Nietzsche on Transforming the Passions into Joys:

On the Middle Writings and Thus Spoke Zarathustra

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Introduction

As Michel Meyer has noted in his study of philosophy's relation to the passions, passion is a unique and enigmatic locus where people meet their animal nature and human nature encounters the forces of nature[1]. Passion is a hybrid entity that stems from our sensible appetites and the representations that they provoke, but also from the urges and emotions that we feel from it[2]. From Plato and the Stoics through to Kant the wisdom of philosophy with respect to the passions is a curious one : it has aimed to put an end to the passions or to at least seriously curtail and restrict them. Typically, the attempt is made to oppose reason to the passions, and the classic modern source for this is, of course, Kant. In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant acknowledges that an inclination that can be conquered only with difficulty or not at all by reason is what we call « passion ». He adds : « To be subject to affects and passions is probably always an *illness of the mind,* because both affect and passion shut out the sovereignty of reason[3] ». Furthermore, « …no human being wishes to have passion. For who wants to have himself put in chains when he can be free ?[4] »

Nietzsche attempts a more nuanced appreciation of the passions than we find in Kant. In terms of human life and its economy of affects we discover, Nietzsche argues, that the affects « are one and all useful, » whether directly or indirectly, and considered in economic terms the forces of nature are both useful *and* the sources of much

[1] Michel Meyer, *Philosophy and the Passions*, trans. Robert F. Barsky, Pennsylvania, Penn State University Press, 2000, p. 1.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 1-2.

[3] Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Louden, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 149.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 151. It is important to note that Kant acknowledges that reason plays a role in the fostering of passions, with passions presupposing « a maxim of the subject, namely, to act according to a purpose prescribed to him by his inclination » (p. 173).

terrible fatality[5]. We both need to have and not to have our passions or affects, to know how to employ their stupidity as well as their fire. Indeed, as Meyer notes, it is difficult on honest reflection to imagine what we human beings would be like without the passions since we live and grow from our loves and our pains, our joys and sorrows, and our regrets and hopes. If passion can be destructive, which it clearly can, what can be said about the dangers of wisdom itself ? And would not reason without passion amount to a ruination of the soul[6]? These questions are, I would maintain, in accord with some of the views on the passions upheld by Nietzsche. Nietzsche clearly acknowledges that on one level the passions are that which drive and push us forward in life, and in ways that are unconscious and often not within our control. Passion (*Leidenschaft*) is a powerful force of nature that exerts its seductions on us. Once we have experienced a passion, Nietzsche observes, it leaves within us an obscure longing for it and so, « It must in fact have provided a sort of pleasure to be scourged with its whip[7] ». Here Nietzsche's psychological insight into the character of passion is typically trenchant : what he is noticing is how human beings prefer « more intense displeasure to feeble pleasure.[8] »

Meyer evinces what I regard as a fundamental insight into the nature and significance of the passions when he notes that passion is, above all, a form of sensitivity before being amorality or even immorality : « It is the sign of the contingent in human beings, that is to say, that which they wish to master…passion upsets, destabilizes, and disorients by reproducing the uncertainty of the world and the course of events.[9] » We understandably experience an ambivalence towards our passions simply because they bring with them all kinds of risks whilst at the same time holding out for us infinite promises and hopes. Still, Meyer's insight into passion being the sign of the contingent within us is, I believe, a vital one, and literally so since it introduces the element of the unpredictable into life and that is supremely important for Nietzsche in his thinking about human life. For example, Nietzsche has this striking thought about the passions : without the passions, he says in a note from 1880, the world is reduced to simply « quantity and line and law and nonsense[10] ». One fundamental reason, then, why Nietzsche values the passions in the way that he does is, I think, because they prevent life from rigidifying into this « quantity, line, and law » – these are all things that, if this is all that existed, would turn life into something strictly mechanical, automatic, predictable, regular, and even boring.

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5 *KSA*, Bd. 12, 10 [133].

6 Meyer, *Philosophy and the Passions*, p. 2.

7 *Human, all too Human* I, trans. Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995 / *MA* I, § 606.

8 *Ibid*.

9 Meyer, *Philosophy and the Passions*, p. 5.

10 *KSA*, Bd 9, 7 [226].

In his middle writings, such as *The Gay Science,* Nietzsche appears keen to revalue the « unreason or counterreason of passion[11] ». In one aphorism at the beginning of the book he makes a distinction between the « common » type of person and the « noble » type of person, noting how the former despises the latter when s/he is gripped by a passion for objects whose value appears as fantastic and arbitrary, and he gives the example of « passion for knowledge » for which one is prepared to risk one's health and honour.[12] Nietzsche appears not to be interested in what he calls the '*coarser* eruptions and gestures of passion », but rather in what he calls a « genuine passion[13] ». The contrast he is making appears to be between a « convention of passionateness » and a passion that is directed towards the pursuit of something new, rare, and noble. He also recognizes the need to provide the passions with an articulate discourse since in nature the passions find themselves poor in words, 'embarrassed and all but mute ». Even when they do find words they become « irrational and » of themselves[14]. What needs resisting is the casting of an evil eye on the passions, in which we see the passions as « dirty, disfiguring, and heartbreaking » ; this is an attitude that reveals an « idealistic tendency » that seeks to annihilate the passions (Nietzsche gives St. Paul as an example here). Contrary to this tendency we can learn valuable lessons from two cultures : firstly, the Greeks who directed their own idealistic tendency toward the passions by loving, elevating, gilding, and deifying them ; and, secondly, by the Italians who show us how the passions can be made to *sing*[15].

