

Nietzsche's Reflections on Love

Kathleen O'Dwyer

Abstract

In light of his assertion of 'perspectivism', in relation to thought and understanding, the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche resists conclusive analysis and interpretation. His work is commonly associated with ambiguous concepts such as self-creation, self-reliance and self-mastery, resulting in a concentration on individual, private and personal experience. This paper acknowledges Nietzsche's focus on introspection, self-analysis and self-centredness. However, it is argued that this aspect of Nietzsche's work does not preclude a consideration of the significance of relationship in human experience, but rather, that it is the essential prerequisite to mutuality, intimacy and optimum human flourishing, culminating in a love of self, of the other and of life, in Nietzschean terms, *amor fati*.

What I have always needed most to cure and restore myself, however, was the belief that I was not the only one to be thus, to see thus – I needed the enchanting intuition of kinship and equality in the eye and in desire, repose in a trusted friendship; I needed a shared blindness, with no suspicion or question marks (Nietzsche, 1984: 4).

The discipline of philosophy is rooted in its Latin translation, 'love of wisdom'. The vagueness and ambiguity of this term allows for diverse concentrations in different areas of philosophy, including philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, phenomenology, metaphysics, ethics, and the history of philosophy, to name but a few. Yet the question inevitably arises: what *is* the wisdom which is loved, and what is its relation to lived experience as distinct from theoretical abstractions? In the words of Martha Nussbaum, this question asks: 'what philosophy has to do with the world' (Nussbaum, 1994: 3). The question poses others, such as, what is the function,

reason, and significance of philosophy in the realm of human life, and how do the insights and explorations of this discipline reflect, interpret, and enhance the experience of the human condition? A concentration on this question is the focus of exploration in this article, and in particular, the philosophical reflections on the concept of love as central to human experience.

The choice of Nietzsche, as a philosopher who contributes in a unique way to the discussion of love, may not seem to be immediately validated. However, it is argued here that Nietzsche's philosophy, while dealing in a more obvious way with issues such as 'truth', 'perspectivism', and 'will to power', is no less concerned with the Platonic and Aristotelian explorations of 'the good', 'practical wisdom', and 'the meaning of love'. Underlying Nietzsche's reflections on morality, philosophy, history, and truth, is a persistent concern with the possibilities and hindrances to optimum human living or flourishing, personal integrity, solitude and connection, happiness and sorrow, and the full spectrum of experience which promotes or diminishes the possibility of love; love of self and of others, manifested in a love of life in all its ambivalence and mystery. Nietzsche sees the enjoyment of life, the inevitable corollary of *amor fati*, or love of one's fate/life, as the most crucial purpose of human living:¹ 'As long as men have existed, man has enjoyed himself too little ... if we learn better to enjoy ourselves, we best unlearn how to do harm to others and to contrive harm' (Nietzsche, 2003a: 112), and he argues for a truthfulness and a comprehensiveness which would enhance rather than diminish life: 'And let that day

be lost to us on which we did not dance once! And let that wisdom be false to us that brought no laughter with it!' (Nietzsche, 2003a: 228).

Nietzsche's writings, in both style and content, provide an unconventional analysis of the individual subject through a revolutionary appraisal of philosophy, humankind, morality and truth. In rejecting hitherto unquestioned assumptions regarding the human condition, Nietzsche overturns some of our most precious depictions of ourselves and our world. Nietzsche is a radical and revolutionary thinker confronting uncomfortable questions regarding philosophy, psychology, and a host of traditionally held convictions relating to human nature. In particular, Nietzsche's writings, through revolutionising our assumptions regarding self and others, morals and values, rationality and instinct, provoke debate and reflection on the actual experience of the human condition, and this inevitably involves an analysis of the concept of love as a central element of human living.

Throughout his work, Nietzsche is critical of the narrowness and deceptions which he sees as characteristic of philosophy throughout history, but especially in his own time. He accuses philosophers of basing their convictions on a biased and distorted view of the human subject, an assumption of absolutism and certainty in questions of truth and meaning, and an aversion to self-analysis and self-interrogation. He refers to this as 'the struggle of belief in opinions, that is, the struggle of convictions' (Nietzsche, 1984: 262), and explains that 'conviction is the belief that in some point of knowledge

one possesses absolute truth' (Nietzsche, 1984: 261). In contrast, many of Nietzsche's proclamations evoke shock and disbelief, as they blatantly overturn long-held assumptions regarding the human being and the human condition; his philosophy denies the validity of revered concepts of truth, being, will to life, and cause and effect; he rejects conventional interpretations of values such as responsibility, guilt, power and knowledge. The impact of the shock emanating from his thought is intensified by his aphoristic style and unapologetic mode of address. The style and language adopted by Nietzsche is radically different from that of his predecessors, and often reflect his claim that 'truth tends to reveal its highest wisdom in the guise of simplicity' (Nietzsche, 1984: 253).

Nietzsche rejects what he perceives as the dogmatism and arrogance of previous philosophers, which, according to his argument, often disguised a dishonesty, an ostensible objectivity that is in fact highly subjective. This is the view of Maudmarie Clark: 'What Nietzsche objects to in previous philosophers is not that they read their values into the world, but that they pretended to be doing something else' (Clark, 1990: 240). Nietzsche's philosophy is not proffered as a prescription or a roadmap for mankind; he constantly asserts that his thoughts are merely *his* thoughts, *his* interpretations, and *his* truths. He explains that he 'came to [his] truth by diverse paths and diverse ways', he insists that 'this – is now *my* way', and asks 'where is yours? ... for *the* way – does not exist!' (Nietzsche: 2003a: 213). The most important questions in life can never be answered by anyone except oneself. This is an assertion which he

applies to all philosophy: ‘It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been; a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary memoir’ (Nietzsche, 2003: 37). Furthermore, Nietzsche acknowledges the co-existence of concealment and revelation in such confessions: ‘Every philosophy also *conceals* a philosophy; every opinion is also a hiding-place, every word is also a mask’ (Nietzsche, 2003: 216). He looks forward to the philosophers of the future who will embrace these sentiments: ‘these coming philosophers...will not be dogmatists...[but will assert that] my judgement is [only] *my* judgement’ (Nietzsche, 2003: 71). Walter Kaufmann suggests that Nietzsche embodies the characteristics of ‘these coming philosophers’ and that his ‘greatest value may well lie in the fact that he embodied the true philosophical spirit of “searching into myself and other men”’ (Kaufmann, 1974: xvi). Robert Solomon, in his existential reading of Nietzsche, concurs with this evaluation as he claims that ‘he is not a philosopher of abstract ideas but rather of the dazzling personal insight, the provocative comment’ (Solomon, 2003: 13). Nietzsche bases his reflections, discoveries, and proclamations on actual lived experience as he perceives it, and there is an underlying awareness that his writings, in fact all literature, is secondary to individual experience in the pursuit of personal truth, as he asks: ‘What *I* find, what *I* am seeking – Was that ever in a book?’ (Nietzsche, 1984: 268). His emphasis on the actual, concrete experience of human living, as distinct from abstract theorization, and his openness to self-interrogation and introspection, render Nietzsche’s philosophy pivotal to an exploration of the concept of love.²

Misinterpretation of Morality

The beast in us wants to be lied to; morality is a white lie, to keep it from tearing us apart (Nietzsche, 1984: 45).

