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Nietzsche on *Amor Fati*

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Abstract: *Amor fati* – love of fate – is one of the formulations most often associated with Nietzsche. How, I ask in this paper, should we understand the relevant kind of love this *amor fati* involves, as against more familiar ideas of interpersonal love and love as historically understood in the philosophical tradition? The love we see with *amor fati* is not, as prominent readings would have it, about the supposed free bestowal of *agape*, nor the pursuit of the beautiful characteristic of *eros*. It instead centrally involves embracing something and coming to be at home with it – in this case, with fate. I explore this philosophically interesting idea of love and explain how it helps us better understand what Nietzsche has in mind by *amor fati*.

Keywords: Nietzsche, amor fati, love, affirmation, fate

“Philosophy is really homesickness; *the desire to be everywhere at home*.”

—Novalis

1 Introduction

Amor fati – love of fate – is one of the formulations most often associated with Nietzsche. Although there are versions of this sort of idea in Hellenistic philosophy, particularly Stoicism, the specific coinage seems to be Nietzsche’s own.¹ The term in fact appears in relatively few places in Nietzsche’s published work: one aphorism in *The Gay Science*, then again in *Ecce Homo* and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*. But because

1 Propertius in his *Elegies* (I, 19, 12) has the phrase “*Traicit et fati litora magnus amor* [great love crosses even the shores of fate],” which could possibly have been some inspiration to Nietzsche; see Kaufmann 2022, 1057–1058. Although there are loose similarities with strands in Stoicism, there are also significant differences. As James Mollison notes: “By Nietzsche’s lights, Stoics do not really accept, much less love, necessity because they erroneously imbue it with teleology, denying purposelessness by embracing divine providence” (Mollison 2019, 111).

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of the close association with life affirmation, it occupies a key place in Nietzsche's thought, despite the relatively small expenditure of ink on it by Nietzsche.

There has of course been extensive scholarly discussion of the related theme of the eternal recurrence – about whether that is to be understood as a cosmology or a thought experiment, what attitude to it is invited and why, how it is connected with life affirmation, and so on.² And a fair bit has been said about life affirmation as well.³ But rather less has been said on *amor fati* specifically.

How, I ask in this paper, do we understand the relevant kind of love this *amor fati* involves, as against more familiar ideas of interpersonal love and love as historically understood in the philosophical tradition? Though it has been suggested that *agape* (the transcendent, embracing love traditionally associated with God) is the best model, I raise doubts about this suggestion.⁴ Perhaps then it is *eros*, the paradigmatically romantic form of love, characterized by the attraction to and pursuit of the beautiful?⁵ Nietzsche, in his scant remarks about *amor fati* indeed does emphasize the connection between beauty and love. But *eros*, I suggest, is a potentially misleading point of reference as well. The form of love that is in operation here is not easily assimilable to either of these notions.

What then is it? I suggest that we look carefully to the surrounding text in *The Gay Science* for elucidation. The love we see with *amor fati* is not about the supposed free bestowal of *agape*, nor the pursuit of the beautiful characteristic of *eros*. It instead centrally involves embracing something and coming to be at home with it, in this case, with fate.⁶ Finding something beautiful is indeed key, but this is the gradual result of love, not what first spurs it. I explore this philosophically-interesting idea of love and explain how it helps us better understand what Nietzsche has in mind by *amor fati*.

2 *Amor Fati* in *The Gay Science*

Amor fati makes its first appearance in Nietzsche's published work at the beginning of Book IV of the *The Gay Science*, entitled "Sanctus Januarius" and written by Nietzsche in Genoa in 1882. That title refers both to the month of its composition, and to St.

2 The literature is vast. Some representative treatments include Schacht 1983; Abel 1984; Nehamas 1985; Clark 1990; Richardson 1996; Reginster 2006; Anderson 2005; Loeb 2006; Huddleston 2022.

3 Magnus 1978; Reginster 2006; Han-Pile 2018; Richardson 2020, ch. 9.

4 Cf. Han-Pile 2009.

5 Cf. Pippin 2010.

6 This form of love is resonant with the core idea from Simon May's important recent work on love. See May 2019.

Januarius, the third-century Italian saint. His blood, kept as a relic in ampoules at Naples Cathedral, is said to liquify spontaneously on three occasions a year. Nietzsche appears to cite this in reference to his own increased vitality with the start of the new year. It is in this context that we get the first aphorism of Book IV, § 276:

For the new year: – I still live, I still think: I still have to live, for I still have to think. *Sum, ergo cogito: cogito, ergo sum.* Today everybody permits himself the expression of his dearest wish and his dearest thought; hence I, too, shall say what it is that I wish from myself today, and what was the first thought to run across my heart this year – what thought shall be for me the reason, warranty, and sweetness of my life henceforth. I want to learn more, to see as beautiful what is necessary in things (*das Nothwendige an den Dingen als das Schöne sehen*) – so I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. *Looking away* shall be my only negation. And all in all and on whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer. (GS 276)

Before we get to *amor fati* itself, we get another Latin phrase, which begins with an inversion of the famous Cartesian formula, and then the repetition of the usual formula. For Descartes in the *Meditations*, he is of his essence a thinking being. Though he might be deceived about a great many other things, he claims that he cannot be deceived that he exists, at least as a thinking being. For Nietzsche, the emphasis is on psychology and ethics instead of metaphysics and epistemology. He is pointing to an inescapably central vocation of his life: thinking, and he is noting the order of priority this stands in to living: he lives *in order* to think. This is not a universal claim; others have different proclivities and priorities.

