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Nietzsche's Compassion

Abstract: Nietzsche is known for his penetrating critique of *Mitleid* (now commonly rendered as "compassion"). He seems to be critical of all compassion but at times also seems to praise a different form of compassion, which he refers to as "our compassion" and contrasts it with "your compassion" (BGE 225). Some commentators have interpreted this to mean that Nietzsche's criticism is not as unconditional as it may seem – that he does not condemn compassion entirely. I disagree and contend that even though Nietzsche appears to speak favorably of some forms of compassion, he regards the nature of all compassion to be fundamentally bad. Furthermore, I suggest that Nietzsche's discussion on different forms of compassion have significant implications for achieving greatness and meaning in life. More specifically, I argue that, for Nietzsche, "our compassion," however regrettable *qua* compassion it is, may give occasion for a rare and peculiar insight into "co-suffering" with others, which in turn results in overcoming compassion entirely. I also argue that although Nietzsche objects to compassion, he approves of a form of what feminist theorists might now call "anticipatory empathy." Even though a large body of literature has evolved over Nietzsche's critical evaluation of compassion, his understanding of a non-compassionate response to suffering is, in my view, rather overlooked and should receive more attention.

Keywords: *Mitleid*, Compassion, Anticipatory empathy, Suffering, Schopenhauer

To the memory of İhsan Akev–a great teacher, opera singer, and human being

Nietzsche is known for his penetrating critique of *Mitleid* (now commonly rendered as "compassion").[1] He seems to be critical of all compassion but at times also seems

1 David E. Cartwright, "Schopenhauer's Compassion and Nietzsche's Pity," *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 69 (1988), 557–67: 557, argues that Nietzsche's conception of *Mitleid* should be understood exclusively as "pity," rather than "compassion," which is what Schopenhauer's *Mitleid* is all about. What this reading implies is that since compassion is different from pity, Schopenhauer's account of *Mitleid* is immune to Nietzsche's extensive polemic. Cartwright remarks: "despite the correctness of Nietzsche's critique of *Mitleid* [i. e., *Mitleid* as pity], the reasons he uses to criticize Schopenhauer's *Mitleids*-Moral [i. e., the morality of compassion] fail. [...] this paradoxical situation results because Schopenhauer and Nietzsche refer to two different emotions by the German noun *Mitleid*." One major drawback of Cartwright's reading is that his solution to this allegedly paradoxical situation comes at the expense of charging Nietzsche of equivocating on his use of *Mitleid*. But far more serious than that, this reading implies that Nietzsche did not really understand Schopenhauer's *Mitleid*. But this is an implausible, as well as uncharitable, interpretation of Nietzsche's intention, since he launches his strongest objections to the moral ideal of shared suffering, i. e., the suffering in response to the other's woe, and its afflicting and enfeebling effects on the compassionate person. To claim that Schopenhauer and

to praise a different form of compassion, which he refers to as "our compassion" and contrasts it with "your compassion" (BGE 225).[2] Some commentators have interpreted

Nietzsche talk pass each other regarding the issue of *Mitleid* is tantamount to claim that Nietzsche was deeply confused, and in the grip of a mistaken understanding of Schopenhauer's moral theory. According to Gudrun von Tevenar, "Nietzsche's Objections to Pity and Compassion," in Gudrun von Tevenar (ed.), *Nietzsche and Ethics*, Bern 2007, 263–81: 268, "Nietzsche's objections are almost exclusively concerned with *Mitleid* understood as pity and not as compassion." More specifically, she argues that "Zarathustra feels *Mitleid* merely as pity while the deeply sad agent [in GM III 14] feels what Nietzsche calls 'great *Mitleid*', which we can now confidently translate as compassion" (275). I think that Tevenar is misreading and overemphasizing certain features of Nietzsche's critique, or making too much of Nietzsche's concern that *Mitleid* may at times be stained by attitudes of condescension and contempt that are characteristic of pity. Although Tevenar can argue that she is being interpretatively consistent, this line of reading does not reflect Nietzsche's conception of *Mitleid* accurately either. For one thing, her commentary on Zarathustra's philanthropic attitude and charitable disposition (in Z II, On the Pitying) indicates that she confuses bestowing virtue with *Mitleid* (273). Tevenar correctly observes, however, that, for Nietzsche, "while the effects of pity can be wiped away, the effects of compassion cannot" (275). But if Zarathustra feels *Mitleid* merely as pity and the effects of such feeling can be discarded without much effort, then it is unclear why Nietzsche painstakingly depicts Zarathustra as being confronted with a strenuous task of overcoming *Mitleid*. This reading also disregards a key component of the story, i. e., Zarathustra's encounter with the Soothsayer who tempts Zarathustra to succumb to the sin of *Mitleid*. The figure of soothsayer is possibly a reference to Schopenhauer. One would only expect Schopenhauer to tempt Zarathustra to display an emotion that he deems the most important of all, i. e., *Mitleid* as compassion for others, not pity. Here is what John Richardson, *Nietzsche's Values*, New York 2020, 268–69, has to say on this subject: "Nietzsche's word is *Mitleid*, which says 'suffering with'. We face an immediate choice whether to translate is 'pity' or 'compassion'. The latter reflects (in Latin) the structure of Nietzsche's word, but it connotes to me something more high-toned and rare than I think he usually means. It connotes a degree of empathy and identification with the other that is not usual. So it may not aptly apply to many of the ordinary cases he diagnoses. I think 'pity' is a better label for the very common attitude he has mostly in mind. And Nietzsche will insist that those high-toned cases are just variations on the common attitude. The difference is just a matter of degree; they share the same structure. So they both count as *Mitleid* for him." Commentators, even influential ones such as John Richardson, continue to misunderstand and misrepresent Nietzsche's *Mitleid*. In 'pity', the (pathos) of distance between the subject and the pitied is maintained, thus one only *feels for* the plight of the pitied. However, and this points out a crucial difference, in "compassion," one recognizes the other's suffering as one's own, thus one *feels with* the sufferer. So, contra to Richardson's claim, for Nietzsche, the difference between "compassion" and "pity" is not just a matter of degree nor do they share the same structure. Nietzsche is well aware of these nuances, therefore it is in my view quite wrong to suggest that Nietzsche's use of the term *Mitleid* does not distinguish between "compassion" and "pity." My own approach to translation is guided by what I think a straightforward and intuitive principle: the choice of translation should pay attention to the contextual clues in a given text. That being said, taking into account the context of those passages quoted in this paper, the English word "compassion" is used to translate the German *Mitleid*, literally "suffering with."

2 I mostly use the following translations of Nietzsche's works. However, where matters of nuance are at issue, I rely on my own translation of the texts. BGE: trans. Adrian Del Caro, Stanford, CA 2014; D: trans. Brittain Smith, Stanford, CA 2011; EH: trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York 2000; GM: trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York 1969; GS: trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York 1974; HH: trans. Gary Handwerk,

this to mean that Nietzsche's criticism is not as unconditional as it may seem – that he does not condemn compassion entirely. To the contrary, Nietzsche allows for and encourages healthy expressions of compassion, which are active, not only increasing one's sense of psychological power, but more so modifying and bringing about beneficial (and creative) changes to one's surroundings. I disagree and contend that even though Nietzsche appears to speak favorably of some forms of compassion, he regards the nature of all compassion to be fundamentally bad. Furthermore, I suggest that Nietzsche's discussion of different forms of compassion has significant implications for achieving greatness and meaning in life. More specifically, I argue that, for Nietzsche, "our compassion," however regrettable *qua* compassion it is, may give occasion for a rare and peculiar insight into "co-suffering" with others, which in turn results in overcoming compassion entirely. Nietzsche interprets this unique experience as the way to achieve greatness, and therefore calls it "the ultimate test" or the "real proof of strength" (EH, Why I Am so Wise 4).

This paper adheres to the following plan. In Section 1, I demonstrate that Nietzsche takes compassion in all its forms to be bad in some fundamental way. In Section 2, I elaborate on Nietzsche's claim about the essentially bad nature of compassion through his observations on ancient moralities. In Section 3, I turn to the passages where Nietzsche approves of something that he presents as a different kind of compassion. Some commentators appeal to these passages as proof that Nietzsche is not entirely against compassion and actually approves of some form of compassion. I argue that compassion, even in its most compelling form, as characterized by commentators, is not a good for Nietzsche, because he considers it to be fundamentally bad for human beings as creators. In Section 4, I argue that the ultimate goal of "our (Nietzschean) compassion" is to prepare those creators that hold the key to human greatness for the ultimate test, which is the overcoming of all compassion. In Section 5, I discuss the ethical implications of overcoming compassion. I argue that although Nietzsche objects to compassion, he approves of a form of what feminist theorists might now call "anticipatory empathy." I then conclude by highlighting some of the basic features of this distinct type of empathy. In the sixth and final section, I briefly consider the possibility of channeling our compassion into the enhancement of human life. As a side note regarding the scope of this paper, even though a large body of literature has evolved over Nietzsche's critical evaluation of compassion, his understanding of a non-compassionate response to suffering is, in my view, rather overlooked and should receive more attention. I believe my reconstruction of Nietzsche's discussion of his brand of compassion opens up many possible avenues of research on his moral psychology and ethical thought.

Stanford, CA 1995; TI: trans. Judith Norman, Cambridge 2005; *Unpublished Fragments from the Period of Human, All Too Human II* [= UFHH], trans. Gary Handwerk, Stanford, CA 2013; *Unpublished Fragments from the Period of Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Summer 1882–Winter 1883/84)* [= UFZ], trans. Paul S. Loeb and David F. Tinsley, Stanford, CA 2019; Z: trans. Adrian Del Caro, Cambridge 2006.

