



The Renunciation Paradox: an Analysis of Vulnerability and Intimacy in Nietzsche's Anti-Humanism

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Abstract

Nietzsche's texts contain a puzzle about the role of vulnerability in the creation of intimacy and its function on behalf of human flourishing. I describe the interpretive puzzle and its prima facie paradoxical aspects. On the one hand, there are texts in which Nietzsche expresses a longing for intimacy and other texts where he furnishes details about the possibility of intimacy between equals. On the other hand, Nietzsche is severely critical of certain types of intimacy (especially ones requiring vulnerability and authenticity) and advocates for a pathos of distance in human relationships. I claim that Nietzschean intimacy is not an inherently paradoxical concept. A proper understanding of Nietzsche's anti-humanism provides the resources to resolve the paradox and to use the solution of the puzzle to illuminate Nietzsche's insights about human psychology.

Keywords Vulnerability · Nietzsche · Intimacy · Humanism · Antihumanism · Authenticity · Egalitarianism · Equality

1 The Renunciation Paradox

Nietzsche displays a marked hostility towards the type of vulnerability promoted in current popular psychology. At the same time, Nietzsche identifies a set of humans who, *inter pares*, strike the correct balance between proximity and distance with their friends. One explanatory alternative to integrate these positions is to pose a paradox, as Jacques Derrida does for fidelity and gift-giving. The social practices that Derrida investigates must achieve contradictory aims at the expense of psychological dissonance. The performance of the practice is mired in paradox as it intrinsically renounces the effects for which it evidently is the instrumental

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cause (the idea of the renunciation paradox is found in Derrida, 2005, 174; I have taken the expression from Freibach-Heifetz, 2005, 251).

One interpretive possibility is to read Nietzsche's condemnation of vulnerability in the traditional sense of modern self-help culture and his affirmation of its possibility in a reformed sense as an expression for a paradox of this type, adding to the stereotype that Nietzsche is careless about stating contradictions. My anti-humanist interpretation, by contrast, dissolves the paradox by providing an analysis of what vulnerability means in appropriate Nietzschean terms. Such an analysis must both explain Nietzsche's animus towards vulnerability as a condition for intimacy; and his rejection of stoicism—the term 'sovereign individual' that Nietzsche uses only in the second book of *The Genealogy of Morality* gives the incorrect impression that Nietzsche has stoic sympathies in this regard (for detailed analysis see Nussbaum, 1994, and Paphitis, 2013).

In English, the word vulnerability equivocates between luck-vulnerability and intimacy-vulnerability. The former captures the dependence of individual human beings on fate. In philosophy, this type of vulnerability is often considered to be problematic (for example in the Socratic tradition; for a spirited defence of its positive value see Marquard, 1991). The latter describes the feature of persons who share private information, making themselves open to psychological injury, and thus improve a social bond with one another. It is the latter concept that is at issue here as well as some assumptions associated with it as manifest in the following excerpt by Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny in their book *Heterosexuality*:

Sharing at the emotional level is one of the hallmarks of intimacy. Unless two people are willing to reveal a good deal of information about themselves—not only biographical, but also in terms of what they feel, what they fear, what they worry about, and what they hope for or dream about—it is unlikely that any meaningful intimacy can exist. It is actually in this process of communication that the essence of intimacy is expressed. (Masters et al., 1994, 18)

On the one hand, a Nietzschean friendship includes a dynamic of revealing what is concealed, of sharing secrets, of exposing oneself to enmity and rejection. On the other hand, it proceeds more along the lines of Pyotr Kropotkin's idea of mutual aid than Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy of universal love and cooperation. Nietzsche's lattice (rather than fluid) structure of friendship is predicated on a delicate balance between repulsion and attraction and differs in critical ways from what modern-day psychology trades as vulnerability. To provide a more accurate account of how Nietzsche resolves the renunciation paradox it is necessary to pose and address several interpretive puzzles.

- (1) What are the physiological foundations of the punishment/reward system instituted by the body of a sentient being in order to motivate fitness-enhancing behaviour using pain and pleasure responses? I will show that a purely functional account leaves an explanatory lacuna that we can exploit to resolve the paradox, if the desired explanation is meant to be a naturalist one—which a Nietzschean would expect (see Williams, 2010, 34f).

