

[DRAFT: THIS VERSION MAY DIFFER IN MINOR WAYS FROM THE PUBLISHED VERSION (FORTHCOMING IN THE *EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY*), IN WHICH CASE THE LATTER SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS AUTHORITATIVE]

Nietzsche and Amor Fati

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To the Memory of Mark Sacks

Abstract:

This paper identifies two central paradoxes threatening the notion of amor fati [love of fate]: it requires us to love a potentially repellent object (as fate entails significant negativity for us) and this, in the knowledge that our love will not modify our fate. Thus such love may seem impossible or pointless. I analyse the distinction between two different sorts of love (*eros* and *agape*) and the type of valuation they involve (in the first case, the object is loved because we value it; in the second, we value the object because we love it). I use this as a lens to interpret Nietzsche's cryptic pronouncements on amor fati and show that while an erotic reading is, up to a point, plausible, an agapic interpretation is preferable both for its own sake and because it allows for a resolution of the paradoxes initially identified. In doing so, I clarify the relation of amor fati to the eternal return on the one hand, and to Nietzsche's autobiographical remarks about suffering on the other. Finally, I examine a set of objections pertaining both to the sustainability and limits of amor fati, and to its status as an ideal.

There is no doubt that Nietzsche considered the theme of amor fati [love of fate] of essential importance: he referred to it in his later work as his 'formula for greatness in a human being' (EH: 258), 'the highest state a philosopher can attain' (WP 1041), or again his 'inmost nature' (EH: 325). Amor fati is often mentioned by commentators in connection with the eternal return and implicitly taken as an illustration of the sort of existential attitude characteristic of someone who would respond positively to the challenge of the daimon and affirm his or her life as worth living over and over again (Magnus 1978: 145; Hatab 2005: 49; Reginster 2006: 229-30). It is occasionally touched upon in relation with various themes, such as self creation (Leiter 2001: 284) or the call for a re-evaluation of all values. Yet — surprisingly given its importance for Nietzsche — there is very little secondary literature specifically devoted to it.¹ Perhaps this initial surprise will lessen if

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¹ See for example: Owen (1998); Yovel (1992); Löwith (1997). Unfortunately, in most cases the secondary literature on amor fati I consulted was not of much help to me. One paper identifies amor fati without argument or textual support to 'ecstatic epiphanies', 'moments of utter wonder and overflowing joy' (Owen

one considers that for all its importance, there is very little material on amor fati in Nietzsche's work. All in all, I was able to identify only seven passages, four in the published work, one in the *Will to Power*, one in the *Nachlass* and one in Nietzsche's correspondence. And if one tries to help oneself out by looking for separate elucidations of love, one does not fare much better. While critical passages about neighbourly love or the love of women are not rare,² Nietzsche says little about more positive forms of love. In one of his latest fragments, he cryptically declares that 'I have never desecrated the holy name of love' (1888, LN1 [286]) and Zarathustra praises the 'bestowing love' of the 'predator of all values' (Z: 100) and of the 'friend'³, but without expanding on the nature of such love.

As for fate, discussions in the secondary literature often focus on the issue of whether the doctrine of the eternal return commits Nietzsche to fatalism, with widely diverging conclusions (Hatab 2005: 127-133; Leiter 2001: 283-290; Reginster 2006: 209). In what follows, I shall restrict myself to examining Nietzsche's thoughts on fate exclusively in connection with amor fati: I shall thus adopt the minimal construal of fate directly entailed by *all* the references to the latter in the published work, namely 'what is necessary' (GS: 223; EH: 258; EH: 325) or 'everything that is necessary' (NCW: 680). Although these expressions may be construed as implying that necessity can admit of exceptions, and thus that not everything is necessary, we shall see that the structural links between amor fati and the eternal return indicate that the category is all-inclusive, covering 'the world as it is, without subtraction, exception or selection' (WP §1041).⁴ Interestingly, this

1998: 190), an interpretation that is not supported by Nietzsche's statements according to which amor fati is both a *state* and his 'inmost nature'. The combination of the two strongly suggests that amor fati is a habitual state that shapes one's responses to life over a continuous period. By contrast, Löwith does understand amor fati as a state, but one which is 'no longer a willing but a condition in which the will no longer wills anything' (Löwith 1997, 79-80). Yet to describe amor fati as a form of 'will-lessness' is far too Schopenhauerian and misses the point of Nietzsche's criticism of resignation entirely: furthermore, Nietzsche is very clear that amor fati is a positive state that entails 'not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it (...), but *love* it' (EH: 258).

² See for example Z, I, 'Of Neighbourly love'. For Nietzsche love of the neighbour is a bad form of self love, a way of fleeing from the self under the guise of disinterest: because we can't love ourselves enough, we love our neighbour. But this love is itself interested: we want to 'seduce our neighbour so that he loves us and, through his mistake, gives us a golden glitter'. See also *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I am so wise', §5, where Nietzsche renews his attacks against the alleged disinterestedness of neighbourly love. It shows not only self-hatred but weakness, and 'inability to resist impulsions'. Yet such impulsions can be detrimental not just to the self, but also to the neighbour. They stem from pity and this 'may have a destructive action on a great destiny'. 'To overcome pity, this is for me one of the noble virtues'.

³ 'I teach you the friend with his overflowing heart. But you must understand how to be a sponge if you want to be loved by overflowing hearts. I teach you the friend in whom the world stands complete, a vessel of the good — the creative friend, who always has a complete world to bestow' (Z: 87-8).

⁴ See also: 'no one is the result of his own intention, his own will, his own purpose. One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole' (TI §8: 32). Stambaugh (1994: 82) comments that 'what Nietzsche

understanding of fate as all-encompassing necessity is very close to the one put forward by the Stoa,⁵ whom Nietzsche clearly had in mind when he claimed that *amor fati* involves more than ‘merely bearing what is necessary’ (EH: 258) — thus Aetius reported that ‘the Stoa describe fate as a sequence of causes, that is an inescapable ordering and connection’.⁶ (Long & Sedley 1987: 336)

really means about fate is that things cannot be other than they are. In this, he and Spinoza are in complete and astonishing agreement’.

⁵ See for example: Josiah B. Gould, ‘The Stoic Conception of Fate’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1974), pp. 17-32.

⁶ In this respect, it may be useful to clarify the difference between fatalism, determinism and necessitarianism. Their common point is that they all presuppose some understanding of necessity as governing the unfolding of events in the world. However they differ chiefly in two respects, namely a) how such necessity is understood, and b) the implications of the claim that everything is necessary for the possibility of freedom. Succinctly put, determinism is the belief that whatever happens in the world is necessitated by the occurrence of antecedent physical causes and the existence of natural laws. The non occurrence of events is seen as equally necessitated (e.g.: there are no alternative possibilities): the determined event would occur in every logically possible world in which the determining conditions would hold. Note that (as attested by the existence of many compatibilist theories and strategies, in particular modal interpretations of the idea of alternative possibilities or more recently Frankfurt-style examples), a commitment to determinism does not entail *per se* a rejection of the possibility of free will. Conversely, rejecting determinism does not commit one to (moral) libertarianism — thus Galen Strawson (Strawson: 2002) points out that theories of freedom are equally vulnerable to *indeterminism*, as this would allow for the possibility of our actions being the result of chance events for which we could not be held responsible. By contrast, hard determinism is the (incompatibilist) view that determinism is true and that this makes freedom impossible. Necessitarians subscribe to hard determinism, with the further claim that it is a necessary truth that there is only one possible world (ours) — a classical example of this position would be Spinoza’s in the *Ethics* (which includes an explicit refutation of the idea of alternative possibles as illusory). So how does fatalism stand in respect to both determinism and necessitarianism? In its ancient version, it shares with determinism both the belief that everything in the world is necessary and the rejection of alternative possibilities — see for example Homer: ‘but it is our common lot [*moira*, also translated as fate] to die, and the gods themselves cannot rescue one they love, when Death that stretches all men out lays its dread hand upon him’, *Odyssey*, III, 236-8). However such necessity is not primarily understood as natural, but as *metaphysical* (the ‘decrees of fate’ evoked by Empedocles, the blind *moira* ordering the destinies of men in Homer). While for the Tragicists such metaphysical necessity does not contradict its natural counterpart, it *supersedes* it in the sense that the relevant arrangement of the antecedent causes (natural necessity) will be determined in advance by the decrees of fate (metaphysical necessity). Thus while it shares with determinism a commitment to necessity, fatalism is teleological in structure [*fatum* = past participle of *feri*, i.e. that which has been said (in advance)]. It may be tempting to conclude, from the fatalist’s commitment to everything being necessary and his rejection of alternate possibilities, that fatalism entails a necessitarian denial of free will. This is the option adopted (with respect to Nietzsche’s position) by such naturalistic interpreters as B. Leiter (Leiter: 2001). However the case is not so clear cut for at least some types of ancient fatalism and nor is it, in my view, for Nietzsche himself. Certainly one of the main characteristics of tragedy (which relies heavily on a fatalistic understanding of the unfolding of events) is that it complicates, but does not *preclude* the assignation of moral responsibility. As pointed out by many interpreters (and notoriously Hegel with reference to Antigone), the pathos of tragedy rests on its main protagonists being torn between incompatible moral demands (in this case, *nomos* and *dike*) and yet having to make a *choice* for which they are morally accountable, although only up to a certain point. In his study of Greek tragedy, J. P. Vernant (Vernant: 2005) examines a number of concepts which capture this moral ambiguity of the tragic hero — amongst these, *hamartia* (an error/fault/taint which often lies in the hero’s *genos* rather than in himself, like in the case of the Atreides), *atē* (the cursed madness incriminated by Oedipus after he’s blinded himself, for example), which both diminish the attribution of moral responsibility, and *hubris* (the pride consisting in wanting more than one’s lot and thus defying one’s fate) which

For the purposes of this paper, I shall leave aside such issues as the relation between this conception of fate as necessity and its more archaic and pathos-laden understanding in the *Birth of Tragedy* or the status of necessity in general as a category in Nietzsche's work⁷, to focus on the paradoxes and difficulties attached to having fate thus construed as the object of any love, let alone the highest possible form of love. In doing so, my aim will be fourfold: a) to grasp both the structure of amor fati and the sort of love it involves, b) to understand better the part played by the concept in Nietzsche's later work, in particular in relation to the eternal return, c) to identify some of the ways in which amor fati might be attained by us and d) to question the sustainability and limits of such an ideal.

Unless it is construed counter-intuitively, as a blind force devoid of any intentionality which moves us in a purely causal way⁸ (a possibility which Nietzsche would certainly reject), love involves a valuation of its object. Loving something or someone entails understanding this object or person as valuable.⁹ The usual assumption is that such valuation must be positive. This commonsensical intuition is often used in the literature about emotions to distinguish love from need in terms of their 'direction of fit'¹⁰: need pushes us towards a particular course of action while love attracts us towards its object. This also enables the distinction between love and negative emotions such as dislike or hate, in which the object repels us. Thus, to love something entails understanding it positively, as worth loving. Yet this observation poses two structural problems for amor fati. Firstly, it points towards a potential contradiction between the nature of the attachment and the putative value of its object. As Nietzsche puts it, 'one will see that the problem is that of the meaning of suffering'. (WP §1052) As it is well known, the *Birth of Tragedy* emphasised in the starkest possible way that our fate is to suffer endlessly, a view illustrated by

grounds it. It would thus be wrong to conclude in general that fatalism entails necessitarianism *simpliciter*. As for Nietzsche, such passages as the following indicate that he did not think that his own brand of fatalism excludes the possibility of freedom: 'such a spirit who has *become free* stands with a glad and trusting fatalism in the midst of the universe' (TI §49: 84, Nietzsche's italics). More generally, fatalism is compatible with at least some theories of freedom, in particular if one divorces having a ground for the assignation of moral responsibility from the requirement that the agent could have acted otherwise, or must be the spontaneous cause of their actions. I would suggest that this latter, Frankfurt-type line may be a fruitful model to understand Nietzsche's fatalism, although I do not have the space to expand on this here.

⁷ See for example Leiter 2001: 288 sq and Nehamas 1995:156.

⁸ See for example Nussbaum 2001: 25: 'the adversary view is that emotions are unthinking energies that simply push the person around, without being hooked up to how she perceives or things about the world'.

⁹ Note that this observation does not necessarily entail a cognitivist view of emotions: my understanding of the worth of what I love does not have to be a conscious belief with a propositional content. It can be embodied in the way I comport myself towards the object of my love, for example by seeking to possess it, caring for it or trying to protect it from harm.

