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The Nietzschean Virtue of Authenticity: "Wie man wird, was man ist."

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In §214 of *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche asks "is there anything more beautiful than *looking* for one's own virtues?" By inquiring into the notion of authenticity as it occurs in Nietzsche's ethical thinking, my essay will consider this question and potential answers to it. Specifically, I will argue that in Nietzsche's middle period works the virtue of authenticity is paramount; it is embodied by the ideal of the free spirit. Nietzsche has qualified his middle period works, *Human, All Too Human*, *Dawn* and *The Gay Science*, as his *ganze Freigeisterei*, literally: his whole free spiritedness. On the back cover of the 1st edition of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche indicates that his book completes a series of works which started with *Human, All Too Human*. The overall goal of these works was to draw a new portrait and ideal of the free spirit.[1] While Nietzsche will later reject this ideal as too moral, an examination of his middle period works shows that the free spirit is Nietzsche's

[1] He says: "Mit diesem Buche kommt eine Reihe von Schriften Friedrich Nietzsche's zum Abschluss, deren gemeinsames Ziel ist, ein neues Bild und Ideal des Freigeistes aufzustellen. In diese Reihe gehören: *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* mit Anhang: *Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche*; *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*; *Morgenröthe. Gedanken über die moralischen Vorurtheile*; *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft.*" Nietzsche attests to the same idea about this body of work in a letter to Lou Salomé: "das Werk von 6 Jahren (1876-1882), meine ganze 'Freigeisterei'!" (BVN–1882, 256 – Brief an Lou von Salomé: 03/07/1882) It should be noted that this means that only the first four books of *The Gay Science* are to be taken into account with regards to the philosophy of the free spirit. Book V is a later addition, one that follows the writing of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* constitutes the elaboration of a new ethical ideal for Nietzsche: the Overhuman.

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ethical ideal at that time.[2] This investigation will also serve to show that it is a viable ethical ideal within the economy of the philosophy of the free spirit.

The free spirit is the being who seeks authentic becoming and thereby becomes what and who she is thanks to the virtues of authenticity and probity that she cultivates. Therefore, my essay will consider the claims presented in *Human, All Too Human*, *Dawn* and *The Gay Science* regarding morality, ethical flourishing, and authenticity. In addition, I will examine Nietzsche's early formulation of authenticity in "Schopenhauer as Educator" §1. I will argue that the essence of Nietzsche's ethics of authenticity may be found in these works. I will show that this ethics is similar to and yet distinct from Aristotelian virtue ethics. Nietzsche argues for a cultivation of the self that rejects the role of Aristotelian rationality. However, the notion of care of the self that is entailed by his virtue ethics is akin to that which we find in ancient virtue ethics such as Stoicism and Epicureanism. This notion of care of the self is at the heart of Nietzsche's ethics insofar as it focuses on the character development of the moral agent. What matters for Nietzsche is the style of one's being, creating oneself as the agent of one's own life. This ethical flourishing is possible only through caring for one's own being and becoming through certain practices.

1 The Critique of Morality

The middle period works start with a critique of important traditional discourses: metaphysics, morality, religion, and art. According to Nietzsche, these discourses have presented truths to human beings that have been detrimental to human flourishing. The critique of these discourses is risky since one may not have the strength to reconstruct new discourses and worldviews following the great liberation. The critique and rejection of traditional discourses leaves one empty-handed until one undertakes the project of creating values and establishing truths for oneself. As Nietzsche puts it in the Preface to *Human, All Too Human*, "to become sick in the manner of these free spirits, to remain sick for a long time and then, slowly, slowly, to

[2] Nietzsche says that "Die Moral ist durch die Freigeisterei auf ihre Spitze getrieben und überwunden."(NF-1882, 4[16] – Nachgelassene Fragmente November 1882-Februar 1883) But despite this important role, the free spirit is itself moral: "Aber jetzt erkennen wir die Freigeisterei selber als Moral."(NF-1882, 6[4] – Nachgelassene Fragmente Winter 1882-83) In a letter to Lou Salomé from that period, he says: "Lassen Sie sich nicht über mich täuschen – Sie glauben doch nicht, daβ, der Freigeist' mein Ideal ist?" (BVN-1882, 335 – Brief an Lou van Salomé: verm. 24. November 1882) and again in a letter to Köselitz, he says: "Gewiβ ist, daβ ich damit in eine andere Welt hinübergetreten bin – der 'Freigeist' ist erfüllt."(BVN-1883, 397 – Brief an Heinrich Köselitz: 02/04/1883) This is the period of writing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.*

become healthy, by which I mean 'healthier,' is a fundamental cure for all pessimism" (*HH* P:5).[3] The sickness that he identifies here is brought on by the absence of truths and values, the negative nihilism that one must overcome through a constructive nihilism, one in which the free spirit becomes creator.[4] Nihilism, as risky as it may be, is a necessary step for the liberation of the spirit. Nietzsche says, "we negate and must negate because something in us wants to live and affirm – something that we perhaps do not know or see as yet. – This is said in favor of criticism" (*GS* 307).