- (2) Nietzsche demonstrates in other contexts an inclination to resort to explanation by concept migration. In *The Genealogy of Morality*, for example, the emergence of the ascetic ideal is explained by the migration of the debtor-creditor relation in a 'state of nature' to the privacy of a civilized person (see Craig, 2007, and Janaway, 2007, 124–142). I will show that a satisfactory resolution of the renunciation paradox entails a similar account of concept migration from the public to the private.
- (3) The resolution of the renunciation paradox has critical implications for a proper interpretation of Nietzsche's anti-humanism. Nietzsche is anti-essentialist about human nature, with much of Michel Foucault's anti-humanist Nietzsche interpretation being a proper commentary and extension of Nietzsche's thought. What steps into the place of humanism in Nietzsche is the idea of a subset of humans overcoming their tragic heritage and enjoying equality of overcoming with each other. Struggle, moments of deception, and communication by silence characterize this equality, which for Nietzsche is a *conditio sine qua non* for friendship ("all company is bad company except the company of one's equals," *Beyond Good and Evil* 26). Note that 'overcoming' does not mean 'leaving behind in the past,' but, in the spirit of Rosi Braidotti's nomadic ethics, "transcending the resignation and passivity that ensue from being hurt, lost, and dispossessed" (see Braidotti, 2009, 150).

I will contrast humanism, which considers belonging to the human species to be a feature necessarily relevant to the most fundamental ethical questions, with a Nietzschean anti-humanism whose fundamental ethical category is the difference between *homo volens* and *homo volans*. The former's psychology is characterized by the wish to attenuate fate and by the projection of present desires into future accomplishments via an illusion of agency and moral responsibility. The latter's psychology is characterized by an overcoming of the general limitation of humans: *homo volans* is the person engaged in the art of flying, not by wishful thinking but by patient and serene engineering within the parameters of nature yet outside and unfettered by the parameters of liberty, fraternity, and equality—and the emotional muddle of love, hatred, and intimacy-vulnerability.

Here is the roadmap for this paper: this section explains and illustrates the renunciation paradox that one may read into Nietzsche's various writings on the topic of psychological intimacy. The following section shows that a functional account of vulnerability cannot be accommodated with Nietzsche's explanatory approach to psychological phenomena. An evolutionary or otherwise straightforward causal narrative explanation is a mismatch with Nietzsche's more general genealogical program.

Instead, Nietzsche resolves the paradox by means of concept migration. He does not do so explicitly for vulnerability, but his detailed thoughts on morality provide a helpful template; and I will speculate on how the concept migration works for vulnerability. In the final section before the conclusion, I show how Nietzsche's anti-humanism makes all the pieces fall into place without the need for a paradox. Humans are not only superficially but deeply different from one

another. Those who manage to transcend their humanity (in the sense that they live atypically and do not pursue human ideals but rather seek to flourish in ways that are not available to an individual qua human) experience intimacy in ways that are inexpressible in humanist terms.

I agree with Sharli Paphitis' assessment that despite Martha Nussbaum's own rejection of what she calls the Nietzschean 'sovereign individual,' Nietzsche is in broad agreement with Nussbaum that

there is a strength of a specifically human sort in the willingness to acknowledge some truths about one's situation: one's mortality, one's finitude, the limits and vulnerabilities of one's body, one's need for food and drink and shelter and friendship. There is a strength in the willingness to form attachments that can go wrong and cause deep pain, in the willingness to invest oneself in the world in a way that opens one's whole life up to the changes of the world, for good and for bad. There is, in short, a strength in the willingness to be porous rather than totally hard, in the willingness to be a mortal animal living in the world. (Nussbaum, 1994, 160)

That Nussbaum understands this view to be a criticism of Nietzsche while I argue Nietzsche's and Nussbaum's broad agreement shows that Nussbaum has become tangled in a paradox that can be untangled. The resolution of the renunciation paradox attempted in my paper fields analytical questions about details in Nietzsche interpretation and aims at a coherent representation of Nietzsche's anti-humanism that rejects one type of vulnerability while envisioning another—something Nietzsche has notably also done for freedom (for example in Richardson, 2009), valuing (for example in Hussain, 2007), and subjectivity (for example in Guay, 2006).

In the preface to *Human All Too Human*, Nietzsche characterizes the great liberation by a "desire for travel, strange places, estrangements, coldness, soberness, frost, a hatred of love." In *Beyond Good and Evil* 257, Nietzsche explains the 'pathos of distance' which is a necessary condition for the elevation of the type 'man,' in the following terms: "the longing for an ever new widening of distance within the soul itself, the formation of ever higher, rarer, further, more extended, more comprehensive states," and adds in *Human All Too Human* 195, "rigorous reflection, terseness, coldness, simplicity, deliberately pursued even to their limit, self-containment of the feelings and silence in general—that alone can help us."