Oedipus's story and encapsulated in Silenus' 'wise' pronouncement (BT: 42) that the best thing for us would be not to have been born, and the second best, to die soon. Even on the minimal construal evoked above (as necessity), fate is bound to entail at least some suffering and unhappiness for each of us. We shall lose loved ones, or see them hurt. We shall be harmed ourselves. And even if our life was as devoid of suffering as possible, fate will inevitably lead us to aging and death, possibly in painful or degrading circumstances. In order to love fate, then, one would have to accept the paradoxical possibility of loving a repellent object (either a fully negative one or one which on the best construal involves some very significant negativity).

Secondly, there are two main ways in which we can value a loved object: in relation to our own needs, for example because we deem its possession or enjoyment highly desirable or even indispensable to our well-being or happiness; or in relation to the object itself, because it appears to us as endowed with intrinsic value. In the first case, we perceive the object of our love as something that we should seek to acquire or, should we be fortunate enough to have it in our possession already, prevent the loss of. In the second, we try to preserve or protect the beloved object for its own sake, regardless of our own happiness. Yet both these options raise further doubts about the suitability of fate as an object of love. Regarding the first, on either construal (Greek *moira* or necessity), fate is seen as indifferent to our needs and desires and would only fulfil them (or not) accidentally. We are aware that we cannot possess it and have no control over it. Furthermore, it is not even the sort of object we can actively *seek*: we are already under its sway and if anything cannot be rid of it.¹¹ So how could we conceive of it as an indispensable component of our happiness? And if we were to value fate *per se* rather than in relation to ourselves (the second option), then a different problem arises, which was originally identified by the Stoa as *argos logos* [idle reason].¹² Perhaps its best known version is given by Cicero: 'if it is your fate to recover from this illness, you will recover whether you call for the physician or not. Likewise, if it is your fate not to recover, whether you call for the physician or not, you will not recover. One of the two is your fate, therefore it is pointless to call for the physician'.¹³ (Cicero: 28-9) Along similar lines, by definition fate or necessity will unfold whether we love it or not, and

¹⁰ See for example Nussbaum 2001: 130-1.

¹¹ For Plato this would *per se* be enough to disqualify fate as a possible object of love. See *Symposium*, 201b ('love is of something that one lacks, and has not') and also 200 a-b.

¹² See for example Frede (2003).

¹³ 'Si fatum tibi est ex hoc morbo convalescere, sive tu medicum adhibueris sive non adhibueris, convalesces; item, si fatum tibi est ex hoc morbo non convalescere, sive tu medicum adhibueris sive non adhibueris, non convalesces; et alterutrum fatum est; medicum ergo adhibere nihil attinet'. (my translation).

it is not clear what difference our love could make. If this is the case, then amor fati would seem a rather futile form of love. Plainly put, why bother?

Thus prospective lovers of fate are faced from the start with two paradoxes: a) amor fati involves an apparent contradiction between the nature of love and the partly negative value of its proposed object, and in particular requires us to love something which is difficult, if not impossible, to value in relations to our needs or desires; b) should we value fate for itself, there would seem to be no point in our loving it: whether we do or not will make no difference either to fate or to what happens to us. Given these structural difficulties, how can we make sense of amor fati, let alone regard it as a desirable ideal? To seek a solution to this puzzle, it may help to turn to the traditional distinction between four forms of love: eros, agape, caritas and philia.¹⁴ Of these, only the first three are relevant to amor fati as philia (in its Aristotelian version) entails an element of disinterestedness from the part of the lover and reciprocity on the part of the loved object, two conditions which love of fate cannot satisfy.¹⁵ And since caritas, at least according to Nygren, is an Augustinian synthesis of eros and agape designed to solve a specific doctrinal problem (namely whether human love can by its own strength ascend to God)¹⁶, I shall focus on the last two. Very interestingly, the main difference between eros and agape, Greek and Christian forms of love, concerns the relation between loving and valuing. Both traditions agree that love is not blind and involves a valuation of its object, but they disagree on the source and nature of such valuation. In a nutshell, erotic love is motivated by the perceived value of its object: we love

¹⁴ There are useful insights on the various forms of love in Soble (1989) and Singer (1966). However, the most seminal analysis of the relation between erotic and agapic forms of love is Anders Nygren: *Agape and Eros*, London: S.P.C.K., 1953 (two volumes published in one).

¹⁵ The traditional account of philia can be found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, book VIII, 1155a-1159b-24 and also 1165b-1172a. While there is significant debate amongst commentators regarding the best translation of the Greek *philia* (see for example Vlastos: 1973, p. 3), there is general agreement on the two conditions it entails (disinterest and reciprocity). They are introduced by Aristotle thus: 'of the love of lifeless objects we do not use the word 'friendship', for it is not mutual love, nor is there a wishing of good to the other (...); but to a friend we say we ought to wish what is good for his sake. But to those who wish good we ascribe only good will, if the wish is not reciprocated, good will when it is reciprocal being friendship' (1155b-27-33). Nietzsche himself refers to this sort of love in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (I, 'Of the friend') and implicitly subscribes to both conditions: 'May your pity be a conjecture: that you may know if your friend wants pity. Let your pity for your friend conceal itself under a hard shell (...). Thus it will have delicacy and sweetness. Are you pure air and solicitude and bread and medicine to your friend? Many a one cannot deliver himself from his own chains and yet he is his friend's deliverer' (Z: 83). However it is clear that the reciprocity condition cannot be met by fate (it cannot love me back); as for the disinterestedness condition, it would be impossible for me to feel philia for my fate without this entailing at least an element of self interest: if my love is motivated, even partially, by specific aspects of my fate which I perceive as beneficial, then such evaluation involves both a conception of myself and of my interest (thus for Aristotle 'not everything seems to be loved but only the lovable and this is good, pleasant or useful' (1155b16-26)). Given this, it is hardly surprising that Nietzsche never connects amor fati to philia.

¹⁶ On the relation between agape and caritas, see Nygren 1953: 449-559.

someone or something *because we value them*. By contrast, agapic love bestows value on its object, and this regardless of the value previously attributed to it: we value someone or something *because we love them*. As we shall see, whether and how we may solve the paradoxes of amor fati analysed above depends in a large part on which of these two conceptions of love is seen as dominant in Nietzsche's thought. In order to understand this, I shall expand briefly on each of them.

According to Nygren¹⁷, eros is the understanding of love that comes from the Platonic and Hellenistic tradition, and it has five main features: a) it is an acquisitive love, intermediate between wanting and having (eros is the son of poros and penia): to love an object is to long for its possession; b) consequently, it is a *human* form of love (thus for Plato the gods do not feel love because they want for nothing); c) the longing and thus the love itself are motivated by the perceived value of the object (in the *Symposium*, beauty): it is impossible to love a negative object and should we realise, for example, that the object does not have the value we thought it had, we would cease to love it; d) eros is a self-centred form of love: the object is loved because we assume that its possession can secure our happiness; e) finally, such love can be educated: our estimations of the worth of its object can be corrected or refined, and this may lead us to re-channel our love accordingly. This last feature is what makes erotic love important for the Platonic tradition: it can be purified by philosophical reflection and ultimately refocused on intelligible objects (the beautiful and the good). This is the purpose of the ascent of love in Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*.¹⁸ By contrast, agapic love is Christian in origin and finds its first formulations in the New Testament and John's and Paul's letters.¹⁹ It has four main features: a) it is a divine form of

¹⁷ Note that Nygren's interpretation is by no means unassailable: for example, his almost exclusive focus on the *Symposium*, combined with the fact that (as bishop of Lund) he himself belonged to the Christian tradition which sought to highlight the virtues of agape by criticising eros, led him to leave aside aspects of Platonic love which do not fit the binary opposition between eros and agape. A prominent example would be the description of eros in the *Phaedrus* (245a-256e) as a *mania* which, far from than being self-centred and acquisitive, exposes the frantic soul to total loss of control due to its yearning for the beloved object: seized by 'anguish and helpless raving, in its madness the lover's soul cannot sleep at night or stay put by day'. (251e) Yet while some aspects of Nygren's interpretation may be vulnerable to criticism, the general framework presented remains extremely useful as a conceptual tool to clarify the relation between different types of love, and does capture important insights about the sort of valuation involved. Even in the *Phaedrus* there is no doubt that for Plato love is determined by the perceived value of its object (beauty): it is defined as 'the unreasoning desire that overpowers a person's considered impulse to do right and is driven to take pleasure in beauty (...) – this desire, all conquering in its forceful drive, takes its name from the word for force and is called eros'. (238c) Correlatively it is the remembrance of beauty which propels the soul towards its 'heavenly pilgrimage', and the 'fourth kind' of madness (associated with eros) is that which 'someone shows when he sees the beauty we have down here and is reminded of true beauty' (249d).

¹⁸ See Nygren 1953: 166-182; Soble 1989: section II; Nussbaum 2001: 482-500.

¹⁹ For example: Mark ii. 17; ps. i; Deut. vii. 6-10; Luke xv. 11-32; Cor. xiii, 11; Rom v. 6-10; 'while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die (...). But

love; b) it is spontaneous in the sense of not being externally motivated — God’s undeserved (and undeservable, at least in the Lutheran tradition Nietzsche was familiar with) gift to man; c) it is not motivated by the value of the object (Christ came for sinners and the righteous alike); and finally d) it creates value by transfiguring its object (the sinner becomes worthy by virtue of being loved by God).²⁰

It is difficult to know which (if any) of these two forms of love Nietzsche had in mind when he first coined the expression ‘amor fati’: ‘amor’ is a fairly neutral choice of words, although interestingly it is Luther’s own in his redescription of agapic love against Augustinian *caritas*.²¹ Furthermore, eros and agape are idealised types and it is unlikely that Nietzsche’s understanding of amor fati would fall squarely under either description. Let us start with the first occurrence of the concept in the *Gay Science*:

I want to *learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary* in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth! Some day I wish to be only a yes-sayer. (GS §276: 223, my italics except for ‘amor fati’)

One way of reading this passage would interpret it as presupposing an erotic conception of love according to which we love objects in proportion to their perceived value (hence the need to learn ‘more and more’) and as offering a Platonic solution to the first paradox (amor fati as the love of a repellent object). The erotic nature of the love in question is made clear by the implicit assumption that the true object of love is beauty and conversely that what is beautiful is lovable, which echoes Socrates’ and Diotima’s views in the *Symposium* (respectively: ‘love is the love of beauty and not of deformity’, 201b, and ‘love is of the beautiful’, 204b). The beautiful pulls us towards itself. Consequently the proposed solution consists in educating our eye so that what is

God commandeth His own *agape* toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him’. John iii. 16: ‘Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us’.

²⁰ See Luther (2000: 365): ‘Amor dei non invenit sed creat suum diligibile, amor hominis fit a suo diligibili’ [God’s love does not find, but creates, its lovable object; man’s love is caused by its lovable object]. The text continues as follows: ‘the first clause is evident, since God’s love living in man loves sinners, the evil, the foolish, the weak and thus makes them righteous, good, wise and strong, and so it flows forth and confers good. Sinners are lovely because they are loved; they are not loved because they are lovely. So man’s love shuns sinners and evil men. But thus Christ: I came not to call the righteous, but the sinners. And this is the love of the cross (amor crucis) born of the Cross, which betakes itself not where it finds a good to enjoy, but where it may confer good upon the evil and the needy. For it is more blessed to give than to receive, says the Apostle’.

²¹ That Nietzsche was aware of the distinction between eros and agape is attested by an early remark about the culture: ‘the *culture* of a people is manifest in the *unifying mastery of their drives*: philosophy masters the knowledge drive art masters ecstasy and the formal drive; *agape* masters *eros*, etc.’. (PT: 16, Nietzsche’s italics).

necessary progressively ceases to repel us by virtue of our having learned to value it differently. At the end of the process, the perceived negativity of the object (implied at the start by the need of a learning programme) may ultimately turn out to be a mistake due to our original lack of understanding, or at least be diminished to such an extent that fate will on the whole appear as a positive object, which will remove the potential contradiction in our loving it. The imperative 'let that be my love' consequently presents amor fati as a desirable (and conceptually sound) ideal, although little is said about how it may be achieved at this point.