The possibility of love is a question approached directly and indirectly in Nietzsche's work as he addresses the obstacles and deceptions which militate against love of self, of others, and of life. A major impediment to the experience of love is, according to his argument, the misinterpretation of morality involving an unquestioned acceptance of a range of values and morals which suppress and distort personal truth, motivation and desire. In what is considered his most controversial work, *The Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche provides a critique of morality, values and philosophy. In calling for a re-evaluation of all morals, Nietzsche brings into question common assumptions regarding accepted values and moral virtues which have been extolled and encouraged as being inherent to human nature, and which have served to portray an image of humanity which is basically good, well-meaning, and other-centred. Virtues such as altruism, generosity, sympathy, and compassion, have historically been seen as the best expressions of human nature, and are encapsulated in the Christian dictum to love one's neighbour as oneself. Nietzsche rejects the assumption that these virtues are inherent to human nature, that they are natural to humankind, and he disputes any absolutist conception of these virtues. Rather, he argues that 'values' and codes of morality are 'in a continual state of fluctuation' (Nietzsche, 1984: 53), and he seeks to expose the cultural and historical relativity of our values, crucially our moral values, 'the utility which dominates moral value-judgements' (Nietzsche, 2003: 122); in so

doing he casts a particularly critical and sceptical eye on Christian sources of morality. The deleterious effect of unrealistic codes of morality results, according to Nietzsche, in a diminishment of human experience and a distorted appraisal of the human subject: 'All these moralities...[are] recipes to counter his passions' (Nietzsche, 2003: 119). This is particularly evident in the concept of love: 'Christianity gave Eros poison to drink – and he did not die of it, to be sure, but degenerated into vice' (Nietzsche, 2003: 105). The poet D.H. Laurence describes this as 'the mess of love': 'We've made a great mess of love, / Since we made an ideal of it' (Laurence, 2002: 387). According to Nietzsche's argument, many assumptions, norms and practices that are accepted as inevitable and unavoidable in fact have a contingent, utilitarian and relativist character. It could be argued that the importance of modern literary theory lies in its unveiling of values that appear natural and self-evident as contrived and created, whether relating to language, identity, otherness, morality or sexuality. In this way Nietzsche can be seen as a precursor to this mode of thinking, and this creates a strong link between his work and that of contemporary theorists.

Nietzsche's genealogy of morals suggests that all moral values, rather than being natural and inherent to human existence, actually serve the interests of influential groups or institutions. Morality is, in this analysis, a body of rules which has come down through centuries, appropriated by a religion or a culture, and uncritically received and accepted. Nietzsche maintains that moralities are essentially instruments

of social control, usually related to the establishment or preservation of the interests of one group or another. “Value” is essentially the standpoint for the increase or decrease of ... dominating centres’ (Nietzsche, 1968: 715). This critique of ‘dominating centres’ is expanded in the deconstruction of Western metaphysics undertaken by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Like Nietzsche, Derrida argues that centres or hegemonies validate themselves by making their situation at the centre seem natural and fixed, and by perpetuating the illusion of binary oppositions such as male/female, nature/culture, and mind/body. He suggests that it is necessary to consider ‘that the centre had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function’, and he looks to ‘the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, the critique of the concepts of being and truth ... and the Freudian critique of self-presence, that is, the critique of consciousness’ in outlining his attempt to deconstruct these ‘centres’ (Derrida, 1981: 280).

Nietzsche’s attack on morality centres on its commitment to untenable claims about human nature, and on what he sees as the deleterious impact which these claims have had on the flourishing of life; deception, resentment, and guilt ensue: ‘how dearly the erection of every ideal on earth has exacted its payment? How much reality always had to be libelled and mistaken, how much lying sanctified, how much conscience disturbed?’ (Nietzsche, 1998: 65). Nietzsche promotes his argument by insisting on a re-examination of the origins of these values, and thereby he seeks to expose their historical and utilitarian character. Thus, his attack is not centred primarily on the

nature of the values and morals which are accepted unquestionably as ‘good’ and ‘true’; he insists on the necessity of examining the origins of these values as a route to understanding their historical and cultural sources. According to Solomon, ‘Nietzsche’s genealogy of morals is, first of all, a thesis about the motivation of morality’ (Solomon, 2003: 54). Nietzsche argues that the true nature of morality can only be approached if one analyses and acknowledges the sources and purposes of moral teaching, and hence he calls for a more honest, a more factual appraisal of human nature. He insists that moral values do not exist in themselves; they are not absolute or transcendent, and they can be modified according to changing situations and circumstances: ‘Unchanging good and evil does not exist!’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 139). This appraisal would relinquish the possibility of fixed absolutes, in relation to truth, goodness, or the human being. As Richard Kearney states: ‘Nietzsche’s project of transvaluation effected not only the moral question of good but also the epistemological question of truth. The age-old quest for absolute truth is now exposed as a hidden will to power’ (Kearney, 1998: 212).

Nietzsche’s question regarding our values of good and evil is, ‘have they inhibited or furthered human flourishing up until now? Are they are a sign of distress, of impoverishment, of the degeneration of life?’ (Nietzsche, 1998: 3). Only by recognising the pragmatic nature of all morals, and by acknowledging the premise and the purpose of all ethical rules and judgements, can we, according to Nietzsche, attempt to come to terms with the multi-faceted character of life as we experience it.

Such honesty, involving the abandonment of established 'ideals' which act as a barrier to instinct, passion, and an appreciation of human nature as it is, inevitably results in a transitional period of nihilism, an uneasiness portrayed in the literature of the age;³ but, it is, according to Nietzsche, prerequisite to overcoming the resentment inherent in a slave morality, whereby individual responsibility is sacrificed for the illusions of certainty and truth, social and personal guidelines, and a fixed script of rules and expectations. These assumptions and limitations alienate the subject from individual truth and expression: 'The first opinion that occurs to us when we are suddenly asked about a matter is usually not our own, but only the customary one, appropriate to our caste, position, or parentage; our own opinions seldom swim near the surface' (Nietzsche, 1984: 245).

Nietzsche disputes any inherent or consistent meaning pertaining to the concepts of good and evil, and suggests that such signifiers are conditioned by historical and cultural fluctuations. On this point, Alexander Nehamas, in his interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy, draws a comparison between the thought of Nietzsche and that of Socrates: 'Nietzsche argues in a manner very close to the manner of Socrates that what we commonly consider good depends essentially on the context that we implicitly introduce into our evaluation, and that it is not therefore good in itself' (Nehamas, 1985: 212). In his analysis of the history of philosophy, Nietzsche suggests an absence of honesty in relation to these matters: 'The errors of the great philosophers usually start from a false explanation of certain human actions and

feelings an erroneous analysis of so-called selfless behaviour, for example, can be the basis for false ethics' (Nietzsche, 1984: 41). Solomon argues that Nietzsche's criticism of philosophy is based on the tendency of philosophers to 'ignore the concrete social and psychological situations out of which ideas, ideologies, and whole philosophies are born' (Solomon, 2000: 45).