1 The Essentially Injurious Nature of Compassion

Nietzsche wrote about the value of compassion frequently. His focus is particularly on *Mitleid* as compassion, in the Schopenhauerian sense of acknowledging, identifying with, and sharing in the sufferings of others. Nietzsche declares in his 1883 notebook he kept while writing *Zarathustra* (1883–1885) that "an abyss called 'compassion' is my danger." And he adds in the same place: "The danger for superhumans is compassion. Let us avoid giving them compassion!" (Nachlass 1883, 13[1], KSA 10.442, UFZ 393 and 396) In an 1883 letter to the writer and friend Malwida von Meysenbug, Nietzsche expresses his concern as follows:

> Schopenhauerian "compassion" [*das Schopenhauerische "Mitleiden"*] has always instigated the main mischief in my life–and therefore I have every reason to be well-meaning toward such moralities that include in morality a few other motivating forces and do not reduce all our human capacities to "fellow feeling" ["*Mitgefühle*"]. This is not just a softness that any great-minded Hellene would have laughed at, but also a serious practical danger. One should enforce one's own ideal of human being, one should, with his ideal, force and overpower one's fellow human beings as oneself: and thus act creatively! But to do this, one needs to hold one's compassion in strong check (Mid July 1883, no. 437, KSB 6.404; my translation).

At this juncture, three questions force themselves upon us. First, what does Schopenhauerian compassion involve? Second – a question that is central to understanding Nietzsche's problematizing of the value of compassion – what is the danger, Nietzsche thinks, associated particularly with Schopenhauerian compassion, i. e., the danger posed by it to one's well-being? Third, how exactly does this danger in turn affect our interaction and relationships with others? This is not a question of lesser significance; after all, compassion is an interpersonal process, which involves attending to another's negative state with a desire to reduce this distress. These questions are interrelated, and we find some initial answers to them within Nietzsche's middle writings.

In D 134, titled *The Extent to which One Must Guard Against Compassion*, Nietzsche sees giving into compassion as a form of "loss of self to an injurious affect [*Sich-verlieren an einen s c h ä d i g e n d e n Affect*]." In D 137, he proceeds to implicitly criticize Schopenhauer's characterization of compassion. According to Schopenhauer, when feeling compassion, we immediately transcend the constraints of our self and share another's suffering "precisely in his person,"[3] "despite the fact that his skin does not enclose [our] nerves."[4] In Nietzsche's understanding, this is objectionable because compassion requires one to risk one's own suffering to alleviate the sufferings of others. In other words, in compassion, we must "suffer from our ego and simultaneously from the ego of the other, and [...] thereby voluntarily overburden ourselves with

3 Arthur Schopenhauer, "Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals," in *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, trans. and ed. Christopher Janaway, Cambridge 2009, 113–258: 203.
4 Schopenhauer, "Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals," 218.

a doubled irrationality instead of making the load of our own as light as possible" (D 137). Hence, Nietzsche thinks that compassion, as characterized by Schopenhauer, creates unnecessary suffering; it involves a spontaneous, intense emotional distress felt when confronted with another's negative state or situation, which is inherently pathological because such opening up to another's suffering depletes one's emotional and physical energy, which may leave the individual feeling feeble and somewhat passively indignant. Even worse, through such depletion, one may eventually "come to mistrust any 'meaning' in suffering, indeed in existence" (Nachlass 1886/87, 5[71], KSA 12.212; trans. Kaufmann and Hollingdale). Filling oneself up with others' misfortunes, one becomes preoccupied with the question: "What is the point of suffering?" (Nachlass 1887, 8[2], KSA 12.327; my translation) Grappling with the meaning of suffering and accompanying pessimism in turn stands in the way of our self-realization and saps us of our joy for life. Therefore, the stronger one's susceptibility to compassionate impulses, the stronger the feelings of depletion and mental-emotional exhaustion.

On the other hand, because humans are also endowed with the capacity to take a source of distress and transform it into a source of pleasure, the detrimental effects of empathic distress can be to some extent masked and overlooked if not obliterated. Nietzsche warns against the recurrent tendency to drain one's creative energies and resources solely in the service of others by way of blindly indulging in the self-forgetting pleasures of compassion. Specifically, Nietzsche points out, in compassion, we automatically and unconsciously try to override the effects of psychological depletion by "surrendering to an impulse for pleasure." Pleasure arises in various forms:

> in the very idea of being able to help [...], in the thought of praise and gratitude were we to help, in the very activity of helping insofar as the act is successful and succeeds step by step, thus allowing the performer to delight in himself, but especially in the sensation that our action has put an end to an injustice that arouses our indignation (already the release of indignation in itself is invigorating) (D 133).

In other words, we are typically motivated by another's distress to help, but in significant ways, we also gain our altruistic motivation from pleasure. Nietzsche holds this way of deriving pleasure from compassionate behavior in low estimation in contrast to the pleasure that one gains from being creative or from fostering and enabling creativity, i. e., "the pleasure in creating and in the thing created" (Nachlass 1886/87, 7[2], KSA 12.253; trans. Kaufmann and Hollingdale).

Additionally, and equally problematic, is that the psychological depletion caused by the perception of and immediate affective participation in another's suffering in turn limits one from effectively comprehending the feelings and perspective of the person suffering and thereby using one's empathy in genuinely benevolent ways to increase human flourishing. Nietzsche urges us to be cautious with respect to compassion, for "it lames [the individual] in all decisive moments and paralyzes his knowledge and his benevolent delicate hand" (D 134). In this connection Nietzsche carefully emphasizes that while there may be instrumental reasons for acting on our compas-

sionate impulses insofar as doing so will occasionally contribute to the benefit of those in distress, such instrumental justifications for compassionate action effectively ignores what is fundamentally bad about compassion, i. e., its essentially injurious nature.[5] I will return to this point and consider it in more detail in Section 3.

2 Reflecting on the Problem of the Value of Compassion through Ancient Moralities

The ancients, Nietzsche contends, remained on guard against being driven by a spontaneous, all-encompassing concern for others. Nietzsche draws on ancient moralities to oppose Schopenhauer's overemphasis on the moral value of compassion. One historical example Nietzsche offers is drawn from the ancient Stoic culture, where the altruistic potential of empathy and its moral dimension is simply disregarded:

> What a shift there has been in the whole panoply of moral judgments! Those greatest marvels of antique morality, Epictetus, for example, had no concept of the now common glorification of thinking about others or of living for others; according to our moral fashion, we would have to brand them downright immoral, for they fought with all their might for their ego and against empathy with others (particularly with the suffering and moral frailties of others) [*die Mitempfindung mit den Anderen (namentlich mit deren Leiden und sittlichen Gebrechen*)]. Perhaps they would reply to us: "If to your own selves you are such boring or loathsome objects, go right ahead and think of others more than yourselves. You're doing the right thing by it." (D 131)

Here Nietzsche's main observation is that empathy, and in particular compassionate empathy, is a nonexistent concept in ancient Greek thought. Another example concerns the Roman attitude to empathic concern:

> A compassionate action [*Eine mitleidige Handlung*], for example, was considered neither good nor bad, neither moral nor immoral, in the best period of the Romans; and even when it was praised, such praise was perfectly compatible with a kind of indignant contempt as soon as it was placed together with an action that served the well-being of the whole, of the *res publica* (BGE 201; my translation).

So far from being perceived as a moral phenomenon, acting in a caring way and expressing sensitivity for others' distress was frowned upon by the Romans. The classicist David Konstan also claims that neither empathy nor compassion (*Mitleid*) has a direct terminological equivalent in Greek and Roman antiquity. More specifically, while there are, for instance, in ancient Greek, words that are morphologically analogous to

5 Nietzsche speaks of failed attempts to justify "compassion's essential nature, which is, as stated, injurious" (D 134).

Mitleid such as "*sunalgein* ('feel pain with'), *sullupeisthai*, *sunakhthesthai* ('feel pain or grieve with'), and *sumponein* ('struggle or toil with')," these terms simply signify a contagious sharing of others' distress, not the perception and comprehension of another's emotional or psychological state.[6] Thus, Konstan notes, "[n]ot even these compound terms, then, indicate the kind of emotional fusion that modern coinages such as empathy imply."[7] Note also that here we see Nietzsche repeating the same concern about the phenomenon of self-loss through compassion. With his imagined reply of a stoic critic, he seems to convey the idea that when one has a tendency for attentiveness to others' distressing situations and spontaneous helping behavior, one always runs a certain risk of losing one's way and forfeiting one's goals. This is, however, only an aspect of the "serious practical danger" that Nietzsche speaks of in his letter to Meysenbug, namely, the psychological weakness and self-loss elicited by one's strong susceptibility to the sufferings of others. The other danger concerns the extent of our emotional engagement with the experiential states of others. Nietzsche cautions us against it when he tells us that the ancients disdain any display of heightened sensitivity to the sufferings of others, especially when such sensitivity involves making a greater commitment to others and the common good. Compassionate actions based on the motivation of putting others before oneself carries with them the risk of losing sight of one's potential for self-growth and self-creation and thereby undermining one's progress toward achieving the ideal of human greatness. If one habitually tends "to run from the ego [...] and to live in others, for others" (D 516), then one likely lacks a strong sense of appreciation and understanding of oneself and thereby the kind of attitudes and goals that are necessary for the fulfillment of creative potentials. But if that is so, then one is simply not in a position to form one's own ideal of human greatness and effectively inculcate it in others in order to empower them to flourish. In the following section, I will elaborate in detail how exactly, Nietzsche thinks, compassion thwarts creative potentials and personal growth in self and others, and his attempt to overcome this issue by presenting what he calls a different kind of compassion.

