# AGONISTIC ETHICS:
# ON THE HOSPITALITY OF WARRIORS[1]

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> "But the healthy strife that makes the city strong—I pray that the force of fate will never end that wrestling: the force of fate, my champion, I will never let you go." — Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*
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> We must know that war is universal and strife right, and that by strife all things arise and are used. — Heraclitus, LXII
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> For [love and strife] are, as they were before and will be, nor do I think that endless time will ever be empty of these two. — Empedocles

With the collapse of the onto-theological order, the structures by which the world once assured and validated its existence collapse, and, concomitantly, though they continue to persist, the politics, ethics, and virtues founded on the Abrahamic tradition lose legitimacy. Thereafter, the phenomenon of nihilism arises, but it is a stage that humanity must pass through. Since, as Nietzsche diagnoses, the "shadow" of the dead God may continue to engulf us for *thousands* of years, the "war" between Dionysus and the Crucified — a "war" that is between two ethical modalities — remains to be fought; the [29] "shadow" in all its manifestations must still be vanquished, again and ever again on into the future, just as nature must undergo de-deification and, in order to restore it to its proper condition, humanity must undergo *naturalization*. For, to shoot one of Nie-

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tzsche's arrows: "It is by being 'natural' that one best recovers from one's unnaturalness, from one's spirituality" (TI: Maxims & Arrows §6).[2] It is in the aftermath of this monumental paradigm shift that we live, in the epoch of nihilism, and the future ages will continue to be epochs of nihilism, too. Let us not be deluded. In the midst of such crises, Nietzsche wonders how we will comfort ourselves and proposes in part that we invent both new festivals of atonement and new "sacred" games (GS 125; Z: IV.18 §3), each of which are to be within the domain of the earth, which is to say, anti-metaphysical. Equally so, if we are to embark on the task of recovering from our 'unnaturalness,' we must also invent modes of hospitality concordant with our ontological condition. If, as Nietzsche illustrates in the *Genealogy of Morals*, certain moral systems or codes of ethics are threatening, impositions that actually inhibit the growth of humanity, obstructing its highest potential power and splendor, then, based as it is on a form of slave morality, Abrahamic hospitality poses a threat that must [30] be neutralized. Moreover, with his incisive critique of monotheism, Nietzsche shatters the very foundation upon which such hospitality rests. However, in diagnosing its problematic

2 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968). Hereafter, the following abbreviations will be used for Nietzsche's works: HC for "Homer's Contest," BT for *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Vintage, 1967), HH for *Human, All Too Human* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), D for *Daybreak* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), GS for *The Gay Science* (New York: Random House, 1974), Z for *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), BGE for *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Random House, 1968), GM for *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), CW for *The Case of Wagner* (New York: Vintage, 1967), EH for *Ecce Homo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), AC for *The Antichrist* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), and WP for *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage, 1968). I also cite from Duncan Large's translation of *Twilight of the Idols* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), and for citations from the *Nachlass* I use Nietzsche Source, the most definitive and philologically correct version of Nietzsche's oeuvre: http://nietzschesource.org

aspects, Nietzsche does not seek to eradicate hospitality altogether but to subject it to transvaluation.

Although there is no concentrated treatment of hospitality in Nietzsche's corpus, in addition to the few passages concerning it,[3] an alternative mode of hospitality can be constructed through other conceptual resources, including his celebration of polytheism, the culture of contest, his agonistic conception of the friend-enemy, and his notion of the *pathos of distance*. These and other elements contribute to founding an affirmative, agonistic mode of hospitality that relishes strife and positive power relations. Whereas Abrahamic hospitality feigns to eradicate power relations, albeit coercively sustaining them, in recognizing the positive aspect of such relations, agonistic hospitality makes them transparent and cultivates productive forms of them. Since the will to power can never be eradicated, denying the combative forces that are part of our total economy is harmful; when suppressed, their execution only becomes pernicious, whether directed inwardly against ourselves, or worse, externally against others. Thus, not only would a noble mode of hospitality aid the governing and shaping of our unruly affects, it would lead to greater power, creativity, and inventiveness, and not only for every individual, but for culture at large.

