that is ready to give advice and go into action."[199] He sees great danger in this ideal's being worshipfully and unquestioningly embraced as a 'value-in-itself'.[200] For this reason he offers "a new challenge" to us to revaluate these selfless concepts, which have so far been taken "as given, as a fact, as beyond all calling-into-question…."[201]

In *The Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche offers a critique of moral values through an investigation of their origin and evolution. He states that his overarching mission in this work is to have us reevaluate "the *value* of morality…, in particular the issue [of] the value of the unegoistic, of the instincts of compassion, self-denial, self-sacrifice," by way of genealogical exploration.[202] It is instructive briefly to recap the account in order fully to understand Nietzsche's revaluation of selflessness and altruism.

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[197] GM "Preface," 5.
[198] EH "Why I am a Destiny," 8.
[199] EH "Why I am so Wise," 4. See: also BGE 33.
[200] GM "Preface," 5.
[201] GM "Preface," 6.
[202] GM "Preface," 5.

Nietzsche begins his genealogical account of morality by suggesting that all values and all morality originated in the nobility of ancient peoples, within their basic feelings of superiority, efficacy, inner satisfaction and harmony. This, they simply and even naively felt, was 'good,' thus they called it 'good'. As an afterthought, they came to associate the 'bad' with those who did not equal their rank. It was the "pathos of distance" that generated the concept 'bad'.

The reversal of this Good/Bad morality and the entrance of the concept of altruism begins with the "slave revolt in morality." It is marked by the event wherein "*ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values."[203] This *ressentiment* originates with those considered 'bad' in the Good/Bad morality of the nobles. In these 'bad' persons—impoverished, suffering, and inefficacious— frustration with their situation, their suffering, and their impotent hostility toward the nobles and the external world festers inside them until they are a "cauldron of unsatiated hate."[204] The lives of these men of *ressentiment* are consumed by hate and the desire to exact revenge.

For them the concept of 'evil' is primary. It is not an afterthought, but a pervasive feeling, which turns into an obsession. Through their powerlessness and "oblique souls," the weak found a means to resist the moral judgment of the nobles. They resisted with an "imaginary revenge:" They had to "construct their happiness artificially by looking at their enemies, to talk themselves into it, *to lie themselves into it* (as all human beings of *ressentiment* tend to do)."[205] Those filled with ressentiment retaliated by inverting the natural and generally life-affirming Good/Bad morality of the nobles. Those characteristics in virtue of which the nobles deemed themselves 'good,' these men of *ressentiment* declared 'evil.' Inverting their "value-positing

[203] Ibid. I, 10.
[204] Ibid. I, 11.
[205] GM I, 10.

eye," these weak and impoverished souls then looked upon their dearth and impoverishment and, in an afterthought, blessed it as 'good.'

Through this inversion of morality the 'good' of the noble morality became the 'evil' of the slave morality, and the 'bad' of the noble morality became the 'good' of the slave morality. What was good, viz. 'strength,' 'efficacy,' 'industriousness,' 'pride,' and 'self-satisfaction,' was seen through the "poisonous eye of *ressentiment*" as 'impudence,' 'impiety,' 'disobedience,' 'selfishness,' and 'foolish pride.' Likewise, the unfavorable and inept qualities of the weak were refashioned: "Weakness is to be lied into a *merit*…the powerlessness that does not retaliate into kindness; fearful baseness into 'humility'; subjection to those one hates into 'obedience'; …cowardice itself, which he possess in abundance… 'patience.'"[206] This is Nietzsche's genealogical account of how the Good/Evil morality evolved from mankind's first morality. It still remains, however, to be explained how this Good/Evil morality won out over the morality of the nobles, and this is what Nietzsche shows in the third treatise of the *Genealogy*.

The overturning of the Good/Bad morality is, according to Nietzsche, the work of the ascetic priest. The priest "must be counted as the foreordained savior, shepherd, and advocate of a sick herd," Nietzsche declares.[207] What is 'the herd' sick from? *Ressentiment*, Nietzsche says. Indeed, the fabrication of their own morality gave the men of *ressentiment* some direction and outlet for their anger and frustration. It did not, however, give them a *reason* for their suffering and it did not permit a full release of their *ressentiment* because the nobles were still the strong and powerful ones. To relieve the weak of their suffering the priest "chang[ed] the direction of ressentiment." He gave them a reason for their suffering and provided them with an explanation of the meaningfulness of life. He said to them: "'That's right, my sheep! Someone must be to

