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## Anti-Stoic Lessons for the Concept of *Amor Fati* in *Gay Science IV*

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*Book IV of The Gay Science explicitly criticizes Stoicism (306) yet seems to implicitly adopt elements of it as well, e.g. in the ideal of amor fati (276). Yet, this paper proposes an alternative reading of amor fati, one that moves away from the assumption that it is inspired by Stoicism. Tracing Nietzsche's growing sense of dissatisfaction with the Stoic take on passions in the pursuit of knowledge, a new light is shed on amor fati, related in the first place to the dangerous quest for truth, but also, indirectly, to the importance of health and self-cultivation. Amor fati should be understood in this context not just as non-Stoic; it is even anti-Stoic.*

### Introduction

*Amor fati* is often regarded as a form of therapy resembling one of the Stoic exercises for self-cultivation. Peter Groff for instance finds it 'illuminating to read Nietzsche as a kind of late modern neo-Stoic, providing us with a veritable banquet of spiritual exercises aimed at the cultivation of the self and the affirmation of fate.'<sup>1</sup> Michael Ure's book *Nietzsche's Therapy* discusses in great detail Nietzsche's turn to the Stoics, claiming that 'what looms large in Nietzsche's thinking is the question of psychological health and sickness [...]. In the middle period, [...] he conceives the patient, piecemeal labour of psychological self-observation as a therapy of the soul.'<sup>2</sup> Ure's article 'Nietzsche's Free Spirit Trilogy and Stoic Therapy' further explores the implications of

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1 Peter Groff, 'Al-Kindī and Nietzsche on the Stoic Art of Banishing Sorrow', in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 28 (2004), p. 154.

2 Michael Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy; Self-Cultivation in the Middle Works* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2008), p. 3.

Nietzsche's adoption of Stoic therapy for the notion of *amor fati*.<sup>3</sup> Although it is claimed that *amor fati* is set up as an alternative to those elements of Stoicism that Nietzsche is discontent with, it is stated throughout that it remains faithful in many respects to the basics of Stoic therapy. In short, Nietzsche's suggestion to love one's fate mirrors, according to Michael Ure, Epictetus' advice: 'Do not seek to have events happen as you wish, but *wish* them to happen as they do happen, and all will be well with you.'<sup>4</sup>

The aim of this paper is to respectfully challenge two of the main assumptions instructing this view. First, I will trace Nietzsche's engagement with Stoicism in the Middle Works, or the so-called 'Free Spirit Trilogy', which include *Human, All Too Human (HAH)*, *Daybreak (D)*, and *The Gay Science (GS)* until Book IV.<sup>5</sup> I hope to show that the motivation for turning to the Stoics is not, at least not exclusively, the question of psychological health and sickness, or self-observation as a therapy of the soul. Parallel to this interest namely, and closely related to it as I will show, runs Nietzsche's fascination for truth and the scientific practice aimed at the increase of knowledge. I will argue that Nietzsche's passion for knowledge, known in German as the 'Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis', shapes the engagement with Stoicism in a stronger sense than his quest for health.

Secondly, after showing how Nietzsche's stance towards Stoicism starts out sympathetic in *HAH* yet ends fiercely critical in *GS*, I will make the case that *amor fati* is not only un-Stoic, but even anti-Stoic. *Amor fati* occurs only ten times in the totality of Nietzsche's works, including the *Nachlass* and his letters, and its first published occurrence is in the first

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3 Michael Ure, 'Nietzsche's Free Spirit Trilogy and Stoic Therapy', in *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 (2009), pp. 60-84.

4 *The 'Encheiridion' of Epictetus and its Three Christian Adaptations*, trans. by Gerard Boter (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 8. It is quoted by Ure, 'Nietzsche's Free Spirit Trilogy and Stoic Therapy', p. 75. On p. 76 he writes: 'Nietzsche develops a quintessentially Stoic ethic, anchored in in the complete affirmation of natural necessity'.

5 Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), hereafter *HAH*; Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale, ed. by Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), hereafter *D*; Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Josephine Nauckhoff, ed. by Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), hereafter *GS*.

aphorism of *GS* IV. I will argue that the timing of this first occurrence is not coincidental: the introduction of *amor fati* follows from Nietzsche's growing dissatisfaction with Stoicism. This also has an impact on our understanding of *amor fati*, at least of its meaning in *GS*.<sup>6</sup> Although I will suggest that *amor fati* can still be interpreted as a form of self-cultivation, my point is that it is informed by Nietzsche's struggle with the desire for truth to a much larger extent than has been acknowledged so far. *Amor fati* can only be understood as the wish for the counterweight of joyful and aesthetic self-interpretation against the exhausting burden of the 'Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis', I claim.