Nietzsche challenges the foundations of traditional thought; he calls for a questioning of everything, especially the concepts through which we have viewed the world and ourselves without seeing their underlying assumptions and deceptions. He demands that we reconsider what we have taken for granted, and that we consider afresh what a good human life consists of, by putting our usual assumptions about the world into brackets. Nehamas, in his discussion of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, states that 'Nietzsche's opposition to traditional histories of morality and his sometimes extravagant claims for the novelty and importance of his own approach are primarily caused by his aversion to this linear or static conception of the nature of values and institutions' (Nehamas, 1985: 112). The Italian poet, Antonio Porchia concurs with this critique of the narrowness of linear thinking and vision: 'Following straight lines shortens distances, and also life' (Porchia, 2003: 43), while William Blake notes what is sacrificed in the attempted 'improvement' of human nature: 'Improvement makes strait roads; but the crooked roads / without improvement are roads of Genius' (Blake, 2004: 139). In probing the inconsistencies and deceptions which form the background of much of our convictions about ourselves and our world, Nietzsche, like Freud, calls

into question our illusions of self-knowledge and self-awareness: 'We remain of necessity strangers to ourselves, we do not understand ourselves, we must mistake ourselves, for us the maxim reads to all eternity; "each is furthest from himself"- with respect to ourselves we are not "knowers"' (Nietzsche, 1998: 1), and he suggests that self-deception is sometimes chosen, either consciously or unconsciously: 'Where my honesty ceases I am blind and want to be blind' (Nietzsche, 2003a: 264).

Freud later reiterates this assertion that we can never fully know ourselves, particularly in the light of his description of the unconscious as a part of mental life over which we have little or no control, and which can be aptly described as a stranger in the house, suggesting its inaccessibility and alienation from rational thinking. Thus Nietzsche claims that 'Man is difficult to discover, most of all to himself' (Nietzsche, 2003a: 212). The impossibility of complete self-transparency is difficult to acknowledge, and this difficulty is also an obstacle to the acceptance of the alterity of the other as something which can never be fully penetrated; the state of 'unknowing' discomfits the demands and expectations of human pride and propels an insistent desire to 'know' and so to evaluate that which cannot be known. Derrida looks to Nietzsche's analysis of this dilemma as part of his exploration of love and friendship, and he concludes that love and friendship involve an acceptance of distance and 'unknowing': 'Whereby those who are separated come together without ceasing to be what they are destined to be ... dissociated, 'solitarized', singularized, constituted into monadic alterities ... what is proper to the *alter ego* will never be accessible'

(Derrida, 2005: 54). Accordingly, love of the other is possible in an acknowledgement that one can never fully know another, and in a gracious appreciation of this difference and mystery.

Nietzsche philosophises from ‘the perspective of life’, from the awareness that all knowledge is ultimately based on one’s interpretation of reality, on one’s experience in the world. He therefore urges an expansion of this experience to include a broad spectrum of perspectives and interpretations:

There is only a perspectival seeing, only a perspectival “knowing”; and the more affects we allow to speak about a matter, the more eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our “concept” of this matter, our “objectivity” be (Nietzsche, 1998: 85).⁴

According to Nietzsche, our lack of self-knowledge is mirrored in our crippling dependence on overly rationalistic or metaphysical conceptions of human nature, and on external sources of value, such as religion and society. This one-sided and distorted view of human nature has, in Nietzsche’s view, been mirrored in traditional philosophy, a criticism which is echoed by Nussbaum: ‘Philosophy has often seen itself as a way of transcending the merely human...The alternative I explore sees it as a way of being human and speaking humanly’ (Nussbaum, 1992: 53). Nietzsche urges us to abandon the false certainties which we have unknowingly inherited and internalised, and concludes that there are no absolutes, no certainties, no ‘truth’, only the unique experience of the individual. Only then, when we face the reality of our

experience, of ourselves and of the world, can we begin to confront the actual obstacles to our experience of love and happiness. The absence of this honest encounter with reality ensures that we recoil from life as it is, and therefore dismiss the challenge to overcome the barriers to self-knowledge and self-fulfilment. What is not faced, acknowledged, and accepted, persists, and cannot be changed.

A Distorted View of Human Nature

For all too long man has regarded his natural inclinations with an “evil” eye (Nietzsche, 1998: 65).

The desire to love and to be loved can only be genuinely pursued within an honest, albeit constantly changing, acknowledgement of human nature. Without this acceptance, the experience of love is supplanted by fantasy and pretence, where the flesh and blood reality of self and other is camouflaged by denial of certain aspects of human nature and exaggeration of more acceptable traits; the result is an array of pseudo-loving encounters which recoil from the complex and ungraspable nature of living relationships. This distorted view of human nature is necessitated and maintained by the demands and expectations of civilization and socialization, and clearly functions as an impediment or obstacle to love. Nietzsche sees the evolution of civilization, and the changes and adaptations that this has entailed, as both a blessing and a curse on the actual life of the individual. While accepting the practical necessity of some control and order which civilization inevitably imposes on the citizens of

particular societies, he laments the corresponding loss of life-affirming and life-enhancing values which he ascribes to the Dionysian world-view of ancient Greece. Qualities such as power, aggression, mastery, self-advancement and the full embrace of all that humanity is, are, according to Nietzsche, since the advent of Christianity especially, denigrated as sinful and evil. Under the influence of established institutions such as Church, state, and the prevalent conventions of legal and penal systems, these values have been replaced by euphonic qualities; humility, service, pity, sacrifice, and self-effacement are now established as the ideal components of love and goodness, and are encouraged as essential guidelines in the living of a good life. Nietzsche rejects this diminishment of life as it is, 'all those aspirations to go beyond, to that which is contrary to the senses, contrary to the instincts, contrary to nature, contrary to the animal ... libel the world' (Nietzsche, 1998: 65). However, in attempting to uncover the origins of these values, Nietzsche rejects the possibility that they are natural, actual, or unequivocally beneficial to human life; 'the wickedest in man is necessary for the best in him' (Nietzsche, 2003a: 235). Rather, he suggests that powerful institutions of Church and state have wittingly imposed these unrealistic ideals in order to establish and maintain their positions of power and authority. Acceptance of these values has been enabled by offering the reward of an other-worldly existence, the comfort of an all-seeing, all-knowing, all-powerful deity, and the relaxation consequent to a diminished sense of personal freedom and responsibility: 'For out of fear and need each religion is born, creeping into existence on the byways of reason' (Nietzsche, 1984: 79).⁵

Hence the emergence of a herd-mentality, where morality is grounded in the anonymity of the crowd, and where security is sought in the euphoria of consensus. This compliance to the herd-mentality constricts individual spontaneity and freedom, and forbids the expression of many natural experiences: sexuality, aggression, hatred and anger are denigrated as evil; concealment and subterfuge are inevitable, and empirical experience in the here and now is devalued: ‘Many men wait all their lives for the opportunity to be good in *their* way’ (Nietzsche, 1984: 243). Adherence to public expectations, concern with recognition and acceptance, and consciousness of image and reputation, result in loss of self: ‘Who has not for the sake of his reputation – sacrificed himself?’ (Nietzsche, 2003: 94). This need to belong, this fear of one’s separateness and difference, is outlined as one of the obstacles to love, by the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, in his exploration of the topic, *The Art of Loving*, and is referred to as ‘fusion without integrity’ (Fromm, 1995: 16). Nietzsche argues that such escapism, deception, and rejection of reality, rather than enhancing life, diminishes and weakens the human being, and thus inhibits the possibility of experiencing the full spectrum of human existence. Although he states that ‘there is much in man that is horrifying’ (Nietzsche, 1998: 64), Nietzsche argues that the repression of this fact entails a simultaneous blindness to human goodness and potential: ‘Much hidden goodness and power is never guessed at; the most exquisite daisies find no tasters!’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 212). The possibility of love, as part of this spectrum, is therefore blocked and distorted.