[206] See: GM I, 14.
[207] GM III, 15

blame for [your suffering]: but you yourself are this someone, you alone are to blame for it—*you alone are to blame for yourself!*"'[208] Thus, the sufferer was advised to look for the cause of his suffering in himself and should understand his suffering itself as a "*condition of punishment.*"[209]

It is through this internalization of blame, prescribed as a cure by the priest, that the "ascetic ideal," which places the highest value on self-denial or self-inflicted suffering, is born. The ascetic ideal gave sufferers a reason for their suffering—themselves. It gave purpose to their lives, atonement. It did not, however, cure them. To the contrary, it made them sicker. It prescribed a *meaningful* poison, but a poison nonetheless, which has "pressed so destructively upon *health*."[210]

The ascetic ideal is indeed destructive to man, but it gave man an answer to "the scream of his question: *'to what end suffering?* "'[211] Suffering was not the torment of man, meaningless suffering was. Up until now, the ascetic ideal has offered the only meaning for suffering. And, "any meaning is better than no meaning at all…*a will to nothingness*, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presuppositions of life…remains a *will*! ... And "man would much rather will *nothingness* than not will…."[212]

B. What is Altruism?

Altruism, as I take it, is the moral view that serving the interests and well-being of others at the expense of one's own interests and well-being is one's moral duty and highest purpose. In this sense, "[a]ltruism" requires "*assuming* a duty to relieve the distress and promote the

[208] Ibid.
[209] GM III, 20
[210] GM III, 21.
[211] GM III, 28.
[212] Ibid.

happiness of our fellows...[and] maintain quite simply that a man may and should discount altogether his own pleasure or happiness as such when he is deciding what course of action to pursue."[213] The moral view of egoism holds that an action is morally right or good just in case it promotes the self-interest of the agent who performs it, whereas altruism takes the opposite position, claiming that an action is morally right or good just in case it promotes the interests of others.

Altruism can also be described in terms of an action. In this sense, an altruistic act necessarily involves a personal sacrifice, but is done with the intention that another might benefit from one's efforts. This is clear from the opening definition given for altruism by James Ozinga in his recent book entitled, simply, *Altruism*: "Altruism in its dictionary meaning simply refers to unselfishness. The positive way of expressing this is unselfish concern for the welfare of others. I have refined this just a bit, so the way the word is used here is as follows: Altruism is behavior benefiting someone else at some cost to oneself…"[214]

Indeed, few people today, save missionaries and monks, tend to adhere to altruism as a strict, uncompromising moral principle, striving to be altruistic in all of their actions. Most people believe, instead, that some type of compromise is necessary, in order to be practical, and that one should balance egoism with altruism. Though, most people do not realize that this compromise is *anti-Christian*. Nietzsche explains this in the following passage:

> So *who* exactly does Christianity negate? What does it consider worldly? The fact that people are soldiers, judges, patriots; that they defend themselves; that they defend their honour; that they do what is best for themselves; that they are *proud*…Every practice at every moment, every instinct, every value judgment that people *act* on is anti-Christian these days: what *miscarriages of duplicity* modern people are, that in spite of all this they are *not ashamed* to call themselves Christians![215]

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[213] Maclagan, W.G., "Self and Others: A Defense of Altruism," *Philosophical Quarterly,* 4 (1954), 109-110.
[214] Ozinga, James R. *Altruism*. (Westport: Praeger, 1999) 1.
[215] A 38.

Nietzsche explains that although most people believe themselves to take the moral demands of Christianity seriously, in fact, people today adhere only to a watered-down version of Christianity. They believe in,

> marvelously *simplified* Christianity. A god who in his love arranges everything in a manner that will in the end be best for us; a god who gives to us and takes from us our virtue and our happiness, so that as a whole all is meet and fit and there is no reason for us to take life sadly, let alone to exclaim against it; in short, resignation and modest demands elevated to a godhead.[216]

Indeed, while such people today might accept altruism as the highest good, they certainly do not think achievement of the highest good is necessary *for them*. For them only "modest demands" are required and it is these 'modest demands' of simplified Christianity that have made a life of pure selflessness appear extreme today. This is not a move forward in Nietzsche's view, but a move backward. People no longer desire to be great in terms of their morality because they feel there is no need to do so beyond the modicum of altruistic acts, prayer, and tithing. Under this simplified version of Christianity, the meek are blessed and everything turns out for the best, including in the afterlife: But, "modest virtues…h[ave] been paid for too dearly," Nietzsche thinks, for they "have brought into discredit the more valuable qualities of virtue and of man…they have led the *brave, generous, audacious, excessive* inclinations of the strong soul astray to the point of self-destruction."[217] As far as *whom* the modest adherents of Christianity view as representing the highest in moral stature, however, it is quite revealing that for most of these people Mother Teresa is accepted as being one of the greatest exemplars of the good.