3 Nietzsche's Revaluation of Compassion

Nietzsche regards compassion as, in its "essential nature," "injurious," "a weakness," or, "as with the Greeks, a pathological recurring affect, the danger of which one can remove by temporary, voluntary discharges" (D 134). Compassion is essentially injurious because compassionate tendencies mislead individuals about the value and necessity of suffering. By itself, suffering is no gateway to greatness. Rather, it is one's

6 David Konstan, *Pity Transformed*, London 2001, 58.
7 Konstan, *Pity Transformed*, 60.

attitude toward suffering and the potential instilled therein, or what one does with suffering, that matters. One cannot develop a certain attitude towards one's own suffering – its nature or potential – if one looks out and away from one's self to the other. This is what Nietzsche labels as "self-forgetting," and it is not surprising to find that he also considers certain forms of self-forgetting entirely injurious. The kind of self-forgetting that results from focusing on the good of others, for Nietzsche, may result in a self-loss (or self-deflation) that is marked by thinking of one's own benefit less frequently and sometimes even giving up one's goals and independence in order to meet the needs of others. This experience is, for Schopenhauer, allegedly illuminating because it offers insight into metaphysical oneness with others, characterized as renouncing one's self-identity, forming one body with others, and ultimately viewing them as one's own self. However, for Nietzsche, the self-forgetting associated with compassionate feelings is deeply troubling. Even God forgets himself to the point of completely identifying with and drowning in the sufferings of humanity, a passionate forgetfulness of self that ultimately leads to his death. Therefore, Zarathustra warns us by quoting the devil's words, "God is dead; God died of his compassion for mankind" (Z II, On the Pitying; my translation).

Indulging in strong empathic affects and their associated self-forgetting feelings, as Nietzsche contends, tends to gradually and subtly disassociate the person from his growth and character building, misleading him into the belief that "the individual's happiness as well as his sacrifice consist in feeling himself to be a useful member and tool of the whole" (D 132). Here of particular concern to Nietzsche is also the psychology behind such self-forgetting behavior, or as he calls it, the tendency "to lose one's own way in order to come to the assistance of a neighbor" (GS 338). He believes that the compassionate motive to benefit others is an excuse to take pause from one's laborious path to greatness, which seems to betray the ideal of self-actualization, even if the agent may not experience it as such. Our conspicuous compassion is most often a symptom of a lack of self-love and worthiness. As Nietzsche says through Zarathustra in his speech to those who seek to have selfless, compassionate love for others: "You flee to your neighbor to escape yourself and you want to make a virtue of it: but I see through your 'selflessness'," and he points out that "your love of the neighbor is your bad love of yourselves" (Z I, On Love of the Neighbor). There is always a temptation to give up the ideal of self-actualization, and this apparent deviation from the path of will to power remains one of the psychological mysteries of human motivation for Nietzsche: "our 'own path' is too hard and demanding and too far from the love and gratitude of others, – we are not at all unwilling to escape from it, from our own conscience, and take refuge in the conscience of others and the lovely temple of the 'religion of compassion'" (GS 338; my translation).

However, self-forgetfulness is not always and necessarily regrettable. There are healthy expressions of self-forgetfulness that must be distinguished from the kind that Nietzsche finds pernicious. A willingness to drift from one path to another, to venture into risky territories as a way of exerting one's physical-psychological potential

without the fear of self-immersion in sensation and experience is the most resounding expression of "the unexhausted begetting will of life," i. e., the most vital sign of the excess of life and thereby greatness (Z II, On Self-Overcoming). Therefore, Zarathustra proclaims: "I love the one whose soul is overfull, so that he forgets himself" (Z I, Prologue 4). One must learn to take one's sufferings lightly and allow them to be a means of encouragement and strength to the self, and at times even to derail oneself from one's purpose for the sake of teaching one about the painful manifestations and lower aspects of human nature. Nietzsche speaks highly of the ability to endure emotionally and physically destructive experiences that is necessary for creative, noble, and relentless transformation of the self, which in turn depends on the practice of a peculiar form of self-forgetfulness. Nietzsche describes such forgetfulness as not being able to take one's misfortunes and suffering seriously for very long (GM I 10).

Compassion with its excessive concern with suffering dismisses and goes against the most fundamental lesson of life–the insight that life necessitates changes in all directions, including both increases and decreases in amplitude, and sometimes interventions in one's path of self-cultivation. It is in line with this insight that Nietzsche, through Zarathustra, tells us an unambiguously cautionary tale about the heightened sensitivity to suffering that compassion presupposes. In the final analysis, Zarathustra comes to the recognition that his suffering and compassion actually do not matter since he has chosen a life centered around the ideals of self-discovery and creativity (Z IV, The Sign).

In the absence of a discussion of a positive alternative, Nietzsche's sharp critique naturally leads us to the conclusion that he rejects compassion in all of its forms. However, some of Nietzsche's later writings suggest that compassion *per se* is not objectionable but only certain expressions of compassion. In BGE 225, Nietzsche introduces a contrast between "our compassion [*unser Mitleid*]" and "your compassion [*euer Mitleid*]." He claims that excessive empathic involvement in others' distressing situations and emotional experiences saps our strength and gets in the way of human flourishing by dragging us into a sort of passive and inert existence without action-stirring ideals. Hence, Nietzsche, in an unpublished fragment, warns us of how habituating oneself to empathic affects is fraught with the danger of depriving oneself of the ambitions of acquisition of higher values: "It is a relief to count oneself the same as others, to try to feel as they do, to adopt a current feeling: it is something passive compared with the activity that maintains and constantly practices the individual's right to value judgments (the latter allows of no rest)" (Nachlass 1886/87, 7[6], KSA 12.274; trans. Kaufmann and Hollingdale). "Your compassion," Nietzsche says (to the Schopenhauerian), wants to put an end to all suffering, and hopes that doing so will achieve an overall state of social well-being, greater ease and safety without risk to life, which only ends up significantly narrowing the scope of creative human activity. Because it is not concerned with the context in which a particular suffering (of a particular person) takes place, "your compassion" fails to recognize what suffering may carry in it, i. e., the promise for growth. Thus, by unconditionally giving in to

"your compassion," you are withdrawn from the human possibility of enduring and overcoming suffering and thereby from the creative and form-giving aspects of human life.

"Your compassion," according to Nietzsche, neglects that suffering sometimes affords the most valuable of all known means of personal flourishing. It is not part of my present endeavor to defend Nietzsche's views on the value or meaning of suffering.[8] For the purposes of this paper, I am confining my discussion to how compassion tends to demonize suffering, render it devoid of purpose, and therefore meaningless, rather than to see it as something both conducive and even necessary to achieving certain great human goods. One of the main benefits Nietzsche sees in suffering is its disciplining effect. Suffering, in the form of discipline, can mold the character by enabling a redemptive process in which one can combat and overcome excessive or pathological sensitivity to painful stimuli. As a second benefit, intense suffering, in some cases, may produce a transformative tension and a desire to resolve that tension. The latter in turn instigates a process of interpretive sense making that opens the individual to an overabundance of meaning and potential that is intimately connected with the process of reaching towards one's higher self and maintaining a renewed sense of purpose and vigor in life.

Now, to clarify Nietzsche's position here, he is aware that suffering does not always lead to great things in the end. Although he states, *via* Zarathustra, that creating "is the great redemption from suffering" and "in order for the creator to be, suffering is needed and much transformation" (Z II, On the Blessed Isles), not all suffering is creative and redemptive in character. Hence, albeit in a different context, Zarathustra tells us: "There is no redemption for one who suffers so from himself, unless it were the quick death" (Z I, On the Pale Criminal). Granted that, indeed, some suffering is apparently senseless, and "[w]hat causes indignation against suffering is not suffering in itself, but the meaninglessness of suffering" (GM II 7). Yet, we have the ability to reflect on our attitudes to suffering "by changing the effect that it has on our sensibility: that is, by reinterpreting the misfortune as something good [*durch ein Umdeuten des Uebels in ein Gut*] whose utility will perhaps only later become visible" (HH I 108). Instead of seeing suffering as something to be avoided or minimized, Nietzsche suggests, we can benefit by seeing suffering as a potential catalyst for future greatness, as character building and therefore desirable. However, the usefulness of suffering is ultimately determined by one's attitude to suffering and life overall. The main point that Nietzsche is trying to make here is rather subtler. Our consistent effort to cultivate a culture of compassion with its overemphasis on the apparent senselessness or badness of suffering not only perpetuates the problem about human flourishing in the long run, but it also, and perhaps paradoxically, creates more passive suffering for hu-

8 For a good discussion on this point, see Christopher Janaway, "On the very Idea of 'Justifying Suffering'," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 48 (2017), 152–70.

manity by preventing us from exploring and exploiting the particularity and creative potential of suffering. With its orientation toward the goal of abolishing suffering by whatever means necessary, "your compassion" only imposes on the individual a practically and psychologically implausible demand, as if there exists a universal solution to the question of suffering. So, Keith Ansell-Pearson correctly observes that there is "[a] concern that in extolling compassion as the panacea to our moral anxieties we are in danger of existing as fantasists."[9] What we need in the end, Nietzsche proposes, is to fine-tune or reverse the direction of compassion's orientation, toward the goal of creation and accomplishment. It is in this context that Nietzsche presents and extols an apparently different kind of compassion.

On the basis of Nietzsche's favorable remarks on "our compassion," several commentators have concluded that Nietzsche is not entirely against *Mitleid* or compassion and actually approves of a kind of compassion that does not come in conflict with our dedication to the promotion of creativity and greatness. It seems worthwhile to review some of the commentaries on the issue. Robert Hilmar Haraldsson claims that Nietzsche "emphasizes that there is a different kind of *Mitleid* which he sees as valuable and wants to associate his name with."[10] Marinos Diamantides announces Nietzsche as "the philosopher of compassion par excellence."[11] In a negative sense, Nietzsche criticizes compassion and its effects on our culture, how, along the way, it has prevented us from developing a deep, contextual appreciation of suffering– that certain forms of suffering are good for us and should be allowed to dwell within us. However, "[i]n a positive sense," Diamantides claims, "Nietzsche remains the philosopher of affirmative compassion in word and in deed." Michael Ure similarly draws our attention to Nietzsche's call for "active compassion towards the suffering [individual]."[12] Daniel I. Harris argues that while Nietzsche is against the attempt to relieve suffering indiscriminately, he "maintains a place for a particularized attention to suffering."[13] According to Harris, "Nietzsche [...] criticizes one sort of compassion while also holding open the possibility of healthier forms of shared suffering to be encouraged."[14] In his *The Affirmation of Life*, Bernard Reginster remarks: "Although some scholars continue to maintain that Nietzsche's revaluation of compassion is a

9 Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Beyond Compassion: On Nietzsche's Moral Therapy in *Dawn*," *Continental Philosophy Review* 44 (2011), 179–204: 185.