On this picture, the potential lover of fate is faced with the dual tasking of finding out a) how far the re-evaluation of fate should go and b) how it may be carried out. Regarding the first, the injunction to learn to see what is necessary as beautiful can be understood in two ways: it may entail learning to see *everything* that happens as beautiful, or learning to see *the whole process* as beautiful. On the first, stronger construal, fate would become a totally beautiful and thus fully desirable object; on the second, it would be desirable on balance only, but lovable nevertheless. Interestingly, this question is central to most theodicies, and arguing in favour of the second, easier option is often the preferred strategy. Thus Leibniz claims that on the whole our world is the best possible and offers various forms of reduction to deny or at least diminish the negativity of perceived evils.²² Nietzsche himself sometimes oscillates between the two possibilities: a later passage exhorts us to 'attain a height and a bird's eye view, so one grasps how everything actually happens at it ought to happen; how every kind of 'imperfection' and the suffering to which it gives rise are part of the highest desirability'. (WP §1004) Note that here too, Nietzsche uses an aesthetic vocabulary ('imperfection') and implicitly relies on the Platonic association between the beautiful and the good (and conversely the imperfect and the bad). The metaphor of height is important in that it suggests that in order to properly reassess the value of the unfolding of necessity, we need a special perspective, one that is both global (bird's eye view) and detached from our everyday concerns, a point to which I shall come back. There are, however, other passages which emphasise the need to 'perceive not merely the necessity of those sides of existence

²² See *Theodicy*, in particular §20-30. In a nutshell, Leibniz distinguishes between three kinds of suffering (physical [pain], metaphysical [imperfection] and moral [evil]). For Leibniz, the first kind is easily dismissed on three grounds: a) we often exaggerate the extent of our sufferings, b) they can be compensated by the use of our reason and c) suffering can be beneficial: as Descartes saw, it warns us of danger. Metaphysical evil is dispelled as a consequence of our being creatures (and thus imperfect by definition) — see in particular §30. Furthermore, we belong to the best possible series, and we must consider suffering at the scale of the series itself: thus it may be necessary for us to suffer so that some greater good is done elsewhere in the world, just like shadows enhance the beauty of a painting or dissonance makes harmony more pleasing to the ear. Finally, moral evil is the consequence of our having free will and as we have been given the grace of redemption, we should not complain.

hitherto denied, but their desirability; and not their desirability merely in relation to the sides hitherto affirmed (perhaps as their complement or precondition), but *for their own sake*'. (WP §1041) This stronger requirement is, I think, the one Nietzsche truly has in mind; this is evidenced by the references to the eternal return established by the next two passages in which he describes amor fati, to which I shall now turn in connection with the second of the two issues mentioned above, namely how we may carry out the required revaluation of fate.

The first passage is as follows:

My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*. That one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backwards, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it — all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary — but *love* it. (EH: 258, Nietzsche's italics)²³

Here too amor fati is presented as an ideal ('my formula for greatness'), although the status of the infinitives in the last sentence is ambiguous (they can be read either as prescriptive, laying out a programme, or descriptive, expanding on the content of amor fati). It is implicitly distinguished from two of the main alternative attitudes towards fate: firstly, 'bearing' it, which is the course of action advocated by the Stoa (see for example Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, VI 39: 'adapt yourself to the environment in which your lot has been cast').²⁴ Significantly, the Stoic option involves the rejection of all emotions towards fate: 'let no emotions (...) affect the supreme portion of the soul. See that it never becomes involved with them: it must limit itself to its own domain, and keep the feelings confined to their proper sphere'.²⁵ (Marcus Aurelius: V, 26) The second possibility alluded to ('still less conceal it') is most likely the Leibnizian strategy sketched out above, which fallaciously minimises the reality of suffering (hence its 'mendaciousness' and idealism as a refusal to face the real world).²⁶ The notion of 'what is necessary' is now unpacked in a manner which points towards the eternal return by shifting from the usually forward-oriented perspective

²³ The passage in the *Nachlass*, which dates from the same period (end 1888–beginning 1889) is very similar to this one: 'There is nothing that I want otherwise — *not* even to go backwards, — there is nothing that I *had the right* to want otherwise... *Amor fati*' (KSA XIV, Herbst 1888 bis Herbst 1889, 25 [7], Nietzsche's italics).

²⁴ See also: 'live with the gods. To live with the gods is to show them at all times a soul contented with their awards, and wholly fulfilling the will of that inward divinity (...), the mind and the reason' (V, 27).

²⁵ Correlatively, the use of reason is presented as a remedy against the passions in general, according to the Stoic distinction between what depends on us (reason and judgment) and what does not (all external goods).

²⁶ See *Theodicy*, Preface, where Leibniz distinguishes between three types of fate: *fatum mahumetanum* (commented upon by Schopenhauer and thus doubtlessly known to Nietzsche, see WWR p. 302), *fatum stoicum* and *fatum christianum*. Only the latter is acceptable for Leibniz, and it consists both in trusting that Providence governs the world for the best and doing what we can to further the advent of good things in this world.

presupposed by talk of causality (past causes generating present or future effects) to a synchronic standpoint which considers necessity in relation to all temporal stances: present ('nothing to be different'), past to future ('forward'), future to past ('backwards'). Note however that at this point the reference to eternity does not entail any claim about things returning (the chain of events could unfold *ad aeternitatem* without ever repeating itself).

By contrast, the second quote establishes an explicit connection between amor fati and the eternal return. It stipulates that we must:

cross to a Dionysian affirmation of the world as it is, without subtraction, exception or selection — it wants the eternal circulation — the same things, the same logic and illogic of entanglements. The highest state a philosopher can attain: to stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence — my formula for this is *amor fati*. (WP §1041)

Amor fati now receives its maximal extension: we must not only love what is necessary, but love its *return*. There is much secondary literature on the eternal return and my intention here is not to enter the various debates for their own sake.²⁷ I am only interested in understanding the practical role that it performs in relation to amor fati. From the perspective of erotic love, the most obvious possibility is to see the eternal return as a radical method to develop our ability to see what is necessary as beautiful. On this construal, it is a powerful tool that allows us both to develop the right perspective on our life and to test our capacity to love fate by being provided with the appropriate standpoint from which to consider it.²⁸ According to this logic, many commentators present the eternal return as a 'thought experiment' designed to provide us with a 'visual and conceptual representation of a particular attitude towards life'. (Magnus 1978: 142; see

²⁷ For an extensive study of the existing interpretations of the eternal return (in particular cosmological, ethical, existential and lately 'practical'), see Reginster 2006, chapter 5. For recent non cosmological construals of the eternal return, see in particular Clark's 'unrealistic' construal (Clark 2001: chapter 8, in particular p. 268 sq) and Hatab's 'literal' reading, which involves what he calls a 'suspension of disbelief' (Hatab 2005: chapter 5, especially p. 91-102).

²⁸ Here is the relevant aphorism: '*The greatest weight*. What if, some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'this life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence — even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down and you with it, speck of dust!'

Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'you are a God and never have I heard anything more divine'. If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are and perhaps crush you. The question in each and everything, 'do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?' would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would

also Clark 1990: 250 and Owen 1998: 197) The aphorism (GS §341) is analysed as a form of hypothetico-deductive reasoning, laying out a hypothesis (a demon might come and tell us that we shall have to live our lives over and over again) followed by a rational ‘conclusion’ which must evidence our ability to ‘grasp conceptually’ (Magnus 1978: 144 and 156) the implications of the thought experiment. In a similar manner, Clark understands the demon’s challenge as structurally similar to the question ‘if you had to do it all over again, would you marry me again?’ (Clark 1990: 269) Analysing the validity conditions of the test instead of trying to answer it would be a mark of evasiveness rather than of intellectual honesty²⁹: the important thing is to ponder the question and see what conclusion we may draw from such careful assessment.

The implicit idea seems to be that we must consider everything that happened to us, both *per se* and in its interconnectedness with other events, and make a judgment about the overall worth of the sequence. Although Nietzsche is insistent that the ‘value of life cannot be estimated’ because we are ‘party to the dispute’ (TI: 30), the eternal return provides us with a vertical standpoint (the bird’s eye view in the previous quote) which allows us to evaluate *our* life (not life in general) from a perspective that is temporarily detached from the sequence of events it is asked to consider. This detachment is symbolised by the staging of the thought experiment (presented to us by a supernatural creature, a demon): we are supposed to stand at the ‘gateway’ described in Zarathustra, from where the two temporal paths of the past and the future ‘abut on one another’.³⁰ (Z: 178) Only from this gateway, ‘Moment’, can we consider both.³¹ If, from this standpoint, we are able to conclude that our life is worth living over and over again, then our love of fate will be both substantiated (its object will acquire a determined content through the thought experiment) and proven (by our having given our assent). Note that on this reading, affirming the eternal return is tantamount to asserting a propositional content of the sort: ‘my life is worth living again and again and such is my will’.

There is no guarantee that assessing our life from the standpoint of the eternal return will lead us to a positive conclusion regarding its value: all it does (which is already considerable) is making it possible for us to reach such a conclusion. But should we reach it, then on the erotic logic envisaged so far, this would be enough to solve the first paradox of amor fati (having to love

you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?’ (GS, §341).

²⁹ Thus Clark addresses the concerns expressed by Simmel’s and Soll’s about the truth value or conceivability of the demon’s statement by suggesting an ‘unrealistic’ reading whereby we are supposed to bracket scepticism in order to ‘play the game’ and take the test (270).

³⁰ I am grateful to Hans Sluga for pointing out this passage to me in connection with the eternal return.

a repellent object): fate will have turned out to be a positive object after all.³² Yet tempting as it may seem, there is a fatal flaw in this interpretation. To get a grasp on it, let us turn briefly to a perhaps unlikely (given Nietzsche's criticisms of the categorical imperative) source, namely Kant. Reflecting on the first two commandments³³, Kant observes that 'love is a matter of feeling, not of will or volition, and I cannot love because I *will* to do so, still less because I *ought*' (Kant 2007: 312, Kant's italics).³⁴ This comment points towards a crucial and so far unexplored gap: that which separates loving and valuing. Indeed, the fact that love involves a valuation of its object does not mean that it is *reducible* to such a valuation: I can value the British public transportation system without loving it. I can deem someone's character and actions worthy of respect or admiration without loving that person. Thus the relation between loving and valuing is asymmetrical: I cannot love an object without valuing it in some way (even mistakenly), but I can value it without loving it. As we saw, the idea of wilful affirmation was supposed to bridge that gap: having assessed my life in the light of the eternal return, I can now will its repetition. But I can value my life positively and even want it to return eternally, and yet not *love it*. My *assent* can be won over by my rationally considering a hypothesis and following it through to its conclusion (namely that my life is worth living again and again); but even with the strongest motivation, I can neither argue nor will my love into existence. The reason for this is not a deficit of will power. As we shall see, the difference between willing and loving is qualitative, not quantitative: while the first is purely active, the second entails a significant element of passivity. Although I may be more or less receptive to it, try to cultivate it or to discourage it, love will happen to me (if it does)

³¹ 'For all things that can run must also run once again forward along this long lane. And the slow spider that creeps along in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, (...) must we not all have been here before?' (ibid).

³² Note, however, that while on the Platonic model the lover's commitment to beauty is made unconditional and immune to empirical refutation by the nature of beauty itself (as an intelligible idea), in the case described above my love of fate is in principle revisable (should my assessment of the value of fate change, for example due to particularly unfortunate circumstances). Thus the test is in no way final: it may need to be taken again and again.

³³ (according to the *New Testament*, not to Moses' tables of the Law. See Matthew 22:37-40: 37: 'And He [Jesus] said to him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." [38.] This is the great and foremost commandment. [39.] The second is like it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." [40.] On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets'.)

³⁴ Kant rescues the New Testament by distinguishing between 'pathological love', which is an 'inclination from sensibility' and 'practical love,' whose siege is in the will and which can be commanded. However it is very unlikely that the second, which is a rational concern for the welfare of others, is what Nietzsche has in mind when talking about amor fati.

independently of my control. As strong-willed as I may be, as much as I may value someone or something, I cannot *choose* to love (nor to stop loving) them.³⁵

So the erotic construal of amor fati fails: the motivational gap between valuing and loving cannot be reduced by rational arguments or by an effort of will. Very significantly, in a letter to Overbeck dated summer 1882 (and thus contemporary of the theme's first appearance in the published work), Nietzsche refers to amor fati in terms which emphasise its passive dimension: 'I am in a mood of fatalistic 'surrender to God' — I call it *amor fati*, so much so, that I would rush into a lion's jaws'. (SL, 1996: 185, Nietzsche's italics) I shall return to the religious overtones of the passage later on,³⁶ but note that the proper attitude to amor fati is one of *surrender*, not of erotic pursuit, affirmation or wilfulness. A few years earlier, Nietzsche had already shown his awareness of the motivational gap by insisting that love is beyond education or rational motivation:

it is impossible teach love; for it is love alone that can bestow on the soul, not only a clear, discriminating and self-contemptuous view of itself, but also the desire to look beyond itself and to seek with all its might for a higher self as yet still concealed from it.³⁷ (UM: 162-3).