In a letter to his friend Franz Overbeck of 1884 Nietzsche says something interesting and to my knowledge it has not been taken note of in the literature on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, namely, that his middle writings serve as an introduction to and preparation for an encounter with the text : « It is a *fact* », he writes revealingly and wittily, « that I did the commentary *before* writing the text - -[16]». I believe this is true of a number of the discourses of the book, and it is certainly true with respect to one particular discourse I wish to focus on and illuminate in this essay. The discourse in question features in part one of the text and is entitled « Of Joys and Passions » (*Von den Freuden- und Leidenschaften*). In this essay I propose to provide an exegesis of this discourse in the context of Nietzsche's insights into the passions in his middle writings. In these middle writings Nietzsche's main focus is on how we can combat the demonization of the passions and learn how to transmute the passions into joys. Let me first provide some insight into Nietzsche's thinking on the passions in these

[11] *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York, Random House, 1974 / *FW*, § 3.

[12] On the passion of knowledge in *GS* / *FW* see also aphorisms 123, 249, 283, and from book five (1887), 351. See also *Dawn* / *M* 427.

[13] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* / *FW*, § 47.

[14] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* / *FW*, § 80.

[15] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* / *FW*, § 139, 80.

[16] *Sämtliche Briefe* (*KSB*), ed. G. Colli & M. Montinari, München / Berlin & New York, DTV / Walter de Gruyter, 1975-1984, Bd. 6, p. 496.

writings before moving on to an encounter with the discourse on joys and passions in *Zarathustra*[17].

1. Nietzsche on the Passions in the Middle Writings

Robert Solomon has argued that Nietzsche attacks the modern stress on epistemology within philosophy and seeks to return philosophy to its true vocation as a doctrine of the passions[18]. For Solomon, the title of the text *The Gay Science* signals a defence of the passionate life, since *la gaya scienza* is a life of longing and love. However, the idea of Nietzsche as a « passionate defender of the passionate life », as he puts it, a thinker who wanted to promote living with passion and who writes from the perspective of the passions and not from the supposedly objective perspective of reason and rationality and offers an *unrestrained* defence of them, requires some qualification since Nietzsche's views on the passions are far subtler and more complex than this[19]. Nietzsche's art of the passions is an intricate and delicate one. Let me now demonstrate this by examining his thoughts on the passions in texts such as *Human, all too Human, The Wanderer and His Shadow,* and *Dawn.*

In the aphorism that enigmatically closes the first chapter of *Human, all too Human* Nietzsche imagines a future life in which the free spirit lives a much simpler life than present-day human beings ; an essential part of this simpler life is that they live « more purified of affects » (*Affecten*). Such a perception of future emancipated spirits is fully in accord with the programme of education and culture Nietzsche is putting forward in the volumes of *Human, all too Human*, which he envisages, expressed in general terms, as a cooling down of the human mind and in an effort to reduce emotional and mental excess, so that the human being becomes less afflicted by neurosis. He thus conceives of a « a stable, mild, and basically cheerful (*frohsinnige*) soul, a mood that would not need to be on guard against pranks and sudden outbursts and whose expressions would have no grumbling in their tone, not any sullenness – those familiar burdensome traits of old dogs and people who have been on a chain for a long time[20] ». Here Nietzsche is obviously referring to the way in which a past humanity

[17] There is a very good essay on the passions in Nietzsche's middle writings by Simon Scott. However, his focus is on the relation between the passions and the drives, and he explicitly states that he will not deal with Nietzsche on the transmutation of passions into joys, which is arguably the most important aspect of Nietzsche on the passions. See S. Scott, « On Nietzsche's Theory of the Passions in his Middle Period », *Pli : The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, 25, 2014, pp. 111-131.

[18] Robert C. Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche : What the Great « Immoralist » Has to Teach Us*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 63.

[19] Having said this, let me make it clear that I fully recognize that in his exemplary body of work Solomon made a major contribution to both the philosophy of emotion and to an understanding of Nietzsche on the passions. See, in particular, the very good chapter on « Nietzsche's Passions » in *Living with Nietzsche*, pp. 63-89.

[20] *Human, all too Human* I, translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995 / *MA* I, § 34.

has been enchained to existence in terms of affects or passions inherited from ancient times, such as fear and dread, and that has led it to approach existence in a mode of superstitious anxiety. It is this condition that a modern humanity is now conquering in terms of a purification of its inherited, and powerful, affects.