Human, All Too Human is a work written in the Enlightenment spirit of criticism and search for truth. The book is dedicated to Voltaire, this "great liberator of the spirit."[5] In it, Nietzsche refers to himself and the free thinkers – *Human, All Too Human* is a book for free spirits – as "children of the Enlightenment" (*HH* 55). The figure of the free spirit emerges as one who frees herself from the shackles of traditional discourses and the supposed truths they offer. The free spirit is a critic and a nihilist in the sense mentioned above. She is such because of her search for truth and authenticity. This search is the driving force of the free spirit. As Amy

[3] I cite Nietzsche's texts in parenthetical citations, using the following abbreviations and translations:

AOM "Assorted Opinions and Maxims," in *HH* II, *op. cit.*
BGE *Beyond Good and Evil,* trans. W. Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).
GS *The Gay Science,* trans. W. Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).
SE *Schopenhauer as Educator,* trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
HH *Human, All too Human*, vols. 1 and II, ed. R. Schacht, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
EH *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is,* trans R.J. Hollingdale and W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).
WS "The Wanderer and His Shadow," in *HH* II, *op. cit.*

Nietzsche alludes to this process of becoming sick and recovering from sickness with regards to his own personal history. See for example: "My humanity is a constant self-overcoming. But I need *solitude* – which is to say, recovery, return to myself, the breath of a free, light, playful air." (*EH* "Why I am so Wise" 8).

[4] I have explained the various types of nihilism that Nietzsche discusses as well as the reasons why he embraces a constructive type. See Christine Daigle, *Le nihilisme est-il un humanisme? Ėtude sur Nietzsche et Sartre* (Sainte-Foy: PUL 2005).

[5] This is the phrase Nietzsche uses to refer to Voltaire in his epigraph which reads: "This monological book, which came into being during a winter residence in Sorrento (1876 to 1877), would not have been given to the public at this time if the proximity of the 30th of May 1878 had not aroused all too intensely the wish to offer a timely personal tribute to the greatest liberator of the human spirit." With regards to the theme of my essay, it is interesting to note that Nietzsche thought "The name of 'Voltaire' on one of my writings – that was true progress – *towards myself*" (*EH* "Human, All Too Human" 1). I take this to mean that Nietzsche considered his embrace of an Enlightenment type of criticism as a means to discover his own self, that is, as a means to free his spirit and achieve authenticity. Interestingly, the dedication to Voltaire is left out of the second edition as is the quotation from Descartes' *Discourse on Method*. Perhaps this is indicative of the progress Nietzsche thought he had made toward himself. However, Voltaire is again present at the very end of *Ecce Homo*. The very last word of the book is: "Have I been understood? *Dionysus versus the Crucified*–" (*EH* "Why I am a Destiny" 9). But the preceding section, which opens with the same question, proceeds to explain that the overcoming of Christian morality is essential. It ends by quoting Voltaire's call against the Church: "*Écrasez l'infâme*!" For a discussion of the importance of the dedication and the quotation from Descartes in *Human, All Too Human*, see my "The Intentional Encounter with 'the World'" in *Nietzsche and Phenomenology: Power, Life, Subjectivity*, especially notes 1, 2 and 3.

Mullin puts it, "one of the most striking features of the free spirit is his passion for knowledge – his need for reasons rather than faith."[6] This fundamental need is what leads the free spirit to embrace her critical stance. I return to this aspect of the free spirit below.