The passage itself is entitled “*For the new year.*” It is a familiar feature of the new year that many of us feel we have a fresh start and make resolutions. So too for Nietzsche: “today everybody permits himself the expression of his dearest wish and dearest thought.” Nietzsche goes on to spell out that resolution, connected with *amor fati*. Notice that this is something he aspires to, not something he has already mastered.⁷ (And as often with New Year’s resolutions – to drink just on weekends or go to the gym four times weekly – they may well have been overambitious and fallen by the wayside come February.)

7 When Nietzsche says, “I want to learn more, to see as beautiful what is necessary in things,” the comma after “more” (which Kaufmann’s translation omits) is potentially important. Is Nietzsche *learning* to see as beautiful what is necessary in things? Or is Nietzsche instead describing two things: learning more and seeing as beautiful what is necessary in things? Since there is no “zu” construction between the “*lernen*” and the “*sehen*,” it is not entirely clear that the first interpretation is Nietzsche’s intended meaning (though see GS 334). Thanks to Anja Jauernig for flagging this point.

He continues by saying he will be one who “make[s] things beautiful.” He contrasts this with a bellicose or an accusatory attitude. Rather than “waging war” on things or on leveling charges against them, he will either see them as beautiful and love them, make them beautiful and love them, or else look away.⁸ This is all within the scope of his New Year’s resolution: a positive attitude Nietzsche wishes for, and will work toward, but has not yet achieved.

Nietzsche closes the passage by noting that “some day [he] wish[es] to be only a Yes-sayer.” This thereby underscores the close association between *amor fati* and the ideal of life affirmation, and it implicitly sets into contrast the opposite notions: life negation and nihilism. Spelling out in full the interrelation of this nexus of notions is beyond the scope of this paper. But in brief: *amor fati* is a more specific version of what it would be to be life-affirming. First of all, *amor fati* involves an attitude of love specifically. It would seem one could affirm something (e. g., life) without loving it. Second, *amor fati* foregrounds a particular aspect of life, namely its fatality. Third, as with Nietzsche’s example of one who has experienced a “tremendous moment” when they would welcome the eternal recurrence of all things (GS 341), *amor fati* is an ideal marked by its extremity and demandingness.⁹ It is not obvious that one failing to reach this ideal of *amor fati* is thereby automatically a life-negator or a nihilist.

3 What is This Fate One Loves

Now that we have seen the central appearance of ‘*amor fati*’ in *The Gay Science*, we might now ask: What is the *fatum* in *amor fati*? What is the *fate* that one loves? In its usual meaning, ‘fate’ refers to the events that transpire that are dictated by forces outside a person’s control. In classical Greek mythology, the three fates – Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos – spin out a person’s destiny.¹⁰ Nietzsche does not, so far as I can tell, give us a *definition* of fate (*fatum*; *Schicksal*), but the picture presupposed in *The Gay Science* (e. g., GS 306, 323) and elsewhere seems to be in keeping with its most familiar sense that what is fated is a matter of (pre)-determination either by

⁸ We should notice as well the difference here with many glosses on the eternal recurrence, according to which a full reckoning with everything, including the very worst, seems to be required. Nietzsche sets out “look[ing] away” as an explicit possibility, and as an alternative to loving things and making them beautiful. If one is to negate, this is the preferred kind of negation.

⁹ On this dimension of the eternal recurrence, see Huddleston 2022.

¹⁰ That image suggests that fate is not a matter of necessity in the strict sense. Even if the fates predestine you to do something, they did not *have* to predestine you to do that. It is thereby weaker than the robust metaphysical idea of necessity.

factors or forces outside of you or perhaps by aspects of your underlying nature (BGE 231).¹¹ GM II:17 reinforces this impression, when describing the conquering masters as setting upon the conquered “like fate” (*Schicksal*) in “coming without basis, reason, consideration, pretext [...] like lightning.” Whether from Zeus, or from atmospheric electricity, if and when lightning strikes is something outside of our hands. Fate is thus largely, though perhaps not entirely, beyond one’s control.¹²

In all the published passages where Nietzsche mentions *amor fati*, there is a close connection to the idea of the necessary (*das Nothwendige*). In the formulation from GS 276: “I want to learn more, to see as beautiful what is necessary in things.” Six years later in *Ecce Homo*, the presentation of *amor fati* would seem to be even more demanding: “that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal (*verhehlen*) it – all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary – but love it” (EH, “Clever,” 10).¹³

11 BGE 231: “But at the bottom of us, really ‘deep down,’ there is, of course, something unteachable, some granite of spiritual *fatum*, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined selected questions.” As the context of this passage makes clear, Nietzsche is *not* claiming here that the majority or core of a person’s character is inevitably fixed, nor is it fixed what happens to them. Nietzsche presents this element of fatedness in our nature as compatible with a form of “[l]earning [that] changes us” (BGE 231) and other sorts of malleability in us. Nietzsche is simply highlighting the aspect of us that remains intractably “unteachable.” This element of us is the exception rather than the norm.