10 Robert Hilmar Haraldsson, *The Problem of Mitleid and the Morality of Mitleid: A Reading of Nietzsche on Morality* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, Publication No. 9821251], Pittsburgh, PA 1997.

11 Marinos Diamantides, "Law's Ignoble Compassion," in Peter Goodrich / Mariana Valverde (eds.), *Nietzsche and Legal Theory: Half-written Laws*, New York 2005, 89–103: 97.

12 Michael Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy: Self-Cultivation in the Middle Works*, Lanham, MD 2008, 208.

13 Daniel I. Harris, "Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 48 (2017), 17–28: 24.

14 Harris, "Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche," 18.

wholesale rejection of it, this interpretation is no longer tenable."[15] "For one thing," Reginster points out, "we can no longer ignore that Nietzsche clearly advocates certain forms of compassion and benevolence." In his *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, Antoine Panaïoti offers a similar yet bolder interpretation: "It would be an unfortunate mistake to assume, on the basis of his vociferously critical views, that Nietzsche assumes a purely negative stance vis-à-vis compassion. A more careful reading of his oeuvre reveals, on the contrary, that there is room in Nietzsche's philosophy for a healthy form of compassion."[16] He discredits "the simplistic view that Nietzsche is opposed to compassion and benevolence in all its forms (a view uncritically accepted by most Nietzsche commentators)." Stated briefly, according to the commentators, it is not compassion (and its concern for suffering) that is bad, but only the way we express our compassion, or the way we attend to suffering. I maintain that if we closely examine the details of this interpretation, it will be found that it is actually not fully satisfactory as it relies on certain assumptions that starkly clash with Nietzsche's own assessment of the issue.

For Nietzsche, Harris thinks, "we respond to others in a healthy way when we attend to suffering not as an evil *per se*, but as potentially, though not necessarily, frustrating the particular potential of those we know and care about."[17] What Nietzsche refers to as "your compassion," Panaïoti suggests, involves suffering with the other passively and thus responding to it reactively, as a source of enfeeblement and weakness. "Our compassion," in contrast, is about responding to the other's suffering as a challenge to overcome, as an opportunity to engage actively in the flourishing of the other. More specifically, although, as Panaïoti points out, "our compassion" also "involves suffering on account of the other's woe," "this suffering is experienced as stimulating and invigorating rather than enfeebling and depressing."[18] And since "our compassion" does not involve feeling vulnerable at witnessing the other's plight, but rather an invigorating engagement with another's negative state or situation which surpasses the potentially detrimental effects of empathic distress, it signifies a successful use of empathy in dealing with those in need.

Now I agree with the main assumption of Harris's and Panaïoti's accounts of Nietzsche, namely, that Nietzsche proposes an alternative way of attending to others' suffering. However, there are exegetical difficulties with their views. The most pressing of these is that it is not clear how we could possibly reconcile Nietzsche's claim that compassion weakens us with his apparent praise of one form of compassion. But apart from this, there are other difficulties and drawbacks of this reading as well.

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15 Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*, Cambridge, MA 2008, 185.

16 Antoine Panaïoti, *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, Cambridge 2013, 187.

17 Harris, "Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche," 24.

18 Panaïoti, *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, 190.

There are two issues with the conception of compassion the commentators attribute to Nietzsche.

First, according to Harris, for Nietzsche, "compassion as concern for suffering is not condemnable in itself, but only when such concern erases any vantage point on our situation that might lend suffering significance."[19] As we discussed above, Nietzsche regards compassion, by its very nature, to be injurious as it is predicated upon self-loss and lack of empathic accuracy. This is then simply incompatible with any view that says that compassion is regrettable only when such and such is the case. Thus, there is a reason to be suspicious of Harris's reading. Moreover, Nietzsche thinks, even if the compassionate person has the right sort of relation to suffering (i. e., even if they do not attend to the other's suffering as bad or evil *per se*), there is an active harm associated with all experiences of compassion, including also the cases of "better" compassion, i. e., "our compassion." Compassionate sensibility (for suffering) is something Nietzsche tirelessly warns against because those who make room for it within themselves will be so much taken with compassion as to incline to give in to it. As a result, they will "involuntarily become the glorifiers of the good, compassionate, benevolent, impulses of that instinctive morality which has no head, but seems to consist only of heart and helpful hands" (HH II, WS 45; my translation).

Now, perhaps Harris would insist that there is a healthy kind of compassion that can overcome this danger. He might point out that Nietzsche distinguishes between different kinds of compassion in BGE 225, describing one as actually being life-affirming and healthy. I maintain that compassion, even in its most compelling form (as characterized by Harris, Panaïoti, and others), is not good enough for Nietzsche, because he considers it to be fundamentally bad for human beings as creators and thus remains to the end strongly critical of all compassion. I believe that scholars tend to ignore this aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy entirely. Furthermore, for Nietzsche, the danger is not that one falls into the "unhealthy" kind of compassion, but that one falls into compassion. Therefore, "the overcoming of compassion [*die Überwindung des Mitleids*]," Nietzsche claims, is "the ultimate test, which a Zarathustra must pass– his real proof of strength" (EH, Why I Am so Wise 4). In other words, we do not come across a Nietzsche, as in the words of Harris, "holding open the possibility of healthier forms of shared suffering to be encouraged."[20]

Second, according to Panaïoti, for Nietzsche, compassionate suffering can be experienced as stimulating and invigorating, as actually increasing one's (feeling of) power. If so, then not all compassion is necessarily bad. I disagree with Panaïoti here. Panaïoti's interpretation seems to contradict those passages in Nietzsche's later work where he expressly speaks of compassion as an essentially weakening affect: "Compassion stands in contrast to the tonic affects that increase the energy of the feeling

19 Harris, "Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche," 18.
20 Harris, "Compassion and Affirmation in Nietzsche," 18.

of life: it is depressing. One loses strength when one shows compassion. Through compassion, the loss of strength, which is already brought about by the suffering of life, further increases and multiplies" (A 7; my translation). Nietzsche's remark here is straightforward: there is nothing stimulating, nor invigorating about compassion. Then, we have a reason to doubt Panaïoti's claim that some form of compassion may involve a feeling of enhanced power. If compassionate suffering can be experienced as stimulating and invigorating, as Panaïoti suggests, this can be so, Nietzsche believes, only because when "one fails to apprehend what is injurious about [compassion] and discovers in it instead a source of pleasure" (D 134).

4 Overcoming Compassion

Nietzsche presents compassion as a great danger (in the sense of actively injuring the person feeling it), but also approves of something that he presents as a different kind of compassion. In this section, I will show that one way of dealing with this tension in Nietzsche is to focus on exactly what function(s) Nietzsche want(s) "our compassion" to serve.

Drawing his inspiration from the ancient Greek and Roman thought, Nietzsche reevaluates and reinterprets the concept of compassion in a way to counteract the dangerous passivity of Schopenhauerian compassion and thereby represent a way to steer or guide humanity to the goal of creation and accomplishment. One crucial thing to note is that Nietzsche's discussion of a different kind of compassion in BGE 225 is essentially polemical in character and cannot be understood without considering the specific nature of his ultimate polemics against Schopenhauerian (or Christian) *Mitleid*. Nietzsche's main goal here is to contrast our modern culture of compassion with a culture of greatness, and to convince his readers of the desirability of moving from the former to the latter:

> The discipline of suffering, of great suffering – do you not know that only this discipline has created all enhancements of the human being so far? [...] And our compassion – do you not understand for whom our reverse compassion is when it defends itself against your compassion as the worst of all mollycoddling and undermining? (BGE 225; my translation)

What Nietzsche calls "our compassion" does not induce in one a sense of passive suffering and thereby belittle human creative possibility. It is no longer compassion with social distress, with the broader society and its particular problems. It is not "compassion for the grumbling, oppressed, rebellious slave strata who yearn for dominance–which they call 'freedom'" (BGE 225). The attention, the focus of "our compassion" is not the passive objects of suffering whose only chance is to be redeemed by sharing suffering because their life is valuable only if they can help each other. They are not the agents of their own suffering – but rather the victims of inevitable suffer-

ing – and *a fortiori* less so the agents of their own liberation. It is clear that without this distinction at our disposal, namely the distinction between those who are the subjects of their own suffering, i. e., the "creator, form-giver," and those who simply suffer, i. e., "the 'creature in the human being,' [...] that which necessarily must and should suffer," we could not make sense of Nietzsche's call of "compassion against compassion [*Mitleid also gegen Mitleid*]" (BGE 225; my translation). The passive and reactive "creature" aspect of person *versus* the aspect of person as "creator" seems to be playing with Christian dualism: the ontological dichotomy between human being as creature and God as creator, and the obvious privileging of the creator over the creature. Creature in a person stands for the animal nature of human being, all its drives and sensibilities. Creator in a person, however, symbolizes a God-like powerful being effectively dominant over its passive and malleable side, able to organize it into a unified entity. Nietzsche condemns "your compassion" because of its focus on the creature in a person. But what does it exactly mean to have compassion for the creator as creator? We normally feel compassion for those who are in grief, need of our help and support, not for those who are already in a better position.

This strange emphasis on the well-being of human beings as creators is in part explained by Nietzsche's contention that "our compassion" involves "a higher, more farsighted" attitude to suffering, which is ultimately concerned with the enhancement of human life and the emergence of exceptional individuals (BGE 225). Apparently, this theme is already present in D146, where Nietzsche criticizes the "narrow and petty bourgeois morality," its praise for compassionate behavior at the expense of hindering and distorting opportunities for self-growth and development. The assumption he attacks is the idea of determining whether a decision is genuinely ethical or not by taking into account the most immediate and direct impact of our actions on others' well-being. The problem is formulated as follows: there are sometimes immediate consequences and suffering that ensue from our actions and which, in turn, affect us and others involved. If our actions are always to handle human activities with a motive to avert or alleviate these most immediate consequences, then the ideal of human greatness can never thrive. We must, therefore, Nietzsche suggests, pay attention to the consequences of our action on human character and development, on the conditions in which the feeling of self-power becomes deeper, stronger, and more intense, which in turn allows greatness to develop. For Nietzsche, the problem requires a solution that involves a transposition of our ordinary moral schema into "a higher and freer manner of thought that looks beyond these most immediate consequences for others and to further more distant aims, under some circumstances even at the expense of the suffering of others" (D146). More specifically, the solution can only be carried out if we "get beyond our compassion and [...] gain a victory over ourselves" (D 146), which is precisely taken to be "a higher and freer bearing and attitude" than a narrow, risk-averse cost-benefit attitude towards human relationships. There are many challenges, distress, and risks that come along with creation or great form-giving effort. And, for Nietzsche, only "through sacrifice" we and others would "strengthen and

elevate the general feeling of human power" (D 146), and hence create the ground for greatness.