While the free spirit makes a quick appearance in *HH* 30, it is really in Chapter 5, "Tokens of Higher and Lower Culture" that the notion is fleshed out by Nietzsche. This is interesting if one considers the theme of this chapter: cultural evolution. This chapter discusses how cultures and societies evolve through a dialectic of regression/progression. The free spirit and the genius are figures that trigger change and help the movement forward to occur. This movement forward is not straightforward however: it comprises many backward steps.[7] Importantly, Nietzsche explains in the opening aphorism of that chapter that progress is parallel in the individual and in the social or cultural group. Further, he insists on the dialectical relation between fettered and free spirits: both are needed for progress to happen.[8]

Aphorism 225 of *HH* offers us a first definition of the concept of the free spirit: the free spirit is a relative concept. Nietzsche explains, "he is called a free spirit who thinks differently from what, on the basis of his origin, environment, his class and profession, or on the basis of the dominant views of the age, would have been expected of him" (*HH* 225). The free spirit is an exception as opposed to the rule, which is to be a fettered spirit, a creature of habits who has faith in institutions and supports them. Because the free spirit thinks differently and defies commonly held beliefs, she is perceived as evil and as a threat by the fettered spirits.[9] The free spirit is a threat because she makes use of her intellect, which is of superior quality and sharpness, to question things and embody a skeptical outlook, to pursue the goals of the Enlightenment in herself.[10] Nietzsche says that her spirit of inquiry remains lighthearted against the age of seriousness, thus anticipating the gay science that will be the object of the book concluding the *Freigeisterei* series.[11]

[6] Mullin, Amy, "Nietzsche's Free Spirit," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38.3 (2000): 383–405, p. 398.

[7] Nietzsche views progress as a circular movement forward that entails a stepping back. However, progress is not strictly circular, rather it takes the form of a series of loops. The backward movement of the circle (when drawn from right to left) propels us forward to a point that is beyond the starting point. Further, higher culture does not reject older forms but rather seeks to accommodate them. This is a dialectical movement *à la* Hegel.

[8] Nietzsche says that two things must come together: "firstly the augmentation of the stabilizing force through the union of minds in belief and communal feeling; then the possibility of the attainment of higher goals through the occurrence of degenerate natures and, as a consequence of them, partial weakenings and injuring of the stabilizing force; it is precisely the weaker nature, as the tenderer and more refined, that makes any progress possible at all" (*HH* 224). The degenerate natures in this quote refer to the free spirits as those who think differently. This description follows in the next aphorism. Referring to this aphorism of *HH*, Gemes points out, "Nietzsche is near unique in claiming that degeneration is in fact a precondition of progress." Ken Gemes, "Postmodernism's Use and Abuse of Nietzsche," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62.2 (2001): 337–360, p. 355.

[9] See *HH* 241.

[10] See *WS* 221.

[11] See *HH* 240.

Nietzsche proposes that the free spirit is superior, but the strength of her intellect does not entail that she possesses the truth. Instead, Nietzsche says, "what characterizes the free spirit is not that his opinions are the more correct but that he has liberated himself from tradition, whether the outcome has been successful or a failure. As a rule though, he will nonetheless have truth on his side, or at least the spirit of inquiry after truth: he demands reasons, the rest demand faith" (*HH* 225). The free spirit is presented as a seeker, one who searches for truth on her own and refuses to accept authoritative discourses. This will eventually allow her to uncover the truth about herself. Authenticity is here hinted at as the longing for truth. In aphorism 292, Nietzsche appeals to the reader to try to make of herself a free spirit. He indicates how to achieve this: by not looking down on past experiences, such as religion and art, and by making oneself an instrument of knowledge since knowledge frees the spirit.[12] In section 252, the acquisition of knowledge is described as a form of overcoming—every pursuit of truth is considered worthwhile. Knowledge makes one "conscious of one's strength" and allows one to go "beyond former conceptions" (*HH* 252).

Indeed, what matters is for the free spirit to avoid any inertia of one's spirit which may lead to a stiffening of one's thoughts. Exercising skepticism, the free spirit will be the enemy of convictions and will be on the path of truth, a special path. The free spirit is an ever-evolving concept and error is an integral part of its progress.[13] The concluding two chapters of Book I of *Human, All Too Human*, provide us with a portrait of the free spirit and his philosophy of the morning. It follows a series of aphorisms on truth and convictions. In aphorism 637, Nietzsche says of the free spirit that "even if he should be altogether a thinking snowball, he will have in his head, not opinions, but only certainties and precisely calculated probabilities." Further, he says that the way of the free spirit is to "advance from opinion to opinion, through one party after another, as noble *traitors* to all things that can in any way be betrayed" (*HH* 637). Thus, free spirits are presented as seeking "spiritual nomadism" (*AOM* 211). This is part of the obligation for free spirits to become masters of themselves. To be such, one must have freed oneself from alienating beliefs and convictions. This means adopting the critical skeptical stance that Nietzsche champions. One must free oneself from "conceptions of morality, religion, and metaphysics. Only when this sickness *from one's chains* has also been overcome will the first great goal have truly been attained: the separation of man from the animals" (*WS* 350).[14] But this freedom from constraints and received dogma carries with it an implicit ought. As Ken Gemes explains it, "this is not to say that they [free spirits] are free of the constraint of a self imposed form. Their

[12] For art and religion see ibid., 292 and for instrument of knowledge see ibid., 288.