It is never Nietzsche's aim to seek a complete emancipation from, and extirpation of, the affects. In contrast to Stoic teaching, which places the emphasis on extirpation, Nietzsche envisages a new cultivation of the passions in which each individual would, through the experiences of life and their corresponding reflection, learn anew and for themselves what it is, for example, to love and to hate[21]. He thus writes in *Human, all too Human* : « We must learn to love, learn to be kind…if education and chance provide us with no opportunity for practising these feelings, then our soul will dry out… Hatred must likewise be learned and nourished, if someone wishes to become a skilful hater…[22] ». Moreover, what Nietzsche admires about the ancient Greeks, and over Christianity, is that they periodically granted festive holidays to their passions and evil natural tendencies, even establishing a « festal regulation » of the all too human as part of their policies concerning civic life : « this is what is truly pagan about their world, and what never was nor could be grasped from a Christian perspective and what Christianity steadily opposed as severely as possible and disdained[23] ».

According to Nietzsche, then, the mind set we need to avoid is that of melancholics and philosophical blind-worms who can only speak of the dreadful character of the passions, and as a way of indicting the entire world. What we find here in this disparagement of the passions is a neglect of two things, according to Nietzsche, and that are now of supreme importance to those free spirits committed to psychological observation : (1) first, an attention to the *detail* of things, including nuances and subtleties ; (2) and, second, the practice of adequate self-observation. If we are now gripped by terror whenever we hear the word « passion » it is because we have allowed the passions to swell up into monstrosities. It is in this aphorism from *The Wanderer and His Shadow* that Nietzsche anticipates the essential lesson on the passions he will stage for his readers in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and that he directly opposes to the demonization of the passions :

[21] Stoic teaching makes a distinction between « good affections » (*eupatheiai*) and « passions » (*pathe*), with the latter being construed as disordered affective states that do not participate in virtue. For further insight see Daniel C. Russell, *Happiness for Humans*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 184-88.

[22] *Human, all too Human* I, translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995 / *MA* I, § 601.

[23] *Human, all too Human* II, « Mixed Opinions and Maxims », translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013/ *MA* II, « VM », § 220.

> We should not inflate our blunders into eternal fatalities ; instead, we ought to work together honestly (*redlich*) at the task of altogether transforming the passions (*Leidenschaften*) of humanity into joys (*Freudenschaften*) (translation modified)[24].

It is clear, then, that for Nietzsche a life without the passions is undesirable. In his middle writings, though, he can sometimes give the impression that he wishes to reduce all passions, with their « raptures and convulsions », to their minimum articulation[25]. He speaks of their conquest, mastery, and overcoming, and he writes of the « spiritually joyful, luminous and honest (*aufrichtigen*) human being » that has overcome its passions[26]. He makes it clear, however, that he regards the overcoming of the passions as a means and not an end in itself : the aim is to overcome them so as to enter into possession of the most fertile ground[27]. In truth what Nietzsche opposes is a fanatical adherence towards the affects. In *Dawn*, for example, he argues that Christianity has brought into the world a new and unlimited imperilment, creating new securities, enjoyments, recreations, and evaluations. Although we moderns may be in the process of emancipating ourselves from such an imperilment, we keep dragging into our existence, even into our noblest arts and philosophies, the old habits associated with these securities and evaluations[28]. Nietzsche holds that in wanting to return to the affects « in their utmost grandeur and strength » —for example, as *love* of God, *fear* of God, fanatical *faith* in God, and so on —Christianity represents a popular protest against philosophy, and he appeals to the ancient sages against it, since they advocated the triumph of reason over the affects[29].

For Nietzsche, then, much depends on the attitude we adopt with respect to the passions, indeed, on how we « name » them, whether positively or disparagingly : for Nietzsche there is a need not to demonise the passions but rather to cultivate and sublimate them. As he notes in *Dawn,* « The passions become evil and malicious whenever they are viewed evilly and maliciously[30] ». He is thus keen to take the Christian religion especially to task since it has turned what are grand powers that

[24] *Human, all too Human* II, « The Wanderer and His Shadow », translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013 / *MA* II, « WS », § 37.

[25] *Human, all too Human* II, « Mixed Opinions and Maxims », translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013/ *MA* II, « VM », § 172.

[26] *Human, all too Human* II, « The Wanderer and His Shadow », translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013 / *MA* II, « WS », § 88.

[27] *Human, all too Human* II, « The Wanderer and His Shadow », translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013 / *MA* II, « WS », § 53.

[28] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 57.

[29] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 58.

[30] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 76 ; see also, *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York, Random House, 1974 / *FW*, § 139.

can inspire us, such as Eros and Aphrodite, into « infernal kobolds and phantoms of deceit[31] ». Christianity is a worrisome religion simply because it treats normal and necessary sensations as a source of inner misery and then seeks to make this misery the normal lot for every single human being. We have declared war on the passions and for Nietzsche this is an extreme and unwise strategy to adopt with respect to what are admittedly sources of much human frustration and that do require the exertion of human control, including exercises in self-mastery and self-cultivation. However, in performing these tasks we should refrain from demonizing the passions by calling them « evil » and in which the mighty Eros, or life drive itself, is construed as the principal enemy. Indeed, such is the extent of the human obsession with Eros that we encounter the very strange result that this « devil » has become more interesting to human beings than all the angels and saints combined : « to this very day the effect has been that the *love story* became the only real interest that *all* circles have in common – and to an excess inconceivable in antiquity…From the loftiest to the lowliest, all our philosophizing and poeticizing has been marked, and more than marked, by the excessive importance ascribed to turning the love story into the main story…[32] ».