### **The contrast between the Opening of Book IV and *GS* 306**

Nietzsche's attitude towards Stoic ethics in general is characteristically ambiguous. This can hardly come as a surprise, since most of Nietzsche's responses to important philosophical schools or figures are ambivalent: some aphorisms betray clear admiration, others – sometimes even within the same book – betray aversion and a highly polemical attitude. Moreover, not many texts explicitly mention the philosopher he admires or attacks. The reader is expected to be so familiar with the philosophical tradition that s/he is capable of recognizing Nietzsche's implicit opponent or ally. Developing a consistent account of Nietzsche's relation to Stoicism, therefore, faces these two difficulties: we have to take into account that whom Nietzsche fights in one text might be admired in another, and we have to be aware that Nietzsche might discuss Stoicism in an aphorism lacking explicit signs of it.

Book IV of *GS* serves as a good example. This Book shows both difficulties. Nietzsche seems to be critical and appreciative of Stoicism, both implicitly and explicitly. It contains one of the most explicit evaluations of Hellenistic Ethics in the totality of Nietzsche's oeuvre, namely aphorism 306 entitled 'Stoics and Epicureans'. Nietzsche clearly prefers

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6 I agree with Tom Stern, 'Nietzsche, *Amor Fati*, and *The Gay Science*', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. CXIII,2 (2013), pp. 145-62, who argues that the meaning of *amor fati* changes in between *GS* and its last appearances in 1888. On pp. 157-8 he rightly argues: 'Nietzsche scholars are far too relaxed about picking and choosing from his different books to construct a version of Nietzsche that suits their particular interests. [...] This would be unobjectionable if his views about some of the key notions associated with *amor fati* (in *The Gay Science*) were not subject to change in the coming years. As it happens, they were.'

the Epicureans over the Stoics in this text. But several other aphorisms reveal an implicit dialogue with the Stoic philosophers as well. The Opening of Book IV, for instance, betrays a remarkable yet implicit similarity with the Stoic therapy of affirming fate, that is, according to several commentators.<sup>7</sup> We read:

*GS 276 For the new year.* I'm still alive; I still think: I must be still alive because I still have to think. *Sum, ergo cogito: cogito, ergo sum.* Today everyone allows himself to express his dearest wish and thoughts: so I, too, want to say what I wish from myself today and what thought first crossed my heart – what thought shall be the reason, warrant, and sweetness of the rest of my life!

Nietzsche playfully turns the famous Cartesian saying that we can only know for certain that we exist, because we think: 'cogito, ergo sum'. For Nietzsche, the connection goes both ways, which makes the intimacy between thinking and living even stronger. 'I must be alive, because I still have to think': there is no thinking without living. Moreover, and in opposed direction, the thought he wishes to express 'for the new year' is 'his dearest'. To think a particular thought, it appears, has the power to have a lasting impact on one's life: it can become one's 'reason, warrant', and even one's 'sweetness', changing drastically its taste, sensation, or quality. There is no thinking without living; there is no living well – for Nietzsche – without thinking this particular thought.

This intimate connection is taken as a clue pointing towards the idea that Nietzsche is engaged in a dialogue with Hellenistic philosophy. That is: especially the Stoic tradition has made us familiar with the idea that the way we think affects the way we feel.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, it is not only the fact that our thinking affects our well-being; it is moreover a specific thought that will have a therapeutic effect on us, namely that of affirming

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7 Michael Ure and Peter Groff are not the only ones; see for instance also John Sellars, 'An Ethics of the Event, Deleuze's Stoicism', in *Angelaki Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* II,3 (2006), pp. 157-71, and Thomas Brobjer, 'Nietzsche's reading of Epictetus', in *Nietzsche-Studien* 32 (2003), pp. 429-32.

8 Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) is one of the most prominent works in this field. John Sellars' *The Art of Living. The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 3-4, suggests that Nietzsche's notion of philosophy as an 'art of living' is influenced by Stoicism.

fate. For the Stoics, we are radically unfree, since the world is fated – yet we can achieve happiness (*eudaimonia*) and psychological health by accepting and embracing our fate, even if it seems to be a horrendous one. The ‘dearest wish’ that Nietzsche expresses in the first aphorism, after loosely introducing it in the ‘motto’ preceding Book IV<sup>9</sup> is the following:

I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let *looking away* be my only negation! And, all in all and on the whole: some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer!

Nietzsche sees in *amor fati* a thought that can become a ‘sweetness’, making ‘all things well’. Even though he does not explicitly name a Stoic philosopher, it would take some argumentation to show that these concepts, so strongly reminiscent of Stoicism, actually have a different background.

The apparent attitude of agreement with Stoic doctrines does not last throughout the Book, however. Aphorism 306, where Nietzsche explicitly compares and evaluates Stoic and Epicurean ways of living, is radically different in tone.

*GS 306 Stoics and Epicureans*. The Epicurean seeks out the situation, the persons, and even the events that suit his extremely sensitive intellectual constitution; he foregoes the rest – that is, almost everything – because it would be too strong and heavy a diet. The Stoic, by contrast, trains himself to swallow stones and worms, glass shards and scorpions without nausea; he wants his stomach to be ultimately insensible to everything the chance of existence pours into him [...].