[13] See *AOM* 4.

[14] It ought to be noted, however, that while one frees oneself from the conceptions of morality, religion, and metaphysics, one must not disregard these past experiences, as indicated in *HH* 292, as noted above.

play is the serious play of self-creation."[15] This brings me to the virtue of authenticity.

2 The Virtuous Free Spirit

A fundamental virtue of the free spirit is her capacity to be true to the strength of her intellect and to have the will to use it. Once she has done so, she will engage in spiritual nomadism. Nietzsche writes:

> He who has attained to only some degree of freedom of mind cannot feel other than a wanderer on the earth – though not as a traveller to a final destination: for this destination does not exist. But he will watch and observe and keep his eyes open to see what is really going on in the world; for this reason he may not let his heart adhere too firmly to any individual thing; within him too there must be something wandering that takes pleasure in change and transience. (*HH* 638)

While this may seem to speak against the notion of authentic becoming—becoming what one is—I would argue that it is rather the key to authenticity.[16] As Jacob Golomb aptly explains, "Nietzsche makes it clear that becoming one's true self is a perpetual movement of self-overcoming, a free creation of one's own values and perspectives. These presuppose the persistent overcoming of any 'higher self'."[17] The middle period writings are those in which the notion of *Einheit*, the unity of the self, is the least discussed. However, it is what the free spirit aims for. This unity of the self, toward which one aims, is not the actualization of one's essence but rather, the actualization of oneself as this perpetual movement of overcoming.[18]

[15] Gemes, op. cit., p. 346. In an essay on individuality in Nietzsche, Nuno Nabais has rightly suggested that "… since individuality is not a primary datum to be found by each individual within himself, it has to be reconceived as a task to be accomplished." Nuno Nabais, "The Individual and Individuality in Nietzsche," in Keith Ansell-Pearson (ed.), *A Companion to Nietzsche* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 76–94, p. 82. As Keith Ansell-Pearson puts it, "there is a kind of 'core' for Nietzsche, but this is simply the potential for a self. Nietzsche's self is the product of both nature (*physis*) and culture." Keith Ansell-Pearson, "In Search of Authenticity and Personality: Nietzsche on the Purification of Philosophy," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84.2 (2010): 283–312, p. 285. More on this below.

[16] Jacob Golomb notes that while Nietzsche does not make use of the term "authenticity" it is what he has in mind when he discusses "Wahrhaftigkeit." See Jacob Golomb, "Nietzsche on Authenticity," *Philosophy Today* 34.3 (1990): 243–258, p. 243.

[17] Golomb, op. cit., p. 246.

[18] As Daniel Breazeale points out, Nietzsche does not hold an essentialist (naturalist) or an anti-essentialist view of the self. He says that Nietzsche "refuses to accept either as wholly adequate for understanding what it means to 'be a self.' On the one hand, he recognizes that in order to 'become who one is,' one always requires a sufficient amount of self-knowledge to insure that what one is striving to become is really consistent with what one is (though, to be sure, the 'knowledge' in question does not have to be propositional in character or fully explicit). […] Mere 'knowledge' – no matter how indirect or tacit – is not enough; in order to 'be yourself' you have to act. This is the kernel of truth in all anti-essentialist theories: the self is something constructed, indeed, it is always 'under construction'." Daniel Breazeale, "Becoming Who One Is: Notes on Schopenhauer as Educator," *New Nietzsche Studies* 2.3–4 (1998): 1–25, pp. 14–15. As he further points out, there are times in his writings where Nietzsche will affirm both positions within the same work without adjudicating between them. Breazeale's discussion of this pertains to his analysis of the theory of selfhood introduced in "Schopenhauer as Educator" to which I turn further below as it pertains to the virtue of authenticity.

In the middle period works, Nietzsche offers a list of ends and excellences that the free spirit ought to pursue: self-mastery, self-sufficiency, self-discipline, and self-reverence.[19] All of these are means to become an authentic self. They also entail self-knowledge. As Nietzsche understands it, learning about things and the world is important but the most important undertaking is to learn about oneself.[20] As Simon Robertson puts it, "to master oneself, though, one must understand oneself. This involves uncompromisingly honest scrutiny (*GS* 335; *BGE* 39; *A* 50; *EH* "Wise" 7): [a] veridical assessment of the kind of person one already is […] the ends a free spirit sets himself reflect both the *particularities* of who he already is, as embodied in his motives, and what he realistically believes he can make of himself."[21] This uncovers the virtue of honesty, being true to one's self which is the overarching virtue for the free spirit. In other words: authenticity is paramount to free spiritedness.