Moral codes embracing altruism as an ideal can differ on the degree of self-sacrifice required for a moral life and also differ about who, in particular, should be the beneficiary of altruistic actions, but the concept of altruism in itself does not offer this guidance. Altruism

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[216] D 92.
[217] LN 10 [86].

states only that a moral life requires self-sacrifice. Nietzsche notes altruism's lack of specification when he states that when one subscribes to altruism one becomes willing to make themselves a "useful member and instrument of the whole except that one is at present very uncertain as to where this whole is to be sought, whether in an existing state or one still to be created, or in the nation, or in a brotherhood of peoples, or in new little economic communalities."[218] Nonetheless, he points out that altruistic action, no matter to what degree it is performed, is harmful to its practitioner and, therefore, should not be performed:

> The best is lacking when self-interest begins to be lacking. To choose instinctively, what is harmful to *yourself*, to be *tempted* by 'disinterested' motives, this is practically the formula for decadence. 'Not to look for your own advantage' --" that is just the moral fig leaf for an entirely different, namely, a physiological, state of affairs: "I don't know how to *find* my own advantage" ... Disintegration of the instincts! — People are done for when they become altruistic.[219]

In Bernard Reginster's article, "Nietzsche's 'Revaluation' of Altruism," he explains that Nietzsche criticizes altruism on three different levels. First, Reginster clarifies a distinction that he says Nietzsche implicitly relies on, namely a clarification of two connotations of the word *'selbstlosigkeit'* or selflessness. Reginster says that in one sense it is used to mean, "a selfless action [which] is equivalent to what we call an altruistic action, i.e. an action which aims at the good of another for its own sake [and] [o]n the other hand, a selfless action is one that is 'unegoistic,' for example, devoid of selfish motives."[220] The former he calls altruism and the latter he refers to as simply 'selflessness'. Reginster's view of 'selflessness', I believe, is accurate in that it designates a category of self-denial, a 'treating oneself as *less* than worthy,' which is broader than altruism. This broader conceptual category would include things like refraining from sex because one thinks the body is sinful, willfully evading impious questions

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[218] D 132.
[219] TI "Skirmishes," 35.
[220] Reginster, Bernard. "Nietzsche's 'Revaluation' of Altruism" *Nietzsche-Studien.* 29 (2000), 200.

that may challenge one's religious beliefs, or the simple act of "swallowing one's pride." Further, it might also include actions of asceticism and self-abuse, such as self-flagellation.

Reginster declares that Nietzsche's revaluation of altruism aims to prove two important things: (1) That altruism is not the only means by which one can be generous; (2) that altruism actually harms a person's capacity to be kind or generous. We begin then with Nietzsche's first point, namely, that generosity towards others does not demand self-sacrifice.

In section V, we saw that Nietzsche espouses a principled form of egoism aimed at a healthy and accomplished lifestyle. We also saw that Nietzsche maintained the value of fairness and honor between individuals who are equals and encouraged relationships of romance and friendship, and even acts of benevolence, as consistent with one's egoistic well-being. Here I will explain that the capacity for generosity fits equally well into the life of the ideally selfish person: "It is *wealth of personality*, plenitude in oneself, overflowing and giving away, instinctive well-being and saying "Yes" to oneself which enables great sacrifices and great love: what these affects grow from is strong and divine *selfness*, as surely as do the desire to master, the invading, the inner assurance of having a right to everything."[221] Lester Hunt affirms the benefits of egoism for generosity by suggesting that when we "pile up spiritual riches by living the sort of healthy life [Nietzsche] describes in his books, then the problems of distribution that altruists and Moralists try to solve by laying down their iron duties would take care of themselves. Healthy human beings, who are not creatures of duty at all, are naturally a blessing to others. 'Physician, help yourself: thus you help your patient too.' (Z I 22)"[222]

Nietzsche even goes so far as to suggest that a life of profuse giving is a characteristic of the 'ideally' selfish person:

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[221] LN 10[128]
[222] Hunt, Lester. *Nietzsche and the Origin of Virtue. (Lanham:* Routledge, 1991) 93.