This passage hints at the other possibility I mentioned above, namely agape (love alone 'bestows on the soul'...), to which I shall now turn.³⁸ Remember that on an agapic model, the value of the

³⁵ Many literary works display an intuitive understanding of this passive dimension of love, which is central to their plots: in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Anna knows that loving Vronsky is the wrong thing to do, as she is married to Karenin and has children with him. Yet she is powerless to stop loving the Count. In a similar way, in the *Princesse de Clèves*, Madame de Clèves, a pious, married and highly reflective woman, falls in love with the duke of Nemours against her will. And lest one should think that such passivity is characteristic of female love, in Zola's *La faute de l'abbé Mouret*, Serge Mouret, a priest, is devoured by remorse but cannot help loving Albine, a young and innocent peasant girl. Perhaps the most interesting example is that of Valmont in Laclos' *Liaisons dangereuses* as it illustrates both the irreducibility of loving to willing and the potential conflicts between the two. On a gamble with his fellow libertine the Marquise de Merteuil, the Viscount resolves to seduce the apparently unassailable Présidente de Tourvel, for whom he has no particular attraction and to whom he must be seen to remain indifferent in order to win the bet. Yet for all his cynicism and original determination he is progressively taken at his own game and falls for her. While he is capable of willing himself to take another lover and to split up with the Présidente, and this in the cruelest way ('Farewell angel, I took you with pleasure, I leave you without regret: I may come back to you. Such is the way of the world. It is not my fault', letter CLXI), he is not able to stop loving her and lets himself be killed in a duel with a much less experienced opponent soon after.

³⁶ 'Rushing into a lion's jaws' is clearly a reference to the Book of Daniel, 6, 16-23, in which Daniel is thrown by Darius into the lions' den to test the power of God ('may your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!' [16]). The next morning, Daniel emerges unscathed and addresses Darius thus: 'O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight' [21].

³⁷ This echoes another passage from Schopenhauer: 'to become practical, to guide conduct, to transform character, are old claims which with mature insight it [philosophy] ought to abandon. For here, where it is a question of the worth or worthlessness of existence, of salvation and damnation, not the dead concepts of philosophy decide the matter, but the innermost nature of man himself' (WWR IV §53 p. 271).

object does not determine the love we may bear it; on the contrary, our love transfigures its object by bestowing value on it. Whether fate is valued positively or negatively prior to our loving it will not affect whether we may love it or not. This takes care at once of two of the difficulties previously encountered, namely the apparent impossibility of loving a repellent object and the motivational gap examined above. Even if fate was perceived as a fully negative object, our love would *per se* enable us to overcome this negative valuation. Consequently, on an agapic reading whatever function the eternal return will play in relation to amor fati, it won't be to provide us a standpoint and reasons for a positive re-evaluation of fate (as this would be falling back on the erotic logic just refuted). By contrast, on an agapic construal the main problem is that of *genesis*: not *why* we should love fate (since reasons won't determine love), but *how* such a love can come into existence, especially bearing in mind that in its original version agapic love is divine, not human. But before turning to this problem, I shall first look at textual evidence to see whether it provides support for and substance to an agapic interpretation of amor fati.

Let's return to Nietzsche's original statement, this time by emphasising different aspects of it:

I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; *then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. Amor fati: let that be my love henceforth!* (GS §276: 223, my italics)

I previously read this passage as laying out a quasi-Platonic strategy for overcoming the perceived negativity of fate and thus making amor fati possible. However two elements plead in favour of a

³⁸ Note that while acknowledging this passive dimension of love entails the rejection of any fully erotic construal of love (as a wilful pursuit determined by the perceived value of the object), it does not *per se* entail a commitment to a fully agapic conception either. The possibility remains of a love which, while not under my control, and not entirely determined by the perceived value of the object, would remain sensitive to some of its particular traits. To this extent, such a love would incorporate erotic elements and be sensitive to reasons (if asked why I love this person/object, I could point to specific features which partially motivate my love, although they wouldn't *account* for such love). This hybrid conception of love looks plausible; contrary to philia (see footnote 15), it doesn't need to be disinterested or reciprocated, which means that fate could, *prima facie*, qualify as a possible object. However Nietzsche seems to reject this possibility in favour of an either/or framework: this is textually indicated by the marked agapic character of his pronouncements about the right sort of love (see for example, in addition to quotes in the main text: 'you compel all things to come to you and into you, that they may flow back from your fountain as gifts of your love' (Z: 100)) and by his criticism of psychological constructions which emphasise the loveable qualities of our fate (in particular GS277, very significantly positioned just after GS276, which introduces amor fati for the first time). While Nietzsche doesn't say so explicitly, this suggests that this hybrid form of love would not be an appropriate candidate to characterise amor fati, albeit for different reasons than in the case of philia. One possible ground could be that such hybrid love conceptually rests on the harmonious integration of erotic and agapic elements, which feed off each other and reinforce our attraction for the loved object. Yet it is doubtful that such harmony would be possible in the case of fate, quite simply because Nietzsche sees the latter as too painful and difficult for a sufficient erotic attraction (if any) to arise in the first place.

different interpretation: firstly, on an erotic construal the second part of the statement ('then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful') is rather mysterious: it is presented as a consequence ('then') of amor fati. The only interpretation that an erotic reading allows for is rather literal: having learned to see things as beautiful, I would be in a position to create beautiful things. But the expression 'making things beautiful' (*die Dinge schön machen*) clearly refers to *existing* things, which rules out the idea of a physical poiesis whereby nice things would be produced. The alternative is to understand this making beautiful of things as an agapic transfiguration of their value brought about by our love for them. This central feature of agapic love, namely its ability to transform the former value of its objects, is explicitly identified by Nietzsche as one of the characteristics of the Overman: 'verily, a predator of all values must such a bestowing love become; (...) May your bestowing love and your knowledge serve towards the meaning of the earth! (...) *And may the value of all things be fixed anew by you!* (Z: 101-2, Nietzsche's italics) I shall try later to specify how this bestowal works in the case of amor fati; for the moment, let me point out the second aspect of GS276 which favours an agapic reading of love.

It concerns the peculiar modality of the expression 'let that be my love'. Firstly, although it is, grammatically speaking, an imperative, it can also be read in a non prescriptive way, as an expression of hope for the coming of agapic love rather than as an erotic call for action. Secondly, the sort of act it refers to (letting be) is neither fully active nor passive: it suggests that the love may come to and through the agent (who has to 'let it' happen — perhaps, in this case, precisely by hoping for it), but that it cannot be fully *caused* by the agent. Although most Indo-European languages only allow for passive and active modes, ancient Greek had a third mode to refer to such cases where agency is ambiguous. The middle voice was meant to capture the modality of situations in which the agent is both active and passive, in such a way that s/he participates in the action but without being in control of it.³⁹ Gonda (Gonda 1960: 53 sq) underlines this peculiar

This, in turn, means that a full agapic transfiguration is required if we are to find the strength to love our fate.

³⁹ There is a large amount of secondary literature on the middle voice, and the one thing scholars seem to agree on is that it is a very elusive notion (cf. for example Andersen 2004: 10: 'there are as many definitions of voice or diathesis as there are theoretical frameworks in the relevant literature', S Kemmer 1993: 1: 'there is no generally accepted definition of the middle voice'). One of the reasons for this is that the Greeks themselves did not elaborate on the matter. Andersen notes that the first grammar to use the three categories is a work attributed to Dionysios of Thrax. He focused on the opposition between active performance (*energeia*) and passive experience (*pathos*) and introduced *mesotes* as an intermediate category that applies to verbs that have a grammatical form which doesn't fit in either of the two previous ones (e.g.: active verbs with a passive ending, such as deponents). Roman grammarians, in particular the Stoa (Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school) re-appropriated this active/passive distinction by referring it to agency. Current grammar manuals of ancient Greek emphasise that the middle voice refers to actions that the subject performs on or for himself. See for example Smyth's *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge:

active/passive mode of the middle voice in relation to a particular example in ancient Greek, that of marrying someone. The active form (*gameô*) was standardly used by men and denotes an action in which the agent is fully in control, namely the taking of a wife. This is grammatically reflected by the fact that the complement is in the accusative. The middle voice form (*gameomai*) was normally used by women: it denotes activity (the woman takes a husband) but also passivity (she gives herself over to him, a fact which is grammatically expressed by the complement being indirect and in the dative). Furthermore, the middle voice has an eventive dimension: it indicates that ‘the process of marriage befalls the subject’ (59), in such a way that she participates in it without controlling it.

I want to suggest that this mediopassive modality is typical of Nietzsche’s reinterpretation of agape as a human form of love. It differs from the wilful, erotic pursuit picture of love in that it fully takes into account the motivational gap revealed by the phenomenology of love described above. The letting be of agapic love displays precisely the two features pointed out by Gonda: it is both active and passive, requiring, perhaps, the development or cultivation of a particular receptivity to such love, but without any guarantee that the presence of such sensitivity will generate our love. Secondly, it has a marked eventive dimension (love happens to us, as expressed by the locution ‘to fall in love’). This mediopassive mode is often found in passages devoted both to amor fati and to the eternal return. For example, Nietzsche’s autobiographical observations in *Ecce Homo* recount how the revelation of the eternal return came to him on the background of the ‘yes-saying pathos *par excellence*’ then ‘alive in me to the highest degree’ (EH: 296 — note that GS276 also refers to loving fate as being able to say yes to it, a point I shall comment upon later). The modality of this ‘being alive in me’ of the ‘yes-saying pathos’ is very similar to that of the ‘letting be’ of amor fati: it suggests that Nietzsche’s attitude was instrumental to the yes-saying

Harvard UP, 1956, §1713): ‘the middle voice shows that the action is performed with special reference to the subject: *loumai* (I wash myself). Such actions often involve an ambiguous form of agency, neither fully active nor fully passive, as one is both the agent and the recipient of the action. Benvéniste (1966: 172 sq) and Gonda (1960: 30-67) picked up on this particular feature of the middle voice. According to the first, the middle voice does not so much indicate that the subject has an interest in the action as point towards the fact that s/he is the medium in which something takes place. It indicates that the subject is part of a process (expressed by the verb) to which s/he participates but which is not reducible to such participation. To emphasise this dimension, he introduced the notion of internal diathesis (as opposed to the external diathesis of the active mode, in which the subject accomplishes an action which is under his control and carried out outside of him. Gonda also underlines the peculiar active/passive mode of the middle voice (see main text); Llewelyn (1991) follows his lead in his studies of Heidegger and Derrida and indicates that ‘we need a notion of power which does not merely pass through the subject, and a notion of subject which is neither merely a conduit or passage (the ‘through’ of pure passivity) nor the conductor entirely in charge of a performance (the ‘by’ of pure agency) but is performed as much as it performs the process’ (p. IX). For a

pathos being alive, perhaps in the sense that he was self aware enough to perceive its existence in him and offered it propitious conditions without which it would have died; yet the expression makes it clear that both the pathos and its life were neither generated nor controlled by Nietzsche himself.

Thus Nietzsche's introduction of amor fati in GS276 is ambiguous. It can be read as an invitation to strive to satisfy the conditions that will make an erotic version of amor fati possible or as a description of what may happen if an agapic form of amor fati was somehow realised. By contrast, the last two passages about amor fati, which I have so far left aside, seem to emphasise the second possibility, to which I shall now turn. They are as follows:

Ten years — and nobody in Germany has felt bound in conscience to defend my name against the absurd silence under which it lies buried (...). I myself have never suffered from all this; what is *necessary* does not hurt me; *amor fati* is my inmost nature. (EH: 325, Nietzsche's italics)

What is most intimate in me teaches me that everything that is necessary, viewed from above and interpreted in the direction of a *superior* economy, is also useful per se — one needs not only bear it, but also *love* it... *Amor fati*: this is the bottom of my nature. (NCW: 680, Nietzsche's italics).

Amor fati is now presented in the first person, and not as an ideal but as a *realised* state ('my inmost nature', 'the bottom of my nature'). Nietzsche does not offer any reasons to try to convince us of the desirability of loving fate, but a reflective description of how things appear to someone who is in such a state. This may be seen as an implicit acknowledgement of the motivational gap identified above; it also reflects his conviction that philosophy is a way of life rather than a theory about life: it has to be lived through to be genuinely understood.⁴⁰ Very significantly, the passage which explicitly links amor fati to the eternal return is introduced as follows: 'philosophy, *as I have hitherto understood and lived it...* (...). Such a *philosophy as I live* (...) wants to cross over to a Dionysian affirmation of the world (etc.)'. (WP §1041, my italics) It follows from this that the meaning of amor fati is not reducible to a pure conceptual content: it is inseparable from the first person experiences that are both expressive of and governed by it. Correlatively, what may have looked like arguments or requirements for the erotic love of fate are in fact observations about the

useful account of the various conceptions of the middle voice, see Eberhard (2004), in particular: 'The middle voice from a Linguistic Perspective' and 'Philosophical Perspectives on the Middle Voice' (p. 7-31).