12 Emerson, in his essay “Fate” in *The Conduct of Life*, does not see fate as incompatible with freedom; indeed “a part of fate is the freedom of man.” Nietzsche read Emerson in German translation as a teenager and two of Nietzsche’s earliest essays from 1862 (“Fate and History” and “Freedom of the Will and Fate”) are in close dialogue with Emerson. Nietzsche’s enthusiasm for Emerson continues, and the 1882 edition of *The Gay Science* has an epigraph from Emerson. Nietzsche’s two early essays are available with a translation and commentary by George Stack, “Nietzsche’s Earliest Essays: Translation of and Commentary on ‘Fate and History’ and ‘Freedom of the Will and Fate,’” *Philosophy Today* 37:2 (1993). In these early essays, Nietzsche is keen to show that fate does not preclude freedom. For discussion of this Emersonian influence on Nietzsche, see Stack 1992; Friedl 1997. For the affinities between Nietzsche and Emerson on the subject of *amor fati*, Zavatta (2019, 62–66) is particularly helpful.

13 The two other appearances in the published work are in *Ecce Homo* (“The Case of Wagner,” 4) and in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* (“Epilogue,” 1). In these instances, Nietzsche describes *amor fati* as his “innermost nature” and couches it as a love for what is necessary, echoing the *The Gay Science* formulation. The earlier formulation from *The Gay Science* (§ 276) seems to leave open the possibility, and perhaps to imply, that not everything is necessary. That is because focusing on “what is necessary in things” (Kaufmann’s translation) or (more literally) “the necessary in things” (*das Nothwendige an den Dingen*) as the object of love suggests a contrast class of that which is *not* necessary in things. It is in principle possible that “what is necessary in things” or “the necessary in things” encompasses *everything* about them – that every aspect is necessary – but there seems

Yet what does Nietzsche mean by the “necessary” or by what is “necessary in things”? Earlier in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche is skeptical of the idea of understanding necessity with reference to supposed laws of nature. Such an approach, for him, is misguided – a shadow of God (GS 109). The image of a law, he thinks, depends on the idea that there is a lawgiver who makes the world obey. But there is no such lawgiver, and no “laws”; there are just “necessities” (GS 109). Yet how exactly do we then understand these necessities philosophically? Are the events that transpire in our lives or in human history necessary?¹⁴ If so, in how strong a sense? Are they necessary in the objective metaphysical sense that things could not be or have been otherwise? We could think such a notion of necessity is in play, if we take seriously the eternal recurrence as cosmology, or other metaphysical speculations (e. g., the interconnectedness of everything) gestured at in the *Nachlaß* or given voice to by Nietzsche’s character Zarathustra. Yet, if this were Nietzsche’s position, how does this square with the important leitmotif from the *Genealogy* that contingency is the hallmark of history, with things not developing of necessity, but rather as the collisions of chance?¹⁵ When someone meets the unfortunate fate of being struck dead by lightning – or by the guillotine-wielding mob – is this necessitated, in such a way that things really could not have been otherwise? What one is to say from Nietzsche’s perspective is not clear-cut, to say the least. Strands in his work seem to pull in competing directions.

Given that fine-grained, high-level metaphysics was probably not Nietzsche’s main interest and certainly was not his *forté* – or so it seems to me – it is best to approach his usage of ‘necessity’ and cognate terms with the recognition that it is

to be an implicature suggesting otherwise. The later formulation from *Ecce Homo* says that loving what is necessary is a matter of wanting nothing at all to be different. On the face of it, there is no such commitment in *The Gay Science* passage; one could love the necessary in things, yet want a number of things to be different. Moreover, the second sentence in the quoted EH passage, coupled with the first quoted portion, might be taken to suggest that the totality of things is necessary, since “not merely bear[ing] what is necessary [...] but lov[ing] it” seems to be an elaboration of what is involved in “wanting nothing to be different.” In short, although there is a perhaps a reading of these two passages together where they are expressing the same view, the position seems to have gotten more demanding in Nietzsche’s later text. Moreover, the description of it as his “innermost nature” is far more definitive than the new year’s resolution from GS 276 to try to achieve this attitude.

14 Here we could get entangled in issues in Nietzsche’s metaphysics, such as it is: Is he a determinist? If so, of what kind? A causal essentialist (Leiter 1998; Leiter 2002) instead? How much space, if any, is left open for contingency? Is he, as Anderson 2005 has argued, following Nehamas 1985, an “inverse superessentialist”? Does his view then leave space for an open future? Does his view allow for the possibility that things could have transpired differently from how they did transpire? These difficult questions cannot be treated here.

15 For a good development of this reading, see Foucault 1984.

perhaps quite loose. We should not simply assume that it is the philosopher's notion of a strong modal robustness, such that if something is necessary it must be that way, or is true in every possible world, *à la* Leibniz. Indeed, in the context of *amor fati*, Nietzsche's loose use of 'necessity,' I suspect, could well just amount to what in stricter philosophical terms would be better described as actuality: how things are, and have been – not how they *have* to be (in the sense that they could not possibly have been otherwise). The locution of 'necessity' is just a way of emphasizing that it is what we are ineluctably stuck with.