Nietzsche prefers Epicurean selectivity, and mocks the Stoic aim to be completely open to whatever fate may bring. On first sight, Nietzsche does not have different Stoic doctrines in mind here: in both *GS 276* and *306* the Stoic idea is central that we are dependent on fortune somehow and that we should ‘wish the events as they happen’ instead of ‘making

<sup>9</sup> Motto *GS IV*: ‘Ever healthier it rises, Free in fate most amorous’.

the events happen as you wish'. However, in contrast to the Opening, Nietzsche firmly rejects this idea in 306. We should not become 'ultimately insensible to everything the chance of existence pours into us'; rather, we should actively 'seek out the situation, the persons, and even the events' that suit our constitution, not passively accept whatever comes our way. How to explain this inconsistency?

### **Science and knowledge 1: Nietzsche's appreciation of the Stoic approach to emotions**

In order to develop a more refined account of Nietzsche's relation with Stoicism up until *GS*, it is crucial to distinguish between two major concerns in the 'Free Spirit Trilogy': *health* and *science* (science taken in the broadest sense possible here, not limited to the natural sciences; 'Wissenschaft' being the German equivalent). My approach concurs with that of Melissa Lane, who, different from commentators like Michael Ure and Peter Groff, but also Martha Nussbaum and Keith Ansell-Pearson, does not evaluate Nietzsche's engagement with Stoicism merely from the angle of ethics and therapeutic self-cultivation.<sup>10</sup> Whereas Peter Groff claims that Nietzsche is 'committed to the task of banishing or overcoming sorrow' arguing that he 'appropriate[s] many of the Stoics' therapeutic techniques toward this end', Melissa Lane's point is that 'while self-fashioning has become a leading theme of the 'post-modern' reading of Nietzsche, [...] there has been little discussion of [...] the extent to which Nietzsche marks out a virtue of honesty named *Redlichkeit* from *Daybreak* (1881) onward'.<sup>11</sup> Yet, whereas her analysis reveals 'the extent to which honesty and intellectual adequacy came to weigh for him on the

10 Melissa Lane, 'Honesty as the Best Policy. Nietzsche on *Redlichkeit* and the Contrast between Stoic and Epicurean Strategies of the Self', in *Histories of Postmodernism*, eds. Mark Bevis, Jill Hargis, Sara Rushing (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 25-51. See also Keith Ansell-Pearson, 'Beyond compassion: on Nietzsche's moral therapy in *Dawn*', in *Continental Philosophy Review* 44.2 (2011), pp. 179-204; Keith Ansell-Pearson, 'For Mortal Souls: Philosophy and Therapeia in Nietzsche's *Dawn*', in *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 66 (2010), pp. 137-163; Martha Nussbaum, 'Pity and Mercy, Nietzsche's Stoicism', in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality; Essays on Nietzsche's 'On the Genealogy of Morality'*, ed. by Richard Schacht (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

11 Melissa Lane, 'Honesty as the Best Policy. Nietzsche on *Redlichkeit* and the Contrast between Stoic and Epicurean Strategies of the Self', in *Histories of Postmodernism*, eds. Mark Bevis, Jill Hargis, Sara Rushing (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 25-51, p. 25.

side of Stoicism', my conclusion shall be that Nietzsche increasingly criticizes the Stoics, precisely for their misapprehension of the value of rationality in the pursuit of truth.<sup>12</sup>

It is clear from the beginning of Nietzsche's philosophical project that the interests in truth and health do not complement each other.<sup>13</sup> As the first Book of *Human, All Too Human* reveals, for instance in the title of aphorism 33 '*Error regarding life necessary to life*', the search for truth might uncover things that do not sit well with our 'human, all too human' constitution. In aphorism 34 this thought is formulated as follows:

*HAH 34* Will truth not become inimical to life, to the better man? A question seems to lie heavily on our tongue and yet refuses to be uttered: whether one *could* consciously reside in untruth? or, if one were *obliged* to, whether death would not be preferable?

Yet, this same aphorism reveals how Nietzsche, be it implicitly, has the Stoic philosopher in mind, who can set us an example of how to deal with a devastating yet desired truth (even if the Stoics do not recognize the idea that truth and health may be opposed). This text reveals the presence of Stoicism in at least three ways. Firstly, the temperament that is recommended is one 'by virtue of which a life could arise much simpler and emotionally cleaner', reminding us of the simple life lived by Epictetus and the thought that it would be much better without the burden of great emotions:

*HAH 34* I believe that the nature of the after-effect of knowledge is determined by a man's *temperament*: [...] I could just as easily imagine a different one, quite possible in individual instances, by virtue of which a life could arise much simpler and emotionally cleaner than our present life is: so that, though the old motives of violent desire produced by inherited habit would still possess their strength, they would gradually grow

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12 Ibid., p. 26.

13 The development of Nietzsche's thought on the relation between health, happiness, and the destructive desire for truth is eloquently and in full detail worked out by Marco Brusotti, *Die Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis: Philosophie und ästhetische Lebensgestaltung bei Nietzsche von Morgenröthe bis Also sprach Zarathustra* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1997).

weaker under the influence of purifying knowledge. [...] For this to happen one would, to be sure, have to possess the requisite temperament, as has already been said: a firm, mild and at bottom cheerful soul.