As the primary foundation upon which Abrahamic hospitality rests, it is necessary to begin with God and the question of identity. As Klossowski observed in *Nietzsche and*

[3] See D §319; GS §334; BGE §§ 41, 207; TI: Raids §25; *Nachlass*: NF-1882, 3[1] (WP §939); NF-1883, 22[1]; NF-1885, 2[1]; NF-1887, 11[2].

*the Vicious Circle*, since God was the guarantor of "the identity of the responsible self,"[4] the willing Augustinian and Thomistic agent, in sacrificing God the stable self is sacrificed, too. The death of God forces us to recognize our real ontological condition, which monotheism had concealed through numerous subterfuges, [31] including convincing humanity that it possessed a stable identity, and inculcating the doctrine of "one normal type and ideal for their species," which led to the definitive "translation of the morality of mores into their very flesh and blood." Whereas monotheism was one of our greatest dangers, polytheism permits us the luxury of beholding "a plurality of norms" and therefore "no eternal horizon or perspective" (GS §143). Subsequent to the death of God, the body is no longer a property of the self but a "locus of impulses, the locus of their confrontation. Since it is a product of the impulses, the body becomes *fortuitous*; it is neither irreversible nor reversible, because its only history is that of the impulses" (NVC 30, emphasis added). What emancipates the metamorphic nature of the self is the revelation of the eternal return, for it "brings about, *as necessity*, the successive realizations of all possible identities" (NVC 57, emphasis added). The self is not something fixed, but something we create, a cohesion formed of the various impulses and *affects* of our fortuitous bodies.[5] It is language itself that has bemused us: "We are only a succession of *discontinuous states* in relation to *the code of everyday signs*, and about

[4] Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 57. Hereafter cited parenthetically as NVC.

[5] Lest this sound somewhat utopic or overdetermined, the 'created' self is formulated out of existing forces and 'material,' but at the same time, there are elements that remain beyond our shaping—as Nietzsche notes in BGE, within us, " 'deep down,' there is, of course, something unteachable, some granite of spiritual *fatum*, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined selected questions" (§231).

which *the fixity of language* deceives us" (NVC 41). As Klossowski observes in *Such a Deathly Desire,* the "soul" is full of phantasms that bespeak its aptitude for continuous metamorphosis and "various diverse extrahuman forms of existence are offered to the soul as so many possibilities of being — stone, plant, animal, star — but precisely insofar as they would always be possibilities for the life of the soul itself" (119).[6] It is not only in our encounters with others that we can develop new possibilities of being, but in our encounter with the geological, vegetal, animal, and cosmic realms, too, which illustrates the [32] porousness of ourselves and the world, that our bodies are not firmly bound vessels but engirth that which surrounds them as what surrounds our bodies engirths us, too.[7] Founded as it is on the notion of a fixed identity whose security is assured by the ontological status of God, and always in need of securing that identity — a subjectivity tainted by "sin" no less — Abrahamic hospitality has no validity in the post-Nietzschean epoch.[8] With an agonistic mode of hospitality, identity is never secured or

[6] Polytheistic culture (and ethics) does not function under principles of normativity (monotheism institutes one normal type), nor does it compel or rather *force* us to renounce our animal, vegetative, or mineral being but *embody* it and recognize how interwoven we are with such realms. See Graham Parkes' *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) for an astute exploration of these fascinating aspects of Nietzsche's thought.

[7] With Klossowski's reference to stars, one is reminded of Nietzsche's injunction in Zarathustra to give birth to dancing stars (Z: P.5), as well as his insistence on destroying the ego in order to "feel cosmically": "To learn step by step to cast off the *supposed individual*! To expose the errors of the ego! To see *egoism* as *error*! But not to mistake altruism for its opposite! That would only be love for *other supposed* individuals! No! To go *beyond* 'me' and 'you'! *To feel cosmically*! [*Kosmisch empfinden*!]" (KSA 9, 11[7]). It is not "think cosmically" as several commentators have it.

[8] If, as Paul de Man argues, every age is modern, "post-modernism" is an imprecise and meaningless term. Post-Nietzschean is far more precise and significant for Nietzsche's thought not only marks a significant epistemic break of monumental proportion, the impact of his thought upon the arts and sciences of the 20th century is immeasurable (recall Gottfried Benn's famous statement), thus the term functions in numerous directions, marking not only a schism but a *pathway* out of that schism towards a new future that we have still yet to reckon.

reinscribed, but *disrupted*, and this is concordant with our actual ontological condition. In our encounter with the stranger, this in part is why we must remain 'enemies,' for we aid the rupture of one another's illusory identities and come to one another not like Christ, *but Dionysus*.