Yet treating this thorny topic adequately would require another paper, and even then, I think the text is unlikely to settle things in an exegetically or philosophically satisfying way. My main focus, in any event, is on *amor*, not *fat(um)*. We can, however, note that it is an open question just what Nietzsche means by fate and by necessity. My key point in this section is a negative one: do not simply assume he is talking about something deeply metaphysical with 'necessity' or with 'fate.'¹⁶

Now, what is it to *love* this fate, ill-defined though it may be? Is it, as has been suggested, a kind of *agape*? A sort of *eros*? Or something else still? In the sections to follow, I reflect critically on these possibilities, and caution us against trying to shoehorn this notion into these two familiar categories of interpersonal love. I then go on to develop a positive suggestion about how we might think about this love, both by analogy with interpersonal love and on its own terms.

¹⁶ Another interpretive strategy, suggested by Tom Stern (2013), is to claim that Nietzsche in fact referring to something quite specific in the fate that he is seeking to love. On the line of interpretation Stern develops, Nietzsche is here highlighting the inescapability of error in our cognition and calling upon us to love this specifically. Stern thus writes of *amor fati* that it "is not a personal theodicy – a demand to love thy cancer: it is, rather, the hope for a way of coming to terms with what is necessary for us, namely our error" (Stern 2013, 155). But, even confining ourselves to *The Gay Science* and leaving aside *Ecce Homo*, it is not clear to me that close attention to the passage, and surrounding passages, bears out Stern's reading. Stern is right to say that Nietzsche highlights the necessity and inescapability of error elsewhere in *The Gay Science*, and presents *amor fati* as love for what is necessary. If error is necessary, then he must love error too. But, despite the opening Cartesian allusion, Nietzsche never mentions error (or any related notion) at all in GS 276. Nietzsche says he wants to see as beautiful what is necessary "*in things*" (emphasis mine). That would seem to be quite general. It is not about simply seeing a specific aspect of things (viz., inescapable error) as beautiful. Therefore, I do not see decisive or even persuasive textual evidence for the limitation Stern seeks to introduce, namely, that *amor fati* takes error and only error as its object. The point of Nietzsche's lead-in in the first sentences of GS 276 is not, it seems to me, to limit the scope of what he wants to affirm, but instead to explain the conditions that led him, with the exuberance of fresh beginnings in the new year, to the position of where he wanted to embrace this sort of loving attitude toward what is necessary in things.

4 An Agapic Interpretation of *Amor Fati*

Perhaps the most sustained analysis of *amor fati* in the anglophone literature is Béatrice Han-Pile's.¹⁷ According to Han-Pile's interpretation, *amor fati* is to be understood along the lines of a kind of *agape*. She draws the distinction between *agape* and *eros* on broadly metaphysical lines around the locus of value. *Agape*, she claims, bestows value on the beloved object, whereas *eros* responds to this value.¹⁸

One can see why Han-Pile is interpretively drawn to *agape*. Something about its characteristic generosity and outpouring seems to be fitting to the sort of attitude that Nietzsche is describing. Her interpretation also promises to resolve a paradox thrown up by Nietzsche's work: How can we love fate, when so much can seem to be manifestly awful and unlovable, judging by its characteristics? Han-Pile's solution, on Nietzsche's behalf, is that *amor fati* is not the sort of love that appraises and responds to the value of its object. So we can thus love even seemingly unlovable fate, if it is an agapic bestowal of value, rather than a response to antecedent value or disvalue.

Han-Pile thus presents a potentially neat interpretive solution. But as I see it, there are also considerable limitations to the agapic reading. First, it is not clear that Nietzsche himself had this way of conceiving the *agape/eros* distinction, even implicitly.¹⁹ Second, when it comes to *agape* and *eros* as conceptions of love more generally, this way of regimenting them is, at the very least, controversial within the philosophical and theological traditions in which they occur. Third, even taking on board this conception of *agape*, there are several further reasons for doubting that Nietzsche conceives of *amor fati* in these terms.

On the notion of *agape* itself, why think it is a matter of unconstrained bestowal? Han-Pile seeks to build textual support for this idea from Luther's remarks on love in his *Heidelberg Disputation* and the theologian Anders Nygren's discussion of it in the twentieth century.²⁰ Luther describes the love God has for creatures who are fallen and unworthy.²¹ He, along with Nygren, appears to think that it is through this *agape* that God bestows his grace upon us and thus is supposed to create the lovability of the beloved object.

¹⁷ Han-Pile 2009.

¹⁸ Han-Pile 2009, 227.

¹⁹ On this criticism, see Stern 2013.

²⁰ Han-Pile cites Luther here in the *Heidelberg Disputation*, where he notes that "God's love (*amor*) does not find, but creates, its lovable object" (Han-Pile 2009, 251). For the fuller context, see Dillenberger 1962, 503.

²¹ As Han-Pile (2009) notes, Luther makes this point using the Latin 'amor.'

This Lutheran tradition aside, it is not theologically settled whether this even correctly characterizes God's love for humans. Another theological view holds that humans (compared with, say, piles of mud or bacterial cells) are especially worthy of love because they are made by God in the image and likeness of God; they have that divine spark in the form of a soul. They may be wicked and fallen, but this does not deprive them of this core element that is itself still lovable. Nygren briefly considers such a view, then dismisses it. Yet his reasons for doing so seem to me rather weak.²² I am not disputing that there is some historical-theological backing for this very voluntarist picture of God, a picture that would take up one side in a Euthyphro-like dilemma. But it is not clear to me that this is the only, or the best, way of understanding *agape*.