The description of ‘a firm, mild and at bottom cheerful soul’ is similar to the state of *eupatheia* the Stoics envision; resembling their ideal of a calm and rational temperament, well balanced, in which all extreme passions are held in check.<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, this state is traditionally achieved through adopting an attitude of ‘detachment’. One should be able to perceive most things as ‘indifferent’ and ‘forgo much’:

[He] must, rather, without envy or vexation be able to forgo much, indeed almost everything upon which other men place value; that free, fearless hovering over men, customs, and the traditional evaluations of things must *suffice* him as the condition he considers most desirable.

The idea is simple. Dismissing as indifferent the things that we would normally value means to be able to remain cheerful and calm, also when these are taken away or fundamentally questioned. This attitude of ‘detachment’ is illustrated in this aphorism as ‘free, fearless hovering over men, customs, and the traditional evaluations of things’, a description that is almost identical to what we find in Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations*:

*MA VII 48* One who would converse about human beings should look on all things earthly as though from some point far above, upon herds, armies, and agriculture, marriages and divorces, births and deaths, the clamour of law courts, deserted wastes, alien people of every kind, festivals, lamentations, and markets, this intermixture of everything and ordered combina-

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14 This similarity is also identified by Michael Ure, *Nietzsche’s Therapy*, p. 126. *Eupatheia* literally means a ‘state of good passion’. In Stoic psychology a passion is understood to be a mistaken judgment. It is often stated that the ultimate Stoic goal is to reach ‘*apatheia*’, a state without mistaken judgments, hence of emotionlessness. But a life in which impulses are rational, moderate, and held in check leads, according to Seneca for instance, to a state of calm joy: *eupatheia*.

tion of opposites.<sup>15</sup>

Thirdly, the relation between temperament and truth is double. On the one hand, Nietzsche acknowledges that the response to knowledge depends on one's 'temperament': a nature whose life is 'emotionally cleaner' might react more calmly and rationally. On the other hand, it is *because* of the effects of knowledge that the passions lose their strength and weaken, for knowledge can be 'purifying' as we have seen above: 'though the old motives of violent desire [...] would still possess their strength, they would gradually grow weaker under the influence of purifying knowledge.' The implicit idea seems to be that it is not the things themselves that are threatening or disturbing, rather it is our *opinion* or reaction to it – an idea that we find recurring in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*.<sup>16</sup> We should, thus, calm down in order to be able to deal with the consequences of knowledge wisely, and use the purifying workings of this knowledge in order to calm down our passions.

Consequently, we can see how Stoicism is taken on board by Nietzsche as part of a therapy that will not only prepare us to face a hostile truth by adopting a calm attitude of passion-free detachment, but that moreover changes our expectations of that truth: it may be devastating at first, but it may, in the long run, purify and even liberate us. This idea can be found explicitly in *HAH* 170: 'To perceive all this can be very painful, but then comes a consolation: such pains are birth-pangs. The butterfly wants to get out of its cocoon'.

## Science and knowledge 2: Nietzsche's rejection of the Stoic approach to emotions

Nevertheless, this hopeful attitude concerning the relation between knowledge and psychological health changes in *Dawn*. Correspondingly, the appreciative stance towards the Stoics develops into one of rejection, the most explicit example of which is *GS* 306, as we have seen. *GS* 305 reveals in more detail what exactly Nietzsche's disappointment with Stoicism entails.

*GS* 305 *Self-control*. Those moralists who command man first

15 Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, trans. by Robin Hard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), hereafter *MA*.

16 For instance: *MA* IV 7: 'Do away with the judgment, and the notion 'I have been harmed' is done away with; do away with that notion, and the harm itself is gone.'

and above all to gain control of himself thereby afflict him with a peculiar disease, namely, a constant irritability at all natural stirrings and inclinations and as it were a kind of itch. [...] [N]o longer may he entrust himself to any instinct or free wing-beat; instead he stands there rigidly with a defensive posture, armed against himself, with sharp and suspicious eyes, the eternal guardian of his fortress, since he has turned himself into a fortress. [...] [H]ow impoverished [he has become] and cut off from the most beautiful fortuities of the soul! And indeed from all further *instruction*! For one must be able to lose oneself if one wants to learn something from the things that we ourselves are not.

The fact that this aphorism is immediately followed by 306, ‘Stoics and Epicureans’, suggests that Nietzsche sees at least the Stoics (perhaps the Epicureans, too) as examples of sick ‘moralists who command man first and above all to gain control of himself.’ They are described here as those who rigidly defend their own ‘fortresses’, a very familiar image within the writings of Marcus Aurelius.<sup>17</sup> But interestingly, Nietzsche’s objection to this kind of attitude is not just that it is unhealthy; it is also inappropriate for those who wish to *learn*. Nietzsche’s desire in this time is still (partly at least) to find truth, which is confirmed by *GS* 309: “This penchant and passion for what is true, real, non-apparent, certain – how it exasperates me!” *GS* 305 shows Nietzsche’s awareness that if one wishes to grow, to *learn*, one must have faith in one’s own instincts. Only if we ‘lose ourselves’, ‘entrust ourselves to any free wing-beat’, we will not be cut off ‘from further *instruction*’ and will actually come to discover new things.