The unquestioned acceptance of artificial dualities such as mind/body, appearance/reality, human/nature, and good/evil, is seen by Nietzsche as both originating from and contributing towards, a denial of life as it is, and particularly of humanity as it is: 'The false opposites...have always been dangerous hindrances to the advance of truth' (Nietzsche, 1968: 371).⁶ The resulting deception posits reason as superior to sensual experience, suggests a 'reality' beyond what is perceived by the senses, elevates 'human' unrealistically above the realm of animal passion and instinct, and imposes impossible judgements of good and evil which disavow the inevitable ambiguity inherent in all such concepts. This critique of a distorted portrayal of human nature, which has hitherto been prevalent in Western philosophy, is the starting point for the French philosopher/psychoanalyst, Luce Irigaray, in her work, *The Way of Love*, which she introduces with a call for 'a philosophy which involves the whole of a human and not only that mental part of ourselves' (Irigaray, 2002: ix). She defines this philosophy as 'the wisdom of love', and argues that

This possible interpretation would imply that philosophy joins together, more than it has done in the West, the body, the heart, and the mind. That it is not founded on contempt for nature. That it not resort to a logic that formalizes the real by removing it from concrete experience; that it be less a normative science of the truth than the search for measures that help in living better: with oneself, with others, with the world (Irigaray, 2002: 2).

Her call for a more holistic, and a more realistic assessment of the human being concurs with Nietzsche's exhortation to see the human condition as it really is, in all its complexity and ambivalence: 'we who are of a mixed nature, sometimes aglow

with fire and sometimes chilled by intellect' (Nietzsche, 1984: 266). Nietzsche sees 'all these moralities...as...recipes to counter his passions' (Nietzsche, 2003: 119), and reiterates his conviction that such moralities diminish life and being: 'Every morality is ... a piece of tyranny against 'nature' ... it is a protracted constraint' (Nietzsche, 2003: 110).

In exposition of his argument, Nietzsche examines, with ruthless self-scrutiny, so-called virtues such as gratitude, pity and generosity. He probes beneath the surface interpretation of behaviour based on these values, and suggests that in many cases, self-interest, fear, and will to power provide the real motivational drive of such behaviours. In outlining this drive as 'self-enjoyment', Nietzsche's description finds echoes in Freud's theory of the 'pleasure principle':

Good actions are sublimated evil actions; evil actions are good actions become coarse and stupid. The individual's only demand, for self-enjoyment (along with the fear of losing it), is satisfied in all circumstances: man may act as he can, that is, as he must, whether in deeds of vanity, revenge, pleasure, usefulness, malice, cunning, or in deeds of sacrifice, pity, knowledge. His powers of judgement determine where a man will let this demand for self-enjoyment take him (Nietzsche, 1984: 75).

Nietzsche looks behind the physical and verbal expression of an array of familiarly understood emotions — compassion, sympathy, outrage, grief — and suggests that behind the outward show of expected response lurks an ever-present concern with audience, image and impression: 'Ultimately, not even the deepest pain can keep the

actor from thinking of the impression of his part and the overall theatrical effect' (Nietzsche, 1984: 50). Following this assertion, Nietzsche continues to give detailed analysis of the less accepted motivational direction of a wide range of 'good' and admirable behaviour. Gratitude is exposed as empowering the giver rather than the benefactor; pity is portrayed as being evoked as evidence of power within the pitiable individual;⁷ and punishment is revealed as 'the means to frighten others away from certain future actions' rather than having any intrinsic relation to the crime or its perpetrator (Nietzsche, 1984: 73). Nietzsche therefore expresses a warning: 'distrust all in whom the urge to punish is strong' (Nietzsche, 2003a: 124), and he is adamant in his assertion of the contradictions inherent in the desire for punishment: 'Punishment' is what revenge calls itself; it feigns a good conscience for itself with a lie' [because] 'no deed can be annihilated: how could a deed be undone through punishment?' (Nietzsche, 2003a: 162). The duplicity, conscious or unconscious, underlying many 'moral' virtues, entails a contradiction between theoretic ideals and hidden motivation; the concept of love is often abused in this way, for example: 'Ultimately 'love of one's neighbour' is always something secondary, in part conventional and arbitrarily illusory, when compared with fear of one's neighbour' (Nietzsche, 2003: 123). Freud also refers to the 'hypocrisy' whereby '*the suppression and inversion of affects* is useful ... in social life' (Freud, 1997: 320), and proceeds to offer some easily recognizable examples: 'If I am master of the art of dissimulation I can hypocritically display the opposite affect – smiling where I should like to be angry, and pretending affection where I should like to destroy' (Freud, 1997: 321).

Public expressions of moral rectitude often belie a different personal perspective: ‘Men are not ashamed to think something dirty, but they are ashamed when they imagine that others might believe them capable of these dirty thoughts’ (Nietzsche, 1984: 62).⁸ In summary, human motivation and behaviour are often ambiguously inspired, and transcend the polarities of good and evil: ‘Our actions shine alternately in differing colours, they are seldom unequivocal – and there are cases enough in which we perform *many-coloured* actions’ (Nietzsche, 2003: 148).

The deception involved in denying the self-serving impetus underlying much of one’s virtuous behaviour militates, according to Nietzsche, against authentic confrontation with self and others; the experience of love, friendship, and mutuality is forfeited through an embrace of ‘safer’, less-demanding, weaker forms of pseudo-intimacy and approval-seeking performances; dismissal of one’s ambiguity diminishes one’s engagement with life, and muffles one’s experience with a cloak of security and fear. Nietzsche sees in this willingness of the subject ‘to let itself be deceived’, a rejection of alternative possibilities and perspectives:

a sudden decision for ignorance, for arbitrary shutting-out, a closing of the window, an inner denial of this or that thing, a refusal to let it approach, a kind of defensive posture against much that can be known, a contentment with the dark, with the closed horizon, an acceptance and approval of ignorance (Nietzsche, 2003: 161).