In addition to the points already mentioned, the biggest stumbling block is this: *agape*, as understood in Christianity, is not asymmetrical, but instead is supposed to be marked by mutuality. It describes the love not just of God for humans, but humans for God.²³ And what, on this theological outlook, could be more meriting of love than God? It cannot be correct to say of *agape* that it is about bestowal in general, because humans do not bestow the value of God on Him by having *agape* for Him. Now, it may be that humans cannot, of their own accord, attain this sort of love; it can only happen thanks to God's grace. But from the fact that we need His help, it does not follow that such love is then unmerited. Indeed, that suggestion is theologically absurd. Nothing more *merits* our love than God. The metaphysical point about the locus of value and bestowal is just orthogonal to *agape*, fully and properly understood.

Turning now to *eros*: according to Han-Pile, this sort of love, by contrast with *agape*, is merited by the perceived value of the object. Yet one could agree with the broadly Platonic view that the beautiful is the object of love, while disagreeing with the Platonic view about the objectivity of the beautiful. For instance, if one thinks of beauty as in the eye of the beholder, then the beauty to which *eros* responds is not

22 Nygren writes: "If this interpretation of Divine forgiveness and love were correct, God's love would not in the last resort be spontaneous and unmotivated but would have an adequate motive in the infinite value inherent in human nature. The forgiveness of sins would then imply merely the recognition of an already existing value. But it is evident enough that this is not the forgiveness of sins as Jesus understands it" (Nygren 1957, 79). This confuses the issues in play. Nygren's reasoning seems to be based on the suppressed premise, attributed to his opponent for the purposes of a *reductio*, that forgiveness would be an obligation on God's/Jesus's part, if humans had inherent value. But why should one accept this premise? One might think that God's forgiveness is always a gift, never an obligation.

23 It is a feature of all of the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus calls on his followers to "love (*agapēseis*) the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37, KJV). Cf. similar formulations in Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27.

a property objectively there, but instead is due to one's subjective outlook. Moving beyond just the beautiful, one might think that caring about things, including in erotic relationships, bestows value on them. This is the picture of love given voice to in contemporary philosophy by Harry Frankfurt most notably.²⁴ I do not aim to adjudicate these issues here. But I am doubtful there is a close, let alone necessary, correlation of *agape* with bestowal and *eros* with objective responsiveness in either Nietzsche or in the broader philosophical tradition.

In any event, our purpose here is not to settle these matters of theology, or the conceptual history of notions of love, but rather to interpret Nietzsche. So suppose we assume for the sake of argument that Nygren and Han-Pile's bestowal conception of *agape* is correct, where does this get us? It seems to me that there are some other significant reasons for being hesitant about seeing *amor fati* along the lines of *agape*.

First, *agape* is usually taken to be a form of selfless love. Indeed, it is sometimes claimed to be the highest form of love *because* it is a selfless form of love. It would be surprising if Nietzsche, that great enemy of the ideal of selflessness (e. g. GM III:11; III:17; A 54), were to embrace *agape*. For Nietzsche, our love of fate is not disconnected from self-love; it is importantly bound up with it. When we take GS 276 in conjunction with the surrounding passages in Book IV of *The Gay Science*, we see that it is part and parcel of coming to love fate that we come to be satisfied with ourselves and indeed come to love ourselves.²⁵ For example, only a few aphorisms later, in GS 290, Nietzsche describes the attainment of this sort of satisfaction with oneself as the "one thing [...] needful": "For one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art; only then is a human being at all tolerable to behold. Whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually ready for revenge, and we others will be his victims, if only by having to endure his ugly sight" (GS 290). Nietzsche can often over-egg things when characterizing the opposing position, and likely he exaggerates the place of self-abnegation in Christianity. But even so, *amor fati* seems to be much more self-involving and self-directed than *agape* would allow for.

²⁴ Frankfurt 1988; Frankfurt 2004.

²⁵ Being 'self-satisfied' often has a negative connotation, because it can suggest a kind of laziness in not wanting to strive for anything else, or a kind of arrogance, or similar. Nietzsche's formulation, it seems to me, does not mean to have this sort of negative flavor. At core, it is about overcoming the potential for dissatisfaction (viz., through "giv[ing] style" to one's character [GS 290]) and coming to have a self that we can affirm. For further discussion of the theme of self-creation, see Nehamas 1985.

Second, Nietzsche foregrounds learning when it comes to love (especially in GS 334, as we shall see).²⁶ Again, if *amor fati* were this sort of unconstrained outpouring, it is difficult to see what role this sort of learning might have. It could, I suppose, be thought that we need to get ourselves into such a position where we are able to love things in this freely-bestowing way. But as Nietzsche describes this process of learning later in *Gay Science* Book IV, our attention is on the *object of love* and seeing *its* features in a new way (GS 334). Again, as with the point above, this is in tension with the idea that this is simply an unconstrained outpouring.

So while there are similarities to *agape*, I think the differences are also pronounced and salient. *Agape* is therefore not the best characterization to capture what Nietzsche is after with *amor fati*.