Nietzsche is keen to revalue the value of Eros in terms of the role it plays in our lives. However, he does not wish to place undue importance on it. He is, in fact, suspicious of philosophies of universal love and compassion and he values friendship over idealized romantic and sexual love. Part of his revaluation is to note that when properly considered it becomes possible to appreciate that sexual feelings have something important in common with feelings of sympathy, notably, that in doing what pleases us we at the same time give pleasure to another, and this kind of benevolent arrangement is met all too rarely in nature and is one reason why we ought to prize it.

In *Dawn* Nietzsche makes an interesting distinction : the ancients were profoundly concerned with friendship, whereas we moderns offer to the world idealized sexual love[33]. As he goes on to note in antiquity the feeling of friendship was considered the highest feeling, « even higher than the most celebrated pride of the self-sufficient sage...[34] ». Although Nietzsche is an enemy of compassion, friendship is one arena where, as Ruth Abbey has noted, there can be genuine knowledge and sympathy for another and the overcoming of a narrow-centred egoism[35]. Although Nietzsche acknowledges that there can be poor or inadequate friendships – friendships lacking in trust and genuine concern for the other – he sees it, at its best, as an effort at « fellow

[31] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 76.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 503.

[34] *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York, Random House, 1974 / *FW*, § 61.

[35] Ruth Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 73.

rejoicing » rather than « fellow suffering[36] » ; it is the ability to « imagine the joy of others and rejoicing at it », which he thinks is a very rare human quality[37]. The ethical work Nietzsche wants each of us to carry out of ourselves, giving style to our characters for example, does not have to be work undergone and performed in isolation ; instead, « friendship can be a spur to greatness[38] ». It's not for Nietzsche so much a question of self-knowledge being a precondition for the realisation of friendship and realistic friendships ; it is rather that honest friends can become a prerequisite of self-knowledge : it is through the observations of others that a more incisive view of ourselves can be attained ; friends can pierce our ignorance about the self[39].

I now propose to turn to the main raison d'être of this essay, which is to provide an exegesis of the discourse entitled « Of Joy and Passions » in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

2. « Of Joys and Passions » in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Nietzsche's discourse on « Of Joys and Passions » is the fifth discourse in part one of the text. It appears after a discourse on the despisers of the body and is succeeded by a discourse on the pale criminal. The surrounding discourses are no doubt relevant to a full appreciation of « Joys and Passions », but they will not be examined here as I wish to focus solely on the single discourse and in relation to what we have learned about Nietzsche's perspectives on the passions in his middle writings.

Let me note straightaway that the discourse is as important for understanding Nietzsche on virtue and the virtues as it is for understanding him on the passions, including appreciating his stance on the relation between the virtues and the passions. Indeed, the discourse in question commences by speaking not of the passions but of virtue (*Tugend*). Put at its simplest, « virtue » denotes an ethically admirable disposition of character and involves more than the exercise of skills, since a virtue also entails « characteristic patterns of desire and motivation », as Bernard Williams puts it[40]. Nietzsche understands virtue in multifarious ways. On the one hand, when virtue emerges out of our socialization it denotes for him a consistent principle of action that helps to foster habitual and regular mode of behaviour and that is bound up with social conformity. On the other hand, though, when he is exploring the nature of self-cultivation it denotes a kind of human excellence, the possession of which, in the

[36] *Human, all too Human* I, translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995 / *MA* I, § 499.

[37] *Human, all too Human* II, « Mixed Opinions and Maxims », translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2013/ *MA* II, « VM », § 62.

[38] Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period*, p. 81.

[39] *Ibid*., p.77.

[40] Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, London, Fontana & William Collins, 1985, p. 9. For an instructive analysis of Nietzsche on the virtues see Edward Harcourt, « Nietzsche and the Virtues », in Lorraine Besser-Jones & Michael Slote (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, London, Routledge, 2015, pp. 165-181.

words of Christine Swanton, « tends to enable, facilitate, make natural the possessor's promoting, expressing, honouring and appreciating value…[41] ». As Robert Solomon adds, the emphasis here on « excellence » is important simply because not any « good » trait will prove adequate or suffice to task of our becoming the ones that we are : « no virtue is good "in itself," but only as it contributes to something else of value, such as personal style and character…[42] ».