The passive and outward acceptance of a world view which suppresses much of our

natural inclinations, and the ensuing frustration of life, results in an ongoing cycle of resentment, guilt, and atonement, ‘where universal slow suicide is called – life’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 77). The repression of the individual’s human nature does not obliterate it: ‘All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn themselves inwards*’ (Nietzsche, 1998: 57); as Freud later discovered, what is repressed finds expression in intra-psychic and inter-relational conflict, personal and social discontent, and private and public negation of life and love. A reluctance to embrace a more realistic and integrative appraisal of the motivation of human behaviour is accepted as understandable and predictable by Solomon in his discussion of Nietzsche’s theories, but he admits a recognition of the truth of these theories: ‘Much of what Nietzsche says about pity is quite outrageous, but at least some of what he says strikes us as exactly on the mark. How often is our supposed compassion a mask for our sense of superiority, or at least, our relief that the victim wasn’t us?’ (Solomon, 2000: 208). In a poem exploring ‘the fruit of Deceit’, William Blake echoes this sentiment: ‘Pity would be no more / If we did not make somebody poor’ (Blake, 2004: 76). Paul Ricoeur makes a similar point when he differentiates sympathy from ‘simple pity, in which the self is secretly pleased to know it has been spared’ (Ricoeur, 1992: 191). Solomon argues from this analysis that Nietzsche’s exposure of deception and pretence inherent in much of human behaviour paradoxically, and simultaneously, enables a more honest and realistic acknowledgement of the baseness and the greatness which constitute the potential of a human being (Solomon, 2000: 208). Nietzsche argues for a comprehensive integration

of all aspects of human nature, free of moralistic and guilt-inducing judgements of good and evil: 'The great epochs of our life are the occasions when we gain the courage to rebaptize our evil qualities as our best qualities' (Nietzsche, 2003: 97).⁹ Only thus – and not in a vacuum of deception and pretence - can love of self and other be experienced.

Fear of Freedom and Responsibility

we wish that there will one day no longer be anything to fear!
(Nietzsche, 2003: 124).

Fear of confronting the complex, ambiguous, and contradictory nature of being human, has, according to Nietzsche's philosophy, diminished and weakened human life by cutting off the joys and tribulations of experiencing all that a person is. 'For fear – that is man's original and fundamental sensation' (Nietzsche, 2003a: 312). Fear of embracing the potentiality and danger, the uncertainty and ambivalence of individual freedom and responsibility, curtails the possibility of love, as priority is directed towards the attainment of security, recognition and identity through externally imposed standards and definitions. The child-like yearning for an external authoritative and protecting figure, the rejection of instinctual and sensual realities, and the exclusive emphasis on rationality as characteristic of human nature, is fuelled by the forces of civilization and by the constraints of individual and private concerns. 'As soon as we imagine someone who is responsible for our being thus and thus, etc. (God, nature), and therefore attribute to him the intention that we should exist and be

happy or wretched, we corrupt for ourselves the *innocence of becoming*' (Nietzsche, 1968: 299). As Sartre later argued, man is afraid of his freedom, he is terrified of his own power to choose, and he seeks refuge in the safety and anonymity of the crowd. Seeking security in conformity, 'the cowardly man always said "no" inwardly, [and] he always said "yes" with his lips' (Nietzsche, 1984: 59). The hidden conflict of this contradiction is the price of this pseudo-belonging, and Nietzsche suggests as a more life-enhancing alternative the welcoming acceptance of difference and diversity: 'rather than making oneself uniform, we may find greater value for the enrichment of knowledge by listening to the soft voice of different life situations' (Nietzsche, 1984: 256).

Afraid to face the reality of himself or herself, the subject prefers to attain consolation from distorted versions of 'mankind', and promotes rules and judgements in an endeavour to keep these distortions in place: 'Thus they have eliminated the affects one by one ... [and] placed reality in the negation of the desires and effects' (Nietzsche, 1968: 309). The individual refuses a more comprehensive awareness of what he/she is, and similarly prevents an encounter with the full range of possibility inherent in others. The result is a negation of life in all its complexity and possibility, a resentment which opposes a love of life in all its manifestations and results in 'The tired pessimistic glance, the mistrust toward the riddle of life, the icy "no" of disgust at life' (Nietzsche, 1998: 43). Mistrust and fear result in avoidance of life in its complexity and richness, and the possibility of love is averted because, 'Love desires;

fear avoids ... love acknowledges no power, nothing that separates, differentiates, ranks higher or subordinates' (Nietzsche, 1984: 252).

Nietzsche urges an integration of all the complexities and ambiguities of the individual subject, rather than a selective and exclusive depiction. In the words of Nehamas, 'in Nietzsche's view every aspect of the personality is equally essential to it' (Nehamas, 1985: 159). What is not welcomed and accepted as laudable and 'good' is often projected onto others, whether in the guise of criminality, madness, or evil.¹⁰ Nietzsche explains the attraction of this phenomenon as the desire to escape from the reality of the self:

When, as happens so often, we let our annoyance out on others, while we are actually feeling it about ourselves, we are basically trying to cloud and delude our judgement; we want to motivate our annoyance *a posteriori* by the oversights and inadequacies of others, so that we can lose sight of ourselves (Nietzsche, 1984: 253).

The individual therefore attempts to escape from the demands of personal responsibility, and seeks refuge in the bland mediocrity of 'normal' humanity, 'the inevitable dominion of the average' (Nietzsche, 1968: 364), where less acceptable traits and drives are disowned and denied: 'To this end, they need an appearance of justice, i.e., a theory through which they can shift responsibility for their existence, for their being thus and thus, on to some sort of scapegoat' (Nietzsche, 1968: 400).¹¹

Walter Kaufmann, in his prolific commentary on Nietzsche's philosophy, traces the origins of many contemporary ideas on subjects such as alienation, depression, resentment and guilt back to Nietzsche's insights, and he credits Nietzsche with counteracting 'the ostrich prudery of his age' (Kaufmann, 1974: 274). Release from the fear of responsibility, however, necessitates a simultaneous release from the fear of freedom. The freedom which is feared is the freedom to create oneself and one's life, to be master of oneself in all one's humanness, and to embrace with honesty and courage what one is at any moment. Nietzsche accepts the presence of fear as a pervading experience of living, but he argues for the necessity of meeting this fear with courage and honesty: 'He possesses heart who knows fear but masters fear; who sees the abyss, but sees it with pride' (Nietzsche, 2003a: 298). Solomon gives the following appraisal of Nietzsche's thoughts on fear and courage:

Courage, for Nietzsche, refers not so much to over-coming fear (the standard account) or having "just the right amount" of fear (Aristotle's account), and it certainly doesn't mean having no fear (the pathological conception of courage). Rather, as in so many of his conceptions of virtue, Nietzsche has a model of "over-flowing" – overflowing with an assertiveness that overwhelms fear (Solomon, 2000: 183).

In contrast to this courage, the selective rejection of aspects of one's humanness precludes a genuine encounter with oneself, and consequently prevents an encounter with another in the fullness of his/her being; the experience of love is therefore blocked and thwarted.

The dichotomy between human nature as it is and the ideals which are promoted as human aspirations is attacked by Nietzsche as a negation of life. He abhors the elevation of one aspect of being human to the detriment of another, and he advocates an embracing of the totality of life, with all its uncertainties and frustrations. He calls for a translation of ‘man back into nature; to master the many vain and fanciful interpretations and secondary meanings which have been hitherto scribbled and daubed over that eternal basic text *homo natura*’ (Nietzsche, 2003: 162). He tells us that ‘there is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 62), that our senses are the instruments whereby we relate to the world: ‘All credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth comes only from the senses’ (Nietzsche, 2003: 100), and that our instincts, all of them, are central to our nature and cannot be successfully denied or censored; they are, like all of life, ‘beyond good and evil’.