This preoccupation with learning can also be recognized in *GS* 306, where Nietzsche prefers the Epicureans over the Stoics because the Epicurean attitude fits a learning attitude (formulated as ‘the work of the spirit’) better:

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17 See Pierre Hadot, *The Inner Citadel. The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, trans. by Michael Chase (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) on the writings of Marcus Aurelius; moreover, we can find in *MA* VIII 48 an explicit example by Marcus Aurelius himself: ‘Remember that your ruling centre becomes invincible when it withdraws into itself and rests content with itself, doing nothing other than what it wishes, even where its refusal to act not reasonably based; and how much more contented will it be, then, when it founds its decision on reason and careful reflection. By virtue of this, an intelligence free from passions is a mighty citadel’

*GS* 306 But someone who more or less *expects* fate to allow him to spin *a long thread* does well to take an Epicurean orientation; people engaged in the work of the spirit have always done so! For it would be the loss of all losses, for them, to forfeit their subtle sensitivity in exchange for a hard Stoic skin with porcupine spines.

What insight made Nietzsche change his mind between *HAH* and *GS* concerning the right attitude for dealing with truth? Whereas *HAH* obviously regards Stoic *eupatheia*, an attitude with calmed and purified passions, as the right preparation for uncovering even these truths that are inimical to life, *GS* encourages us to adopt a selective, Epicurean attitude instead, one that protects its ‘subtle sensitivity’ and deems the Stoic attitude ‘insensible’, ‘inflexible’, ‘defensive’, ‘suspicious’, having a hard skin ‘with porcupine spines’, reminiscent of what he would later, especially in *GM* III, come to term ‘asceticism’ – a term to which I will return below.

In *Dawn* a shift occurs. Importantly, this change concerns the role of the passions in the quest for knowledge. Even though *Dawn* is mostly read in the context of therapy and self-cultivation, it also contains many aphorisms showing an involvement with ‘Wissenschaft’ and objective judgment. On that subject, we find on the one hand texts in which the Stoic attitude of rational detachment, even of hovering over all things, is still appreciatively adopted, for instance in the following aphorism:

*D* 137 To view our own experiences with the eyes with which we are accustomed to view them when they are the experiences of others – this is very comforting and a medicine to be recommended. [...] [This] maxim is certainly *more in accord* with reason and the will to rationality, for we adjudge the value and meaning of an event more objectively when it happens to another than we do when it happens to us.

This text resembles what we saw in *HAH*. It contains a direct reference to Epictetus<sup>18</sup> and stresses the importance of reason: arguably it is more

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18 The inspiration must have come from Epictetus’ *Encheiridion* 26: ‘The will of nature may be learned from things upon which we are all agreed. As when our neighbor’s boy has broken a cup, or the like, we are ready at once to say, ‘These are casualties that will happen’; be assured, then, that when your own cup is likewise broken, you ought to be affected just as when another’s cup was broken. Now

rational to regard one's experiences through the eyes of others, leading to a more 'objective' evaluation of the event – being untroubled by passions that stand in the way of a clear and rational judgement. Also, in *D* 497, we find the suggestion that men with 'true geniuses' are those who possess 'the *pure, purifying* eye which seems not to have grown out of their temperament and character but, free from these and usually in mild opposition to them, looks down on the world as on a god and loves this god', again hinting at the importance of a kind of rational strength functioning detached from one's emotional humours. It even has the potential to hover over them: 'the spirit seems to be only *loosely attached* to the character and temperament, as a winged being who can easily detach itself from these and then raise high above them.'

On the other hand we find examples that reveal a slowly dawning awareness of truth being such that it will not be uncovered by adopting a detached and rational point of view. *D* 539: 'Have you never been plagued by the fear that you might be completely incapable of knowing the truth? The fear that your mind may be too dull and even your subtle faculty of seeing still much too coarse?' And this is not the only fear; slowly its possible implication is explored, namely that we may not have *any* access to a truth outside. We may be imprisoned by our deceptive senses, as *D* 117 holds: 'it is by these horizons, within which each of us encloses his senses as if behind prison walls, that we *measure* the world [...] and it is all of it an error!' And, further below: 'The habits of our senses have woven us into lies and deception of sensation: these again are the basis of all our judgements and 'knowledge' – there is absolutely no escape, no back way or bypath into the *real world!*' This line of thought, then, leads to a kind of despair expressed in *D* 483: 'Learn to know! Yes! But always as a man! What? [...] Never to be able to see into things out of any other eyes but *these?* [...] What will mankind have come to know at the end of all their knowledge? – their organs! And that perhaps means: the impossibility of knowledge! Misery and disgust!'