The first time Nietzsche addresses hospitality is in a brief aphorism in *Daybreak*. The passage concerns the meaning of "the usages" of Abrahamic hospitality, which he concludes entails "the paralyzing of hostility in the stranger" (§319). As a technology for denuding the guest of his or her power or energetic or combative forces, for Nietzsche, Abrahamic hospitality [33] neutralizes power relations and creates a false sense of equality, specifically pacifistic socio-physiological relations. If to be hostile means that one is *of* or belongs *to* an "enemy," in paralyzing the stranger's hostile forces, in making the enemy into a native as God instructs in Leviticus (19:33–34), the host actually *re-fuses* the stranger, refuses treating the stranger as a guest, perhaps out of fear of the guest's latent potential to be an enemy. The word "guest" comes from the Old English *goest* or *giest*, which meant both "guest" and "enemy," the common notion being "stranger." The term is paradoxical and illustrates that every guest is a potential enemy and every enemy a potential guest; or, more sinuously, it signifies that we always em-body *both* potentialities, which function as a ceaseless dialectic.[9] The instantaneous

[9] Consider the Greek term *Xeinos*, which contains both potentialities, too. As Vered Lev Kenaan notes, the term "contains within it the duality between remoteness and affinity. *Xeinos* is not, strictly speaking, a stranger. He is, rather, a stranger who is potentially a friend. Likewise, he is not strictly a friend, since he retains his primal aggressiveness as an outsider. As is typical of the Iron Age, the ambiguous meaning of "friend" and "guest" remains unresolved." See Vered Lev Kenaan, *Pandora's Senses: The Feminine Character of the Ancient Text* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008) 64.

transformation of the enemy-guest into a native has then two ramifications. First, it divests the other of its autochthonous quality, thus its strangeness is not honored but essentially eradicated, and second, while claiming to found a state of equality, it actually creates *disequilibrium* in exercising power against the other as it feigns to entirely eliminate power relations. If true hospitality can exist only "when its evil presupposition flourishes," or when agonistic relations are sustained as Nietzsche avows in the conclusion to his aphorism, then, in paralyzing the stranger's hostile forces, we destroy what he sees as the only authentic mode of hospitality.[10]

Importantly though, Nietzsche does not speak of being only an 'enemy,' but specifies that true hospitality decreases when the stranger "is no longer *felt* to be *first* and *foremost* an enemy" (D §319, emphasis added). It is not that we are [34] 'enemies' alone, but always both friends *and* enemies — in this, instead of eliding the strangeness of the guest we sustain it. Although both ancient Greek and Abrahamic modes of hospitality recognize the guest's potential enemy status, that potential is always considered threatening. In constructing a mode of ethics that is not pacifistic but agonistic, Nietzsche's concept of the friend-enemy offers us an entirely different way of thinking the figure of the 'enemy.' When defining what he terms the "spiritualization of *hostility*," Nietzsche explains that such spiritualization "involves a deep appreciation of the value

[10] This refusal to recognize the strangeness of the other, to permit the other to remain an 'enemy,' is how we can in part understand *Antigone*. The play can be interpreted, even if just experimentally, as a dramatization of this dilemma. Both Antigone and Creon refuse to recognize or permit one another to be 'enemies.' In each wanting the other to adapt to their position, to become a 'native' and lose their own status, disastrous conflicts ensue. As Jean-Pierre Vernant comments, "Neither of these two religious attitudes set in conflict in the *Antigone* can by itself be the right one unless it grants to the other the place that is its due, unless it recognizes the very thing that *limits* and *competes* with it." See his *Myth & Tragedy* (New York: Zone Books, 1988) 41. Emphasis added.