Acknowledgement of human nature as it is, acceptance of contradiction and uncertainty in human living, and accommodation of the reality of personal freedom and responsibility, opens the way, according to Nietzsche, for the emergence of an affirmative nihilism, whereby we construct our own values, our own truth, our own life, our own self: ‘To live as I desire to live or not to live at all’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 285). In the words of Solomon, ‘Nietzsche insists that each of us must find our own way’ (Solomon, 2003: 139). This ideal of self-creation, ‘become what you are!’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 252), explored by Nietzsche through the prophetic reflections of

Zarathustra, confronts the joys and tribulations of personal freedom which insists that the subject 'must become judge and avenger and victim of its own law' (Nietzsche, 2003: 137). It insists on the necessity of self-belief: 'Only dare to believe in yourselves – in yourselves and in your entrails! He who does not believe in himself always lies' (Nietzsche, 2003a: 146). Genuine self-belief involves an acceptance that one is not supernaturally wonderful or hopelessly despicable, but humanly complex and indefinable. It demands a rejection of the illusions of external sources of values and authority and the defences of projection and conformity; it accepts the self as the ultimate creator and evaluator of one's life: 'One should not avoid one's tests...tests which are taken before ourselves and before no other judge' (Nietzsche, 2003: 70).

Self-acceptance and Amor Fati

Go out to where the world awaits you like a garden (Nietzsche, 2003a: 236).

Confronting the obstacles and difficulties which diminish human living enables Nietzsche to affirm the possibility of love within this imperfect realm. His critique of morality, duplicity and conformity is motivated by an insistent assertion of love's central force in human life: 'Good nature, friendliness, and courtesy of the heart are ever-flowing tributaries of the selfless drive and have made much greater contributions to culture than those much more famous expressions of this drive, called pity, charity, and self-sacrifice' (Nietzsche, 1984: 48). Acceptance of the multi-faceted nature of the self enables an acceptance of the experience of life in all its

manifestations, and opens the way towards the possibility of love, of self, of others, and of life, *amor fati*.

In his doctrine of the eternal recurrence Nietzsche offers a theoretical formula of a ‘test’ whereby life is embraced and loved. According to Nehamas, ‘the eternal recurrence is not a theory of the world, but a view of the self’ (Nehamas, 1985: 150), and Solomon argues that Nietzsche presents eternal recurrence...as a “test” of our attitudes towards life’ (Solomon, 2003: 14). Indeed, the sentiments explored by Nietzsche through this ‘test’ are less concerned with theory than with enabling an ethical framework whereby one’s attitudes, to self, to others, to life, may be examined with ruthless honesty. Anticipating Ricoeur’s theory of narrative identity as fluid and ongoing, Nietzsche claims that the individual’s life is a continuum of creation, and that it is constructed and reconstructed again and again: ‘Existence begins in every instant’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 234). He sees life as the ongoing creation of the self. Accordingly, the idea of a fixed self, ego or soul is a mere fiction; there is no being, only becoming. Life is synonymous with change; avoidance of the risks inherent to change may provide illusory comfort and security, but only at the cost of stagnation and death. An affirmation of life necessitates an acceptance of this fluidity, and a simultaneous acknowledgement of the individual’s unique power of self-creation as a continually evolving endeavour. This is not a static response to selected experiences, but rather a love of life in its totality; a positive response to life must embrace and integrate every experience, joyful and sorrowful, proud and shameful, loving and

hateful, for, Nietzsche argues, one can only accept a particular experience if one accepts that all of the events and experiences of one's life have directly or indirectly led to this moment. Thus, nothing can be denied or regretted; everything is essential to the process of becoming, and what one is at any moment encompasses all of one's experience, past and present. Nietzsche poses the question:

What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must 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 question in each and every thing, 'do you want this again and innumerable times again?' would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? (Nietzsche, 1974: 341).

The frightening possibility of endlessly replaying the single life we each have, and the demand that we affirm everything that we have experienced in that life, is an approach by which we can strive towards a celebration of life as it is. In a poem titled "A Dialogue of Self and Soul", W.B. Yeats echoes the possible connection between the eternal recurrence and *amor fati*:

I am content to live it all again
And yet again....
I am content to follow to its source
Every event in action or in thought;
Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot!
When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into the breast

We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest (Yeats, 1967: 145).

The theoretical and conditional nature of the eternal recurrence – ‘if’, ‘would’, etc. – is given more concrete form as Nietzsche particularises the question: ‘Did you ever say Yes to one joy? ... then you said Yes to *all* woe as well. All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 332). According to Clark, the eternal recurrence is ‘a test of affirmation...one’s affirmation of life’ (Clark, 1990: 270). This affirmation of life, *amor fati*, implies an acceptance of one’s fate,¹² a delight in all aspects of life, an accommodation of chance, accident and uncertainty. This is a life lived without regret, remorse or guilt, but open to love, of self, others, and the world as it is experienced in all its manifestations; the possibility of love is closely related to acceptance and love of life: ‘we love life, not because we are used to living but because we are used to loving’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 68). Nietzsche believes in the interconnectedness of all our actions; what one is at any moment is influenced and created by all of one’s past. To live one’s life in such a way that one wants it again, helps us to make a selection of what is important and significant for us in our lives. It also fosters appreciation of the moments of genuine wonder which speckle ‘the symphony of real life’ (Nietzsche, 1984: 247). Nietzsche includes the experience of love in his depiction of these moments:

Life consists of rare, isolated moments of the greatest significance, and of innumerable many intervals, during which at best the silhouettes of those moments hover about us. Love, springtime, every beautiful melody, mountains, the moon, the sea – all these speak to the heart but once (Nietzsche, 1984: 247).

These ‘rare, isolated’ moments may be rare and fleeting, but when life is experienced as an interconnected process, such glimpses of love and beauty can ‘hover about us’ and impact on all of life.

This is the task of self-creating, self-mastery, self-overcoming; to work out what an affirming life could be, and to develop a life-affirming world view which has no remorse, no melancholy, no end; it is a process of becoming and creating, ‘*processus in infinitum*’ (Nietzsche, 1968: 552). In this life-affirming stance, the past is embraced, mistakes, losses and disappointments are acknowledged, as are joys, achievements and fortuitous encounters and occurrences, and the future is seen as the offshoot of the present. Nietzsche acknowledges that this is a difficult path, as it necessitates the humility of self-honesty and the courage of individual responsibility in place of the comfort and security of the ‘herd’: ‘One has to get rid of the bad taste of wanting to be in agreement with many’ (Nietzsche, 2003: 71). Self-honesty, self-direction and self-empowerment enable one to be the artist of one’s own life, and to answer affirmatively Nietzsche’s question: ‘Do you possess courage? ... Not courage in the presences of witnesses, but hermit’s eagles’ courage, which not even a god observes any more?’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 298). In his discussion of the doctrine of

eternal recurrence, Hans-Georg Gadamer states that Nietzsche ‘was a great moralist’,¹³ and that he was posing the question, ‘to what extent can human life endure truth at all?’:

This is a question which Nietzsche formulated and it represents one of the provocative challenges which his thought poses for our epoch with ever greater force. In his despair at the ability of the enlightenment and of modern science to answer the most fundamental human questions, Nietzsche arrived at his provocative doctrine of the eternal return of the same...with this doctrine he wanted to show how in the face of absolute hopelessness we must learn to be resolute...what he demanded of us was genuine morality (Gadamer, 1996: 160).