"Your compassion" requires suffering together, that only through solidarity and a sharing of the suffering with other people, can suffering be overcome. "Our compassion," on the other hand, requires the discipline of suffering, that we overcome suffering by enduring it and finding our own creative potential in the process. Nietzsche's "compassion" does not have the negative valence of ordinary compassion: it is not compassion in the sense of an active motivation to share the suffering of others and pursue their welfare. Nor does it condemn suffering as something bad or evil. Its target is no longer distress and misery, but life and specifically its unrealized potentials and possibilities. Here Nietzsche expresses his frustration at those who have failed to exploit the opportunities available to realize their potential for self-growth and excellence. And he reserves his greatest anger for the plight of those promising ones who are cast-aside or stepped over because of "your compassion." Hence Nietzsche says, "how the human is becoming smaller, how you are making it smaller! – and there are moments when we regard precisely your compassion with an indescribable anxiety, when we resist this compassion" (BGE 225).

Nietzsche's polemical rhetoric reaches its zenith in BGE 293, where he remarks: "a man who is a master by nature – when such a man has compassion, well now! this compassion has value!" And he adds in a provocative manner: "But what good is the compassion of sufferers! Or for that matter of the preachers of compassion!"[21] Incidentally, Reginster uses this passage as a decisive proof that Nietzsche approves of certain expressions of compassion.[22] I suggest that any interpretation that will be faithful to Nietzsche's intentions requires a more careful examination of his seemingly positive attitude about the value of compassion. What commentators, in my view, tend to ignore is that just because something is valuable does not mean it is not also dangerous. Nietzsche explicitly describes compassion as especially dangerous for the exceptional individual. Consequently, the thrust of Nietzsche's thinking on compassion is that it is to be overcome. Nothing is valuable in and of itself. Rather, for Nietzsche, it is always a matter of being valuable for something or to someone (GS 301). Perhaps, one is blessed to be on the receiving end of the master's compassion because this kind of compassion infallibly discerns the facts about the suffering it encounters and typically leads to action that brings relief and healing. The preachers of compassion, on the other hand, remain passively suffering with, rather than actively aiding others. It is in this sense, Nietzsche claims, some compassion has value; it is good (i. e., benefi-

21 Literally, the text here reads as follows: "But what lies in the compassion of those who suffer! Or those who even preach compassion! [*Aber was liegt am Mitleiden Derer, welche leiden! Oder Derer, welche gar Mitleiden predigen!*]" (BGE 293; my translation) To be specific, Nietzsche does not use the term "good" (or other value terms) here.

22 Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*, 185.

cial) for those who suffer. But the question is, is indulging in a sense of shared vulnerability good for the master? Is it good for him to be on the giving end of compassion? I do not think so. But then why does Nietzsche state that the master's compassion has value? We cannot hope to find an answer to this without the context of the rest of the passage, which more fully uncovers the polemical motivation of Nietzsche's attack on those who tend to exalt compassion as a virtue (which Reginster neglects to cite):

> Almost everywhere in Europe today there is a pathological sensitivity and irritability to pain, likewise a repulsive lack of restraint in whining, a tenderization that tries to dress itself up as something higher with religion and philosophical odds and ends – there is a veritable cult of suffering. The unmanliness of what is christened "compassion" in such circles of fanatics is the first thing that meets the eye, in my opinion (BGE 293).

Surely, here Nietzsche seeks to provoke a certain kind of reaction in the readers. On the one hand, it should be potentially upsetting (for some at least) to hear that their compassion is worthless. On the other, Nietzsche's words will hopefully help some to question the value of compassion, its significance, and detrimental effects on culture. Viewing his remarks in their entire context indicates that Nietzsche is subtly suggesting the irony that while Christians say that compassion is their quintessential virtue, representing the core of their doctrine, i. e., Christ's suffering for humanity on the cross, they are not strong enough to live up to the moral ideal they proclaim. Their compassion has no value. Only the strong-willed individual can feel compassion proper, and act according to what is required from a compassionate person. Having made this point, Nietzsche's polemic of "compassion against compassion" (BGE 225) is now complete, which is essentially intended to instruct the reader (who are potential creators) and not necessarily serve the needs of society and its disadvantaged subjects.

Nietzsche's vindication of "our compassion" is a way to pull through the dangers of "your (Schopenhauerian) compassion" and find a new strength to revive our interest in challenges of life and greatness. But this is not the end of "our compassion," a point that has not been adequately appreciated or explained in the recent literature. Even though it is a different (and better) form of compassion, "our compassion" *qua* compassion is fundamentally (and decidedly) regrettable. So then, the question remains: what makes "our compassion" valuable other than its focus on greatness? What is it ultimately good for? According to Reginster, in many ways, "Nietzsche's assessment of the value of compassion [...] remains a source of puzzlement."[23] Panaïoti seems more on the mark with his articulation of the issue when he says that Nietzsche ultimately prescribes the overcoming of compassion as a necessary step to greatness. Yet, overcoming of compassion and cultivating a certain form of compassion (i. e., "our compassion") are two goals that do not appear to go well together or work to-

23 Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*, 185.

gether. Thus, Panaïoti observes, "it seems as though Nietzsche does not establish clearly enough a link between [the two]."[24] I suggest, as paradoxical as it may seem, that the highest aim or ultimate goal of "our (Nietzschean) compassion" is to prepare those creators that hold the key to human greatness for the ultimate test, which is the overcoming of all compassion. In order to see how this is so, we must attend in particular to a few of the salient passages in *Zarathustra*, which is primarily a book about reflexively becoming aware of various ways we stifle our own potential and the potential of those around us–and hence a book about those who strive towards the ideal of self-overcoming and transformation.

"Our compassion" constantly looks for greatness and the possibilities of future greatness. Yet, it never finds what it is looking for, but – and this is a crucial but – "our compassion" persists without diminution, it regains its impulse, its movement from this very failure to meet greatness face to face. Consider Zarathustra's initial feeling of compassion for the higher men that he has been encountering during his journey of self-overcoming, who "herald the coming of the lightning" (Z I, Prologue 4), and thereby can provide humanity with a new goal and meaning to pursue. The soothsayer of the great weariness, a Schopenhauer-like character, at this point tries to seduce Zarathustra to his final sin, i. e., compassion for the higher men (Z IV, The Cry of Distress). This fellow feeling, however, dissipates quickly once Zarathustra realizes that these higher men "haven't yet suffered from human beings" nor do they "suffer from what [Zarathustra] suffered" (Z IV, On the Higher Man 6), and therefore, "they are not [his] proper companions!" (Z IV, The Sign) Although first struck by this profound fellow feeling for the higher men, Zarathustra later becomes agitated and angry in the face of this feeling, the temptation to attend to and help with others' concerns, which he regards as his "last sin" (Z IV, The Sign). One's greatness, Nietzsche is convinced, can be measured only by having achieved a Zarathustra-like attitude towards compassion. In other words, this last sin is also the ultimate test of Zarathustra's strength and thereby the greatest opportunity for growth.

Now, Nietzsche's argument about (the overcoming of) compassion boils down to this: "our compassion" does not try to save us from suffering but affirms that the core of human greatness is formed and fostered in and through suffering. Hence Nietzsche says elsewhere: "You want [...] to abolish suffering; and we?–it seems as though we would prefer to have it even higher and worse than it ever was!" (BGE 225) The standard for greatness set by Nietzsche (*via* Zarathustra) exceeds all expectations and hence ever evolves towards a greater perfection. The standard is so high that even a rare and select group of individuals fall short of it. Since we know that greatness is not meant to be achieved through the (cumulative) activities of some higher men, "our compassion" can never find a practical outlet to manifest itself and therefore falls back on hard work, effort, and perseverance. And so, in the final part, the overcoming

24 Panaïoti, *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, 208–9.

of compassion ultimately announces itself with the advent of Zarathustra's children, who represent the epitome of his desire to create over and beyond himself, and to which the higher men are only a bridge (Z IV, The Sign).

Here a caveat is in order. Here "overcoming" does not mean to fully eradicate the temptations of compassion from sight, but to be able to recognize them and take one's mind off of them so that one can live for the sake of one's work. So, I tend to agree with Michael Frazer when he says that "Zarathustra never 'overcomes' his compassion in the sense of ridding himself of it once and for all."[25] Once struck by a powerful and almost cathartic feeling of compassion, Zarathustra achieves the ultimate insight into the creature-creator duality in human nature, namely that "the 'creature in humans' [...] must be formed, broken, forged, torn, burned, melted and purified" and therefore "must necessarily suffer and should suffer" (BGE 225). In the end, Zarathustra simply dismisses his suffering and compassion: "what do they matter!" (Z IV, The Sign) A life in which compassion does not matter means that compassion does not determine or guide one's relations and interactions with the surrounding world. Therefore, I reject Frazer's suggestion that Zarathustra ultimately comes to affirm his compassion as necessary in achieving deeper insight into the human condition. Frazer's argument, put simply, is that banishing compassion, and of eradicating the most essential fellow feelings from the human breast "requires us shield ourselves from the troubling awareness of our fellows' plight, to sever the imaginative and emotional bonds which connect us to others."[26] More specifically, "[i]t requires that we turn against our own strength of intelligence and imagination, that we sacrifice knowledge for ignorance by denying our insights into the human condition."[27] Frazer is, however, unable to cite direct textual support in *Zarathustra* for this suggestion. So, he turns to BGE 227, where Nietzsche speaks of the regrettable aspects of philosophical honesty, "supposing that this is our virtue from which we cannot get away, we free spirits-well, let us work on it with all our malice and love and not weary of 'perfecting' ourselves in our virtue." Frazer suggests that "Zarathustra treats compassion similarly, realizing that sympathetic suffering is inseparable from his imaginative creativity."[28] Unfortunately, the textual basis for this interpretation is tenuous at best. Setting aside the lack of textual support, a couple of points should be clarified. First, Zarathustra's encounter with the higher men was his ultimate opportunity to be put to the test, once and for all. He already passed the test once, and saw through the misconceptions and realized what value and significance "co-suffering" with others really has for him. So there seems no point in speculating that there is no guarantee that Zarathustra "will fail

25 Michael Frazer, "The Compassion of Zarathustra: Nietzsche on Sympathy and Strength," *The Review of Politics* 68 (2006), 49–78: 73.