The conclusion then must be that 'truth', if possible at all, will not reveal itself to those who are engaged in purely rational activity: 'Or do you believe that today, since you are frozen and dry like a bright morning

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apply this to greater things. Is the child or wife of another dead? There is no one who would not say, 'This is an accident of mortality.' But if anyone's own child happens to die, it is immediately, 'Alas! how wretched am I!' It should be always remembered how we are affected on hearing the same thing concerning others.'

in winter and have nothing weighing on your heart, your eyes have somehow improved? Are warmth and enthusiasm not needed if a thing of thought is to have *justice* done to it?' (*D* 539) Rather, we are constantly presented with the results of our own inner sensitive movements: 'when you are tired you will bestow on things a pale and tired coloration; when you are feverish you will turn them into monsters' (*ibid.*). Hence it is acknowledged that passions and drives should not be left out of the process of acquiring knowledge – rather, they may possibly be the only thing we will ever get to know, or at least they provide us with the only method that perhaps enables us to acquire small amounts of knowledge:

*GS* 333 Before knowledge is possible, each of these impulses [to laugh, lament, and curse] must first have presented its one-sided view of the thing or event; then comes the fight between these one-sided views, and occasionally out of it a mean, an appeasement, a concession to all three sides, a kind of justice and contract.

It should not come as a surprise, therefore, to find Nietzsche in *GS* encouraging the stimulation of as many impulses, passions, and 'views' as possible – which is quite opposite to the idea of the possibility of a 'detached genius' we encountered in *D*, and of the adoption of a Stoic, calm, rational attitude we saw Nietzsche defending in *HAH*. *GS* 12 reveals explicitly how Nietzsche had not forgotten about the Stoics; here he formulates very precisely and in a tone of respect how he has come to disagree.

*GS* 12 But what if pleasure and displeasure are so intertwined that whoever *wants* as much as possible of one *must* also have as much as possible of the other [...]? And that may well be the way things are! At least the Stoics believed that this is how things are, and they were consistent when they also desired as little pleasure as possible in order to derive as little pain as possible from life [...].

This aphorism conveys appreciation for the Stoic doctrine of passions as communicating vessels (it is impossible to have more pleasure without an increase of pain<sup>19</sup>). But importantly, it is entitled '*On the aim of science*',

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19 In this context the first sentence of *GS* 318 might be revealing as well: '*Wisdom in pain*. – There is as much wisdom in pain as in pleasure'. See also *GS* 338: 'happiness and misfortune (*Glück und Unglück*) are two siblings and twins who

suggesting that its focus is science, not well-being. It finishes as follows:

With *science* one can actually promote either of these goals! So far it may still be better known for its power to deprive man of his joys and make him colder, more statue-like, more stoic. But it might yet be found to be the *great giver of pain!* – And its counterforce might at the same time be found: its immense capacity for letting new galaxies of joy flare up!

Again it can be noticed how this aphorism describes the Stoic attitude in terms of stiffness and inflexibility, adding ‘cold’ and ‘statue-like’ to the list of adjectives. But it also shows how the Stoic denunciation of pain and pleasure, like all passions – still adopted in *HAH* as the only attitude available for those attempting to uncover truth – is now rejected. Instead of encouraging to ‘purify’ all our passions Nietzsche reaches the conclusion that the practice of science rather involves their full engagement and stimulation.

### **Health, well-being, and aesthetic self-cultivation**

Having traced the development of Nietzsche’s stance towards the Stoic dealing with passions in the context of the desire for truth – from one of appreciation to its opposite – it is time to return to the initial question: how to understand the apparent incompatibility between *GS* 276 and 306 on the affirmation of fate? For although we have seen that the rejection of the Stoic attitude in *GS* 306 concerns the practice of science, we still cannot deny that the *amor fati* of *GS* 276 closely resembles the remark in *GS* 306 that a Stoic ‘wants his stomach to be ultimately insensible to everything the chance of existence pours into him [...]’. Two questions still need to be answered at this point: what does it mean for Nietzsche to love fate; and to what extent is *amor fati* different from what can be described as Stoic indifference in *GS* 306?

To answer these question we should, first of all, turn to the second issue that is on Nietzsche’s mind in these years: health. Health is of importance in at least two ways. On the one hand, keeping in mind his personal health issues, Nietzsche is concerned with it in its own right. But it also can be related once again to the exhausting project of finding truth. One revealing instance in this context is *GS* 333, in which the ‘the fight

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either grow up together or – as with you – *remain small* together!’

between these one-sided views', compelled, as we know, by different impulses, 'might well be the source of that great and sudden exhaustion that afflicts all thinkers'. But there are also texts that hint at the presence of a danger that is even more serious. *GS* 423 explicitly connects the practice of knowledge with danger: 'And knowledge itself: let it be something else to others [...]; to me it is a world of dangers and victories'. The strongest sense of danger might be found in *GS* 107, where the threat of nausea and suicide is brought up:

*GS* 107 Had we not approved of the arts and invented this type of cult of the untrue, the insight into general untruth and mendacity that is now given to us by science – the insight into delusion and error as a condition of cognitive and sensate existence – would be utterly unbearable. *Honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide.