Gadamer’s response to Nietzsche suggests the crucial necessity of a personal morality, and this acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the self is intrinsic to the possibility of love. Taking responsibility for the creation of one’s life diminishes the perceived necessity to seek refuge, recognition and acceptance in the ‘herd’; it promotes a constant re-evaluation of the values one chooses to adopt, and it defines one’s life as an ongoing process of becoming.

The possibility of striving towards this affirmative engagement with life is glimpsed in Nietzsche’s description of the *Übermensch*. The overman succeeds in overcoming himself¹⁴ and all the illusions which constitute this falsity, as he takes responsibility for his life at every moment and in every action. This life-affirming perspective leaves no room for remorse or melancholy; it sees ‘truth’ as the practice of one’s own values — the way one lives one’s life — and it recognises a continuity between the values

which are espoused and the actions which characterize one's life experience: 'A human being's evaluations betray something of the structure of his soul' (Nietzsche, 2003: 206). The process of self-overcoming is the expression of the will to power, as Nietzsche sees everything alive as seeking to perfect itself and to become stronger. Thus the human subject is never satisfied with his/her 'self', but is constantly driven by the urge to grow, to flourish, and to surpass what he/she is at any moment.¹⁵ The will to power, the desire to grow beyond what one is, is inherent in the moments of life which are fully lived; its absence or denial results in melancholy, ennui, or any other attempted withdrawal from the fullness of life: 'Need forces us to do the work whose product will quiet the need...but in those intervals when our needs are quieted and seem to sleep, boredom overtakes us' (Nietzsche, 1984: 254).¹⁶

Deception, fear, denial and repression are constant impediments to authenticity, self-creation, freedom and responsibility. The overman resists such limitation and restraint; he refuses to deny the multiplicity of drives which propel him, drives which vary in strength and direction in various circumstances. He acknowledges his aggression, selfishness, greed, sexuality, as well as his power, autonomy, uniqueness and energy. Nietzsche asserts that 'Life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of the strange and weaker, suppression, severity, imposition of one's forms' (Nietzsche, 2003: 194). The overman does not deny his animal nature, he does not repress his basic instincts, and he does not use a splitting mechanism to overcome his impulses. Rather, he embraces the truth of his humanity, and in so doing, he is

enabled to achieve what Kaufmann refers to as ‘an organic harmony’ (Kaufmann, 1974: 227). The overman, rather than denying aspects of himself, rejoices in his full humanity, and by overcoming his illusions and deceptions, his complaints and excuses, he achieves self-mastery; he overcomes himself. In his willingness to integrate the totality of his personality, he accepts the ambiguity inherent in being human, ‘the wickedest in man is necessary for the best in him’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 235), and acceptance of this reality enables a joyous celebration of life: ‘One must have chaos in one, to give birth to a dancing star’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 46).

In this ideal of human living, Nietzsche rejects universal definitions of ‘mankind’; the overman is not a specimen of ‘everyman’, but an ideal of the individual person creating and living a unique life. Nietzsche acknowledges the tremendous difficulty of living within such expansive honesty, and he offers it as an ideal which is worth striving towards. The acknowledgement and integration of all aspects of life enables a celebratory love of life, and, according to Solomon, this is Nietzsche’s ‘cardinal virtue ... he will not deny that cruel reality or human tragedy but rather see past our suffering to the miracle of life itself’ (Solomon, 2003: 11). Thus, Nietzsche claims that ‘though woe be deep: Joy is deeper than heart’s agony’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 331). Nietzsche is non-prescriptive in suggesting an account of how to live a fuller life as he merely offers the possibility. His perspectivism extends to his own work, and he repeatedly asserts that these are merely his ideas: ‘these are only – my truths’ (Nietzsche, 2003: 163). This avowal of ‘personal truth’, correlates to the experience

of love itself, as love is essentially subjective, primarily personal, and necessarily experiential rather than theoretic, objective or measurable.

Nietzsche's philosophy attempts to reveal the deceptions and duplicities which characterize much of life, of philosophy, and of human relations. It offers a different perspective which embraces what he sees as a more realistic appraisal of human life and of human being, and through this he envisages the possibility of a life where love, of self, of others, and of life, is possible. It is a life which embodies self-acceptance, self-responsibility, and self-created values: 'To have and not have one's emotions, one's for and against...to remain master of one's four virtues, courage, insight, sympathy, solitude' (Nietzsche, 2003: 214). Dichotomies of mind and body, instinct and reason, heart and soul, good and evil are dissolved, the co-existence of solitude and connection — 'sympathy' — is embraced, and the way for love's possibility is cleared, because 'That which is done out of love always takes place beyond good and evil' (Nietzsche, 2003: 103).

Nietzsche ascribes the experience of love to 'the genius of the heart'¹⁷ which integrates the 'gold' and the 'mud' of human existence, and which exudes its richness and blessing in the spirit of Derrida's gift,¹⁸ wherein neither giver nor receiver consciously interpret the gift as gift:

The genius of the heart ... who divines the hidden and forgotten treasure, the drop of goodness and sweet spirituality under thick and opaque ice, and is a divining-rod for every grain of gold which has lain long in the prison of much mud and sand; the genius of the heart from whose touch everyone goes away richer, not favoured and surprised, not as if blessed and oppressed with the goods of others, but richer in himself, newer to himself than before, broken open, blown upon and sounded out by a thawing wind, more uncertain perhaps, more delicate, more fragile, more broken, but full of hopes that as yet have no names (Nietzsche, 2003: 219).

The juxtaposition of images in the above quotation, blessed/oppressed, opaque ice/thawing wind, broken open/full of hopes, suggests the ambiguity, risk and vulnerability which the experience of love necessitates, the fullness of life which it embraces, and the enrichment which it proffers to both the lover and the loved. This experience entails the humility of ignorance co-existing with the reception of otherness, an openness to life which Nietzsche describes in one 'who shares profusely in others' joy, who wins friends everywhere, who is touched by everything that grows and evolves, who enjoys other people's honors and successes, and makes no claim to the privilege of alone knowing the truth' (Nietzsche, 1984: 255). According to this view, love is rooted in attention and interest, devoid of judgement and expectation, receiving the other in its irreducible alterity:

Whoever wants really to get to know something new (be it a person, an event, or a book) does well to take up this new thing with all possible love, to avert his eye quickly from, even to forget, everything about it he finds inimical, objectionable, or false ... by doing this, we penetrate into the heart of the new thing, into its motive centre; and this is what it means to get to know it (Nietzsche, 1984: 257).

Engaging with life, with self and others, 'with all possible love', is enabled through a

divestment of deception and disguise, distortion and image, projection and defensiveness, and the willingness to stand in a naked vulnerability and a courageous simplicity: ‘Where one can no longer love, one should – pass by!’ (Nietzsche, 2003a: 198). In such moments of personal honesty and agenda-free encounters with life, love is possible: ‘Fine, with one another silent, Finer, with one another laughing’ (Nietzsche, 1984: 268). The possibility of love suggested in these lines, evoking ease and acceptance, joy and silence, enables the experience of a relationship engaging the full expression of who one is, and the open reception of who the other is.