The contrast is provided by Nietzsche when he clearly cares about friendship and seeks to compensate for the necessity of silence and distance in relationships. *Daybreak* 288 speaks of "warm and noble intimacy," and in his letters Nietzsche cries out, "I do not want to be lonely any longer and desire to learn how to become human" (July 1882 to Louise von Salomé).

It is precisely we solitary ones that require love and companions in whose presence we may be open and simple, and the eternal struggle of silence and dissimulation can cease. Yes, I am glad that I can be myself, openly and honestly with you, for you are such a good friend and companion. (January 1875 to Elisabeth Nietzsche)

Dana Freibach-Heifetz has observed points of comparison between Aristotle and Nietzsche in their treatment of and attachment to intimacy and friendship: Aristotle and Nietzsche “have a lot in common: their distinction between higher and lower forms of friendship; their elitism; their stressing the equality between the friends; their conceiving friendship and self-love, in their proper sense, as interwoven” (see Freibach-Heifetz, 2005, 252).

For Jacques Derrida, the paradox of gift-giving or the paradox of the fidelity-promise is constitutively engraved in these two social practices. They contain the necessity for their own renunciation in an irreducible paradox. A flawed reading of Nietzsche may see such a paradox in operation for vulnerability: while intimacy-vulnerability is essential to human flourishing (as expressed in Nietzsche’s letters), I can only achieve it by renouncing it (as expressed more forcefully in Nietzsche’s published works).

More generally, this flawed reading associates Nietzsche’s thought on psychology with dialectic reasoning (following Sartre’s distinction between dialectic and analytic reason). Whatever may be true of the rest of Nietzsche’s philosophy, I consider his psychological investigations to follow a principled approach of analysis.

My paper seeks to show that for Nietzsche, friendship, intimacy, vulnerability, and communication are not bonded by paradox. The appearance of paradox can be resolved by diligent interpretation of Nietzsche’s philosophical claims. There are rewards for this type of interpretive labour as we clear up misunderstandings of Nietzsche’s concepts and provide a coherent view of Nietzschean psychology.

2 The Failure of the Functional Account

Nietzsche questions the positive value of intimacy-vulnerability given the drive of every life form to enhance its power and overcome resistance. Interpretation of Nietzsche’s texts faces the following questions: What are physiological explanations for the positive value of certain types of intimacy-vulnerability in modern culture? Is there a genealogy of intimacy-vulnerability that explains the paradox that power acquisition in modern culture is often associated with increased intimacy-vulnerability? Finally, what is the status of intimacy-vulnerability after a Nietzschean revaluation of values in anti-humanist terms?

A functional account serves as an explanation for trait T and its positive valuation in a population capable of valuing as follows: T increases an organism’s fitness, leading to higher rates of survival and reproduction, therefore it becomes encoded in DNA by natural selection. Because T is fitness-enhancing, circumstances for its appropriate expression become motivationally salient for the organism. A chemical process is triggered which causes the organism pleasure as it expresses T.

Pleasure is an effect caused by a chemical process P, for example the release of dopamine. Here is a chicken-or-egg question: did P become pleasurable because it was associated with the behaviour, or was P associated with the behaviour because it was pleasurable? Clearly, there is nothing inherently pleasurable about the release of a chemical. How P imparts pleasure is a mystery and related to the philosophy of qualia and consciousness; the power of functionalist explanations is that the

how-question can be set aside. P assumed its function by being associated with some kind of fitness-enhancing behaviour. When the association took place, there was as yet no pleasure attached to P. What kind of accident made them associate? It is the same kind of accident that makes a sign associate with a signified, for example the word ‘chair’ with the artifact that facilitates sitting.

The association between sign and signified, between trait and pleasure, becomes so strong that they are confused in explanations: one is taken for the other, causes and effects are reversed. Nietzsche devotes a whole section of *Twilight of the Idols* to one of the four great errors, the error of reversing cause and effect. What is intimacy-vulnerability—a sign or a signified? Is the pleasure experienced at opening oneself up in intimate ways a sign that intimacy-vulnerability is fitness-enhancing, or is it a more degraded product that has been laundered in the machine of iterated semantics so often that its association with enhanced fitness has blanched and vanished?