⁴⁰ Thus the second preface to the *Gay Science* (a large part of which was incorporated two years later to the paragraphs about amor fati in *Nietzsche contra Wagner*) remarks that 'this book may need more than one preface and in the end there would still remain room for doubt whether anyone who has never lived through similar experiences could be brought closer to the *experience* of this book by means of prefaces' (GS: 32).

sort of experiences entailed by the state once it is achieved in its agapic form. In particular, the quotes previously given in support of the apparent requirement that each part of our life should be valued positively for its own sake are prefaced with ‘it is *part of this state* to perceive not merely the necessity of those sides of existence hitherto denied, but their desirability (...) for their own sake’ (my italics). That the agapic lover does not experience the negative as such anymore should be understood as a *description* of the consequences of loving as being in a specific state, not as reasons for us to enter that state (which we cannot do at will anyway). Furthermore, and importantly, any attempt to construe these observations as reasons would be self-defeating because the experiential worth of such states could only be fully understood retrospectively, from the value-bestowing perspective of amor fati itself. The would-be erotic lover, who is in need of motivation, could not understand the ‘reasons’ that would make fate lovable; conversely, the agapic lover, who would be in a position to understand them, does not need them.

This, however, makes the issue of genesis more acute. If amor fati cannot be rationally motivated or willed into existence, how will it come into being? Note that by virtue both of its irreducibility to a conceptual content and of the lack of rational justification for it, there cannot be any *de iure* answer to these questions, only empirical accounts such as the autobiographical observations made by Nietzsche about his own experience of amor fati. I shall now explore two possible ways that emerge from his writings. The first one is the eternal return, construed this time not as a thought experiment but as an imaginative and emotionally charged scenario meant to generate amor fati in a performative manner.⁴¹ The second, paradoxically, consists in the experience of suffering itself, understood under certain conditions.

This agapic reading opens up a second and more fruitful way of understanding the function of the eternal return: not as a thought experiment meant to give us a standpoint from which we can rationally assess the value of our life and come to a decision, but as a poetic scenario that we are

⁴¹ Perhaps unexpectedly, both these ways are Schopenhauerian in essence. In book IV of WWR, Schopenhauer notes that rational argumentation or ‘abstract knowledge’ are powerless to perform any ethical transformation. Thus ‘To become practical, to guide conduct, to transform character, are old claims which with mature insight it [philosophy] ought to abandon. For here, where it is a question of the worth or worthlessness of existence, of salvation and damnation, not the dead concepts of philosophy decide the matter, but the innermost nature of man himself’ (WWR IV §53 p. 271). By contrast, he relies on ‘the inner, direct, and intuitive knowledge from which alone all virtue and holiness can come’ (WWR IV §68: 383). Such knowledge consists in the intuitive (i.e.: non discursive and non representational) awareness that phenomena, for all their apparent conflicts and divisions, are noumenally one; from this follow first, the identification of the ascetic with the suffering of the whole world, and secondly the conversion of his will (e.g. the negation of his intelligible character as the only possible manifestation of freedom in the phenomenal world). Clearly this is precisely the sort of conclusion that the thought of amor fati (as an alternative to resignation and will-lessness) is meant to oppose. Yet Nietzsche retains from Schopenhauer the idea that a specific kind of intuition may transform our attitude towards life in the most radical way.

meant to enact imaginatively, in a way that reveals to us how we feel about our life in a single, potentially life-changing moment.⁴² This performative dimension of the eternal return is explicitly referred to by Nietzsche: ‘if this thought gained possession of you, it would *change you as you are* and perhaps crush you’.⁴³ (my italics) On such an interpretation, the eternal return has ‘disclosive force’ (Hatab 2005: 99): the internalisation of the scenario is *per se* an operator of existential change. In this respect, note that the possibility of a positive answer is introduced by a reference to the ‘*experience* of a tremendous moment’ (my italics). In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche describes the revelatory power of such moments as follows: ‘with indescribable certainty and subtlety, something becomes visible, audible, something that shakes one to the last depths and throws one down’. (EH: 300) Notice also that the demon does not start by asking a bare-faced question such as ‘would you want to live your life all over again?’ (such as Clark’s question: ‘would you want to marry me all over again?’). On the contrary, he presents us with a metaphorical and powerful description of what it might feel like for us to have this particular moment, ‘even this spider and this moonlight between the trees’, recur. And significantly, the possible ‘answers’ outlined are neither ‘yes’ nor ‘no’ but specific attitudes (‘gnashing our teeth’, being ‘crushed’ or on the contrary becoming ‘well disposed to oneself and one’s life’).⁴⁴ While these may be seen as expressive of a propositional content, they do not state it and it would be difficult to construe them as conclusions reached through hypothetico-deductive reasoning. Correlatively, the yes-saying mentioned by GS341 should not be construed as a constative speech act (in this case an assertion)⁴⁵, but in a performative way: just as the ‘yes’ of the marriage vow both expresses our love and actualises our commitment, in the same way, saying ‘yes’ to the eternal return is not judging our life worth living again and again and assenting to what is entailed by that judgment, but committing ourselves to living in the light of that experience. Yet there is an important asymmetry between the ‘yes’ of the marriage vow and the ‘yes’ to the eternal return. While the first is fully up to us, the second comes to us (or not) at the peak of our imaginative internalisation of the eternal return. Nietzsche makes this clear in his description of his own experience: ‘one hears, one does not seek; one accepts, one does not ask who gives; like lightning, a thought flashes up, with necessity’. (EH: 300) Once more, the mediopassive modality typical of agapic love is in force: we can decide to

⁴² On the transformative force of the eternal return, see Hatab 2005: 104-7.

⁴³ Note that the first expression points towards a loss of control from our part which is indicative of the experiential dimension of the eternal return (we normally entertain thought experiments so as to reach particular conclusions, they don’t ‘gain possession’ of us).

⁴⁴ The sole statement proffered (‘you are a God and I have never heard anything more divine’) validates the scenario by sanctifying its source (the demon becomes a God) but does not provide a direct answer either.

⁴⁵ See Austin (1956): 233-52.

‘play the game’ and take the scenario seriously (rather than inquire about its validity conditions), and how intensely we internalise it does matter, but we do not control the process and its outcome isn’t up to us.

Yet even if the commitment to *amor fati* did arise in us, there would seem to be an inherent fragility to it. It may be entirely sincere at the time it is made, and yet fade away once the rather dramatic conditions of its genesis have disappeared. The thought may ‘gain possession of us’ in the paradoxical instant of our performative commitment, but can it retain its hold on us durably? Perhaps, but perhaps not. However there is another, possibly more durable way: suffering itself.⁴⁶ Nietzsche offers a very rich, first-person phenomenology of suffering, and his narratives are both the expression and the illustration of the transfiguration of the negative which is characteristic of agapic love. Consider the following passage:

Here it happened in a manner that I cannot admire sufficiently that, precisely at the right time, my father’s *wicked* heritage came to my aid — at bottom, predestination to an early death. Sickness *detached me slowly*. (...) It bestowed on me the necessity of lying still, of leisure, of waiting and being patient — but that meant, of thinking. (EH: 287, Nietzsche’s italics)

From an erotic standpoint, ‘predestination to an early death’ would probably be one of the strongest possible objections to loving fate, and so would having the sort of sickness that may cause our death. Yet in Nietzsche’s narrative both are perceived as blessings (‘in a manner that I cannot *admire* sufficiently’... *it bestowed on me...*).⁴⁷ How is this agapic reversal possible? Three things are worth noting from the outset: firstly, not any suffering will do. Only protracted and intense suffering, an ‘icing up in the middle of youth, (GS: 32), that ‘long slow pain in which we are burned like green wood’ (NCW: 680) may have a transfiguring effect. The reason is presumably that unless it is intense or long-lasting enough, the suffering will be discounted as an annoying but insignificant hindrance. And if it can be lessened, we are much more likely to seek any possible course of action (traditional or alternative medicines, surgery, etc.) that might bring about its decrease than to undergo an existential change. Our focus will be outward, not inward.

⁴⁶ Note that the idea is also Schopenhauerian in inspiration, although of course Schopenhauer draws the opposite conclusion (suffering burns out our will to live and leads to resignation). Cf. WWR §68: 392: ‘there is a second way of attaining that denial. Indeed, we may assume that most men can reach it only in this way, and that it is the suffering personally felt, not the suffering merely known, which most frequently produces complete resignation, often only at the approach of death. For only in the case of a few is mere knowledge sufficient to bring about the denial of the will, the knowledge namely that sees through the *principium individuationis*’. See also WWR §68: 396.

By contrast, the need to ‘patiently resist a terrible, long pressure — (...) patiently, without submitting, but also without hope’ (GS: 33) may open the possibility of loving fate for the sufferer. Secondly, should amor fati come to us, this would *not* mean the end of our pain: the sort of overcoming of suffering and of the self that Nietzsche describes does not involve moving to a painless state, an important point to which I shall come back. Finally, and importantly, note that just like that of agapic love, the modality of our relation to suffering is mediopassive: that we suffer is beyond our control, and there are limits to what we can do about it; yet crucially, we can to some extent influence the manner in which we exist our pain.

It is this ability to exist our pain in particular ways which opens up the possibility of fostering amor fati. This may sound paradoxical as it is by definition impossible to know in advance its shape or effects, and its advent is not within our control: so how can we prepare for it? Nietzsche’s autobiographical reflections suggest that in response to suffering we can develop three features which are propitious to amor fati because they thwart the alternative existential possibilities which constantly threaten the sufferer, namely self-pity, resignation and self-deception. The first two of these features are courage and moral strength. Amor fati is not the outcome of a quietist attitude to suffering: on the contrary, Nietzsche remarks on the ‘long war such as I then waged with myself against the pessimism of weariness with life’. (HH II: 212-3) Another passage refers the ‘ultimate, most joyous (...) yes to life’ of amor fati to ‘courage, and as a condition of that, an excess of strength’. (EH: 272) Along the same lines, an unpublished passage about amor fati mentions ‘courage, severity towards oneself, cleanliness towards oneself’.⁴⁸ (WP §1041) These qualities are needed to counteract the rise of self-pity or nihilistic resignation. To my knowledge, Nietzsche does not say much about the first (although he has a lot to say about pity for others, none of it positive),⁴⁹ perhaps because he does not seem to have experienced its temptation

⁴⁷ In a similar way, severe pain is usually construed as precluding happiness (to such an extent that Schopenhauer understands happiness negatively, as the cessation of pain); yet Nietzsche claims that ‘never have I felt happier with myself than in the sickest and most painful periods of my life’ (EH: 288).

⁴⁸ See also a letter to Erwin Rohde, dated Tautenburg, near Dornburg, Thuringia, July 15, 1882: ‘What years [since 1876]! What wearisome pain! What inner disturbances, revolutions, solitudes! *Who* has endured as much as I have? (...) And if I now stand above all that, with the joyousness of a victor and fraught with difficult *new* plans — and knowing myself, with the prospect of a new, more difficult and even more inwardly profound sufferings and tragedies *and with the courage to face them!* — then nobody should be annoyed with me for having a good opinion of my medicine’ (SL: 187, Nietzsche’s italics).

⁴⁹ See for example GS IV, §338: pity strips the other’s suffering of its personal character and thus diminishes both his worth and his will. It shows a certain ‘intellectual lack of care’ from the part of the person who expresses pity, since they have no idea of what is entailed by the other’s suffering. Furthermore, the would-be rescuer is blind to the fact that there may be a ‘personal necessity of distress’, that ‘terrors, deprivations, impoverishments, midnights, (...) are as necessary for me and for you as are their opposites. It never occurs

himself. Yet self-pity would make *amor fati* impossible for three reasons: firstly, it implies that one feels 'hard done by' or treated in an unjust and undeserved manner. This, in turn, entails assumptions about providence (in particular the idea that one should be treated in proportion to one's perceived merits) which Nietzsche finds both unwarranted and undesirable. Secondly, self-pity tends to divert our attention to favoured alternative scenarios and thus to foster resentment towards the existing situation. Finally, it reveals deep existential limitations on the part of the sufferer, in particular the desire to protect oneself from pain at any cost without realising that the most valuable things in human life can only come to us if we open ourselves up to the possibility of being hurt: 'if you refuse to let your own suffering lie upon you even for an hour and if you constantly try to prevent and forestall any possible distress way ahead of time; if you experience suffering and displeasure as evil, hateful, worthy of annihilation, and as a defect of existence, then it is clear that besides your religion of pity you harbour (...) the religion of comfortableness. How little you know of human *happiness*'. (GS: 269) Like the Last Men in *Zarathustra*, the self-pitier seeks to 'move south' rather than risk hardship cultivating harsher lands. Yet it is only from such risks that higher human possibilities, including the 'new kind of happiness' brought by *amor fati*, can arise.