of having enemies; basically, it means acting and reasoning in ways totally at odds with how people used to act and reason. The church always wanted to destroy its enemies: but we, on the other hand, we immoralists and anti-Christians, think that we benefit from the existence of the church. […] Almost every party knows that its self-preservation depends on its opposition not losing too much strength: and the same is true in power politics" (TI: Morality as Anti-Nature §3). While 'hated,' the 'enemy' in Nietzsche's dialectic is never despised nor to be eliminated; one is to be proud of one's enemies, for one can only engage in contests with those one respects and those one is relatively equal to; acting otherwise is to engage in tyranny, to abuse one's power and strength against contestants one will easily vanquish. One would want a relatively equal foe since being an 'enemy' requires a strong nature, and *desiring* resistances, which entails passionately seeking them out instead of evading or trying to subvert them. An aggressive pathos is then integral, but there is nothing violent or despotic in this — the focus is on *pathos*, on feeling, *not* physical action. [35] And as agonistic hospitality necessitates sustaining *both* potentialities, the enemy always remains a friend; if this dialectic collapses, then, for Nietzsche, true hospitality collapses.[11] To Derrida, this logic of Nietzsche's is to be questioned, for "if there is no friend elsewhere than where the enemy can be, the 'necessity of the enemy' or the 'one must love one's enemies' straight

[11] In general, whenever Nietzsche speaks of 'war' the context in which he discusses it is typically overlooked by commentators, or ignored, especially when addressing what he says of 'war' in *Ecce Homo*. If Zarathustra is emblematic of Nietzsche's views overall, and if it represents his penultimate philosophical vision, it is instructive that the book contains not one act of physical violence against another . . . In fact, Zarathustra walks by his enemies with "a sleeping sword." Some might protest, why then carry a sword, but it is in restraint that there is true strength, in *choosing* not to retaliate as opposed to refusing to out of an ethically oriented religious injunction.

away transforms enmity into friendship, etc. The enemies I love are my friends. So are the enemies of my friends."[12] Here, according to Derrida, "madness looms," and this path is not to be followed, but, as should be clear, this fundamentally misconstrues Nietzsche's exacting dialectic and how sinuously he problematizes the friend-enemy-guest constellation.

If Nietzsche compels us to reconsider the figure of the enemy, equally so, he forces us to reconsider what it means to be a "friend," and he conceives a mode of friendship entirely different to the modern liberal one. In that type, which is rooted in Abrahamic ethics, Nietzsche observes a lack of self-belief, a negative form of selflessness indicative of Christian morality, which praises altruism over and against selfishness because it presumes to be free of egoistic impulses. In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche [36] distinguishes between positive and negative selfishness. The first is considered "whole and holy" while the latter is "all-too-poor, and starving," for it always wants to steal; it is the selfishness of the 'sick' while the former is that of the 'healthy.' Positive selfishness leads in a vertical direction, "from genus across to over-genus," while negative selfishness is degenerative and concerned only with itself, pronouncing "All is for me!"[13] In

[12] Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (London; New York: Verso, 2005) 32-33. Further evidence of how Derrida misconstrues Nietzsche's dialectic is evident in this passage too: "Why still call this 'friendship' except in a misuse of language and a diversion of a semantic tradition? How could we not only be the friends of solitude, born friends (*gebornen*), sworn friends (*geschwornen*), jealous friends of solitude (*eifsuchtigen Freunde der Einsamkeit*), but then invite you to become a member of this singular community?" (35)

[13] See "On the Bestowing Virtue" (Z: I.22). In relation to this, consider Nietzsche's discussion of egoism and "ascending" and "descending" lines of life (TI: Raids §33). For other passages on these notions, see

the total refusal of selfishness, Nietzsche detects an unhealthy desire both to escape one's solitude and an inability to endure it. The modern liberal form of friendship is marked by the need for and expectation of constant closeness, hence its urge to paralyze the stranger's hostility. In addition, Nietzsche diagnoses rather incisively that we are not as close to our friends as we believe we are; such absolute intimacy and harmony is actually a presumption.