Nietzsche’s genealogical method claims that such semantic degradation happens all the time. Natural selection itself, by the sedimentation of historical processes, has become degraded and inimical to life rather than supportive of it. It is not the strongest and most life-affirming forms that survive and reproduce, but sadly the weak, the slavish, and the many; not the ones that are ordered in their drives, but the ones that are exposed to the corruption of entropy (see “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man” 14 in *Twilight of the Idols*). This insight is at the foundation of Nietzsche’s anti-humanism.

Popular culture claims that intimacy-vulnerability is a necessary feature of a flourishing psychological human life. The pleasures that some associate with it suggest its fitness-enhancing properties. It is mere speculation, but the offer to receive a wound in order to promote one’s social status may be an ethological reflex. Impregnable dictators are potentially less long-lived than leaders who advertise power sharing, a correlation which the TED talk celebrity Brene Brown with her qualitative method astutely observes—while her pop-psychological causal interpretation of these observations is on trial here.

On Nietzsche’s account, not all fitness-enhancing properties serve the flourishing of life. Some, for example slave morality (which may be fitness-enhancing in the twisted route that natural selection sometimes takes), demonstrably do not. Self-preservation is only an indirect result of what a living thing seeks to do above all: to discharge its strength (*Beyond Good and Evil* 13). Neither success in producing offspring nor pleasure are the ultimate arbiter of what constitutes a flourishing life. In *The Antichrist* 2 Nietzsche explains:

What is good? Whatever augments the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself, in man. What is evil? Whatever springs from weakness. What is happiness? The feeling that power increases, that resistance is overcome.

Applying these criteria to intimacy-vulnerability, the renunciation paradox leaves us in an interpretive dilemma. In some passages, Nietzsche expresses revulsion against proximity in relationships and develops a ‘pathos of distance,’ which is characteristic of strength (see for example “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man” 37 in *Twilight of the Idols*). In other passages, Nietzsche praises friendship and

develops a positive view of inter pares relations that is supposed to be coherent with his vigorous rejection of equality. Ruth Abbey summarizes:

Nietzsche's depiction of friendship illustrates that not all intimacy is tyranny. While he allows that friendship can transcend the boundaries of individuation, total assimilation into or identification with the other is not encouraged. "A Good Friendship" (*Assorted Opinions and Maxims* 241) advocates the artful use of intimacy and warns against becoming too close to another and "confounding the I and Thou." Nietzsche explains that intimacy is only denigrated by those who are incapable of "warm and noble intimacy" ("die edle herzliche Vertraulichkeit" in *Daybreak* 288) while in "A Different Kind of Neighbour Love" (in *Daybreak* 471) he describes the sort of relationship preferred by those capable of grand passion. This is "a gentle, reflective, relaxed friendliness" ("eine milde, betrachtsame, gelassene Freundlichkeit") ... "to gaze into what is strange and free, into what is different, does them so much good!" (Abbey, 1997, 88)

Perspicuity is explicitly not one of friendship's essential features (see Abbey, 1999, 54). In *The Gay Science* 16, Nietzsche underlines the need for dissimulation in relationships. Deception is acceptable if it protects friends' feelings (*Human All Too Human* 360). *Beyond Good and Evil* 40 is a meditation on the need of every profound spirit to have a mask for friends and foes alike. A careful reading of Nietzsche's thought makes clear that intimacy-vulnerability is one of the areas in which a functional account must be replaced by a genealogy. If humans were aware of the instrumental reasons for which they seek intimacy-vulnerability, take pleasure in it, and reward it in others by extending to them power and trust, they would lose the constitutively intrinsic reasons which psychologically motivate intimacy-vulnerability. A case in point is the idolization of love practised by women in *Human All Too Human* 415. It is, according to Nietzsche, "fundamentally and originally an invention of their shrewdness, inasmuch as it enhances their power ... but through centuries-long habituation to this exaggerated evaluation of love it has come to pass that they have become entangled in their own net and forgotten how it originated."

Norms prescribe that making oneself vulnerable in order to gain social relevance by establishing friendship or deepening a romantic attachment is a reversal of the proper causal order. Hence the functional history of this social practice is effaced and the iterated semantic degradation alluded to earlier can commence. The value of intimacy-vulnerability and its pleasures become divorced from what it accomplishes for flourishing; given slave morality, it turns against life and becomes hostile to it.