> Tell me pray: how came gold to the highest value? Because it is uncommon, and unprofiting, and beaming, and soft in luster; it always bestoweth itself. …Goldlike, beameth the glance of the bestower…Uncommon is the highest virtue, and unprofiting, beaming is it, and soft of luster: a bestowing virtue is the highest virtue. Verily, I divine you well, my disciples: ye strive like me for the bestowing virtue. What should ye have in common with cats and wolves? It is your thirst to become sacrifices and gifts yourselves: and therefore have ye the thirst to accumulate all riches in your soul. Insatiably striveth your soul for treasures and jewels, because your virtue is insatiable in desiring to bestow. *Ye constrain all things to flow towards you and into you, so that they shall flow back again out of your fountain as the gifts of your love.* Verily, an appropriator of all values must such bestowing love become; but healthy and holy, I call this selfishness. [223]

While the foregoing passage undoubtedly describes a life of other-regarding behavior, that is, of bestowing, Nietzsche curiously describes such a life as "healthy and holy" *selfishness*. The reason he does describes his actions in this way is that he sees selfishness as hinging on one's motivation for the action performed. Nietzsche's "healthy and holy" egoist bestows in abundance (to both people and causes) not simply because he is capable of doing so, but because in his abundance, this is how he best knows how to fulfill himself and feel powerful.[224] He is bestows gifts onto others, either as tribute to them, because they enhance his life, or as the result of his overflowing wealth, which makes his generosity un-sacrificial. Zarathustra makes this clear when he speaks: "I, however, am a bestower: willingly do I bestow as friend to friends. Strangers, however, and the poor may pluck for themselves the fruit from my tree: thus doth it cause less shame. Beggars, however one should entirely do away with!"[225]

While Nietzsche's view here might seem paradoxical, I suggest it is not far off from Aristotle's view on generosity:

> [T]he generous person will also aim at the fine in his giving, and will give correctly; for he will give to the right people, the right amounts, at the right time, and all the other

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[223] TSZ, I 22[1]. (italics mine)
[224] Importantly, it should be understood that the bestowing virtue can also be seen as giving not simply to people but to any worthy cause or project outside of oneself. A person passionately devoted to a career can sometime more easily be understood as selfish than a person who bestows onto others.
[225] TSZ, II 3. Also see: TI "Skirmishes," 44.

> things that are implied by correct giving…. If someone gives to the wrong people…he will not be called generous but some other person…. [The generous person] avoid[s] giving to just anyone, so that he will have something to give to the right people, at the right time, and where it is fine.

And,

> Most wasteful people['s]…ways of giving are not generous either, since they are not fine, do not aim at the fine, and are not done in the right way. These people sometimes enrich people who ought to be poor, and would give nothing to people with sound characters, but would give much to flatterers or to those providing some other pleasure.[226]

The key difference between this life of 'bestowing' and of 'altruism' is that the former is *not self-sacrificial*. The bestowing agent decides when and to whom he will give to others and usually it is to those who are most important and valuable in his life that he will give. Altruism demands the exact opposite. Under altruism, giving is a duty to be performed regardless of and contrary to one's interest in the matter. Those who are to be one's beneficiaries, furthermore, are not those whom one chooses, and, in fact, it is often those who are least worthy who are the most deserving of being the beneficiaries of an altruistic act.

We have thus clarified that egoism and generosity are not incompatible, according to Nietzsche, but that egoism can be seen as a means to promoting generosity. This leaves little room for why one should wish to perform an act of altruism over an act of egoistic generosity or 'bestowing'. We shall now turn to the other line of criticism that Nietzsche levels against altruism. This second line of criticism declares that altruism actually harms a person's capacity to be generous. That is, to the extent that one engages in altruistic acts, one will either

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[226] Aristotle. *Nichomachean Ethics. Trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd ed. 1120a 25*-1121b10. This should be compared with BGE 41 and TSZ, IV 8, where Nietzsche explains that bestowing is an art one must learn to perform: "Especially nowadays…when everything low hath become rebellious and exclusive and haughty in its manner—in the manner of the populace. / Then learnest thou…how much harder it is to give properly than to take properly, and that bestowing well is an *art*—the last, subtlest master-art of kindness. / Now doth it provoke the lower classes, all benevolence and petty giving; and the overrich may be on their guard! / It is no longer true that the poor are blessed." [TSZ, IV 8].

undermine his ability to be generous or simply be incapable of being genuinely kind. Let us look at his reasoning.

"An 'altruistic' morality, a morality in which selfishness *fades away*—, is always a bad sign. …You are missing the best part when selfishness begins to fail," Nietzsche declares.[227] Additionally, Nietzsche states, altruism holds "of the *good* man" that he "sid[e] with all that is weak, sick, failure, suffering of itself…."[228] Altruism does not tell one 'to whom' or 'for what' such sacrifice is being made, but only that such a sacrifice is required, if one is to be moral. What does this do to a person? For the person who takes this morality seriously, it creates a deep-seated conflict between one's 'values' and one's moral code. It causes one to neglect one's values and desires as, *according to one's own morality*, one must be ready and willing to give these values when they needed by someone else.