5 An Erotic Interpretation of *Amor Fati*

In light of the points above, one might think that we need to look to an erotic interpretation of this love instead. Robert Pippin has suggested a reading along these lines.²⁷ Pippin, importantly, does not seem to be understanding the erotic in the terms that Han-Pile does when she contrasts it with *agape*. *Eros*, for Pippin, is not about appraisal of its object in such a way that failing to have this love is a kind of cognitive mistake needing to be corrected through arguments or reflection.²⁸ This further underscores that Han-Pile's specific way of drawing the *eros/agape* distinction is not necessitated and rather controversial when it comes to *eros* as well.

The notion of *eros* at work in Pippin's account is somewhat elusive, however. Pippin sketches, by way of juxtaposition, the Platonic tradition according to which the beautiful is the object of love, and erotic love draws one upward to higher things. Nietzsche, as Pippin of course acknowledges, has key disagreements with this ethical and metaphysical picture. But Nietzsche, Pippin thinks, is not offering us a reductive proto-Freudian account of *eros* either. Triangulating Nietzsche's position, Pippin thinks Nietzschean *eros* is fundamentally a loving conative or affective state we stand in not just to people, but to ideals and to life as such. Pippin uses this conception of *eros* to highlight what, on Nietzsche's view, goes wrong in the condition of nihilism. On his interpretation, nihilism is not a matter of a specific belief

²⁶ Stern 2013, 148.

²⁷ Pippin 2010; Cf. Pippin 1997.

²⁸ Erotic failure, Pippin notes, is not a matter of "ignorance" or "delusion." "[A]ddressing it properly becomes quite difficult because, as noted, one cannot be convinced that one ought to have a desire, that desire ought not to fail, and thereby acquire it or sustain it," (Pippin 2010, 20).

(e. g., that there is no God, that there are no ultimate values), but instead is a failure of desire, or to use his image, a flickering out of the erotic flame. *Amor fati*, on his reading, is, by contrast, the manifestation of this erotic flame back alight.²⁹

Nietzsche's outpouring in GS 276 can seem to read with the exuberance and enthusiasm of one in love, particularly in the early, heady stages of erotic love. The erotic is also often bound up with the beautiful, in that erotic love, according to the Platonic tradition, characteristically is attracted by and seeks the beautiful. The erotic interpretation could then potentially help make sense of the central suggestion from GS 276 that Nietzsche will seek to see the beauty in the necessity in things. As with Han-Pile's agapic reading, there are thus some good interpretive points in favor of Pippin's reading.

While I do not think the erotic, in this reconfigured sense Pippin gives it, is *wrong* exactly when it comes to capturing *amor fati*, I worry that it is potentially misleading. Fate does not seem to exert the sort of attractiveness usually characteristic of the object of erotic love. On the standard picture of the erotic, the beauty beckons you onward. Fate would then need to be like the beautiful person whose beauty calls to you, with their beauty stimulating the desire for pursuit or possession or whatever is characteristic of such love. But this, it seems to me, would get Nietzsche's point backwards: fate, for him, does not exercise this strong initial erotic pull through its evident and enticing beauty. In fact, when we consider what fate encompasses (e. g., the Last Man, the thought so nauseating to Zarathustra – not to mention the horrors in world history), it is strange to think that fate might have anything like this sort of appeal. On the contrary: if we are able, in the end, to come to see fate as beautiful, that is, as we shall see, an achievement we patiently reach, not the point we start from.³⁰

Perhaps a suitably stretched notion of the erotic, such as Pippin's, can accommodate this concern. But given the conceptual baggage of *agape* and *eros*, trying to fit *amor fati* into either of these pre-existing notions, it seems to me, ends up being more misleading than helpful. Being a classicist, Nietzsche would have been intimately familiar with both of these Greek terms. Yet he uses the Latin instead, and coins a new phrase. If Han-Pile or Pippin were right, why would he do this in Latin coinage instead of Greek, if the key point he wants to make is about *agape* or *eros*? Even if he liked the snappy ring of the Latin phrase, why does he himself never use these Greek terms to elucidate it? While there are analogies to these two familiar

²⁹ Pippin 2010, 65, 116.

³⁰ Another Platonic strand would emphasize that beauty spurs us to give birth ourselves. Here we would be thinking of *eros* not in terms of our relation to the object of love, but rather in terms of what it further stimulates and issues in. This dimension of the erotic might well be there with *amor fati*, but this does not answer the question about the relation we stand in to the beloved object.

forms of love, the disanalogies are at least as strong. We thus need to work toward a different account of what this *amor fati* involves. I now want to look to Nietzsche's own discussion of love in a nearby passage in *The Gay Science* to try to shed light on what he has in mind.

6 Learning to Love

One of Nietzsche's most intriguing suggestions is the idea that love is something we must learn.³¹ Consider what he says later in Book IV of *The Gay Science*, in § 334.

One must learn to love – This is what happens to us in music: First one has to *learn to hear* a figure and melody at all, to detect and distinguish it, to isolate and delimit it as a separate life. Then it requires some exertion and good will to *bear* (*ertragen*) it in spite of its strangeness, to be patient with its appearance and expression, and kindhearted about its oddity. Finally there comes a moment when we are *accustomed* to it, when we wait for it, when we sense that we should miss it if it were missing; and now it continues to compel and enchant us relentlessly until we have become its humble and enraptured lovers who desire nothing better from the world than it and only it.