The courage, honesty and openness which Nietzsche suggests are prerequisite to the enhancement of life, the ongoing creation of the self, and the possibility of love’s experience, are challenging in their attainment and achievement. Nietzsche urges a striving towards such qualities, while accepting the difficulties inherent in the effort. However, the ‘striving’, the ‘effort’, is perhaps enough to accomplish Nietzsche’s vision of ‘enjoyment’, whereby life can be lived and loved in full acknowledgement of its failure and disappointments. This vision of ‘enjoyment’ is radically different to that of Žižek, and in the view of the author, is closely related to love in its diverse manifestations, including *amor fati*.

REFERENCES

- Blake, William, 2004. *Selected Poems*. London: Collector's Poetry Library.
- Clark, Maudmarie, 1990. *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques, 1981. *Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Derrida, Jacques, 2005. *The Politics of Friendship*. London: Verso
- Faulkner, Joanne, 2005. *Voices from the Depths: Reading "Love" in Luce Irigaray's Marine Lover*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. (*Diacritics* 33.1 (2003) 81-94)
- Freud, Sigmund, 1997. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Translated by A. A. Brill. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited.
- Fromm, Erich, 1995. *The Art of Loving*. London: Thorsons.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1996. *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Irigaray, Luce, 2002. *The Way of Love*. New York: Continuum.
- Kaufmann, Walter, 1974. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. London: Princeton University McGraw-Hill.
- Kearney, Richard, 1998. *Poetics of Imagining: From Modern to Postmodern*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Laurence, D.H., 2002. *Complete Poems of D.H. Laurence*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.
- Nehamas, Alexander, 1985. *Nietzsche, Life as Literature*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1968. *The Will to Power*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1974. *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1984. *Human, All Too Human*. Translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1998. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Translated by Maudmarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen. Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, 2003. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, 2003a. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books.

Nussbaum, Martha, 1994. *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Porchia, Antonio, 2003. *Voices*. Washington: Copper Canyon Press.

Ricoeur, Paul, 1992. *Oneself as Another*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Solomon, Robert, and Kathleen Higgins, 2000. *What Nietzsche Really Said*. New York: Schocken Books.

Yeats, W. B., 1967. *Selected Poetry*. London: MacMillan.

Notes

¹ Slavoj Žižek and other contemporary theorists offer an ironic version of this idea whereby the injunction to enjoy is exposed as a societal command, an imposition of the superego, and therefore a constraining limitation on the individual; perhaps the dilemma lies in the variously possible interpretations of the concept of enjoyment, ranging from the struggle pertaining to the 'performance' or 'appearance' of enjoyment to a personal and often private experience of joy which is independent of public validation.

² An encounter with Nietzsche's thought through the reader's textual understanding of his work is based, according to Joanne Faulkner, on 'the *affective relation*' between reader and writer. This thesis is explored by Faulkner in her analysis of Irigaray's *Marine Love of Friedrich Nietzsche*. According to this argument, one can bring one's practical experiences to the text, and so the text can aid the introspective process. Faulkner asserts: 'The reader "understands" Nietzsche's philosophy if upon reading it his life is enhanced' (Faulkner, 2005: etext)

³ The sense of disillusionment, alienation and hopelessness which characterizes much of the literature of modernism is characteristic of Nietzsche's analysis of nihilism, and it is particularly captured in the poetry of T.S. Eliot.

⁴ This plea for the acceptance of a plurality of perspectives foreshadows a central characteristic of postmodernism.

⁵ The ‘fear’ and ‘need’ which, according to Nietzsche, propel religious fervour and conviction, as well as other doctrines which purport to explain/guide/judge human existence, resonate in some way with Freud’s theory of the superego and with Lacan’s exposition of ‘The Big Other’ as an internalized system of self-governance. Nietzsche’s word choice in the phrase – ‘*creeping* into existence on the byways of *reason*’ (emphases mine) prompts a questioning of ‘reason’ as an infallible source of truth. It resounds with Wordsworth’s arguments against an over-reliance on reason to the exclusion of feeling and imagination.

⁶ These ‘false opposites’ resonate with Derrida’s false binaries mentioned above.

⁷ The phenomenon of pity is diversely interpreted; these interpretations range from an analysis of pity as something which empowers the individual evoking the emotion to an assertion that pity is often motivated by a sense of superiority and disdain which is patronizing and/or disguised.

⁸ In a similar vein, Lacan is sceptical of the motivations of philanthropic acts.

⁹ The work of the Italian poet Antonio Porchia, *Voices*, has many Nietzschean echoes, both in its aphoristic style and its embrace of apparent contradictions: ‘That in man which cannot be domesticated is not his evil but his goodness’ (Porchia, 2003: 31).

¹⁰ This concept of projection, a hall-mark of psychoanalysis, is radically explored by Michel Foucault, in his analysis of institutions such as Church, state, education, judiciary and medicine, as sources of manipulation and control.

¹¹ The evasion of responsibility and the projection of evil onto convenient scapegoats is a recurring theme in philosophy, psychoanalysis and literature; for example, Brendan Kennelly’s epic poems, “Cromwell” and “The Book of Judas”, Richard Kearney’s *Scapegoats, Gods, and Monsters*, and Julia Kristeva’s *Strangers to Ourselves*.

¹² Nietzsche’s advocacy of *amor fati*, love of one’s fate, appears paradoxical, as it is complemented by his insistence on the need for self-creation, responsibility. This is the apparent paradox between determinism and autonomy, and is an issue central to philosophy and psychoanalysis.

¹³ Gadamer’s description of Nietzsche as ‘a great moralist’ echoes Philip Rieff’s study, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist*.

¹⁴ The overcoming of the self, in particular the illusions and deceptions of the self, is central to the psychoanalytic process as outlined by Lacan and Žižek.

¹⁵ Nietzsche’s description of the insatiability of the will to power, and its constant striving to overcome resistance, resounds with Lacan’s insistence on desire as the key propellant of life.

¹⁶ Nietzsche’s assertion that ‘will to power’ is the basic driving force of human life, and his description of this drive as a ceaseless striving to overcome all that resists it, bears a strong resemblance to Freud’s reflections on the competing motivations of the pleasure principle, the reality principle, and the death drive. The pleasure principle, according to Freud, is motivated, at least in part, by the desired avoidance of pain, and thus seeks an equilibrium of minimum resistance, but this is countered by an opposing drive which is never quite satisfied with the ensuing stagnation congruent with this state.

¹⁷ This phrase resonates with Wordsworth’s philosophy, as expressed poetically and personally.

ISSN 1393-614X

Minerva - An Internet Journal of Philosophy 12 (2008): 37-77

¹⁸ Derrida outlines his theory of the gift in *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, where he explains, 'For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counterfeit, or debt...At the limit, the gift as gift ought not appear as gift: either to the donee or to the donor' (Derrida, 1994: 12, 14).

Copyright © 2008 Minerva

All rights are reserved, but fair and good faith use with full attribution may be
made of this work for educational or scholarly purposes.

Kathleen O'Dwyer is a temporary lecturer with the Department of English Language and Literature at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

Email: kathleen.odwyer@mic.ul.ie