> Only reflect to yourself how various are the feelings, how divided the opinions, even among your closest acquaintances, how even the same opinions are of quite a different rank or intensity in the heads of your friends than they are in yours; how manifold are the occasions for misunderstanding, for hostility and rupture. After reflecting on all this you must tell yourself: how uncertain is the ground upon which all our alliances and friendships rest, how close at hand are icy downpours or stormy weather, how isolated each man is! (HH §376)

Thus, in opposition to the constant intimacy sought in liberal friendship, an intimacy that Nietzsche reveals to be essentially false, or at very least highly overdetermined, he venerates and praises solitude, protesting that we should love it and recognize it as our actual condition. Derrida's protests against solitude here begin to lose their efficacy, as do those made by Woodruff, who sets up a false dichotomy between friendship and solitude and argues that Nietzsche rejects friendship in [37] finding joy "in creative strife or deep solitude."[14] But Nietzsche does not disavow intimacy or closeness, let alone

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TI: Socrates §11, TI: Raids §36, CW: E, EH: Destiny §4, EH: Z §2, AC §24. For a passage on friendship and ascent, see HH §368.

[14] See Martha Kendal Woodruff, "The Ethics of Generosity and Friendship: Aristotle's Gift to Nietzsche?" in Mark Osteen, *The Question of the Gift: Essays Across Disciplines* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 120. Woodruff's essay is marred by a fundamental lack of understanding of Nietzsche's conception of *agon*, which leads her to argue that there is an absence of ethical friendship in Nietzsche's philosophy.

friendship; he recognizes that friendship is not as pure or absolute as many believe; that our 'friendly' relations are in fact highly stressed or full of unacknowledged unconscious tensions and oppositions. It is a question of *Redlichkeit*, and to be more in accord with our psychic undertow, distance is venerated over "neighborliness" and loving the "farthest" versus the "nearest" or the neighbor, a notion typified by Nietzsche's concept *pathos der distanz*. Intriguingly, that seemingly paradoxical term suggests an emotive connection remains even in the farthest separation. This is best exemplified by Nietzsche's conception of "star friendship": while the great tasks of two friends may cast them into entirely different hemispheres, and they may never congregate again, or rarely, they remain friends even if they be "earth enemies." This estrangement is provoked by a higher law, which refers to a task resting immeasurably above both individual's private concerns. In construing this friendship in astronomical terms, Nietzsche illustrates that "our different ways and goals may be included as small parts of this [tremendous but invisible stellar orbit]" (GS §279). Instead of seeking near absolute alignment with friends and constant intimacy, though distance remains, this much richer, more expansive conception of friendship illustrates that we can be close even in our greatest distances, for we are united through the "spectres" and "causes" (our highest and most illustrious goals) that we set before us as future-minded tasks. Similarly, in an earlier work, Nietzsche avows that affinity and relatedness can also be recognized not in "how one soul approaches another but in how it distances [38] itself from it" (AOM

In praising "creative strife," Nietzsche does not rule out friendship as she believes, claiming that his notion of *agon* is developed at the expense of *philia*. To argue this is to not think Nietzsche's dialectic and to consider how he *reconceptualizes* what both the friend and the enemy are.

§253). Derrida refers to those who embrace the pathos of distance as a "community of social disaggregation," that it is a form of love for "those who can love only at a distance, in separation,"[15] but once again, this misses and simplifies the sense and scope of Nietzsche's far more expansive and complex conception. In not seeking to make every potential enemy *solely* a native or friend, Nietzsche compels us to sustain the exacting dialectic of the friend-enemy as it is more productive, free-spirited, and honest. It is all too convenient to celebrate community as something so effortlessly achievable, if not inherently natural.

Friendship however isn't possible between all people, nor is hospitality, and the inability to be a proper enemy-guest necessitates exercising reserve with some people. In refusing to be hospitable to all, we see how radical Nietzsche's transvaluation of hospitality is; more, it illustrates the dangers of modern liberal forms of hospitality founded on monotheistic ethics. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche avows that liberal hospitality is potentially harmful, especially to the over-rich soul, for it does not reserve itself, is dangerously careless, and would therefore squander its gifts on those who cannot live up to them (BGE §41). Such a person may have many "friends" but no single *real friend* in Nietzsche's sense, that is, no agonistic companion compelling it to reach its higher goals (NF 1885, 2[1]; WP §939). In this way, such a friend is negatively hostile, impeding the goals one hopes to achieve. Extending this critique in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche questions the act of accommodating every potential guest and asserts that "to

[15] Derrida, *ibid.*, 35.