Nietzsche commences discourse on virtue in « Of Joys and Passions » in a startlingly provocative manner : one's virtue is singularly one's own and is shared in common with no other person. This opening statement is in accord with Nietzsche's teaching on the virtues in his middle writings, and indeed throughout his writings, namely, that there is a vital need for each one of us to cultivate our virtues in a singular fashion. As Nietzsche has already put it in book four of *The Gay Science* : « we, however, want to become the ones that we are : unique, singular, incomparable, self-legislating, self-creating[43] ». Nietzsche advances his position on virtue most forcefully in the later text, *The Anti-Christ* when he argues against « impersonal duty » and sacrificing one-self in front of what he calls, with reference to Kant and the categorical imperative, « the Moloch of abstraction » : « A virtue needs to be our *own* invention, our *own* most personal need and self-defence : in any other sense, a virtue is just dangerous[44] ». Wittily, Nietzsche states in the discourse in *Zarathustra* that we will want to provide our virtue with a name if only to pull its ears and caress it, but in doing this we run the risk of having the name of our virtue held in common with the people and the herd. He then writes that it would be much better to say that it is the « unutterable and nameless » that both torments and delights my soul and that is the hunger of my belly. In short, what propels me forward in life is something that is uniquely my own and is neither a law of God nor a human statue, let alone a sign-post to « superearths and paradises » (*Über-Erden und Paradiese*). This virtue has to be part of my unique self and its becoming.

Again, this is in full accord with the ethics of self-cultivation that Nietzsche is advancing in his middle writings and contra the presumptions of morality. For Nietzsche it is necessary, for example, to contest the idea that there is a single moral-making morality since every code of ethics that affirms itself in an exclusive manner « destroys too much valuable energy and costs humanity much too dearly[45] ». In the future, he hopes, the inventive and fructifying person shall no longer be sacrificed

[41] Cited in Solomon, *Living with Nietzsche*, p. 140. See also Christine Swanton, *The Virtue Ethics of Hume and Nietzsche*, Oxford, Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

[42] *Ibid*.

[43] *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York, Random House, 1974 / *FW*, § 335.

[44] *The Anti-Christ & Other Writings,* trans. Judith Norman, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005 / *AC*, § 11.

[45] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 164.

and « numerous novel experiments shall be made in ways of life and modes of society[46] ». When this takes place we will find that an enormous load of guilty conscience has been purged from the world. Humanity has suffered for too long from teachers of morality who wanted too much all at once and sought to lay down precepts for everyone[47]. In the future, care will need to be given to the most personal questions and create time for them[48]. Small individual questions and experiments are no longer to be viewed with contempt and impatience[49]. Contra « morality, » then, he holds that we ourselves are experiments and our task should be to want to be such. In the interregnum we are living through the best strategy is for us to become our own *reges* (sovereigns) and establish small experimental states[50].

For Nietzsche, then, our virtue is to be « too exalted for the familiarity of names » and if we feel compelled to speak of it then we should « stammer » it : « Thus say and stammer : "This is *my* good, this I love, just thus do I like it, only thus do *I* wish the good" [51]». I think Nietzsche places the emphasis on « stammering » simply because in learning to prize our virtue in a singular fashion we are struggling to speak in our own voice and to speak of our will or desire. Still, Nietzsche does lay down one important condition for the cultivation of our virtue, chiefly that it be an « earthly virtue » and so it entreats us, as human-superhuman, to remain true to the earth, that is, not to seek a transcendence of our terrestrial conditions of being in the world.

It is after this enunciation on the singular character of virtue that Nietzsche then introduces into the discourse the notion of passions. The passions represent for him our original human animal condition. We once had only passions and we called them « evil » ; now, however, we have only our virtues that have grown out of these original passions. In short, then, the virtues represent the sublimated form of the primitive passions. Nietzsche makes clear his appreciation of the primitive and animal character of the passions – they are the original endowments of our being – when he speaks of human agents emerging « from the race of the hot-tempered or of the lustful or of the fanatical or of the vindictive » (*aus dem Geschlechte der Jähzornigen wärest oder aus dem der Wollüstigen oder der Glaubens-Wüthigen oder der Rachsüchtigen*)[52]. Here Nietzsche is readily acknowledging the dangerous roots of the passions : they

[46] *Ibid*.

[47] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 194.

[48] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, §, 196.

[49] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 547.

[50] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 453.

[51] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, « Of Joys and Passions », translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969 / *Za*, « Von den Freuden- und Leidenschaften ».

[52] *Ibid*.

emanate from the worst aspects of human nature as he sees it, including the « fanatical » and the « vindictive ». The passions, then, and without achieving a sublimated character, are to be guarded against simply because they can unleash such dangerous sentiments, such as the fanatical thirst for revenge. In spite of this dark underworld to which the passions belong Nietzsche is able to sing the praises of the passions and their transmutation : « You laid your highest aim in the heart of these passions : then they became your virtues and joys…At last all your passions have become virtues and all your devils angels. Once you had fierce dogs in your cellar : but they changed at last into birds and sweet singers[53] ».