It is in the third of the *Untimely Meditations*, "Schopenhauer as Educator," that the notion of authentic striving alongside the notion of selfhood, is first presented.[22] In the first section, Nietzsche claims "we are accountable to ourselves for our own existence; consequently, we also want to be the real helmsmen of our existence and keep it from resembling a mindless coincidence" (*SE* 1).[23] Further he adds, "your

[19] I am indebted to Simon Robertson's comprehensive list which also lists occurrences of such ends and excellences in mature works. See Simon Robertson, "Normativity for Nietzschean Free Spirits," *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 54.6 (2011): 591–613, p. 594.

[20] See *WS* 266.

[21] Robertson, op. cit., p. 601.

[22] While I have chosen to focus on the notion of the free spirit as it occurs in the middle period works, there is good reason to incorporate a discussion of this "early" work here. I find Breazeale's arguments on the status of this work convincing. Breazeale's essay provides a very useful and comprehensive analysis of the history of the work which demonstrates its importance in the Nietzschean corpus. As part of that analysis, Breazeale gathers evidence from Nietzsche's letters and notes and he considers *Schopenhauer as Educator* as a source of information on the program set out for his mature philosophy to come. Specifically, Nietzsche thought that it laid out promises fulfilled in his later works. Breazeale quotes a letter from April 21, 1883, to Peter Gast where Nietzsche says, "It is curious: I wrote the commentary prior to the text! Everything was already promised in Schopenhauer as Educator. But there was still a long way to go from *Human All-Too-Human* to the Übermensch" (quoted in Breazeale, op. cit., p. 7). Breazeale argues the following on the philosophical import of the work: "From a strictly philosophical point of view, the most interesting feature of *Schopenhauer as Educator* is perhaps the complex theory of the self that is sketched – or rather, presupposed – in the first few sections of that work. [this essay contains in a compressed form] one of the earliest expositions of a distinctively Nietzschean theory of selfhood, one that directly anticipates many of the features found in his later remarks on the subject, while possessing a clarity that the latter sometimes lack." (Breazeale, op. cit. p. 13) I agree with Breazeale that this is the most interesting aspect of the work but would insist on the fact that this theory is presupposed rather than elaborated at great length.

[23] It is worth noting that the German has "Dasein" instead of "existence." This is particularly interesting to me given the interpretation I wish to offer of Nietzsche as phenomenologist. The connection with Heidegger comes to mind. If Nietzsche is using Dasein in a way similar to Heidegger, it means that he conceives of the human being as a being-in-the-world and as a being-with-others. For an exploration of this interpretation, see my "The Intentional Encounter With the 'World'" in Élodie Boublil and Christine Daigle (eds.), *Nietzsche and Phenomenology: Power, Life, Subjectivity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 28–43. Also see my "The Subject as Ambiguous Multiplicity: Embodying the Dividuum," in Christian Benne and Enrico Mueller (eds.), *Ohnmacht des Subjekts – Macht der Persönlichkeit* (Schwabe Verlag, 2014), 153–166.

true being does not lie deeply hidden within you, but rather immeasurably high above you, or at least above what you commonly take to be your ego" (*SE* 1). It is important to unpack these statements before moving on. In the first one, Nietzsche posits that we are responsible for our own being and for what we make of it. It is not enough to be born with a certain set of qualities, we must endeavor to actualize them.[24] This entails that we must take our own becoming in our hands, making it our responsibility. The term "helmsmen" which is used here, "Steuermänner" in German, indicates that we can gear our existence in certain ways and thus, we can be held responsible for the direction we give ourselves.[25] In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche writes, "everyone *possesses inborn talent*, but few possess the degree of inborn and acquired toughness, endurance and energy actually to become a talent, that is to say to *become* what he *is*; which means to discharge it in works and actions" (*HH* 263). It is presumably the free spirits who will have that strength.