26 Frazer, "The Compassion of Zarathustra," 75.

27 Frazer, "The Compassion of Zarathustra," 75.

28 Frazer, "The Compassion of Zarathustra," 74.

to experience compassion upon further encounters with suffering."[29] Second, Zarathustra does not overcome all fellow feeling, but only a specific fellow feeling, i. e., shared suffering or compassion. Third, Frazer claims that: "Compassion may cause him real misery, but, when properly harnessed, it helps rather than hinders Zarathustra's creativity."[30] Frazer never quite explains in any satisfactory detail what exactly this controlling/harnessing compassion creatively entails for Nietzsche. Nietzsche's letter to Meysenbug, cited earlier, makes it unambiguously clear that he contrasts compassion with acting creatively: "One should enforce one's own ideal of human being, one should, with his ideal, force and overpower one's fellow human beings as oneself: and thus act creatively! But to do this, one needs to hold one's compassion in strong check" (Mid July 1883, no. 437, KSB 6.404; my translation). Again, leaving admissible this philosophically intriguing but textually thin interpretation, I suggest that Nietzsche offers alternatives that are more effective and preferable in advancing human self-actualization and growth.[31] This final point brings me to a particularly

29 Frazer, "The Compassion of Zarathustra," 73.

30 Frazer, "The Compassion of Zarathustra," 73.

31 In an unpublished fragment, for instance, Nietzsche embraces an alternative attitude to Schopenhauerian compassion, "This is my kind of 'compassion', although there is really no sufferer with whom I suffer [*Dies ist meine Art "Mitleid"; ob es schon keinen Leidenden giebt, mit dem ich da litte*]" (Nachlass 1885, 36[7], KSA 11.552; my translation). The first thing to notice here is that this remark contradicts Panaïoti's claim that Nietzschean compassion also involves suffering on account of the other's woe (Panaïoti, *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy*, 190). Nietzsche's kind of compassion sprouts not from suffering, but from the need for (more) suffering. In other words, Nietzsche's kind of compassion is not concerned with suffering as such, but with those who lack enough of it. This implies that Nietzschean compassion is not the same as what we ordinarily call "compassion." It is something quite different: it is "compassion" despite the fact that there is no sufferer, or not enough suffering: "You do not suffer enough in my opinion!" (Z IV, On the Higher Man 6) In his analysis of this fragment, Bernard Reginster, in my view, uncritically accepts this unusual conception as a given, noting that Nietzsche conceives of compassion as "a response not primarily to suffering", and if so "Nietzschean compassion may be aroused by the lack of suffering" (Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*, 187). But how can there be compassion in the absence of suffering? Compassion literally means "suffering with," which implies a sharing in another's suffering. I think we should not take Nietzsche on his own terms here, as commentators often do. He no longer uses compassion in any recognizable sense of the word. He keeps the word "compassion" but ascribes to it an entirely new meaning. It is not without a reason when Nietzsche says, "This [i. e., his kind of compassion] is a feeling for which I find no name adequate" (Nachlass 1885, 36[7], KSA 11.552; trans. Kaufmann and Hollingdale). And it is precisely because of this terminological inadequacy and conceptual indeterminacy, his attempt to describe this feeling simply collapses under its own weight: "I sense [this feeling] when I see precious capabilities squandered [...]. Or when I see anyone halted, as a result of some stupid accident, at something less than he might have become. Or especially at the idea of the lot of mankind, as when I observe with anguish and contempt the politics of present-day Europe, which is, under all circumstances, also working at the web of the future of all men" (Nachlass 1885, 36[7], KSA 11.552; trans. Kaufmann and Hollingdale). This feeling for which there is no adequate name does not suggest compassion but rather anger. We recognize a similar ambiguity in Nietzsche's speaking of a kind of "indignation" that the ancient Greeks felt

misunderstood aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy, i. e., the ethical implications of overcoming compassion.

5 After Compassion

On the way to greatness, "we become hard against everything in us that desires consideration." Hence Nietzsche concludes with a flourish, "our greatness is also our lack of compassion" (GS 28).[32] Now we need to be cautious not to assume too much too quickly. It is not that Nietzsche objects to compassion and therefore also dismisses benevolence and empathy altogether. This should address the concerns of those (especially Reginster and Panaïoti) who seem to be worried that Nietzsche rules out compassion as of any relevance to our moral life.[33] Nietzsche maintains, from his middle period on at any rate, that "life turns green and blossoms only by means of that benevolence" (HH I 49). Furthermore, he singles out the effectiveness of benevolence values in contributing to cultural life because they serve to keep alive and nourish the qualities that make individuals more fruitful in social interactions: "Good-naturedness, friendliness, politeness of the heart, are the ever-flowing streams of the unegotistical

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"over someone else's misfortune", referring to it as "this more manly brother of compassion [*diesen männlicheren Bruder des Mitleidens*]" (D 78). What Nietzsche describes here is what some classicists refer to as "[heroic] rage at the world's (or the gods') coldness to human aspirations" (Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*, Princeton, NJ 2002, 113, fn. 31). Alternatively, modern psychologists refer to this feeling as "empathic anger," i. e. the kind of empathy experienced as anger on behalf of a victimized person (Guy D. Vitaglione / Mark A. Barnett, "Assessing a New Dimension of Empathy: Empathic Anger as a Predictor of Helping and Punishing Desires," *Motivation and Emotion* 27 (2003), 301–25). At first glance, it appears that "empathic anger" is the most appropriate term for the phenomenon that concerns Nietzsche. However, I do not believe that what Nietzsche approves of can be, strictly speaking, regarded as empathic anger. Although anger at circumstances or people who may be perceived to be the cause of some misfortune to the victim may play a factor in arousing empathic sensations from the subject, I maintain there is more to the phenomenon than can be described by empathic anger. But I will not pursue this matter any further here.

32 Here the German is: "*unsere Grösse ist auch unsere Unbarmherzigkeit*" (GS 28). What Kaufmann translates as "lack of compassion" is actually a positive, single term *Unbarmherzigkeit* which can be rendered as "mercilessness," "heartlessness," or "ruthlessness." But "lack of compassion" is also a reasonable choice.

33 It seems to me that Martha Nussbaum's criticism of Nietzsche's views on *Mitleid* is still quite powerful. I am inclined to see the commentators' views as having arisen under the influence of such (misguided) criticism. Commentators appear to promote an alternative picture of Nietzsche's views of the value of compassion that is more attuned to ethical considerations and hence less controversial (though not necessarily true to Nietzsche's central intentions). Nussbaum's misreadings are well known among most Nietzsche scholars, but perhaps less so elsewhere. For an account of some of Nussbaum's misunderstandings of Nietzsche's thought, see, for instance, Tevenar, "Nietzsche's Objections to Pity and Compassion."

drive and have worked more powerfully in building culture than those much more famed expressions of it that we call sympathy, compassion, and sacrifice" (HH I 49). However, Nietzsche later also came to acknowledge that motivations behind benevolence and philanthropic assistance may be considered suspect especially when the benefactor is in a position of power and has leverage over the beneficiary. He says, for instance, "the noble human being also helps the unfortunate, but not or almost not from compassion [*aber nicht oder fast nicht aus Mitleid*], but from an urge produced by an excess of power [*sondern mehr aus einem Drang, den der Überfluss von Macht erzeugt*]" (BGE 260). But what can be said about the kind of assistance that is coming from a position of strength?[34] At times, Nietzsche appears hesitant about it and does not believe it can ever be sincere or well-intended. He says: "We benefit and show benevolence to those who are already dependent on us in some way (which means that they are used to thinking of us as causes); we want to increase their power because in that way we increase ours, or we want to show them how advantageous it is to be in our power" (GS 13). Nevertheless, this is not how Nietzsche thinks 'the noble human being' acts towards others. True to the character of a noble person, those who possess (excess of) power, as Zarathustra remarks, "strive for the bestowing virtue" (Z I, On the Bestowing Virtue). The noble human being possesses the virtue to utilize and harness power to empower others, increasing their resources, capabilities, effectiveness, and ability to act, while being fully aware that injudicious kindness only forces them into dependent lives. Hence Zarathustra says to his disciples: "Insatiably your soul strives for treasures and gems, because your virtue is insatiable in wanting to bestow. You compel all things to and into yourselves, so that they may gush back from your well as the gifts of your love" (Z I, On the Bestowing Virtue).

34 Diamantides misses the meaning of this crucial passage entirely. He says, for Nietzsche, "the options for modern man are either to react to instances of others' suffering with 'morbid' – moral or empathic – pity denying, in the process, the meaninglessness of suffering; or with productive, 'life affirming' compassion qua will to power without attempting to derive the compassionate action's value from any external source" (Diamantides, "Law's Ignoble Compassion," 98). So far, I agree with what Diamantides says for the most part. However, he continues and remarks: "In *Will to Power*, *Daybreak*, and other works, the idea of compassion as a life-affirming response to another being's suffering is explained negatively and is distinguished from morbid pity, which underlies moral duty. In short, the master may act kindly upon a weaker other out of a *surplus of energy* – not from a submission to moral duty, utilitarian calculus or, more immediately, out of empathic identification, fear of pain, and need for pleasure" (98). Diamantides appears to be characterizing life-affirming compassionate helping in terms of a disposition to help out of excess of power. As the context of BGE 260 makes it crystal clear, helping out of compassion and helping out of excess of power are two distinct phenomena. When the noble human being helps the needy, it is an expression of the noble's excess power. Power determines value. Therefore, there is value in that act of giving. Nietzsche's main point, which Diamantides fails to mention adequately, is that the noble humans are fortunate and are not suffering and so they do not need to identify with the unfortunate who are suffering. Because the noble human being is not similarly situated as the unfortunate, the former simply cannot share any affinity and hence only helps out of excess of power (a phenomenon that bears no relation whatsoever to compassion).