When Nietzsche rejects a social practice as inimical to life (morality, knowledge, intimacy-vulnerability), he often sketches out a new paradigm that replaces the old practice. When his utterances of rejection are placed side by side with his attempts at new paradigms, Nietzsche interpretation often finds itself arrested in paradox. Nietzsche's derogatory comments about morality, for example, are well documented, but then he also praises the "experimental morality" of an ancient East Indian legal codex (*The Antichrist* 57) or speculates on "healthy morality" in *Twilight of the Idols* ("Morality as Anti-Nature" 4).

With respect to intimacy-vulnerability, I call the interpretive dilemma the renunciation paradox, following Freibach-Heifetz and Derrida. For Derrida, the social practices of gift-giving and promise-keeping are mired in paradox, for gift-giving is intrinsically anti-reciprocal and promise-keeping constitutively includes infidelity, so that functional explanations invariably lead to popular-psychological self-help accounts that sabotage the social practice in question by ignoring its genealogy.

Because Nietzsche is master of genealogies, he has resources at his disposal to resolve the paradox. Nietzsche's paradigm of intimacy *inter pares* is coherent and deliberately opposed to popular-psychological descriptions of intimacy-vulnerability in relationships. There is therefore no paradox in rejecting one while embracing the other. The following two sections show how Nietzsche's anti-humanism paired with an explanatory scheme that is one of Nietzsche's favourites, concept migration, serves to provide the foundation for a coherent, non-functionalist understanding and valuing of intimacy *inter pares* which rejects as hostile to life the popular-psychological idea of intimacy-vulnerability.

3 Concept Migration

In the previous section I have shown how Nietzsche accounts for pervasive errors about human psychology by contrasting mistakenly inverted causal explanations with the historical explanations that the causal explanations seek to obscure. Nietzsche's most detailed report of such an error is in his book *The Genealogy of Morality*, where the singularity of morality's metaphysical origin is debunked in favour of a plurality of contingent historical origins. Michel Foucault writes that the genealogist "refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics ... [and] finds that there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secrets that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (Foucault, 1977, 142).

One example for such an inverted causal explanation is the connection between punishment and moral responsibility. The metaphysician first gazes deeply into the essence of humanity and recognizes in it a capacity for moral responsibility. As a consequence, it makes sense to punish the moral failing of an individual. Punishment is derivative of and secondary to moral responsibility. Nietzsche corrects this account by providing a historical explanation: some animals in general and humans in particular remember as a function of pain sensations; for humans, memory (which is indivisibly linked to pain) in addition to some other cognitive functions provide the possibility of promising.

Promises create debtor-creditor relationships. When a debtor fails to make good on a promise, a substitute loss is inflicted on him or her—a punishment. Punishment with its physiological origins in pain and memory creates the illusion of moral responsibility. Once the illusion has solidified, its illusory nature is masked by reversing the explanatory direction and creating metaphysics. The genealogist exposes the reversal and its underlying error by revealing the concept migration that generated it—in the case of moral responsibility, concept migration from promise-keeping and an economic credit system to the realm of moral responsibility.

Nietzschean concept migration is more specific than mere analogy. It necessarily involves competitive claims by the metaphysical and by the physiological. The physiological is ‘die Unschuld des Werdens,’ the innocence of becoming, as historical processes unfold inseparable from their material conditions (this is one of many interesting parallels between Nietzsche and Karl Marx, for many more see the excellent Love, 1986). Helpful explanations always go to soil and root of the physiological; corrupt explanations reach upwards to abstractions, universalizations, and metaphysical essences. One common domain of Nietzschean concept migration is the contrast pair between the public and the private. In the *London Review of Books*, Fritz Stern recounts Nietzsche’s difficulties in balancing his public and his private image.

... the harshness and stridency, the verbal violence, the indifference to, or indeed exaltation of, suffering, the brutal outbursts and the contempt for “the botched and the bungled”—all this is chiefly found in the public Nietzsche, in his published writings, while the private Nietzsche craves and extends love, lives by gratitude and generosity. This, too, is a reversal of the usual values ...

This reversal contains a kernel of design on Nietzsche’s part. Stern implies that most of us tend to be grouchy and shy in private while, as long as we are invested in social approval, our public image is curated to be kind and approachable. Intimacy-vulnerability, by contrast, is popularly understood to grow from the inside out. The roots of intimacy are sought in a human core character, such as the longing that one half has for the other half to which it belongs (in Plato’s *Symposium*), the way in which human ontology reflects the relational ontology of the Christian trinity (see Loos, 2002), or neurophysiology (subjects have a ‘craving for emotional union with the beloved,’ see Aron et al., 2005, 327).