keep open house in one's heart" is "liberal, but not distinguished [*vornehm*]. Those hearts which are capable of noble hospitality are recognizable by their many drawn curtains and closed shutters" (Reconnaissance Raids §25). Similarly, he argues in the *Gay Science* that certain goals, ideals, tasks, *et cetera* are not to be shared with all because not everyone has earned the right to them. "Another ideal runs ahead of us, a strange, tempting, dangerous ideal to which we should not wish to persuade anybody because we do not want to readily concede *the right to it* to anyone . . ." (GS §382). To be [39] noble then is, in part, to refuse to accommodate everyone, to conserve oneself and one's best qualities for those who are equal to them, an act signifying true magnanimity for the guest must live up to the gift that the host offers; if not, the gift can become a dangerous poison and destroy or harm its recipient, if not simply be wantonly squandered. Such continual squandering of one's vital energies is essentially destructive. Here, Nietzsche's gesture is protective, both of the noble *and* the ignoble figure. The "first precondition for an honest duel," says Nietzsche, is "equality before the enemy. If you despise, you cannot wage war; if you command, if you look down on something, you do not need to wage war" (EH: Wise §7). Although hospitality does not entail 'war' *per se*, the potentiality for 'combat' remains between host and guest, thus if hospitality is agonistic and limited to equals, it precludes possible tyrannical dynamics. And when discussing master versus slave morality in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche clarifies that, when guided by master morality, the friend who *performs* the role of the 'enemy' can act as a conduit for the affects of envy, combativeness, and arrogance; in the end, this enables one to be a "good friend," for we aid the redirection or transformation of

one another's potentially harmful affects (§260). Tom P.S. Angier argues that Nietzsche's conception of the friend entails a kind of absolute sovereignty and that each friend is reduced by the other to being a mere instrument for self-enhancement. Angier confuses the friend-enemy constellation and neglects to take note of the concluding remark of Nietzsche's from which he quotes. It is not as a friend but as an 'enemy' that one acts as a conduit for cathecting dangerous *affects* and this, as noted, is in order *to be able* to be "good friends."[16] In agonistic hospitality, instead of suppressing or paralyzing such *affects*, which only results in their recoiling against us,[17] or others, they are expressed within a specific context and therefore used for constructive ends.

In redefining the morphological character of both what the friend and enemy can be and forging a ceaseless dialectic between them, Nietzsche's ultimate concern is with freedom [40] and growth. If certain moral systems or codes of ethics inhibit the growth of humanity and obstruct its highest potential power and splendor, it is vital to live according to an ethics not hostile to "life," which is to say not hostile to nature or to the forces at work in our bodies, our affects and instincts. Nietzsche believes that modern liberal forms of democracy have only led "to the production of a type that is prepared for *slavery* in the subtlest sense," and the "involuntary arrangement for the cultivation of *tyrants*" (BGE §242). In order to restore strength and freedom to humanity, in order to cultivate our finest qualities so as to establish a strong community, Nietzsche advo-

[16] See Tom P.S. Angier, *Either Kierkegaard/or Nietzsche: Moral Philosophy in a New Key* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2006) 62.

[17] On the recoiling of such affects, see GM: II §16.

cates resuscitating agonistic ethics, for such ethics compel continual self-overcoming and the advancement of collective goals or tasks. Strife can function as a stimulant to incite each contestant to action and to the cultivation of our natural gifts, which Nietzsche believes only come to fruition through competition. Without such resistances, without certain boundaries, one is paralyzed by absolute limitlessness.[18] But to the modern liberal, the only form of freedom is borderlessness, to be without boundaries or obstacles, for they consider such oppressive, impositions that impede growth or freedom of expression. As Nietzsche asserts in "Homer's Contest" however, this lack of boundaries is not productive. Instead, it leads to dissipation, to the inability to even [41] act at all, and the individuals in antiquity were actually freer because of the restrictions to which they bound themselves, a freedom best illustrated by Nietzsche's notion of "dancing in chains";[19] precisely because of their boundaries Nietzsche says that the aims of the ancient Greeks "were nearer and easier to achieve. Modern man, on the other hand, is crossed everywhere by infinity, like swift-footed Achilles in the parable of Zeno of Elea: infinity impedes him, he cannot even overtake the tortoise" (HC 98).