In the second statement, Nietzsche introduces the notion of authenticity with the term "true being," "eigentliche Selbst" in German. It is not deeply hidden within oneself, as the metaphysical tradition would have it. When Nietzsche speaks of self-knowledge, it is not a matter of introspecting in order to uncover what one is and do nothing with it. Instead, it is a matter of discovering oneself through one's actions and the steering of one's existence. This is expressed in the later imperative found in *The Gay Science*. Aphorism 270 reads: "*what does your conscience say*? – 'You shall become the person you are.'" That self, *das eigentliche Selbst*, the one that we must become is our ethical goal. But the key to authenticity, as said before, is to know oneself. To understand what one is is the key to one's authentic ethical becoming. And, as Nietzsche says, "no one can build for you the bridge upon which you alone must cross the stream of life, no one but you alone. […] There is one single path in this world on which no one but you can travel" (*SE* 1). Knowing oneself is the key to becoming oneself. However, in order to know oneself, one must be freed from traditional understandings of morality and the moral self.[26] This is why the free spirit may possess this virtue; she has freed herself from traditional

[24] Indeed, as Robertson remarks, "there may be people who, having relinquished morality's grip, either do not pursue the highest excellences [as the free spirits will do] or else do but fail to realize them" (Robertson, op. cit., 611n33). These have an important presence in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* under the guise of the last men.

[25] Note that this image is close to that offered by Descartes with regards to the connection between mind and body in the 6th meditation wherein he explores the possibility that the mind is like a captain in the ship that is the body. There, he offers that the mind is intermingled with the body (see Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*). In Nietzsche's case, it is interesting to note that this view allows for the tension between essentialism and anti-essentialism, that is, between a self that is already what it is and a self that is self-created.

[26] Which is why, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche seems to refute the importance of self-knowledge by saying: "To become what one is, one must not have the faintest notion what one is. From this point of view even the blunders of life have their own meaning and value – the occasional side roads and wrong roads, the delays, 'modesties,' seriousness wasted on tasks that are remote from the task. All this can express a great prudence, even the supreme prudence: where *nosce te ipsum* would be the recipe for ruin, forgetting oneself, misunderstanding oneself, making oneself smaller, narrower, mediocre, become reason itself" (*EH* "Why I am so Clever" 9). However, I would argue that what Nietzsche is emphasizing here is the experimental aspect of self-discovery as well as the notion that we make ourselves through our deeds. We must do so while being free from pre-conceived notions of who or what we are.

understandings. Nietzsche explains further the meaning of this imperative to become the person one is by saying:

> We, however, *want to become those we are* – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves. To that end we must become the best learners and discoverers of everything that is lawful and necessary in the world: we must become physicists in order to be able to be *creators* in this sense – while hitherto all valuations and ideals have been based on *ignorance* of physics or were constructed so as to *contradict* it. Therefore: long live physics! And even more so that which *compels* us to turn to physics – our honesty! (*GS* 335)

Here again, the virtues of honesty and authenticity are emphasized, as are the related virtues of creativity, self-mastery, and knowledge, understood as both self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. In fact, Nietzsche associates authenticity, being who one is, with knowledge to such an extent that it is as much an ethical virtue as it is an epistemological one. The free spirit engages in law-giving, in norm creation, as a result of having freed herself from metaphysical and moral discourses. What matters for the free spirit is not which norm she will create for herself but rather, the manner in which these norms are adopted, namely, through a process of critical inquiry commanded by the virtue of authenticity and its correlate, honesty.[27]

3 Free Spirited Virtue Ethics

The connection between Nietzsche's moral agent who creates her own self through law-giving creativity and the moral agent of ancient virtue ethics has been discussed in the literature.[28] It has been suggested by Michael Ure, among others, that Nietzsche understood himself as developing a new philosophical therapy. Thus, he says that Nietzsche "shares with the Hellenistic schools the belief that the central

[27] Jacob Golomb explains this well emphasizing that it is not the content of the norms adopted by the free spirit that matters but the manner in which they are adopted. See Golomb, op. cit., p. 247.

[28] The following is an extensive – but not exhaustive – list of studies that investigate, one way or another, the connection between Nietzsche's philosophy and ancient virtue ethics in its Aristotelian, Stoic, or Epicurean form: Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Care of Self in *Dawn*: On Nietzsche's Resistance to Bio-political Modernity," in M. Knoll and B. Stocker (eds.), *Nietzsche as Political Philosopher* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 269–286; Keith Ansell-Pearson, "True to the Earth: Nietzsche's Epicurean Care of Self and World," in Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland (eds.), *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching* (Bloomsbury, 2013), 97–116; Jessica Berry, "The Pyrrhonian Revival in Montaigne and Nietzsche," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65.3 (Jul., 2004): 497–514; Thomas H. Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Affirmative Morality: An Ethics of Virtue," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 26 (2003): 64–78; Christine Daigle, "Nietzsche: Virtue Ethics… Virtue Politics?," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 32 (Autumn 2006): 1–21; Lester H. Hunt, *Nietzsche and the Origin of Virtue*, Routledge Nietzsche Studies (London: Routledge, 1991); Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland (eds.), *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching* (Bloomsbury, 2013); Bernd Magnus, "Aristotle and Nietzsche: 'Megalopsychia' and 'Uebermensch,'" in David J. Depew (ed.), *The Greeks and the Good Life* (Fullerton: California State University, 1980), 260–295.; Michael Slote, "Nietzsche and Virtue Ethics," *International Studies in Philosophy* 30:3 (1998): 23–27; Christine Swanton, "Outline of a Nietzschean Virtue Ethics," *International Studies in Philosophy* 30:3 (1998): 29–38; Michael Ure, "Nietzsche's Free Spirit Trilogy and Stoic Therapy," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 (2009): 60–84.