But one may object to this line of reasoning by pointing out that you will have the ability to help others not just because you operate from a position of strength, but also because you are more sensitive and aware to others' feelings and identify your own feelings in others. According to Schopenhauer, if motive is present, but the person does not recognize it or lacks the knowledge and sensibility, there will be no consciousness to act and move according to the motive. He says:

> For the relationship between (for instance) egoism and compassion to emerge in any given person, it is not enough for that person to possess wealth and see others in need; he must also know what wealth can do both for himself and for others; the suffering of others must not only present itself, he must also know what suffering is.[35]

"But then," Schopenhauer asks elsewhere, "how is it possible that a suffering that is not mine, that does not afflict me, should nonetheless become a motive for me, should move me to acting, just as immediately as only my own suffering otherwise does?"[36] Even though another's suffering is "given to me as something external," it is "by my feeling it as well, feeling it as mine, yet not in me but in another"[37] that I come to recognize another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering. In other words, for Schopenhauer, it is primarily the compassion that one feels for another who is suffering, and not one's own strength or bestowing love, that will drive one's consciousness to act benevolently in a way that alleviates another's suffering.

Nietzsche seems to draw our attention to a kind of benevolence that is based on and strives for a continued and richer understanding of the life activities of others, as opposed to Schopenhauerian compassion, which involves being affected by others' predicament but without a greater awareness of the causes and effects of their experiences. Nietzsche rejects *Mitleid* because it is not the sort of thing that can produce a non-superficial insight into another's suffering. As a matter of fact, *Mitleid* is automatic (i. e., impulsive) and lacks intellectual depth and genuine empathic responsiveness, as evidenced by Schopenhauer's remark that "the excitation of our compassion is not accompanied by any particular effort of our intellect."[38] I take this as one of the main motivations behind Nietzsche's effort to replace compassion with a different form of empathy:

> What we suffer most deeply and personally is almost incomprehensible and inaccessible to almost everyone else [...]. But wherever we are noticed as sufferers, our suffering is interpreted shallowly; it belongs to the essence of compassionate affection that it undresses the unfamiliar

35 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman and Christopher Janaway, Cambridge 2010, 321.
36 Schopenhauer, "Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals," 218.
37 Schopenhauer, "Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals," 218.
38 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, trans. and ed. Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman and Christopher Janaway, Cambridge 2010, 616.

> suffering of its genuinely personal aspects: – our "benefactors" are more than our enemies, the reducers of our worth and will. In most of the benefits done to the unfortunate person, there is something outrageous in the intellectual recklessness with which the compassionate person plays the role of destiny: one knows nothing of the whole inner sequence and intertwining, which misfortune is for me or for you! (GS 338; my translation)

The underlying idea in the above critique is that compassion lacks the kind of intellectual depth and rigor essential to genuine help. Perhaps in many circumstances it is possible to relieve suffering through the shallow acts of compassion. And this explains why Schopenhauer has such faith in "the everyday phenomenon of compassion, i. e. the wholly immediate sympathy, independent of any other consideration, in the first place towards another's suffering, and hence towards the prevention or removal of this suffering, which is ultimately what all satisfaction and all well-being and happiness consists in."[39] However, and this is important, Nietzsche's main objection is that relieving some suffering requires a deep understanding of the other's experiential state. In compassion, we focus on the feeling and not its role in the person's life – its causes, effects, and potential "disciplinary" function. Nietzsche implicitly admonishes us to lay aside any preconceptions, which are likely misconceptions, that we may have as to the nature of another's suffering, or that may stand as barrier to another's flourishing. Nietzsche's argument appears to be this: compassion with its essential indifference to the individual character of suffering only aims at the release of suffering. This, in turn, results in the neglect of the disciplining effect of suffering. Because compassion lacks a deeper understanding of human suffering and aspirations, it tends to do more harm than good for some. Therefore, it is better not to give in to generous and compassionate affects.

Compassion's lack of genuine understanding seems to be due to its characteristic of eliminating the distinction between an individual and others.[40] This experience of nondualism or oneness, i. e., the instinctual recognition that beneath our apparent separateness as individuals, we are essentially related to one another through the inward experience of our own willing, in effect eliminates the need for the subject to understand, or at least to be tuned in to, another's situation, feelings, and thoughts. There is no such thing as the other, since we are all one being. Therefore, another's suffering loses its particularity and becomes an instantiation of universal suffering. Compassion signifies the ultimate suppression and assimilation of all opposition, difference, and becoming that is integral to one's edification and betterment; for Nietzsche, it presents the danger of devaluing of one's own will. For the reasons provided above, Nietzsche strongly reacts to this account of compassion (and the experience of oneness associated with it) by holding to a theory of empathy in which greatness, individuality, and self-stylization play the central roles.

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39 Schopenhauer, "Prize Essay on the Basis of Morals," 200.

40 See Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, § 65 and § 68.

Furthermore, the failure to temper and channel the excesses of compassionate affects negatively affects one's ability to provide the effective help and support the other needs. Thus, Nietzsche warns:

> Whoever even attempts at some point consciously to pursue for a period of time in his daily life every inducement to compassion will invariably turn sick and melancholic [...], whoever wishes to [help] will have to be very cautious with regard to that sentiment – it lames him in all decisive moments and paralyzes his knowledge and his benevolent delicate hand (D 134).

What Nietzsche then suggests is that we are more likely to be helpful to others and have a positive influence on them when we remain mentally perceptive and emotionally controlled in responding to their situation and try to help with understanding and accuracy. Hence, Nietzsche admonishes: "You will also want to help: but only those whose need you fully understand [*ganz verstehst*], because you and they possess in common one suffering and one hope–your friends: and only in the way you help yourself" (GS 338; my translation). The kind of empathic understanding evoked in the above remark does not require the warmth of compassion and its associated physiological states (i. e., the shared feeling of others' suffering, or mirroring their sadness). Here Nietzsche is implicitly committed to what might be called an emotionally-controlled perspective taking. One potential advantage of this type of non-compassionate empathy is to avoid the feelings of being overwhelmed by the others' negative emotional states that may prevent one from thinking outside of one's own experiences and effectively grasping and reflecting on others' experiential realities.

I suggest that the kind of empathy Nietzsche believes can be more effective than compassion consists of anticipatory inference and attentiveness, which allow for a wiser, deeper, and more genuine caring for another's well-being. An intriguing perspective on this phenomenon is presented by relational-cultural theory (RCT), which is closely associated with psychotherapy and critical, feminist strands in psychology. RCT refers to this phenomenon, where one tries to anticipate what the other person is experiencing based on identifying situational and contextual cues of that individual's emotional state, as "anticipatory empathy."[41] RCT therapy suggests that "a judicious use of emotional transparency and anticipatory empathy"[42] positively correlates with more veridical emotional responsiveness to the joys, sufferings, and life situations of others. This responsiveness on the part of the empathizer over the sufferer does not require being motivated immediately by their suffering. Nor does it require that one shares all spontaneous emotional reactions. Rather, it calls for caution in conveying one's concern for others.[43]

41 Judith V. Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, Washington, DC 2018, 121.
42 Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 59.
43 Jordan, *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 58.

In expressing one's empathic feelings it is important to be sensitive, but it is also important to establish boundaries effectively and appropriately with the other. Hence Zarathustra's admonition: "The friend should be a master of guessing and keeping silent [*Errathen und Stillschweigen*]: you must not want to see everything" (Z I, On the Friend). When unchecked, our empathic concern may be too intrusive and debilitating to the point of preventing others from taking the necessary steps to overcome and grow out of the challenges they are faced with. Therefore, Zarathustra at times appears to be advocating only for limited empathic engagement: "Let your compassion be a guessing, so that you might first know whether your friend wants compassion. Perhaps what he loves in you is your unbroken eye and the look of eternity" (Z I, On the Friend). Here a caveat is in order. To be sure, Zarathustra frowns upon compassion and aspires to overcome all compassion towards the misery of others. However, he maintains that if one cannot help but feel compassion now and then, one should guard against becoming too caring, to the point of interfering. After all, Zarathustra is aware that not everyone is strong and determined enough not to give in to it.

At this point, a question immediately presents itself: what is the main motivating force behind Nietzschean empathy? The kind of empathy that Nietzsche thinks we should embrace involves a deeper understanding of another's emotional life in all its complex particularity, together with an appreciative joy in the success, good fortune, and joy of others. For Nietzsche, having such a capacity is not only compatible with but essential to growth, aspiration, and creativity:

> A different character, one that has a rich capacity to share in the joys of others, wins friends everywhere, feels affection for all that is growing and becoming, shares the pleasure of others in all their honors and successes, and claims no privilege of being alone in recognizing truth, but is instead filled with a modest mistrust – that is an anticipatory [*vorwegnehmender*] person who is striving toward a higher human culture (HH I 614).