Nietzsche is more explicit about resignation, which is presented as the antithesis of *amor fati*: 'such an experimental philosophy as I live anticipates even the possibilities of the most fundamental nihilism: but this does not mean that it must halt at a negation, a No, a will to negation. It wants to cross over to the opposite of this (...) — my formula for this is *amor fati*. (WP §1041) For lack of space I won't develop Nietzsche's arguments against Christianity or Schopenhauer⁵⁰; of more interest here is the thought that one must not '*halt*' at a negation. This can be understood as an allusion to his interpretation of Schopenhauer's position in the history of Western philosophy (he is supposed to have improved on the Christian world view by replacing the idea of a benevolent God with the will as doomed by its very structure to suffer endlessly)⁵¹.

to them that, to put it mystically, the path to one's heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one's own hell'. (GS: 269).

⁵⁰ '... At the same time I grasped that my instinct went to the opposite direction from Schopenhauer's: towards a *justification of life*, even at its most terrible, ambiguous, and mendacious; for this I had the formula 'Dionysian' (WP, §1005). See also EH: 272: 'I was the first to see the real opposition: the degenerating instinct that turns against life with subterranean vengefulness (Christianity, the philosophy of Schopenhauer, in a certain sense already the philosophy of Plato, and all of idealism in typical forms) versus a formula for the highest affirmation, born of fullness, of overfullness, a Yes-saying without reservation, even to suffering, even to guilt, even to everything that is questionable and strange in existence'.

⁵¹ 'Against the theory that an 'in-itself of things' must necessarily be good, blessed, true, and one, Schopenhauer's interpretation of the in-itself as will was an essential step; but he did not understand how to

But it may also refer to a specific feature of Nietzsche's own experience of suffering, namely the 'Russian fatalism' described in *Ecce Homo*. Russian fatalism is a response to certain situations where the courage and strength of the sufferer find themselves overwhelmed by pain and sickness: 'one cannot get rid of anything, one cannot get over anything (...), everything hurts. Men and things obtrude too closely; experiences strike one too deeply; memory becomes a festering wound'. (EH: 230) Such situations are bound to arise in the course of a long illness: suffering and powerlessness foster a greater sensitivity and vulnerability both to events and to people; one is hurt by details that the healthy do not even notice. One's memories of happier times, far from being comforting, become obsessive reminders of what was lost. The time comes when even the greatest courage and strength of mind must fail. In such times, the appropriate response is that of the 'Russian soldier who, finding a campaign too strenuous, finally lies down in the snow. (...) No longer to take anything, no longer to absorb anything — to cease reacting altogether'. (ibid) Yet while this may look like a Schopenhauerian form of resignation (similar to the death by attrition sought by the ascetic), the function of such fatalism is the very opposite: 'to preserve life under the most perilous conditions by reducing the metabolism'. (ibid) Rather than being invaded and used up by negative reactions ('ressentiment, anger, pathological vulnerability, impotent lust for revenge'), it is best 'not to react at all anymore' until one finds the courage and strength to measure oneself against one's pain in a way that transfigures both the suffering and the sufferer. Although it is meant to be discarded (perhaps to be adopted yet again later) as soon as our vitality is 'rich and proud' again, Russian fatalism is thus a moving (and perhaps unexpected) acknowledgement of human finitude from Nietzsche's part. While by definition it prevents the sort of positive commitment of *amor fati*, it nevertheless fosters the right sort of attitude and can perhaps be seen as its precursor: 'I displayed the 'Russian fatalism' I mentioned by tenaciously clinging for years to all but intolerable situations (...). It was better than changing them, than *feeling* that they could be changed — than rebelling against them'.⁵² (ibid)

The third feature that may encourage the birth of *amor fati* is the clarity of vision sometimes fostered in us by the need not to give up when faced with protracted suffering. This is rather paradoxical as pain is often said to cloud judgment. Yet should we display the courage and strength mentioned above, then suffering may prove itself to be the 'ultimate liberator of the spirit

deify his will; he remained entangled in the moral-Christian ideal'. (WP, §1005). On this, see Reginster: 103-125.

⁵² Interestingly, the three excluded attitudes are the three possible responses to fate to which *amor fati* is a preferable alternative: 'changing the situations' is impossible, 'feeling that they could be changed' refers to

(...) [that] forces us (...) to descend in our ultimate depths'. (NCW: 680) In another passage, Nietzsche mentions the 'supreme sobering up through pain' that is the means of 'extricating [us] from the perilous world of fantasy' in which the healthy live (D: 69-70). As noted by moralists, suffering often strips human relations and events of their social trappings and reveals to us what matters most to us. 'He who suffers intensely looks *out* at things with a terrible coldness: all those lying little charms which things are usually surrounded when the eye of the healthy regards them do not exist for him; indeed, he himself lies there before himself stripped of all colour and plumage'. (ibid) Such clarity of mind is a defence against the mendaciousness of idealism or self-pity and thus may reinforce our courage in the face of suffering (by removing the temptation to dwell on alternatives). It is also per se a way to endure pain. For those who are strong enough, pain has a 'spiritualising' effect: such individuals are able to overcome their native aversiveness to it by focusing on the increased lucidity that it may bring. Thus 'the tremendous tension imparted to the intellect by its desire to oppose and counter pain makes him see everything he now beholds in a new light; and the unspeakable stimulus (...) is often sufficiently powerful to defy all temptation to self destruction'. (ibid) Nietzsche lucidly points out that such awareness carries with it the danger of Faustian arrogance: 'our pride towers as never before: it discovers an incomparable stimulus in opposing such a tyrant as pain is, and in answer to all the insinuations it makes to us that we should bear witness against life, in becoming precisely the *advocate of life* in the face of this tyrant'. (D: 70) Yet for him such pride is preferable to resignation or self-pity in that it fosters a positive attitude toward this life: in this, it too can be seen as a precursor of amor fati, not because it conveys the right sort of understanding of fate, like Russian fatalism, but because of the commitment to life it denotes.

So how does one experience one's life if one has come to love fate, be it through an instantaneous, performative commitment to the eternal return or the long, difficult experience of suffering? To try to describe the experience of amor fati, one needs to focus on its main feature, the agapic bestowal of value. For Nietzsche, such bestowal is the correlate of a transfiguration of the self⁵³: 'man becomes the transfigurer of existence when he learns to transfigure himself'. (WP §821) As we have seen, suffering is instrumental to such 'learning' because (in the best of cases) it helps us to develop the qualities (courage, strength, lucidity) which will allow us to overcome its

the mendaciousness of idealism (the italics suggest that such a feeling is ungrounded) and of self-pity, 'rebellling against them' is the futile reaction to fate exhibited by the heroes of Greek tragedies.

⁵³ Nietzsche also points towards this aspect in his biographical reflections about suffering: due to the effects of his illness, 'that nethermost self which had, as it were, been buried and grown silent under the continual

adverse effects. The extent of the agapic transfiguration of existence is in direct proportion to the transformation of the self: ‘the tragic man affirms even the harshest suffering: he is sufficiently strong, rich and capable of deifying to do so. The Christian denies even the happiest lot on earth: he is sufficiently weak, poor, disinherited to suffer from life in whatever form he meets it’. (WP, §1052) Very importantly, such affirmation is not the assertion of a propositional content — it is perhaps best described as a commitment to living our lives in the light of our ‘deifying’ love. Nor does it operate by holding in front of us the prospect of a life without any disorder, irrationality or pain: this would only replicate the dichotomous structure of ascetic ideals by contrasting implicitly our currently wretched condition with a happy ever-after under the sway of amor fati. Whatever it does, agapic transfiguration does not work by ignoring the darker, chaotic and irrational sides of human existence (which is perhaps why courage is so important in the fostering of amor fati). It does not diminish our aversiveness to pain, nor dispel the painful character of our more difficult experiences; yet through an existential transformation that makes us stronger and ‘more profound’⁵⁴, it somehow enables us to love these experiences as fated, and this in spite of the suffering they cause us. This is not tantamount to recapturing them within the sort of eroticising, providential narrative criticised in GS277. No justification or reasons are involved at all: we feel the pain that attaches to such experiences but find ourselves able to love them *nevertheless*, without holding them as objections to life.⁵⁵ As Zarathustra says, ‘we love life, not because we are used to living, but because we are used to loving’ (Z: 68). Amor fati, like Angelus Silesius’ rose, has no why.

Yet amor fati is not only characterised by the ability to transfigure one’s own suffering; it is also a positive state. Nietzsche indicates that ‘a full and powerful soul not only copes with painful, even terrible losses, deprivations, (...); it emerges from such hells with a greater fullness and powerfulness; and most essential of all, with a new increase in the blissfulness of love’. (WP §352) How is such an ‘increase’ experienced? Another passage indicates that from the ‘abysses’ of suffering, one returns ‘newborn, more ticklish and malicious, with a more delicate taste for joy,

pressure of having to listen to other selves (...) awakened slowly, shyly, dubiously (...). This ‘return to myself’ meant a supreme kind of recovery — the other kind merely followed from this’ (EH: 288).

⁵⁴ ‘As for my long illness, do I not owe it ineffably more than to my health? I owe it a *superior* health, a health that is fortified by everything that does not kill it (...). I doubt that suffering makes us better. But I know that it makes us more profound’ (NCW: 680).

⁵⁵ Note that the anticipation that at least some aspects of our fate will not be loveable on erotic grounds is *built in* the agapic construal of amor fati. Just as the faithful are prepared to be tested by God, in the same way lovers of fate will expect suffering, and more generally the sort of things we usually perceive as negative, to happen to them; but their love will transfigure these experiences. So long as it holds, the very

(...) with merrier senses (...) more childlike and yet a *hundred times subtler than before*' (GS: 37, my italics) The increased strength, sensitivity and lucidity brought upon us by suffering do not disappear with the pain itself. They remain with us and transform our perception, not just of suffering, but of our whole life. We experience the 'happiness which could only be invented by a man who was suffering continually'. (GS: 110) We become more attentive and do not take anything for granted: the 'smallest, tenderest, most fleeting moments life gives us' (HH II: 213) now stand out, and we delight in the little nuances and details we would not have noticed before. To those who 'love life, it seems that butterflies and soap bubbles, and whatever is like them among men, know most about happiness'. (Z: 68) We experience a constant sense of gratitude. Our demands on existence are much more modest; we know the 'happiness of eyes that have seen the sea of existence become calm, and now they can never weary of the surface and of the many hues of this tender, shuddering skin of the sea'. (GS: 110)

In this paper, I have tried to shed some light on the oft mentioned but rarely discussed notion of amor fati. I have identified two central paradoxes (love of fate requires us to love a negative object, and we are supposed to achieve it knowing that our love will not make any difference to its object) and outlined two possible ways of understanding such love (erotic and agapic). I have suggested that while Nietzsche's original reflections on amor fati in the *Gay Science* exhibit a tension between these construals, the erotic reading is bound to fail because it does not take into account the motivational gap between willing or affirming on the one hand, and loving on the other. By contrast, I have emphasised the mediopassive modality used by Nietzsche in relation to amor fati, which, like the middle voice in ancient Greek, signals that love of fate is an existential attitude which requires our participation but which does not fully depend on us. On such an agapic construal, the modality of Nietzsche's remarks on amor fati is descriptive; his comments about the value of suffering are not meant as arguments to convince us that fate is lovable and thus trigger a quasi-Platonic ascent of love, but as observations made from the perspective of someone who already experiences amor fati. Note that one of the advantages of the agapic construal of amor fati is that it solves *both* the paradoxes I discussed at the beginning of this paper: loving a negative object is not a problem since agapic love is not dependent on the previously apprehended value of its object: furthermore, such value is positively transformed by the love itself. Secondly, while our love may not make any difference to the unfolding of fate which was not already pre-included in

existence of amor fati will structurally prevent the possibility of anything counting as an empirical objection to it.

the latter (our loving fate, if it happens, is part of that fate itself), it will make a substantial difference to *us*. Our perception of the events that befall us (and of ourselves) will be greatly transformed. As we saw, this existential transformation will in turn allow us a sort of happiness which neither resignation nor rebellion could ever bring us. We experience ‘an equilibrium and composure in the face of life and even a sense of gratitude towards it’. (HH II: 212-3) Although this cannot count as a motivation for loving fate (since this would be subscribing to the erotic logic which, as we have seen, ultimately fails), it is enough to rebut the objection that such a love is pointless.