From this process of transmuting and sublimating the passions Nietzsche maintains that the individual purifies itself of previous opinions and valuations, and to the extent that no « evil » now comes from it. But there is now on the scene a new « evil », and this time it is a productive and necessary one : it is the « evil » that emerges from the conflict of our virtues. As is well-known, conflict and contestation are essential Nietzschean values, and they are values he esteems in an especially dramatic form in aphorism 235 of *Human, all too Human.* I think it will be wise to attend to this aphorism in order to gain an adequate appreciation of Nietzsche's position on the creative dimension of conflict.

Although Nietzsche describes Christ as « the noblest human being » in *Human, all too Human*[54]*,* as a thinker who extols the supreme importance of aristocratic and agonistic values and virtues for the ends of human growth and enhancement he must oppose Christ and where Christ is conceived as having « the warmest of hearts ». By aligning himself with the poor in spirit Christ promoted « human stupidity » and so « delayed the engendering of the greatest intellect[55] ». What is needed, Nietzsche maintains, is an image of the perfect sage who will « just as necessarily obstruct the engendering of a Christ[56] ». This aphorism is a key place in his writings where Nietzsche stages a fundamental antagonism between aristocratic and agonistic values – for example, the commitment to the production of genius - and modern socialist values that ultimately emanate from Christ's teaching. The engendering of genius requires that life retain something of its violent character in which « savage powers and energies » are repeatedly called forth. What Nietzsche calls « the warm, sympathetic heart » is one that yearns for the elimination of life's violent and savage character. Nietzsche locates a contradiction here : is this heart not itself motivated by a *passion* of life that takes its « fire » and its « heat » from life's violent and savage character ? Surely, he asks, this would mean that the warmest heart would endeavour

[53] *Ibid*.

[54] *Human, all too Human* I, translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995 / *MA* I, § 475.

[55] *Human, all too Human* I, translated by Gary Handwerk, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995 / *MA* I, § 235.

[56] *Ibid*.

to eliminate its own foundation and, in the process, destroy itself. Is this not, then, a philosophy of life that is devoid of intelligence ? Nietzsche, then, sees a fundamental conflict between philosophy and sentiment, or between the sage and the religiously motivated person. Perhaps Nietzsche's most challenging thought in this aphorism is that the highest intelligence and the warmest heart cannot coexist in the same person. Thus, « the sage who pronounces judgement on life also sets himself above goodness and regards it as only one thing to be appraised in taking account of life as a whole[57] ». Thus, the sage works to mount a resistance, resisting the « excessive desires for unintelligent goodness[58] ». The sage does not believe in utopia conceived as the realization on earth of a perfect State, such as inspires the dream of socialism. For Nietzsche this will only lead to an enfeebled humanity and one that will perish of its own contradictions.

Having noted this important dimension of Nietzsche's thinking let me return to my exegesis of the discourse on joys and passions in *Zarathustra.* Although Nietzsche obviously regards it as a healthy condition for the self or ego to engage in the conflict of its virtues, he also recognizes the hazards that come with having more than one virtue and, in fact, states that it may be wise for the self to cultivate the one virtue since it may then go over the bridge (to the superhuman) more easily : « To have many virtues is to be distinguished, but it is a hard fate… (*Loos*)[59] ». It is such a fate because one can so easily tire of being a battleground between different virtues. From this insight, however, Nietzsche does not go on to disavow the importance of battling with oneself in an agonistic manner, and he has Zarathustra raise the question whether war and battle have to always and necessarily be regarded as evil. He wishes to challenge such a perspective : « But this evil is necessary, envy and mistrust and calumny among your virtues is necessary[60] ».

Nietzsche now draws the discourse to a close by writing of virtue and the virtues in ways that perhaps resonate with what he has sought to show in aphorism 21 of *The Gay Science*. Each of our virtues desires the highest or most exalted place in the economy of our affective life. It thus wants, he says, to take hold of our entire spirit so that our spirit may be its herald : « it wants your entire strength in anger, hate, and love. Every virtue is jealous of the others, and jealousy is a terrible thing. Even virtues can be destroyed through jealousy[61] ». In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche is keen to indicate just what it entails to be under the rule of a virtue : « When you have a virtue, a real, whole virtue (and not merely a mini-instinct for some virtue), you are its *victim*[62] ».

[57] *Ibid*.

[58] *Ibid*.

[59] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, « Of Joys and Passions », translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969 / *Za*, « Von den Freuden- und Leidenschaften ».

[60] *Ibid*.

[61] *Ibid*.

[62] *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York, Random House, 1974 / *FW*, § 21.