Now I would like to quickly highlight some of the interesting features of this distinct type of empathy and its difference with compassion. First, anticipatory empathy does not necessitate a co-suffering, i. e., the sharing in another's suffering. Once one picks up the cues of another's suffering through one's affective and representational capacities, and (re)cognizes another's suffering and its significance to them through intersubjective emotional resonance, there is no need to dwell in and co-experience that suffering.[44] In this sense, anticipatory empathy is fundamentally different from what we ordinarily mean by "compassion." Furthermore, anticipatory empathy is predicated

44 Nietzsche speaks of the affective-cognitive mechanisms involved in the recognition of others' experiential state in D 142. I discuss this in greater detail in a paper under review elsewhere (Vasfi O. Özen, "Nietzsche's Theory of Empathy" (forthcoming)). This paper is not much about analyzing the nature and function of affects in empathic experience, but more about exploring Nietzsche's ideas about the significance and value of certain empathetic/affect responses.

on the separation of self and other, and on the recognition of individual experiential differences. It is worth noting that Nietzschean "anticipatory empathy" shares some common elements with contemporary feminist theories of empathy, according to which empathic responsiveness is understood as a dynamic relational process in which individuals maintain a well-differentiated sense of self and feel an increasing sense of emotional connectedness to each other.[45] Second, anticipatory empathy's target is not suffering *per se*, but the redemptive potential in suffering as constitutive of any meaningful, creative, and well-lived human life. This points out a crucial difference between anticipatory empathy and compassion in that the latter simply stems from an indiscriminate desire for others to be free from suffering. Third, and perhaps most importantly, anticipatory empathy combines affection and cognition in a controlled and efficient way to gain a more accurate representation of another's perspective or plight.

At this point, some qualifications must be noted to avoid a potential misconstrual of my argument here. Of course, I do not (even remotely) suggest that Nietzsche seeks to eliminate all affective response, all appearance of behavioral and emotional reciprocity and rapport (i. e., affect attunement between individuals). Affective engagement requires one's sense of belonging and identification with others. And in order for deeper understanding of another's experiential state to occur, affective engagement must take place.[46] However, and this is important, genuine empathy, for Nietzsche,

45 Sharon Freedberg, "Re-examining Empathy: A Relational-Feminist Point of View," *Social Work* 52 (2007), 251–9: 254.

46 In D 142, Nietzsche entertains the view that empathy involves some kind of perceived similarity between the empathizer's and the empathee's subjective affective states. This idea finds considerable support in contemporary psychological research. Frédérique de Vignemont and Pierre Jacob claim that "the empathizer's affective state [must stand] in some relevant similarity relation to her target's affective state" (Frédérique de Vignemont / Pierre Jacob, "What Is It like to Feel Another's Pain?", *Philosophy of Science* 79 (2012), 295–316: 305). In other words, if your emotional response is relevantly similar to my own affective state, then the fact that you sense my affective state must to some extent contribute to your understanding of my emotional experience (306). But how can we exactly know that there is a relevant similarity relation? Nietzsche is well aware of the problem of intersubjective reciprocity; there appears to be a discrepancy between my emotional experiences and those of others: "one simply knows nothing of the whole inner sequence and intricacies that are distress for me or for you" (GS 338). According to the psychologist Stephanie D. Preston, whether one is accurately empathizing or at least sensing the feeling states of others ultimately "depends upon whether the subject's representations are similar enough to those of the object to convince the object that s/he is understood, or to convince observers that the object is understood" (Stephanie D. Preston, "A Perception-Action Model for Empathy," in Tom Farrow / Peter Woodruff (eds.), *Empathy in Mental Illness*, New York 2007, 428–47: 431). This is in a sense the only way to understand whether one feels an emotion appropriate to another's emotion. The fact that I observe my own emotions resonate in you, the social psychologist David R. Heise further suggests, creates a unification in which I and you experience things with similar consciousness. This is how, Heise hypothesizes, "[e]mpathic solidarity is established for [me] when [I] unif[y] consciousness with [you] through [the reciprocal and mutual processes of] emotional resonance" (David R. Heise, "Conditions for Empathic Solidarity," in Patrick Doreian / Thomas J. Fararo (eds.), *The Problem of Solidarity: Theories and Models*, Amsterdam 1998, 197–211: 199).

means to feel the particularity of another's feeling without drowning inside it and thereby losing one's personal identity and perspective. In an unpublished fragment, Nietzsche characterizes this as a "higher stage," i. e., not "being overwhelmed by stormy feelings" (Nachlass 1887/88, 11[353], KSA 13.153; trans. Kaufmann and Hollingdale). And then he adds:

> The same applies to compassion: it must first be habitually sifted by reason; otherwise it is just as dangerous as any other affect. Blind indulgence of an affect, totally regardless of whether it be a generous and compassionate or a hostile affect, is the cause of the greatest evils. Greatness of character does not consist in not possessing these affects – on the contrary, one possesses them to the highest degree – but in having them under control.

Here Nietzsche draws our attention once again to the challenges with affect regulation (in particular, regulating compassionate affects), and emphasizes the importance of the development of self-regulatory skills or affect regulation abilities. He warns that we do not let compassionate impulses to take precedence over our own emotional welfare. Fourth and last, unlike compassion, anticipatory empathy requires a keen sense of anticipation and understanding of what is at stake, for whom, and all conceivable ways and means to achieve one's vision. The anticipation of what is to come brings joy and excitement, which in turn inspires and motivates to action, and keeps us striving for a better state. Although Nietzsche does not use the term "anticipatory empathy," it is, in my view, foreshadowed by him.

The concept of "anticipatory empathy" I am expounding here captures best Nietzsche's ultimate effort to establish a culture of creative change and growth that is based on the sharing of joy with others. It is not Christ's admonition to love and care for one's neighbor and the suffering encountered in the world, but Zarathustra's forward willing ethic of friendship and great action – along with the Nietzschean art of giving style to one's own character (GS 290) – that is to be embraced and regarded as transformative. Thus, Zarathustra tells his would-be disciples: "I do not teach you the neighbor, but the friend. The friend shall be your festival of the earth and an anticipation [*Vorgefühl*] of the overman [...]. My brothers, I do not recommend love of the neighbor to you: I recommend love of the farthest to you" (Z I, On Love of the Neighbor). This is, for Nietzsche, something only "few now understand and those preachers of compassion [*jene Prediger des Mitleidens*] the least: – rejoicing with [*die Mitfreude*]!" (GS 338; my translation) But why does Nietzsche think that it is so much better for us to focus on *Mitfreude* instead of *Mitleid*? In *Dawn* (1881), Nietzsche seems to hint at an argument in favor of the value of shared joy: "Bringing joy to others. – Why is bringing joy the greatest of all joys? – Because we thereby bring joy to our separate fifty drives at one fell swoop. Individually they may each be very small joys: but if we put them all in one hand, then our hand is fuller than at any other time – and our heart as well! –" (D 422)

Nietzsche praises rejoicing with those who rejoice as perhaps the most effective way to bring creativity to one's own life and personal growth. This is so because, as

Willow Verkerk correctly observes: "For Nietzsche, celebrating with others involves a shared creative movement that allows the drives to express themselves more fully."[47] It should be added, however, that Nietzsche's argument for empathic joy trades on a specific claim that he makes about the phenomenology of joy in *Zarathustra*: "Pain is also a joy, a curse is also a blessing, night is also a sun–go away or else you will learn: a wise man is also a fool. Have you ever said Yes to one joy? Oh my friends, then you also said Yes to *all* pain [...] and say to pain also: refrain, but come back! *For all joy wants – eternity!*" (Z IV, The Sleepwalker Song 10)

What Nietzsche (via Zarathustra) is suggesting here is that it is only through our capacity for joy that we are capable of becoming strong enough to reinterpret misfortune as opportunity to grow. This in turn implies that if one can connect with life stronger, it seems to be more through shared joy than shared suffering simply because *Mitfreude* functions to inspire one another to love and creative deeds, which enable us to bear suffering and best fulfill the ideal of self-actualization.[48] Compassion, with its tendency to intervene to support and then to alleviate the distress perceived in others, often undermines the potential in striving for self-actualization as well as our capacity for finding satisfaction in overcoming obstacles. However, Nietzschean "anticipatory empathy," as well as the mutual feelings of rejoicing that stem from it, steer us in the direction of a higher ideal of human existence. With its focus on grasping another's underlying emotions and needs, such empathy becomes a crucial means in the service of the enhancement of life and one's fellow human beings.

6 Concluding Remarks

If we accept Nietzsche's critique of compassion, could we still somehow channel our compassion into the enhancement of human life and the emergence of exceptional individuals? My short answer is no, and the reasons can be briefly stated as follows. There is an inherent tendency in compassion to generalize others' experiential meanings and states of distress, which inevitably remains blind to higher aspects of the self. For Nietzsche, compassion is always regrettable no matter what short-term goods may be achieved by it. Compassion, regardless of what originally motivated it, stands in

47 Willow Verkerk, *Nietzsche and Friendship*, London 2019, 37.

48 Some of Nietzsche's unpublished fragments are especially interesting because they offer, in my view, the most direct articulation of his views on the subject. Nachlass 1878, 27[95], KSA 8.502, UFHH 312: "Friends. – Nothing ties us together, but we have joy in one another, up to the point where one promotes the other's direction, even if it is diametrically opposed to his own." Nachlass 1878, 31[9], KSA 8.559, UFHH 366: "Friends, we take joy in one another as in fresh growth of nature and have regard for one another: thus we grow beside one another like trees, and precisely for that reason stretched upward and straight, because we extend ourselves by means of one another."

tension with the discipline of suffering, i. e., the transformative possibilities involved in enduring suffering. Nietzsche's task is not to transform compassion and the pathological excesses of this feeling into something that is less harmful and more conducive to higher human ends. Rather, his task is to reevaluate and overcome compassion and its excessive concern with suffering and with well-being understood hedonically as safety and comfort.[49]

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49 I am especially grateful to Scott D. Jenkins for his extensive comments on various editions of this manuscript. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the four anonymous referees for their thoughtful comments. An earlier and far shorter version of this paper (titled *Nietzschean Compassion*) was presented remotely via Zoom (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) at the Eastern APA Symposium on January 9, 2021. I would like to thank the attendees for some stimulating questions, and in particular my commentators, Michael Chiddo and J. Reese Faust, for their helpful remarks. Also, special thanks to Bo Brown for his comments on the final version of the draft. And finally, all my love to my parents F. Betül Kanpak and Mustafa "Muson" Özen for their understanding, patience, constant encouragement, and personal sacrifice.

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