One key to the resolution of the renunciation paradox is an explanatory reversal using Nietzschean concept migration. Intimacy-vulnerability, rather than issuing from an essential human need and assuming a derivative public character, has its historical roots in public vulnerability rituals and has come to be transferred to the private realm. Nietzsche does not offer a detailed account of how this migration took place, and whether he gave it any thought is speculative on my part. René Girard’s *Violence and the Sacred* with its description of mimetic desires and the scapegoat mechanism is a useful example of what such an account might include (see Girard, 1977).

To be Nietzschean, the fundamental structure of the account must not be one of intention, design, and reflective planning. Instead, it is firmly planted in the types of physiological affects that are powerful enough to produce a non-functionalist development through an aggregation of historical accident and surreptitious interaction with conscious mental states. Both instrumental and intrinsic reasons, which may enter into intention, design, and reflective planning, are in such a development mere concealment for the more complicated anatomy beneath, whose functional structure is compromised by the contingency of its historical genesis. At the end of the process the subject is born, over and above the body, who has all the characteristics requisite for the popular psychological view (agency, altruism, intimacy needs)—but this subject is an inanimate invention of grammar.

Nietzsche is enough of a cultural pessimist to judge the invention of this subject, as well as the consciousness and the language that surround it, to be hostile to the material conditions, life and body, that have brought it forth (another area of kinship with Marx). “The sympathy of women, which is garrulous, bears the sick man’s bed into the public market-place” (*Human, All Too Human* 282). Intimacy-vulnerability is a phenomenon of the public market-place—a fact to which Nietzsche’s gender stereotype of women is shrewdly attuned—and receives its power from the migration in which it starts as a social practice to become constitutive of how humans view themselves in private. The final section explores the possibility space that Nietzsche outlines for a more life-giving and joyful intimacy: intimacy *inter pares*.

4 Anti-Humanism

“*Inter pares* is an intoxicating word,” Nietzsche writes in a letter to his sister on July 18, 1886. In his publications, however, Nietzsche puts the ideal of equality on the same noxious level as the object of his other favourite complaint, the pervasive ethical force of compassion and empathy with the suffering:

... two most frequently chanted songs and doctrines are called equality of rights and sympathy with all sufferers ... we opposite ones, however, who have opened our eye and conscience to the question how and where the plant ‘man’ has hitherto grown most vigorously, believe that this has always taken place under the opposite conditions ... (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 44)

In *Twilight of the Idols* 48, Nietzsche writes that there is no more poisonous venom than the teachings of equality. In section 37, he contrasts equality with the pathos of distance that according to Nietzsche is vital to any personal relationship.

Equality as a certain factual increase in similarity, which merely finds expression in the theory of equal rights, is an essential feature of decline. The cleavage between man and man, status and status, the plurality of types, the will to be oneself, to stand out—what I call the pathos of distance, that is characteristic of every strong age.

Similarly, in *The Antichrist* 43:

The poisonous doctrine, ‘equal rights for all,’ has been propagated as a Christian principle: out of the secret nooks and crannies of bad instinct Christianity has waged a deadly war upon all feelings of reverence and distance between man and man, which is to say, upon the first prerequisite to every step upward, to every development of civilization—out of the resentment of the masses it has forged its chief weapons against us, against everything noble, joyous and high-spirited on earth, against our happiness on earth ... nowadays no one has courage any more for special rights, for the right of dominion, for feelings of honourable pride in himself and his equals—for the pathos of distance. Our politics is sick with this lack of courage! The aristocratic attitude of mind has been undermined by the lie of the equality of souls.

In this passage, however, something curious happens. In the middle of a diatribe against equality and in favour of a pathos of distance, Nietzsche uses the phrase “himself and his equals.” What, suddenly, does it mean to have ‘equals’ when equality as a value is so corrosive to human life and culture? In *Human, All Too Human* 300 Nietzsche provides a hint. Not all equality is equal. There is a

double character of equality. The thirst for equality can express itself either as a desire to draw everyone down to oneself (through diminishing them, spying on them, ripping them up) or to raise oneself and everyone else up (through recognizing their virtues, helping them, rejoicing in their success).