In this important aphorism, entitled « To the teachers of selfishness » (*Selbstlosigkeit*) Nietzsche sets out to show the real character of a virtue when socially inculcated. For example, it begins with Nietzsche noting that a person's virtues are called good not because of the probable consequences they hold for him but rather for us and society as a whole, and, therefore, the praise of virtues so far has not been selfless or unegoistic. We need to notice that virtues such as obedience, chastity, filial piety, and even justice are typically of great harm for the individuals that possess them. This is because they are, in effect, instincts « that dominate them violently and covetously and resist the efforts of reason to keep them in balance with their other instincts[63] ». This is why Nietzsche adheres to the view that to have a virtue in this social sense is to be its victim. This praise of virtue is in reality, then, praise for something that is privately harmful and deleterious for the individual and their need for self-cultivation. It is, Nietzsche writes, « the praise of instincts that deprive a human being of his noblest selfishness and the strength for the highest achievement of oneself » (*Obhut über sich selbst*)[64]. Socialization via education can thus be an insidious process. It likes to make it appear that virtue and private advantage are sisters, and although a relationship of some kind as this may well exist, even to the point where a healthy industriousness can cure boredom and the blind raging of the passions, education remains silent about the extreme dangers of this inculcation of habits and virtues : « That is how education always proceeds : one tries to condition an individual by various attractions and advantages to adopt a way of thinking and behaving that, once it has become a habit, instinct, and passion, will dominate him *to his own ultimate disadvantage* but "for the general good"[65] ». There are a number of dangers here. For example, whilst industriousness can create wealth and reap honours it can also deprive the organs of their subtlety and that would allow for the enjoyment of this wealth and these honours. Another example : « …this chief antidote to boredom and the passions at the same time blunts the senses and leads the spirit to resist new attractions[66]». In short, one is in danger of becoming through the process of industrious socialization a dull creature of routine and habit. Industriousness becomes its own end, Nietzsche astutely notes, with the endless pursuit of only more industry and more money.

Nietzsche ends the discourse on joys and passions in *Zarathustra* with an appeal to the superhuman, and as is typical of many of the discourses in the text : « The human is something that must be overcome (*überwunden werden muss*) : and for that reason you must love your virtues – for you will perish (*zu Grunde*) by them[67] ». The superhuman here is depicted, I would argue, in terms of Nietzsche's philosophy of

[63] *Ibid*.

[64] *Ibid*., translation modified.

[65] *Ibid*.

[66] *Ibid*.

[67] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, « Of Joys and Passions », translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969 / *Za*, « Von den Freuden- und Leidenschaften ».

the agonistic self : such a self is a creature of self-overcoming *par excellence*, being a fertile battleground of passions and virtues.

So, what do we learn about Nietzsche's thinking on the passions from our consideration of the discourse in *Zarathustra* ? My insights are largely in accord with aspects of the reading of the discourse provided by Leo Strauss, and who is one of the few commentators to take seriously this discourse and provide a fairly sustained engagement with it[68]. Strauss notes that the passions denote the way in which we are affected and in which we can be both pleased and pained in life. On a basic level virtue denotes the ways in which we take a stand towards these affections. Nietzsche departs from the philosophical tradition in not construing passion and virtue as radically different : « In the Platonic simile », Strauss writes, « the passions would be like the horses, noble or base, of a chariot ; virtue is the character of the charioteer[69] ». For Strauss Nietzsche follows a more modern tradition, which he dates to the seventeenth century associates with the likes of Spinoza, Montesquieu and Rousseau, in which virtue is the good passion that defeats the bad passion. However, Nietzsche radicalizes this tradition in the sense that whilst virtue is itself a passion and the highest passion, « there is inseparable kinship between the highest and the lowest[70] ».

Strauss further notes a point I have been especially keen to highlight in my own exegesis. This is the insight that for Nietzsche virtues are deeply and intimately related to the unique character of one's self and one's efforts to fashion this self, or to become what one is : « Virtue has some character of the self », he writes, « because if it were merely a character of the ego it would only be a surface phenomenon, but since this self is characterized by uniqueness, the virtues are something different in every different human being[71] ». An aphorism from *Dawn* can clarify the distinction Strauss is making here between the « self » and the « ego ». The aphorism is entitled « Pseudo-egotism » and in it Nietzsche draws an important distinction between one's phantom ego and one's « self-established, genuine ego ». The former is what Nietzsche calls a « pallid fiction », and it is produced by internalizing the view of one's self that is formed in the heads of those around us and then communicated to us, and to the extent that we live « in a fog of impersonal, half-personal opinions » and arbitrary « fictitious evaluations ». This is to dwell in a strange world of phantasms and that nonetheless dons a sensible appearance[72]. The result of this process, in which we are all cultivated, is « general opinions about "the human being" » : « all these humans who do not even

[68] See also the treatment of this discourse in Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching : An Interpretation of* Thus Spoke Zarathustra, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986, pp. 40-43.

[69] Leo Strauss, *On Nietzsche's* Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2017, p. 43.

[70] *Ibid*.

[71] *Ibid*., p. 44.

[72] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 105.

know one another believe in the bloodless abstraction of "human being", that is to say, in a fiction…[73] ». Contra this fiction Nietzsche invites us, his readers, to regard ourselves as experiments ; indeed, in *Dawn* he states that we *are* experiments and the task is to *want* to be such[74].