In stripping one of his values, altruism also strips one of his identity and his self-esteem. This is made clear when Nietzsche states: "[T]here is a wonderful and fair sounding unanimity in the demand that the ego has to deny itself until, in the form of adaptation to the whole, it again acquires its firmly set circle of rights and duties – until it has become something quite novel and different. What is wanted – whether this is admitted or not – is nothing less than a fundamental remoulding, indeed weakening and abolition of the *individual*."[229] A person devoid of self-esteem will not merely be less confident, and thereby less accomplished, he will be incapable of making decisions, as he will have no confidence in his own mind and judgment. A person at this point will be ripe for commandments.

If "a man should wish to be, like that God, wholly love, and to do and desire everything for others and nothing for himself, then the latter is impossible simply because he has to do a

[227] TI "Skirmishes," 35.
[228] EH "Why I am a Destiny," 8.
[229] D 132.

great deal for himself if he is to be able to do anything whatsoever for the sake of others," Nietzsche asserts.[230] Similarly, genuine good-will and kindness cannot come from the person who neglects himself: For, "[n]othing ruins us more profoundly or inwardly than 'impersonal' duty, or any sacrifice in front of the Moloch of abstraction…. What could be more destructive than working, thinking, feeling, without any inner need, any deeply personal choice, and *pleasure*? as an automaton of 'duty'? It is almost the *recipe* for decadence…."[231] Indeed, it is because of the prescription of altruism and selflessness that has, quote, "trained the individual to be a function of the herd and to ascribe value to himself only as a function," that we see so many, "world-weary," souls in the world—unaccomplished and uncreative—wandering errantly from person to person with a blank stare and helpless dependency.[232] The ideal of altruism causes one "to flee from the ego, and hate it, and to live in others and for others…."[233] Can we call such a man who flees from his ego 'good'? Happy? Virile? Or, rather we should tell him to 'take responsibility for himself', send him on his way, and, as Zarathustra did, tell him to leave us and "find himself?" Indeed, this is what Nietzsche recommends, while at the same time advising that we "suffer no ill effects from him, however well disposed he may want to appear!"[234]

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[230] HAH "The Religious Life," 133. For an interesting discussion on this point (though not directly from a Nietzschean perspective) see: Jean Hampton's "Selflessness and the Loss of Self" *Social Philosophy & Policy*, 10:1 (1993) 135-165.
[231] A 11.
[232] GS 116.
[233] D 516. see also: TSZ, I 16; GS 119.
[234] Ibid.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this thesis I provided an overview of Nietzsche's ethics with an emphasis on demonstrating how his naturalistic approach to ethics leads him to advance a life-based, egoistic moral code. I argued that this Nietzschean ethic, though radical in the light of conventional morality, is not irrational, unprincipled, or proscriptive of other-regarding moral considerations. I began by highlighting what I believe Nietzsche's task as a writer and philosopher-psychologist is. I dismissed the notion that Nietzsche's claim to desire no 'believers' means that he does not recommend any moral view whatsoever. I showed that this statement, like many of his other statements, is meant in a pejorative sense, designating blind followers and believers of uncritical 'faith'. I also pointed out in this section that Nietzsche's writings are meant for a select group of individuals, namely "higher men," whose flourishing may be undercut by their unwitting acceptance of a self-destructive morality. In sections II and III, we saw Nietzsche's deep commitment to naturalism and how this foundation of naturalism influences Nietzsche's life-based, egoistic moral code. I showed that this naturalistic basis leads Nietzsche to place the highest degree of value on the higher man's life, the development of his character, and his flourishing. Further, this value for life, I suggested, leads Nietzsche to extol as virtues, independence, personal achievement, and personal excellence. In section IV, I shifted focus to Nietzsche's account of the higher men, in particular his account of Goethe. Surveying the traits and characteristics of these higher men helped furnished us with a concrete picture of what Nietzsche views as the highest and greatest in man and, further, facilitated our understanding for why Nietzsche embraces egoism as the proper moral orientation for higher men. In section V, after taking a deeper look at Nietzsche's brand of egoism, we saw how Nietzsche was able to give an account of other-regarding behaviors, such as love, benevolence, friendship and

Samaritan assistance in terms of egoism. Finally, in the last section, we took a look at Nietzsche's evaluation of selflessness and altruism. We saw that Nietzsche regards these views, which are typically seen as good and moral, as harmful and destructive to 'higher man'. Generosity, we learned, is actually more abundant on an egoist basis.

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