[18] This is the problem with the figure of "Jack the Dreamer", who Nietzsche sets in opposition to Hamlet. Due to excessive reflection and an excess of possibilities, the former is unable to act whereas Hamlet is supposedly paralyzed because of his knowledge of "the eternal nature of things," a knowledge that forces him to recognize that one cannot repair a world that is out of joint (BT §7). Incidentally, I think this general view of Hamlet is entirely mistaken and that, in all actuality, he is a fiercely directed 'man of action' and pursues his aims with considerable focus. As a prince, and thereby subject to royal codes, he cannot simply instantaneously avenge his father's murder as if he were a gangster. But when Polonius screams while in his mother's bedroom, Hamlet presumes that it is actually his uncle hiding behind the curtain, states that he hears a 'rat,' and swiftly and without hesitation drives his sword into the concealed form. The scene clearly illustrates that Hamlet is entirely capable of acting, just as he vigorously pursues all the clues pertaining to his father's death the instant he first learns of them. Hamlet is no Meursault.

[19] Contrary to the lassitude espoused by all too many bohemians and others as indicative of freedom, this aphorism on *bounded* freedom illustrates the exceptional value of restrictions (HH: WS §140).

To clarify why this kind of agonistic dialectic is necessary, to elucidate Nietzsche's positive view of strife, it will be fruitful to examine the passages from Hesiod's *Works and Days* that he utilizes in "Homer's Contest." In his poem, Hesiod speaks of two distinct Eris-goddesses: the first is a destructive force and the second productive. Nietzsche argues that modern ethics, Christian ethics that is, have led us to misread Greek ethics, such as when tragic heroes are said to 'fall' because of their pride, but *hybris* is distinctly not pride.[20] More, such ethics have led to the large-scale condemnation of envy,[21] jealousy, and the spirit of [42] competition. In their proper context, such *affects* can be beneficial. How so depends upon which Eris-goddess orients them and the ethics informing each. The first Eris goddess is designated by the Greeks as wicked and it is she "who leads men into hostile struggle-to-the-death" (HC 97). If harnessed under such a mode of strife, the *affects* clearly become dangerous. The second Eris goddess is designated as good, for, as jealousy, spite, and envy she "incites men to action, not, however, the action of struggle-to-the-death *but the action of the contest*" (HC 97, emphasis added). Elaborating on this in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche outlines a typology of envy and the modes of action that each type produces: the first instigates

[20] For one critique of this misreading, see the discussion of *hybris* in Walter Kaufmann's *Tragedy & Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992) 59–69. Unfortunately, Kaufmann does not suggest a single new word in place of "pride" for translating *hybris* but his elucidation of the original Greek meaning of the word is illuminating. He notes that "the Greek verb *hybrizein*, found in Homer, means to wax wanton or run riot and is also used of rivers, of plants that grow rank, and of overfed asses that bray and prance about. The noun *hybris* means wanton violence and insolence and is frequently used in the *Odyssey*, mostly of Penelope's suitors. It also means lust and lewdness; and the noun, too, can be applied to animal violence. *Hybrisma*, finally, means an outrage, violation, rape; and in law this term is used to cover all the more serious injuries done to a person" (64). For another similar explication of *hybris*, see Richard Lattimore, *Story Patterns in Greek Tragedy* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1969).

[21] For other passages on the positive aspects of envy, see HH §170, HH: WS §29, D §38 and BGE §23.

pushing one's opponent down [*herabdrücken*], while the second compels one to rise up [*erhaben*] to the height of the other contestant (HH: II §29).[22] These directional forces are conceptually related to Nietzsche's notions of "ascending" and "descending" "lines of life," with the first leading upwards "from genus across to over-genus," and the second leading downwards, for it is solipsistic and does not contribute to the community or the whole (Z: I.22; TI: Raids §36; EH: Destiny §4). Instead of denying *in toto* the affects condemned by Christian ethics, this illustrates how they can become powerful means not only for self-transformation and development, but for the creation of a stronger community. Through its boundaries and its continual urge for contest, the agonistic polis does not permit tyranny but insures that our actions are measured and judged against one another and tested again and again.