motivation for philosophizing is the urgency of human suffering and that the goal of philosophy is human flourishing, or *eudaimonia*."[29] There is some debate, however, as to which Hellenistic school may have influenced him or even whether it was Aristotle's views on the development of one's character in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that served as a source of inspiration.

In an article published earlier, I have picked up on the question of whether Nietzsche offers an Aristotelian ethical ideal as Walter Kaufmann has argued.[30] Following Bernd Magnus' critique of Kaufmann's interpretation, I argued that Aristotle's understanding of *eudaimonia* and of *phronesis* are at odds with Nietzsche's ideals.[31] Aristotelian *eudaimonia* is linked to the exercise of one's rationality in thought and in action. The good life is that of the individual who lives a rational life, i.e., one that is guided by practical wisdom, *phronesis*. Aristotle's practically wise person, the *phronemos*, possesses the wisdom necessary to determine virtue, understood as the means between a vice by excess and a vice by default. Briefly put, virtues are the means by which a *phronemos* will attain *eudaimonia*, the happy life of intellectual activity. Human beings need virtues as such character traits allow them to flourish. The *phronemos* chooses her own virtues in view of her own maturation as a rational being. This emphasis on the rational nature of the human being and the Aristotelian definition of happiness as the life of reason clashes with Nietzsche's own views. As Magnus and others have pointed out, Nietzsche would see in this yet another iteration of the metaphysical-religious view of the human that prevents flourishing rather than fosters it. What then are we to make of this?

I still hold to the view that we cannot understand Nietzsche's ethical ideals in Aristotelian terms. However, I think there are interesting aspects of the program set out in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that resemble what Nietzsche puts forth in the figure of the free spirit. Interestingly, the *phronemos*, like the free spirit, is her own master and law-giver. One could even offer that the *phronemos* is also a relative concept. Indeed, while there is extensive discussion of virtues and their related vices by excess or by default in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is interesting to note that they are all relative to circumstances and to individuals. One must be virtuous but the exact way in which one must be virtuous is not specified. What matters throughout is the moral development and flourishing of the agent. Because Aristotle conceives of the human being as essentially a rational animal, this flourishing is linked to the exercise of reason. But if one conceives of the human in a different way, as Nietzsche does, the concern with flourishing will not ultimately rest with the development of one's intellectual abilities.

[29] Ure, op. cit., p. 62.

[30] See Christine Daigle, "Nietzsche: Virtue Ethics… Virtue Politics?," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 32 (Autumn 2006): 1–21 for my discussion. Kaufmann makes this argument in his influential work *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968). In his book, he suggests that we should understand Nietzsche's opposition to Christianity and Christian religion in view of the influence Aristotle exerted on him. His claims rest on the connection he makes between Aristotle's concept of pride, or "greatness of soul" (megalopsychia), and Nietzsche's notion of the Übermensch.

[31] See Magnus, op. cit., pp. 260–295.

Scholars who examine the connection between Nietzsche's ethics and ancient virtue ethics agree that Nietzsche is concerned with the good life and the means to attain it. However, this good life differs from that described by Aristotle. For example, Ure argues that Nietzsche was embracing a form of Stoicism in which *eudaimonia* amounts to "freedom from emotional disturbance."[32] On the other hand, Keith Ansell-Pearson argues that it was Epicurus' understanding of *eudaimonia* as simple and modest living that appealed to Nietzsche. Indeed, Ansell-Pearson thinks that it was Epicurus who was the main source of inspiration in the middle period works.[33] He claims that "in the middle period, then, Epicurus is one of Nietzsche's chief inspirations in his effort to liberate himself from the metaphysical need, to find serenity within his own existence, and to aid humanity in its need to now cure its neuroses."[34] Ansell-Pearson thinks that it is in Epicurus that Nietzsche finds the inspiration to focus on the closest things rather than on metaphysical-religious first and last things. This relates to what Nietzsche says of the free spirit's renewed attention to the things closest to her in section 5 of his 1886 preface to *Human, All Too Human* which, as we know, opens with a chapter titled "Of First and Last Things" critiquing metaphysics. Nietzsche speaks of the free spirit's convalescence, writing:

> It seems to him as if his eyes are only now open to what is *close at hand*. He is astonished and sits silent: where *had* he been? These close and closest things: how changed they seem! What bloom and magic they have acquired! […] He had been *beside* himself: no doubt of that. Only now does he see himself – and what surprises he experiences as he does so! (*HH* P:5)

Interestingly this passage ends with Nietzsche referring to the notion of practical wisdom: "there is wisdom, *practical wisdom*, in for a long time prescribing even health for oneself in small doses" (*HH* P:5). The practical wisdom of the free spirit consists in looking at the world differently, in thinking differently, and reevaluating things thanks to her new gaze. Having freed herself from metaphysical-religious discourse, the free spirit may pay attention to the things closest to her and may discover herself anew.

[32] While Ure thinks that it was Stoicism that was a major source of influence on Nietzsche, he also thinks that Nietzsche parted ways with Stoicism to a degree: "by the early 1880s he began to express strong misgivings about Stoic therapy, in particular about its conception of the foundations of human flourishing and eudaimonia." (Ure, op. cit., 72) He explains that the view according to which eudaimonia would amount to a "complete freedom from emotional disturbance" is one Nietzsche rejects (see p. 73). However, Ure argues that in order for Nietzsche to be in a position to put forward the notion of amor fati and the correlate eternal recurrence he must embrace a cosmic Stoicism which entails an affirmation of natural necessity and fate (see pp. 74–80).

[33] Ansell-Pearson points out that Epicurus becomes a prominent influence in 1879. Keith Ansell-Pearson, "True to the Earth: Nietzsche's Epicurean Care of Self and World," in Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland (eds.), *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching* (Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 102. According to him, Nietzsche appreciates the "refined asceticism" of Epicureanism (p. 103; this is a phrase that Ansell-Pearson takes from Richard Roos, "Nietzsche et Épicure: l'idylle héroique," in Jean-François Balaudé and Patrick Wotling (eds.), *Lectures de Nietzsche* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2000), 283–350, p. 298).

[34] Keith Ansell-Pearson, "True to the Earth: Nietzsche's Epicurean Care of Self and World," in Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland (eds.), *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching* (Bloomsbury, 2013), 97–116, p. 104.

In *Ecce Homo*, the book which tells the story of "How One Becomes What One Is," Nietzsche wonders, half ironically, "why on earth I've been relating all these small things," and answers:

> small things – nutrition, place, climate, recreation, the whole casuistry of selfishness – are inconceivably more important than everything one has taken to be important so far. Precisely here one must begin to *relearn*. What mankind has so far considered seriously have not even been realities but mere imaginings – more strictly speaking, lies prompted by the bad instincts of sick natures that were harmful in the most profound sense – all these concepts, 'God,' 'soul,' 'virtue,' 'sin,' 'beyond,' 'truth,' 'eternal life.' (*EH* "Why I am So Clever" 10)

Paying attention to the small things, the things closest to us, turning one's gaze away from harmful illusions and imaginings, that is, freeing oneself from them, will lead one to become who one is. This is the path to truth, a reevaluated notion of truth, one which is to be gained through self-knowledge and knowledge of the world or of the closest things, that is, of the immanent realm of existence as opposed to the transcendent realm which has been rejected. This path to truth is the path to authenticity for the self.

For the reasons mentioned above, I do not think Nietzsche is Aristotelian. There are also reasons why we should not take him to be a Stoic or an Epicurean. There are elements in both schools of thought that are interesting to him and others that he would reject. I do not wish to settle the debate as to whether Nietzsche is actually closer to one school rather than to the other, nor do I need to for my purposes. All ethics have a concept of *eudaimonia*, be it implicit or explicit. Therefore, this is not what aligns Nietzsche with virtue ethics specifically. Instead, what aligns him with virtue ethics is his concern with the moral development and flourishing of the agent. The focus on the character of the individual and her flourishing is what aligns him with ancient virtue ethics, be they of Aristotelian, Stoic, or Epicurean leanings. Each emphasize that the agent must be concerned with her own flourishing and all views hold that one must actualize one's nature. This means that they all adhere to an ideal of authenticity. Nietzsche's focus on authenticity and the free spirit's search for authenticity entitles us to conclude that he presents a virtue ethics, a free spirited one.