By way of a (long) conclusion, I now wish to discuss a number of objections. The first three concern, one way or another, the limitations of human agape, and the fourth its status as an ideal. To begin with, consider that in Luther’s version the transfigurative powers of divine love are infinite; there is nothing, past, present or future, that God’s love cannot redeem. But I cannot literally remake my past, nor make my past suffering a good thing at the time it was experienced. From this observation follows a two-pronged worry about the agapic construal of amor fati: on the one hand, I can learn to see retrospectively a value in my past which previously escaped me, and thus come to love even my past suffering. But then my love is not fully agapic and includes erotic elements. Or on the other hand, I may think that I can genuinely transform my whole life, but then I may well be deceiving myself about the extent of my powers. So either amor fati turns out to be a hybrid construct, in which (pace Nietzsche) eros supplements agape, or it risks being a case of self-deception.⁵⁶ Is there a way out of this dilemma?

Rather than trying to answer this question directly, it may be worth looking at a passage in which Nietzsche specifically considers the problems raised by our inability to reshape our past — note its title: ‘On Redemption’. “‘It was’’: that is what the will’s teeth-gnashing and most lonely affliction is called. Powerless against that which has been done, the will is an angry spectator of all things past’.⁵⁷ (Z: 161) The text then explains how, under the influence of the spirit of revenge, the will, from being a potential ‘liberator’, becomes a ‘malefactor’: faced with its painful ‘inability to go backwards’, it ‘wills itself and all life was supposed to be — punishment’. Existence itself comes to be seen as an unredeemable punishment, and the only apparent solution consists in the (Schopenhauerian) ‘fable song of madness’: ‘willing must become not-willing’. (ibid.) By contrast, the true solution resides in the full assumption of the creative powers of the will: to ‘unlearn the spirit of revenge and all teeth-gnashing’, it must be taught to ‘will backwards’. (Z: 163) At this

⁵⁶ I am grateful to my anonymous referee for having raised this objection.

point, however, Zarathustra breaks off and ‘looks like a man seized by extreme terror’. He does not explain how willing backwards could be achieved but after a moment laughs and comments that ‘it is difficult to live amongst men because keeping silent is so difficult’. (ibid.) What can we make of this narrative, and how does it connect to amor fati? It clearly stems from the same sort of consideration as the dilemma outlined above: how do we deal with our inability to change our past, and the suffering this entails (in particular through the twin forms of regret and remorse)? Willing backwards, mysterious as it is, would nip the dilemma in the bud by allowing us to retrospectively project our will in the past and to acquire total control over our lives: the sting of the ‘it was’ would be removed because what was would ultimately turn out to have been what we willed it to be *even then*. Thus willing backwards would offer us an autonomous form of redemption, a redemption purely based on the power of willing and without any need for amor fati. In Nietzsche’s (very biblical) terms, the will must become a ‘creator’ and ‘its *own* redeemer and bringer of joy’ (Z: 162, my italics), combining both the creative power of the Father and the redemptive attributes of the Son — a possibility that not even the Pelagians, who were keen to minimise the need for grace, dared consider.⁵⁸ No wonder that Zarathustra should look terrified and lapse into silence! However, note that such a super-human redemption is not open to us and that, like the Overman itself, it is presented both as an imperative (‘the will to power must will something higher than any reconciliation’) and as an open ended question (‘how shall that happen?’ (Z: 163)). Although Nietzsche does not explicitly make the connection, I would suggest that amor fati represents a human, heteronomous alternative to willing backwards and a secularised version of grace. As we saw, the existential transformation it entails is not dependent on our will (love cannot be willed into existence). What I have called its medio-passive modality captures the fact that even though we may try to prepare for it, we cannot ensure its coming: like grace (which, in the Lutheran tradition Nietzsche was raised in, cannot be secured through works either), love happens (or not) to us from the outside. Yet like willing backwards, albeit differently, it can help us deal with the pain of the ‘it was’: whereas the first, if it could be achieved, would remove the cause of the suffering by literally transforming our past volitions, amor fati is meant to change our *relation* to our (unchanged) past, and more generally to time, in such a way that neither revenge nor despair can hold sway on us anymore.

⁵⁷ Remember that teeth-gnashing was one of the possible (adverse) reactions considered by Nietzsche when discussing the ‘greatest weight’ of the eternal return.

⁵⁸ On Pelagianism, see for example E. Gilson: *La philosophie au Moyen-Age, des origines patristiques au XIV^{ème} siècle*, Paris: éditions Payot, 1947.

This suggestion may go some way towards solving the first horn of the dilemma. Remember that the background of the problem is Nietzsche's requirement that our fate should be loved in its entirety, and not just on balance. As we saw, this entails that *all* its aspects should be loved, which is clearly impossible on an erotic construal, for structural reasons (we cannot love the negative). The objection consisted in pointing out that this may well be impossible on a purely agapic construal as well, although this time for practical reasons which have to do with human finitude and our inability to transform our past. However, such ability, although it is central to willing backwards, is not required for amor fati: what is needed is a transformation, not of the past, but of *ourselves*. Furthermore, and importantly, there are several indications in Nietzsche's writings that the primary temporal focus of such transfiguration is not our relation to our past, but our ability to live in the *present*. Thus in the autumn of 1882, very soon after having written to Overbeck about amor fati for the first time, he remarked in the *Nachlass* that 'any love thinks of the instant and eternity — but *never* of "duration"'. (KSA, VII 1, Juli 1882-Winter 1883: 88 (Z I 1, 3 [1] n° 293), Nietzsche's italics) Note also that *all* the passages quoted above (including those in footnotes) which describe the state in which lovers of fate may find themselves are in the present tense. Yet another text, entitled *At Noontide* (recall that for Nietzsche noon is the hour of the 'shortest shadow', in which time is compressed into a single, present moment) shows Zarathustra passing 'an old gnarled and crooked tree which was embraced around by the abundant love of a vine (...); from the vine an abundance of yellow grapes hung down to the wanderer'. (Z: 287). Drawn by the grapes, Zarathustra stops and lies down besides the tree. As he falls asleep, he speaks to his heart: 'take care! Hot noontide sleeps over the fields! Do not sing! Soft! (...) Precisely the least thing, the gentlest, the lightest, the rustling of a lizard, a breath, a moment, a twinkling of the eye — little makes the quality of the best happiness. Soft! What has happened to me? Listen! Has time flown away? Do I not fall? Have I not fallen — listen! Into the well of eternity?' (Z: 288) Admittedly there is no explicit mention of amor fati in this passage. However it is connoted both by the agapic elements of the description (the '*abundant love* of the vine', the '*abundance* of yellow grapes') and by its content: here too the emphasis is on the rare ability, which amor fati bestows upon us, to notice the 'smallest, most fleeting moments that life gives us' — not butterflies and soap bubbles as before but the similarly small and apparently insignificant rustling of a lizard. Like all its previous counterparts, the excerpt is in the present tense, and the fading away of the other temporal extases is indicated by various rhetorical means: Nietzsche's insistence on the shortest possible temporal span for the object considered (a 'breath', a 'moment', a 'twinkling of the eye'), Zarathustra's musing about the flying away of time, and the reverse order of his last two questions

(do I not fall? Have I not fallen?), from present to past and not past to present as one might logically have expected. This passage strongly suggests, as do others, that amor fati does not work so much by providing us with ways to re-evaluate our past positively but by allowing us to live fully in the present, free both from the temptations of the spirit of revenge and from worries about the future. Of course, it is somewhat paradoxical to think that loving fate would allow us to sidestep thoughts about temporal succession. But the fatal element remains present: it is expressed differently, not by means of a linear consideration of the concatenation of past, present and future events, but through an intuitive understanding of the unavoidability of what happens in the present tense, when we ‘experience all things as necessarily linked’. (K, 2: 98)

Thus clarifying the challenge of the ‘it was’ and construing amor fati as a human alternative to the super-human (and unachievable) redemption of willing backwards allows us to understand its agapic element better and to resolve the first horn of the dilemma: it removes both the requirement that we should be able to literally transform our past and the need for narratives that would allow us to love it backwards on erotic grounds. However this only makes the second horn, namely the risk of self-deception, more pressing. Can my relation to existence truly be transfigured to this extent? Is such a love humanly possible? Or do I just delude myself into thinking that it is? Self-deception is a notoriously problematic topic in that it is equally hard to describe the phenomenon appropriately and to present a coherent account of the psychological factors that supposedly make it possible.⁵⁹ In fact, the difficulty is such that some are inclined to deny its existence altogether (in which case, however, there would be no objection to answer here).⁶⁰ Furthermore, the sort of description and explanation available varies considerably depending on how weak or strong the cases envisaged are: instances of weak self-deception are very close to wishful thinking in that they can be construed as requiring no self-deceptive intent and no violation of our normal epistemic standards. The subject, although he is motivated by a negative affect, has no intention to deceive himself and does not know that he is doing it.⁶¹ By contrast, strong cases are sometimes said to exhibit both an intention to deceive oneself (although it does not take the self-defeating form of a conscious choice) and a failure of reflective self-

⁵⁹ For a highly interesting discussion of resentment as a case of self-deception in Nietzsche, see Poellner (2004).

⁶⁰ For a discussion of skepticism about self-deception, see for example Gardner 2006: 28 sq.

⁶¹ See for example Mele’s self labelled ‘deflationary’ account (Mele 1997: 91 sq). A standard example is that of the anxious husband whose anxiety and desire to be reassured about his marriage cause him to disregard potential evidence of deceitful behaviour from his wife and to over-interpret elements in her conduct that may assuage his worries. For a criticism of this interpretation of self-deception, see Poellner 2004: 54-57.

knowledge.⁶² Without entering into these debates, it seems possible to describe *amor fati* as a case of self-deception operating along the following steps⁶³ (artificially separated for the sake of clarity): (1) faced with the experience of pain or suffering, which I see as a consequence of my fate, (2) I experience a negative affective response to the latter (such as anger, resentment or hatred). This negative affect is in itself painful because it expresses an unpleasant truth about myself or my situation — hinting perhaps at my powerlessness in the face of my fate, my inability to cope with it, or at weaknesses in my character such as self-pity or cowardice. (3) In order to prevent this painful secondary affect and what it expresses from coming to reflective awareness, I deceive myself into believing that I love my fate. This instrumentally adopted belief allows me to think that I envision my pain in a positive light⁶⁴ and that I am genuinely endowed with the sort of virtues which I wish to have (for example being a strong, generous and powerful individual who is capable of overcoming pain). (4) The whole process is made possible by the fact that neither my negative secondary affect nor my motivation to deceive myself are reflectively available to me at the time.⁶⁵

⁶² For an illuminating account of the structure of strong self-deception, see Gardner 2006: 17-32. According to Gardner, strong self-deception can be distinguished both from its weaker counterpart (i.e. motivated self-misrepresentation) and from neurosis by two key features: the first is that it requires an intention to deceive oneself ('a subject is self-deceived when he believes one thing in order not to believe another (...). Self-deception is a structure of motivated self misrepresentation in which S and S' are beliefs and the process occurs through an intention of the subject' (Gardner: 18)). The second is that strong self-deception involves two distinct beliefs, one which is false but useful to the subject, and another which is true but painful ('let's call the psychological states S and S' which are involved in strong self-deception the promoted and buried beliefs respectively' (Gardner: 21)). For a discussion and defence of these two claims, see Gardner: 23-26).

⁶³ In order to give the objection its maximum scope, the description sketched below has minimal requirements in that it does not involve an intention to self-deceive or a duality of beliefs. But a redescription of *amor fati* as a case of strong self-deception could equally be possible: the repressed belief could be, for example, that I resent or hate my fate, or that I love it only on erotic grounds (e.g. when it is favourable to me).

⁶⁴ Note that the process differs from sublimation in that the negative affect is not displaced or discharged by being transformed into another emotion or attached to another object. Although it is not recognised as such, the negative affect remains (and keeps motivating the process of self-deception).