But that is what happens to us not only in music. That is how we have *learned to love* all things that we now love. In the end we are always rewarded for our good will, our patience, fairmindedness, and gentleness with what is strange; gradually, it sheds its veil and turns out to be a new and indescribable beauty. That is its *thanks* for our hospitality. Even those who love themselves will have learned it in this way; for there is no other way: Love, too, has to be learned. (GS 334)

Nietzsche says that this same picture extends to love generally: love of other people and love of ourselves, presumably along with love of fate.³² Nietzsche's formulation is quite strong – perhaps too strong – for someone as resistant as Nietzsche usually is to universalizing generalizations: 'all,' 'always,' 'for there is no other way.' Let us put aside whether this formulation is strictly true and just explore the model that is on offer here. What, on this picture, would it be to *learn* to love?

One dominant idea of love – to the point almost of caricature – sees it as a kind of unreflective, immediate state. It comes naturally to us, like an instinct. Or it comes over us suddenly, like a force from outside. In the sphere of romantic love, as depicted in Hollywood, we have "love at first sight." Similarly with parents, who describe their sense of love, and the sort of transformative orientation of life it

³¹ Stern 2013 rightly draws attention to this point, contra Han-Pile (2009, 227), who suggests that a love that can be learned is erotic, rather than agapic.

³² See the discussion of this passage, as applied to the interpersonal case, in Serini 2023.

brings, when they hold their newborns for the first time. But if we *learn* to love, specifically if we learn to love fate, this is not the right picture. Learning to love is something more gradual, something, in Nietzsche's terms, requiring "exertion" as well as "patience."³³

Nietzsche explores this process through an extended musical analogy. We come to find beauty eventually in what at first seemed to us strange. Presumably this is not the music with the cheery, immediately-appealing melody, but instead the music that is more difficult, to the point that we may not even discern the musical phrase itself. It just passes us by in an odd wash at first, maybe is even unpleasant on the first few hearings. But gradually we detect the phrase and, in the first stage, "isolate and delimit it as a separate life"; we recognize that it is there. The second stage involves toleration. We are patient and kind-hearted about it. And then we move to growing accustomed to its face, in the words of Prof. Henry Higgins, and onward to love, "desir[ing] nothing better from the world than it and only it."

This treatment of learning to love, as noted above, speaks against the *agape* reading. Han-Pile's interpretation presents love as a spontaneous outpouring unconstrained by the properties of the object. It would therefore seem that such a reading cannot really make good sense of the idea that love, specifically *amor fati* (GS, 276), could be something learned. Granted, there are perhaps ways that we could come to learn to undertake this kind of loving better – in other words, to try to be better at loving in this way. But the passage focuses on the characteristics of the object of love in such a way as to suggest that there are in fact things that, after sustained attention, draw us to the object of love, and maybe even warrant our love.

While a suitably capacious notion of the erotic could make sense of this passage as well, the erotic, as usually understood, would miss the mark. Although beauty is foregrounded in GS 334, we have, as noted above, a reversal of the imagery we might have expected from an erotic account. An erotic reading, of the most familiar stripe anyway, would suggest that beauty is what *initially* appeals to us and draws us in. Nietzsche turns this around: the beauty is *not* apparent from the start. Through a slow process, and with patience, it eventually comes into view. It is thus not that the beauty – in the formulation of Stendhal, and more recently, Alexander Nehamas – promises happiness, at least not at first.³⁴ The beauty is something that

³³ Han-Pile 2009 has usefully highlighted its "mediopassive" character in the sort of agency it involves. We are partly the agent and partly the patient when it comes to love. One can take on board this nice point without accepting the agapic reading, I think.

³⁴ Stendhal 1975; Nehamas 2007.

we only after some time come to see at all. And it emerges thanks to patience with something we initially find strange.

Notice, by way of a more positive point now, that we reach this sort of love through ‘hospitality’ (*Gastfreundschaft*). Hospitality characteristically involves inviting someone to enter your home. It combines generosity and openness, coupled potentially with a sort of vulnerability (door unlocked, drawbridge and defenses down). It is through extending this hospitality that the beloved object becomes something to which we are accustomed (*gewohnt*) and then comes to be part of the fabric of life: something we miss when it is gone and would not want to be without. Given that Nietzsche himself elaborates a conception of love in Book IV of *The Gay Science*, we should, I submit, look first to this, rather than Luther, in trying to understand what the *amor* might be in the *amor fati* mentioned in the very same book. I suggest that this idea of love is better captured in a different interpretation. The core of this sort of love is a matter of coming to be *at home* with someone or something and thereby to embrace it. In the section to follow, I will spell out in further detail how this idea of being at home is useful for understanding Nietzsche’s account of *amor fati*.