The danger of nausea and suicide is connected to the unbearable insight, uncovered by science, that our 'human, all too human' constitution is not suited for truth. As a consequence, life is inescapably filled with untruth, delusion and error. Especially for someone like Nietzsche, who suffers from the 'Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis' and desires truth and nothing short of it, the danger of nausea and suicide is very real.

This aphorism contains an important clue for a better understanding of *GS* 276 and *amor fati*. For, first of all, in *GS* 276 a sense of danger, even of death is recurrent as well: as we have seen, the very first sentence is 'I'm still alive; I still think', a sentence that seems to silently invoke the afterthought 'against all expectations'. Only two aphorisms further, in *GS* 278, we find the title '*The thought of death*'. Secondly, both *GS* 276 and 107 hint at a way in which this danger can be, if not averted, at least reduced: *GS* 107 speaks about the 'arts' and 'this type of cult of the untrue' that prevent science from becoming 'unbearable'; *GS* 276 introduces *amor fati* not only as a 'warrant', but also as the process through which one might 'learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them', turning whoever achieves this into 'one of those who make things beautiful.'<sup>20</sup>

In other words: the desire for truth leaves its victim – Nietzsche, in

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<sup>20</sup> For another interesting and recent interpretation of *amor fati* in the context of *GS* see Tom Stern, 'Nietzsche, *Amor Fati*, and *The Gay Science*', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. CXIII,2 (2013), pp. 145-62.

this case – exhausted, suffering from nausea and longing for suicide; but *amor fati*, as an attitude depending on the relief of art and beauty, might be a lifesaving strategy that guarantees at least a minimum of health. Let me, before turning to the differences between *GS* 276 and 306, say a little bit more about this turn to the aesthetic. To begin with, it is clear from several texts in *GS* that what should be made beautiful is, as a starting point at least, oneself. In *GS* 107 we find some more clues revealing not only why, but also how one should look upon oneself with a benign and aestheticizing eye:

*GS* 107 As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* to us, and art furnishes us with the eye and hand and above all the good conscience to be *able* to make such a phenomenon out of ourselves. At times we need to have a rest from ourselves by looking at and down at ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing *a t* ourselves, or crying *a t* ourselves; we have to discover the *hero* no less than the *fool* in our passion for knowledge.

It seems therefore that the ‘hovering’ position, associated with Stoicism and rationality in *HAA* and *D*, has developed in *GS* into a distanced approach towards ourselves, yet no longer with the seriousness that characterizes Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus, but rather with humour and artistic relief. There are, moreover, several aphorisms in *GS* that take up the thread of aesthetic self-cultivation. One of these is *GS* 290, in which it is claimed that ‘*One thing is needful*. – To ‘give style’ to one’s character – a great and rare art!’ This aphorism makes use of the tricks presented in *GS* 299: ‘What means do we have for making things beautiful, attractive, and desirable when they are not? And in themselves I think they never are! Here we have something to learn from physicians [...]; but even more from artists’. We find, for instance, advises with respect to those elements in our character that we think are ugly: ‘Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it is reinterpreted into sublimity.’

We can thus say that Nietzsche’s interest in health is at least partly introduced as a necessary counterweight to the devastating ‘*Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis*’, which has the power to exhaust and sicken its victim. Health, then, is associated with the creativity to look upon ourselves with ‘artistic distance’, aesthetically beautifying the elements that are ugly. What is more, in *GS* 290 we read that ‘one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself – be it through this or that

poetry or art'. This thought is easily linked to one of the possible reactions to the famous words on the eternal return of the demon in *GS* 341: '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?'

Clearly all this has everything to do with *amor fati*. To begin with, *GS* 276 opens in a sphere of wonder, 'I'm still alive', suggesting that the desire for truth is full of danger; accordingly, *amor fati* is introduced as the thought that must provide some relief, wishing that it 'shall be the reason, warrant, and sweetness of the rest of my life!'; and thirdly, it is clear from the start that this is supposed to be achieved through the workings of beauty: 'I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful.' *Amor fati* is therefore the concept that summarizes the aesthetic love for these things that cannot be changed, the first of which being our own character and life.

### **Amor fati and Stoicism**

How does this analysis of *amor fati* relate to Stoicism, and to *GS* 306? *GS* 306 portrays the Stoic as someone who 'trains himself to swallow stones and worms, glass shards and scorpions without nausea; he wants his stomach to be ultimately insensible to everything the chance of existence pours into him'. At first sight, even if the two descriptions differ in tone heavily, they seem to describe the same procedure, namely that of 'Ja-sagen' to fate, that is, to everything that fate, or chance, might confront us with: 'Do not seek to have events happen as you wish, but *wish* them to happen as they do happen.' Nevertheless, it follows from what have seen so far that, in fact, the two descriptions should be taken to denote different attitudes, in different contexts, which also contain different connotations of 'fate' or 'chance'. While *GS* 276 speaks about an aesthetic 'Ja-sagen' that has everything to do with our own character (and not so much with the occurrence of 'events' as Epictetus formulates it), *GS* 306 concerns an attitude towards knowledge. The object of what is loved in *GS* 276 – '*fatum*' – is first of all ourselves; the object to be 'swallowed' in *GS* 306 could be knowledge or 'truth'.