As Strauss goes on to note one's goal as the highest goal is something uniquely original to this « self-established, genuine ego », and can only come about through engaging in the tasks and experiments of self-cultivation. Here we need to understand virtue as sublimated passion. As Strauss rightly notes, sublimation is Nietzsche's term and before it becomes Freud's. In Nietzsche sublimation is connected to the sublime, that is, to attaining states of elevation and even exaltation, and this is a key element in the transfiguration of the passions, that is, in the activity of turning our passions into joys[75]. Passions become virtues, then, when we dedicate them to our highest goal, and in this way we contribute towards the creation of the superhuman.

Let me bring my analysis of the discourse to a close with a brief consideration of the sublime and its links with sublimation. Strauss maintains that the connection between sublimation and the sublime is peculiar to Nietzsche and not part of Freudian vocabulary. This is a mistaken appreciation since the connection between the two is made, and made in highly instructive terms, in psychoanalysis. In his study of sublimation, for example, Hans Loewald observes that the etymology of the word « sublime » suggests « rising to a limit or upper threshold and proceeding on a slope[76] ». When deployed in a figurative sense sublimation denotes the elevation to a higher state of existence, « transmutation into something higher, purer, or more sublime[77] ». In both chemical and psychoanalytic senses sublimation, then, denotes a transmutation from the lower to the higher, to a purified mode of existence. However, relevant to the analysis conducted in this essay is Loewald's insight that we should not think automatically of this transmutation as a simple form of progression, say from a coarse state to a more refined and advanced one in which the crude state is completely left behind. Rather, we need to see the highest and lowest as enveloped within one another and within « an original, unitary experience[78] ». Such an insight is, I think, of vital importance for

[73] *Ibid*. Nidesh Lawtoo has constructed an elaborate and thought-provoking reading of modernism, including Nietzsche's role in modernism, on the basis of insights into this aphorism from *Dawn.* See N. Lawtoo, *The Phantom of the Ego : Modernism and the Mimetic Unconscious*, Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 2013.

[74] *Dawn. Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, translated by Brittain Smith, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011 / *M*, § 453.

[75] Nietzsche configures the sublime in *Zarathustra* in varied and complex ways, and devotes a discourse to « The Ones Who are Sublime ». Regrettably, a treatment of the sublime in Nietzsche's text lies beyond the scope of the present essay.

[76] Hans Loewald, *Sublimation : Inquiries into Theoretical Psychoanalysis*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988, p. 12.

[77] *Ibid*.

[78] *Ibid*., p. 13.

properly understanding Nietzsche's lesson on the transmutation of the passions into joys : the passions are not to be regarded as merely crude and as modes of being that are to be left behind as one becomes what one is. Although purification is involved in the tasks of self-cultivation for Nietzsche, the aim is not to attain some pure moral condition or state in which we would say farewell to the amoral or immoral passions.

Conclusion

In this essay I have sought to show that the discourse on joys and passions in *Zarathustra* can be productively appreciated in the context of the concerns and insights Nietzsche develops in his middle writings. His discourse does not emerge out of the blue but rather reflects in epigrammatic and enigmatic ways the various insights he has been providing in his middle writings on the virtues and the passions, as well as on self-legislating individuality and the tasks of self-cultivation. I have shown that in spite of his opposition to any devaluation of the passions Nietzsche does not blindly champion them contra major strands in the philosophical tradition. His position is far subtler and more nuanced than this. On the one hand, he is keen to revalue the passions and demonstrate the central role they play in the affective economy of human life. On the other hand, he is keen to argue in support of the sublimation of the passions in which we carry out such sublimation in the context of the goals and ideals that motivate and guide us in our tasks, namely, those of self-cultivation. The answer to the question of what it means to convert our passions into « joys » ultimately resides in the meaning and significance we accord to these tasks of self-cultivation. The passions are not to be demonized, and through such demonization extirpated or extinguished from life ; rather, they are to be approached as granting us an opportunity at a truly joyful existence : through exercises of self-conquest and self-overcoming, including the transmutation of the passions through sublimation, we have the chance of practising the creation of self by self and in this practice of wisdom we come to practice the joyful science. Such a wisdom and a science are at work throughout much of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* Part of what it means, then, on Nietzsche's appreciation to transmute the passions into joys is to name them anew, and so that they are no longer seen as « monstrosities ».

In the entry on *Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche admits that in the book he pays careful attention to both the highest and lowest powers of human nature, in which « that which is sweetest, airiest, and most fearsome pours forth from a single spring with immortal assuredness[79] ». It is as if he is speaking of his discourse on the virtues and the passions. Indeed, in the same section of *Ecce Homo* he maintains that *Zarathustra* contains aphorisms that quiver with « passion » and in which eloquence becomes music. Nietzsche is, in effect advising his readers on how best to approach the tasks

[79] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* « Thus Spoke Zarathustra », translated by Duncan Large, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007 / *EH*, « Also sprach Zarathustra », § 6.

of self-cultivation, namely, in a spirit of adventure and with light feet and in a non-fanatical mode. He is surely right in suggesting that in this task of self-cultivation that the individual grants itself there lies the possibility of « greatness ». Once again, he is offering a teaching on « selfishness » : « the soul that loves itself the most, in which all things have their streaming and counter-streaming and ebb and flood[80] ».

[80] *Ibid*.