In opposition to pacifistic morality, which modernity has inherited from Christian ethics, Nietzsche opposes agonistic morality, which we can adopt from pagan ethics. Founded as it is on Christian ethics, Abrahamic modes of hospitality are essentially slavish and deceptive but what I have provocatively termed the "hospitality of 'warriors' " is noble and honest. Whereas pacifistic ethics presumes that power relations can be elided but simultaneously sustains them, agonistic ethics *celebrates* power relations but practices them in positive and productive ways. In order to cultivate excellence and to [43] protect those who cannot live up to their gifts, the noble warriors aren't hospitable to all. If this radicalization of hospitality seems elitist, that anxiety is unfounded for by

[22] One could think of the ascending mode, of rising up, *erhaben*, as a form of *agonistic sublimity*.

"nobility" Nietzsche does not imply a class let alone class structure—the noble are strictly those capable of performing *eventful deeds*. In addition, there remains a place for 'cult' values, which cannot be readily denounced let alone dismissed with the convenient and simple cry of "elitism." To Nietzsche, greatness is not determined by class let alone by race; contra Aryan and Semitic, he locates the source of great culture in the mixing of races (Werke XVI, 373). And although this mode of hospitality is not perhaps entirely democratic, it is still not exclusionary, certainly not in an absolute sense. While someone may choose not to host or engage with someone not deemed equal, that other is not jettisoned from the polis let alone obstructed from participating in *agons* with *its own* equals. Agonistic hospitality resists idealizing humanity and recognizes that one must at times guard against those who refuse to, or are incapable of, sustaining the friend-enemy dialectic and come to us only as malicious enemies who wish to push us down instead of compelling us to rise up. Nietzsche is concerned with the conservation of one's vital energies, as well as sustaining one's independence and the establishment of a productive and exceptional *polis*. To be a true friend, and that implies being such to one's city-state also, one must also always remain an 'enemy,' but it is only in sustaining the enemy-friend dialectic that we can be *true guests*, for such guests recognize that 'hostile' forces are integral elements of our total economy, but that does not imply exercising force against others. We feel such hostility from others and experience it ourselves but most people rarely express it, or worse, suppress or deny it, just as we do with the friends we are closest to, as Nietzsche illustrates in *Human, All Too Human*. In immediately transforming the 'enemy' into a mere native, we engage in a reductive, na-

ïve, and potentially harmful gesture. If we're no longer capable of, or worse, are not *permitted* to remain 'enemies' through retaining our hostility, a legal or moral law impeding our power relations, then friendship as Nietzsche conceives it fails to exist, just as does true hospitality, which doesn't seek to reinscribe [44] identity, but retains the strangeness of the fortuitous body-self that remains an enigma even to who embodies it, or to who it embodies.[23] If the subject is reinscribed, the multitudinous possibilities for self-creation evaporate and our social and political relations are no longer agonistic; the pathos of distance so necessary to the conception of politics that Nietzsche believes to be most beneficial and productive is annulled. It is only through contest that existing values can be questioned, tested, and when necessary, reformed or created anew. If, as Nietzsche believes, "every strong age" is characterized by the pathos of distance (TI: Raids §37) as opposed to being a "good neighbor," practicing agonistic ethics can more probably lead to the cultivation of a strong age. Liberal institutions only undermine that, but for Nietzsche freedom itself is measured in individuals and nations "by the resistance which has to be overcome, by the efforts it costs to stay *aloft*." If we are to seek the highest type of free man and the highest type of free nation, Nietzsche believes that we will find them where "the greatest resistance is constantly being overcome: five steps from tyranny, near the threshold of the danger of servitude" (TI: Raids

[23] As Nietzsche says in "From High Mountains. Aftersong," the poem concluding BGE, "Only changelings remain kin to me through transfiguration." These lines from the poem are quite apropos, too, and have an entirely different resonance when thinking them in relation to the fortuitous body: "— There you are, friends! — Alas, the one you sought, You do not find? You hesitate, astounded — ah, your anger would be preferred! I — am not the one? Different hand, gait, face? And what am I, you friends — not the one? An other am I? And to self, strange? From self, arisen? A wrestler, who too often surpassed his self? Too often strained against his own power, Wounded and thwarted by his own victory?"

§38). Our ontological condition requires displacing modern morality in order to cultivate an ethics that is concordant with it, an ethics that recognizes the necessity of the mindful and measured expression of the will to power. Let us pursue that task.