We could say that the story as developed thus far begins with a reflection on the past in *GS* 306 and ends with a future-oriented perspect-

ive in *GS* 276. That is: we have seen that Nietzsche's desire for truth leads him in *HAH* to go along with the typically Stoic idea that the best method of acquiring knowledge is to suppress one's emotions and develop a 'purified', rational outlook. We also saw how Nietzsche slowly comes to change his mind, realizing how indispensable passions, drives and impulses are for knowledge. In *On the Genealogy of Morality* he looks back upon this earlier phase as follows<sup>21</sup>:

*GM* III 24 [...] Perhaps I am too familiar with all this: [...] that stoicism of the intellect which, in the last resort, denies itself the 'no' just as strictly as the 'yes', that *will* to stand still before the factual, the *factum brutum*, that fatalism of '*petits faits*' (*ce petit fatalisme*, as I call it) [...] – on the whole, this expresses the asceticism of virtue just as well as any denial of sensuality (it is basically just a *modus* of this denial).

It is in this context that I believe we should place *GS* 306, for it seems that Nietzsche there, too, looks back at the attitude he used to adopt in *HAH* and *D* (a kind of fatalism indeed, as *GM* III has it<sup>22</sup>) but now rejects it. Instead, the proper attitude towards truth should hold a combination of adopting as many emotional perspectives as possible on the one hand, balanced on the other by the aesthetic relief of joyfully turning oneself into a piece of art – as this is the only way of averting the danger of suicide and other forms of sickness.

In *GS* 276 the aspects of both danger and aesthetic relief can be recognized, as we have seen. *Amor fati* should therefore no longer be associated with Stoic rational calmness towards 'everything the chance of existence pours into him'; rather, it is an expression of hope for a future ('some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer!') in which joy will outweigh any form of dissatisfaction. The loving of fate, i.e., the project of self-cultivation, is the attitude Nietzsche considers most fruitful with respect to the attainment of health as well as, indirectly – once the danger of nausea and suicide is averted – the development of truth (hence the signi-

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21 Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. by Carol Diethe, ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), hereafter *GM*.

22 Which can also be well connected to what Nietzsche describes several years later in *Ecce Homo* as 'Russian Fatalism' ('why I am so wise' 6). Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*, trans. by Judith Norman, ed. by Aaron Ridley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

ficance of *amor fati* appearing for the first time in a book called *The Gay Science*). It is the expression of a joyful, artistically healthy *and* scientifically promising perspective for a future *away* from stiff and rational Stoicism.

## Conclusion

*Amor fati* is not to be understood as resembling the Stoic therapy to embrace all events, fortunate as well as unfortunate. This paper has attempted, first, to challenge the assumption made by Ure, Nussbaum, Ansell-Pearson, and Groff, that Nietzsche's reflection on Stoicism takes place for the most part in the context of psychological health and therapy. I have argued, instead, how Nietzsche's stance towards Stoicism in the context of the desire for truth shifts from being appreciative in *HAH* to fiercely critical in *GS*. The difference between the two approaches concerns the role of passions and drives in this quest. Whereas *HAH* still concurs with the Stoic idea that one should be calmly rational, allowing as little emotion as possible in the practice of 'Wissenschaft' (in which also our emotions will be 'purified'), *GS* holds the opposite: we need all the drives and passions we have in order to increase the amount of perspectives on things. Hence Nietzsche's preference in *GS* 306 for the Epicurean 'selectivity': only this attitude can safeguard our sensitivity. Losing contact with our emotional inner life would be 'the loss of all losses' (*GS* 306), leaving us 'cut off from the most beautiful fortuities of the soul! And indeed from all further *instruction!*' (*GS* 305). In short: the ascetic stance towards truth is one that Nietzsche is 'too familiar with' (*GM* III 24) – but that is abandoned nevertheless.

Secondly, *amor fati* in *GS* 276 should be placed within this context as well. Whereas *GS* 306 concerns the dealing with truth, *GS* 276 concerns health and aesthetic self-cultivation; yet this turn to beauty should be seen as a reactive sort of self-protection (a 'warrant') against the devastating, even dangerous 'Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis'. It is only by means of art ('I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful') that the danger is outweighed. It is only by means of self-beautification and laughter that one's drives can be given some relief, offering a chance to continue the life-threatening quest for truth afterwards, including its dazzling stimulation of the drives.

My aim has been to show that the introduction of *amor fati* in *GS* Book IV meaningfully corresponds with one of the most critical aphorisms on Stoicism. Since *GS* marks the endpoint of a growing sense of dissatisfaction, and since *amor fati* might be seen as an alternative strategy, we cannot but conclude that *amor fati* is not just un-Stoic; it is anti-Stoic.