Donovan Miyasaki has called these two forms of egalitarianism noble and slavish:

Slavish egalitarianism is assimilationist; it seeks to establish qualitative equality, understood as similarity. Noble egalitarianism, in contrast, is pluralist; it supports only quantitative equality—proportional resistance as the foundation of qualitative multiplicity—thus it is anti-egalitarianism in the slavish sense. (Miyasaki, 2015, 14)

Miyasaki has a persuasive argument that the right kind of egalitarianism is more conducive to Nietzsche’s most dearly held commitments than elitism. This pluralistic egalitarianism promotes equality not as similarity but as multiple, proportional resistances. In *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche invokes Arthur Schopenhauer’s ‘republic of genius,’ where “one giant calls to another across the desert intervals of time and, undisturbed by the excited chattering dwarfs who creep about beneath them, the exalted spirit-dialogue goes on” (“On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” 9). Miyasaki gives the helpful example of athletic competition, where both diversity of innovation and non-dominance provide the best basis for the development of high-performing individuals.

My emphasis in the following will be on Nietzsche’s anti-humanism, his conviction that, as he puts it in the introduction to *The Antichrist*, “one must make oneself superior to humanity, in power, in loftiness of soul, in contempt.” This thought is prefaced by the remark that the ‘rest’ is merely humanity, indicating that the bearer of value is not humanity or even individuals who share some property that is characteristic for humans (Kantian rationality, the inviolable dignity of humans in the preamble of the German constitution, or the ingredients of Karl Jaspers’ humanist *Existenz* philosophy, to name a few important examples).

As a working definition for humanism in this context (mostly to understand and contrast with Nietzsche’s anti-humanism), let us say that humanists claim that the biological species *homo sapiens* constitutes or has created a special set of circumstances that raises certain properties to a level at which they are appropriately valued in a positive way. There is something aspirational about the essence of humanity. Existentialists and anti-essentialists, of course, will be unhappy about the term ‘essence’ here, but even they, if not especially they (see Jean-Paul Sartre’s defence of existentialism as a humanism), locate a creativity and aesthetics in humans that they broadly value as positive.

Nietzsche is an anti-humanist in the sense that he rejects the idea that humanity is intensionally aspirational. Nothing about humanity ought to be valued positively except its pure extension: the way in which historically humans have fought and suffered, experienced joy and tragedy, overcome resistance, employed their curiosity, and created beauty. From the deeds of humanity cannot be distilled a human substrate that then can turn into a basis for humanism. Unfortunately, most humans reject what is aspirational about them—their deeds, their fate—and corrosively elevate illusions of human ideals instead. It is where humans try to live up to an abstraction of humanity and give it deeper meaning that they fail to be admirable.

Nothing offends the philosopher's taste more than man, insofar as man desires. If he sees man in action, even if he sees this most courageous, most cunning, most enduring animal lost in labyrinthian distress—how admirable man appears to him! He still likes him. But the philosopher despises the desiring man, also the 'desirable' man—and altogether all desirabilities, all ideals of man. ... Man being so venerable in his reality, how is it that he deserves no respect insofar as he desires? ... The history of his desirabilities has so far been the *partie honteuse* of man: one should beware of reading in it too long. What justifies man is his reality—it will eternally justify him. How much greater is the worth of the real man, compared with any merely desired, dreamed-up, foully fabricated man? with any ideal man? And it is only the ideal man who offends the philosopher's taste. (*Twilight of the Idols*, "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man" 32)

The ideal man is *homo volens*, wishing man. In the quote above, the German word 'wünschen' has been translated 'to desire,' underlined in order to show how important the word is in this context and how the English reader should read some of the connotations of wishing into this expression. *Homo volens* is the implied subject of humanism. Nietzsche disdainfully states that "nothing has become more alien to us than the wishfulness of the past" (*Twilight of the Idols*, "Morality as Anti-Nature" 3). In humanism's stead, he proposes the concept of the sovereign individual, the overman, the free spirit—what I shall call *homo volans*, flying man. Nietzsche often uses flight as a metaphor for his pathos of distance: *Daybreak* 265, 514, 553, and in 574, 'do not forget!—the higher we soar, the smaller we seem to those who cannot fly,' *Human All Too Human* 4, *The Gay Science*, Book 1, 27 and 293.

Miyasaki has correctly identified some of the characteristics of *inter pares* equality among *homines volantes* and how they are set in contrast to the 'poison of the doctrine of equal rights' (The Antichrist 43), equality between *homines volentes*.