⁶⁵ There are several possible types of explanation for such lack of availability. Sub-system theories such as Davidson's (1985) and Pears (1985) suggest that in cases when the coming to awareness of a particular belief would cause significant anxiety to an individual, a sub-system is set up within the mind which, unbeknownst to the main system, manipulates the latter so as to insulate it from that belief. As pointed out by Poellner, another possible explanation can be found in Sartre's distinction between *thetic* and *non-thetic* forms of awareness. While the former is fully reflective and thus cannot fail to be noticed by the subject, the second is pre-reflective and easily overlooked. The reason for such ease is that for Sartre self-deception (as a psychological form of ontological bad faith) also involves a pre-reflective commitment from the part of the subject *not* to submit certain aspects of herself or her life to reflective scrutiny (what Sartre calls the 'original project' of bad faith, see Sartre 1969: 67-8).

It would seem hard to deny that although it is not without difficulties⁶⁶ this model has some intuitive plausibility. Cast in the light of self-deceptive intent, the eroticising narrative presented by GS277 could be seen precisely as the sort of rationale we might unwittingly use to persuade ourselves of our love for fate, and conversely that our fate is loveable at the scale of our whole life.⁶⁷ However, it does not follow from the fact that self-deception is possible that it is necessary. To go back to the original objection, it is certainly the case that we would have to be mistaken or more likely self-deluded if amor fati required of us that we should literally transform our whole lives, including our past. As human finitude precludes us from doing this, loving our fate would turn out to be an impossible task and we could only convince ourselves to have achieved it through sustained illusion or self-deception. But as we saw, such a radical ability is *not* required by amor fati: what is at stake is an existential transformation of the self and of our relation to our present (rather than our past). So just as there is no principle ground to rule out self-deception, in the same way there is no a priori reason to deem such self-transfiguration impossible. In cases of genuine amor fati, there would be no need for self-deception because we would be transformed in such a way that step (2) would simply not present itself: the agapic transfiguration of our aversiveness to pain would prevent the secondary negative affect from forming, and without it there would be no motivation for the rest of the process to take place.

Given that self-deception is not a necessity, let us grant that amor fati is, at least in principle, possible.⁶⁸ This, however, raises a third difficulty, which concerns its sustainability over the course of a human life. Even if one grants that it can be agapic (in the modified sense above) and that it needs not involve self-deception, the question remains of the extent to which it can hold sway on us. Nietzsche clearly thought that he did experience it, and this seems evidenced in some of his writings. Yet his moving remarks about Russian fatalism also make it clear that he did not think that he himself was able to sustain amor fati all his life. We saw that it requires us to develop certain qualities (such as courage, moral strength and lucidity), which may appear in response to the various challenges that life throws at us, in particular suffering, and evolve in proportion to the intensity of our ordeals. Yet there is no guarantee that we shall find it in ourselves to be equal to *all* the sufferings that may come to us. We cannot rule out the prospect of being faced with an

⁶⁶ (in particular the so-called 'static' and 'dynamic' puzzles which challenge (with different degrees of severity) all accounts of self-deception. See for example Mele 2001: 6 sq).

⁶⁷ (and so could, more polemically, Nietzsche's reconstruction of his own life previously quoted in EH: 287).

⁶⁸ (One way of distinguishing genuine cases of amor fati from instances of self-deception could consist in examining the relevant individuals' behaviour to see whether it conflicts with their purported belief).

ordeal that we *cannot* love, not for want of trying, but simply because it is beyond our strength.⁶⁹ Russian fatalism may aid us to a point but there may come a time when all that is left to us, all the strength we can muster, is the ‘courage to die’. (EH: 230) The courage to die, yes, but perhaps not that of loving the approach of our own death. Ultimately, amor fati may, as in Luther’s description of *agape* (although for different reasons) turn out to be a ‘lost love (*verlorene Liebe*) (...) and the kindness thrown away’.⁷⁰ Like all human loves, it may wither and die, no matter how hard we try to keep our commitment to it — a significant dysanalogy with divine agape. This, however, needs not be seen as an objection against amor fati. The key is to note that it could only count as such on the romantic assumption that the most appropriate kind of love for us is a love that would overcome all obstacles, vanquish death and last forever after. Yet this is precisely the sort of mendacious idealism that Nietzsche repudiates. For all his talk of the Overman (or perhaps because of it...), and like all those who have suffered considerably in their lives (Pascal comes to mind⁷¹), he is keenly aware of the limitations of the human condition. Seen in this light, the fact that amor fati may not last forever simply reflects the fact that it is the love of finite beings, and is not a reason to reject it because of unrealistic and undesirable requirements. It may or may not come to us; we may not be able to sustain it forever. But if and while we have it, it saves us from bitterness and resentment as well as from Schopenhauerian resignation. Its redemptive powers may not be infinite, but they are the best we can hope for.

The final objection concerns the status of amor fati as an ideal. The previous acknowledgment of its limits does not detract anything from its desirability; but is loving fate the right thing to do when it comes to morally challenging situations? In particular, what about the suffering of others? Especially that of the people who are dear to us? Is *that* something that we should love as fated? In this respect, two things are worth noting: firstly, just as the agapic loving of our own suffering is not an exercise in masochism (our aversiveness to pain does not disappear), in the same way the potential love of the suffering of others should not be interpreted as a sadistic relishing of their pain: in neither case would we derive any pleasure from the loving, and both present us with a very significant challenge. Secondly, there are reasons to think that Nietzsche envisaged amor fati

⁶⁹ Nietzsche points out that for the more spiritualised men, those who have overcome their natural aversiveness for pain, ‘the attraction of everything problematic (...) flares up again and again like a bright blaze over the distress of what is problematic, over the danger of uncertainty’ (NCW: 680). If this is true, then it is almost unavoidable that some day amor fati will be defeated. Bernhard Reginster makes a similar point about the will to power: see Reginster: 248-250.

⁷⁰ WA 36, p. 435, 30ff.

⁷¹ See for example ‘Prière à Dieu pour le bon usage des maladies’, in Pascal : *Œuvres Complètes*, Gallimard: Pléiade, 1998.

in the first person, as a suitable response to what befalls *us*, not others.⁷² He did not say that we could (or should) love the fate of others. Nor does loving one's fate logically entail loving the fate of other people: love is not necessarily transitive (although it can be so, at least up to a point, for example if our love for someone extends, in time, to individuals this person cherishes). Common experience shows that we can perfectly well love someone or something without loving all the circumstances that made them what they are, nor everything that will happen to them in the future. In fact, our very love is likely to make us deplore the events that harmed or may harm those we love, and no one would deem our attachment less true for that. So while loving my fate does entail my being strong enough to love even the pain that it brings me, it does not commit me to loving the suffering of others, even though there may sometimes be a direct causal link between the pain I feel and the suffering they endure (for example if I am deeply saddened because someone I love is seriously ill): I can try to love my fate, hard as that may be, without loving theirs, even though my fate is necessarily linked to theirs.

Yet the objection can be reformulated in a way that makes it relevant even to this first person perspective. There may be occasions when our feelings of anger or powerlessness in the face of the suffering of those we love will oppress us to such a degree that it will simply seem impossible (and even indecent) to us to love a fate that put us in such a position. This connects to an objection which is often made in relation to the eternal return: to will the recurrence of all things entails willing the return of some of the most abhorrent events in human history, and this may be seen as morally unacceptable.⁷³ What then? One possible reply is to emphasise once more, the

⁷² Thus *all* the seven excerpts which mention amor fati do so in the first person. While one of them seems to envisage fate from a general perspective (WP §1041), the last two published passages (in *The Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche contra Wagner*) strongly suggest that Nietzsche is talking about the love of his own fate, and the remaining quotes can be understood either way. On balance I have made the interpretative choice to emphasise the first person and am well aware of its theoretical costs, in particular the exacerbated tension with Nietzsche's claim in WP §1041 that the whole world must be affirmed as it is; note, however, that the passage refers to an *affirmation* (not love) of the world which is connected to amor fati but not identified with it. It could also be suggested that this was an unpublished observation and that affirmation, contrary to love, is transitive in nature (e.g.: I cannot affirm a proposition as true and deny its implications). On the first person reading of amor fati, what 'fate' picks out is *existential* (rather than metaphysical) necessity, e.g. the perceived ineluctability of what happens to me from a personal standpoint rather than the interconnectedness of all things, which by contrast is emphasised by the eternal return. Still, for those who wish to reject this first person focus, then note that the Nietzschean rebuttal of the ethical objection suggested on p. 35sq would apply in either case.

⁷³ Some commentators, like Magnus, consider this a fatal objection to the eternal return; others, like Clark, try to adapt Nietzsche's position by claiming that although we are required to affirm the return of everything, we could still prefer another sequence in which evil events would not reoccur. Yet others, like Hatab, defend the eternal return by pointing out that willing everything is not the same as approving everything, and that willing abhorrent events to return also entails willing our opposition to them to return as well.

mediopassive mode specific to amor fati. Whereas willing the return of morally repellent events is fully within our power, whether we love fate is not. Because of this deep asymmetry between willing and loving, the issues of moral responsibility and choice do not arise in the same way: we are not accountable for our love in the way we are for a decision. Yet this mediopassive feature of amor fati cuts both ways: while we cannot start or stop loving at will, the previous analyses have shown that we still have a part to play in fostering amor fati. So the question can be rephrased: not should we love fate, since this is not up to us, but should we try to *foster* such love? I can think of two answers, one of which is Nietzschean in spirit and the other, not. The first consists in pointing out that should we prove strong or lucid enough to try to foster love for our anger or powerlessness, and should amor fati arise in us, then the agapic nature of such love would transfigure the formerly negative value of such feelings. The situation itself would be perceived in a totally new light. How it would be then experienced is impossible for us to determine so long as we have not undergone a similar existential transformation ourselves.⁷⁴ Yet the important point is that arguing against the desirability of agapic love in the name of our existing conception of morality presupposes precisely the standpoint that would be invalidated by the transfiguration of values resulting from such a love. Our current moral repugnance is the very thing that amor fati would overcome and is thus no decisive objection to it.⁷⁵ The other, non Nietzschean, answer would consist in resisting this agapic logic and holding that it is not desirable in principle that certain things, such as powerlessness in the face of the suffering of the people that are dear to us, should come to be loved. One would then need to clarify the source and type of normativity entailed by this claim (what would ground such a principle? A robust conception of human nature? A substantive commitment to objective, universal values?) and it is not difficult to think of

⁷⁴ One may find examples in the writings of Christian mystics: under the sway of agapic love, powerlessness is welcomed as a reminder of our dependency on God. Anger is transformed into gratitude. Examples of such agapic transfigurations are not rare: see Saint John of the Cross: ‘oh that it may be perfectly understood how the soul cannot attain to the thicket and wisdom of the richness of God, which are of many kinds, save by entering in to the thicket of many kinds of suffering, and by setting thereupon its consolation and desire’. (in Katz 1983: 49); see also Meister Eckhart: ‘if my suffering is in God and God is suffering with me, how then can suffering be sorrow to me’ (in Sells: 1994: 176) and Teresa of Avila (1957: 113): ‘yet at the same time this pain is so sweet, and the soul is so conscious of its value, that it now desires this suffering more than all the gifts that it used to receive’. While the resulting values may not be what Nietzsche has in mind, the sort of transfiguration performed is exactly what is entailed by the structure of amor fati. On the relation between Nietzsche and Christian mystics, see Roberts 1998, chapter 6.

⁷⁵ See for example TI: 25 : ‘let us finally consider what naivety it is in general to say ‘man *should* be such and such!’ Reality shows us a delightful abundance of types, the richness that comes from an extravagant play and alternation of forms: to which some wretched loafer of a moralist says: ‘no! man should be different?’ (...) Morality, insofar as it *condemns* (...) is a specific error on which we should not take pity, a *degenerate idiosyncrasy* which has wrought untold damage!... We who are different, we immoralists, on the contrary, have opened our hearts to all kinds of understanding, comprehending, *approving*’.

Nietzschean arguments against this sort of reply and endeavour. I cannot enter into this debate here but should one wish to uphold the objection, then one thing to note is that the very defeasibility of amor fati, the fact that there are empirical situations that may be beyond our power to love, may then come to be seen not simply as the unavoidable consequence of our human finitude but as a moral advantage. It may be construed not simply as expressive of the limits of our strength, but as a safeguard against the dangers of the potential excesses of love.

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UM : *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

HH : *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

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Z: *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1969.

TI: *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1968.

EH: *Ecce Homo*, trans. W. Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1990.

NW: *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, translated and edited by W. Kaufmann. London: Penguin, 1968.

WP: *The Will to Power*, trans. W Kaufmann. New York : Vintage, 1968.

K : *Kröners Taschenausgabe*. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1956 (2 volumes) (the translations of KSA and K included in this paper are mine).

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