The oligarchs [of the spirit] have need of one another, they have joy in one another, they understand the signs of one another—but each of them is nonetheless free, he fights and conquers in his own place, and would rather perish than submit. (*Human All Too Human* 261)

The "warm and noble intimacy" of *Daybreak* 288 is possible between *homines volantes* if there is a sufficient number of them—"the more lofty philosophical

man is surrounded by loneliness, not because he wishes to be alone, but because he is what he is, and cannot find his equal” (*Will to Power* 985). It is characterized by enmity and resistance: see, for example, *Ecce Homo*, Book 1, 7, *Assorted Opinions and Maxims* 75, *Will to Power* 910, and

If one would have a friend, then one must also be willing to wage war for him: and in order to wage war, one must be capable of being an enemy. One ought still to honour the enemy in one’s friend ... in one’s friend one shall find one’s best enemy. Thou shalt be closest unto him with thy heart when thou withstandest him. (Zarathustra 63)

One current trend of popular psychology is to encourage intimacy-vulnerability in order to unleash human potential (and improve the bottom line: Brené Brown’s self-help books, for example, are to a significant extent about a positive correlation between increased vulnerability and successful business leadership). Brown preaches that “vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change” (see Brown, 2012, 209).

Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path. (Brown, 2012, 34).

Nietzsche cautions that there is an illusory reversal of cause and effect here. *Homo volans*, who is naturally in possession of the properties that hapless and toxic *homo volens* wishes for (power, beauty, courage, joy, creativity), is capable of intimacy, vulnerability, and friendship, where those are characterized by taking joy in one another, respecting distance, and providing support and friendship without quashing individuality (see Abbey, 1999, 58).

5 Conclusion

The domain of *inter pares* friendship is not humanity; its goal is not friendly feelings, authenticity, sympathy, transparency, and mutuality. On the contrary, it despises the ideals that have come to characterize humanity (versus its innocence of becoming), and it maintains dissimulation and enmity where those are exacted by truthfulness. Truthfulness is not devotion to ideal truth and the explanatory homogeneity of reality but to accuracy, which “aims to encourage resistance to subversion by the wish” (see Williams, 2010, 140). The person of knowledge, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra pronounces, must be able not only to love his enemies, but also to hate his friends (82): Let us also be enemies, my friends! Divinely will we strive against one another! (109).

In *Daybreak* 138, Nietzsche tells us in warm personal terms (the section is called “Growing Tenderer”) about a friendship in which one of the friends begins to suffer for undisclosed reasons. The other friend reacts in the ways that friendship is popularly conceived: she tries to anticipate her friend’s needs and seeks to alleviate the suffering. At last, she thinks to herself, she can give back to this friend who has meant so much to her. The vulnerability of the suffering friend has created a bridge

where before the friendship had lacked in mutual expression of need. It has also created a heightening of attention, which results in feelings of delight and elation.

In other words, the consoling friend begins a relentless attack of benevolent revenge. The suffering friend instinctively shuts the gates of vulnerability, and just as instinctively the consoling friend takes offence that an exchange of gratitude was rejected. Nietzsche's insight is not that the friends acted faithlessly or coldly towards each other but that the choreographic script on which their dance is based is insidious (for another innovative description of these dynamics see Diprose, 2002). Gratitude, authenticity, proximity, intimacy-vulnerability make a cocktail that is sweet to the tongue and harmful to the organism. This does not mean that kinship, connection, recognition, mutual aid between friends is impossible; only "it is not in how one soul approaches another but in how it distances itself from it that I recognize their affinity and relatedness" (*Human All Too Human* 251).

The corruption of a friendship is rooted in a pernicious humanism. Friends do not meet one another as tokens of the human type, they do not implement human potential, they do not live up to the best in humanity. To manifest locally what humans have dreamt up to be universal is a vengeful delusion, and so the longing for friendship becomes the blind man's obsession with the art of seeing and the metaphors that will have to stand in for the elusive ability.

The concept of friendship as an object of desire may have little intersection with descriptions of particular friendships. The thought that a successful marriage is successful as a marriage may just be an instance of an especially ruinous failure to respect the use-mention distinction. It leads to such perversions as marrying a person in order to be married, lamented in Zarathustra's discourse on child and marriage.

The friendship, the marriage engaged in to realize a (concept of) friendship, a (concept of) marriage, is a travesty. It is, similarly, a travesty to live a human life in order to realize abstract human ideals. It is a fundamental illusion to strive for an aesthetic in friendship. The modern aesthetic of intimacy-vulnerability is one abstract humanist type that only serves to corrupt concretely enacted ('unschuldig werdende') friendships.

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