7 The Dwelling Interpretation of *Amor Fati*

In the post-Kantian philosophical tradition, there is a rich discourse around the idea of being ‘at home’ in the world. It is prominent in the Early German Romantics. Novalis, as quoted in this paper’s epigraph, famously says that “Philosophy is really homesickness; *the desire to be everywhere at home (zu Hause)*.”³⁵ That same phrasing (“*zu Hause*”) is one that Hegel uses in the context of his philosophy of history. Such history, for Hegel, is a form of theodicy, not in the traditional theological sense of trying to reconcile the existence of evil with an omnipotent and benevolent God, but instead reconciling us to the ways of the world.³⁶ A theodicy, in this Hegelian form, will seek to vindicate the basic rationality and order of things. It will not show us that everything is perfect, but will show us that things are increasingly tending toward progress and toward the greater realization of freedom. The result, according to Hegel, will be a “peace” (*Friede*) with “actuality” (*Wirklichkeit*).³⁷ In marked

³⁵ Novalis 2007, no. 857. For further discussion, see Beiser 2006, 102.

³⁶ See his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (HW, 20:455) or his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (HW, 12:28). For further discussion of theodicy, and its connection to Hegel’s wider philosophical project, see Hardimon 1994, 19–20; Geuss 1999.

³⁷ *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, HW 7:27; see discussion in Geuss 1999.

contrast, nineteenth-century pessimism, given voice to by Schopenhauer and a range of other figures, maintains, in Schopenhauer's version, that the world systematically frustrates our basic human needs and is therefore *not* a home for us.³⁸

Nietzsche, in his treatment of loving fate, is part of this post-Kantian discourse, most directly, in the form of an answer to Schopenhauer. Fate is not amenable to a rational or moral vindication, yet we must avoid falling into the life-negation characteristic of pessimism. Nietzsche, with the idea of *amor fati*, wants to embrace this world and make his home here, amidst the imperfection, suffering, and potential danger that fate brings in tow. By foregrounding this element, I hope to better situate Nietzsche's idea of *amor fati* in its intellectual context of discussions of being at home in the world, by optimists and pessimists alike.

Note what he says just a few aphorisms after the initial one discussing *amor fati*:

For believe me: the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is – *to live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors, you seekers of knowledge!³⁹ Soon the age will be past when you could be content to live hidden in the forest like shy deer. At long last knowledge will reach out its hand for its due; it will want to *rule* and *possess*, and you with it! (GS 283)

It is instructive that one of his key images is not just of exploring a new place (ships in uncharted seas), or facing difficulties (living at war), but of *building a city*. The progression within the passage itself is to being *rulers* and *possessors*, that is to say, those who govern and who make a place their own; in this way, they go beyond “robbers,” who take from it, and possibly beyond “conquerors,” who may secure victory over a place, but then move on elsewhere. One important form of “fruitfulness and enjoyment (*Genuss*)” comes from establishing oneself in a place, with this

³⁸ Although Nietzsche does not respond directly to Hegel, Nietzsche responds to nineteenth-century pessimism (esp. Schopenhauer, but also different versions in many other figures, including Mainländer, Hartmann, Plümacher, Bahnsen), and they in turn often have Hegel's optimism in the philosophical background. For discussion of nineteenth-century pessimism, see Beiser 2016. For Nietzsche's engagement with it, see Reginster 2006; Hassan 2023.

³⁹ This might seem to lend credence to Stern's (2013) interpretation. But I think it is instead reflective of Nietzsche's intended audience. He is not speaking to just anyone. He is speaking to a select group of knowledge-seekers and elaborating a more general point through the more specific example of knowledge-seeking. By encouraging them to “live dangerously,” he is not encouraging them to be simply *epistemically* adventurous, in being willing to err, but encouraging a broader way of living that will involve encountering difficulties and resistances in other domains too, as they seek knowledge.

establishment coming both with potential benefits and with potential risks. Such risk comes with the territory, since fate, by its nature, lies largely, if not entirely, outside of our control. The volcano may erupt and destroy us. Taking Nietzsche's image further here, we might say that we are, as it were, always already on the side of the volcano. We can "hid[e] in the forest like shy deer" (GS 283). We can retreat to some alternative sanctuary: in, for instance, anticipation of heaven, or in secular progressivism, with some idealized future that will allegedly be better than this one. We can, in what is perhaps another Nietzschean vein, roam about searchingly without any fixed roots. Or, in another (I think preferred) Nietzschean possibility, we can lovingly embrace this place/world and can build a city here – Nietzsche's metaphor for making a home amidst fate. Nietzsche foregrounds *learning* to love (GS 334) because that task is not easy. Rilke, in a Nietzschean moment, speaks – courting paradox – of seeking to make the abyss our home.⁴⁰ The abyss (*Abgrund*) is precisely where we cannot be grounded, where we cannot find lasting peace, but one tries paradoxically to make something like a grounded home here, in the face of the groundlessness of fate.

If we draw the analogy between fate and a physical house, it is as though you have only one option. You can complain about its many faults. You can want something different. You can fantasize with *House Beautiful* and *Architectural Digest*. Maybe you can make the house somewhat better, within the limits of what you have to work with. But ultimately you are going to have to live here and only here. The attitude Nietzsche hopes for is to come to terms with the house (i. e., fate/the world), make it beautiful, and love it.⁴¹ (Whether this is a good or an appropriate attitude to have is another matter entirely, and one I will return to in closing.)

It might seem that these notions of finding a home and love are only adventitiously connected, but I think the point runs deeper than this. There is a notion of love that is constitutively connected with seeking and finding a home in the beloved. According to Simon May in his magisterial treatment of the topic, love is what is inspired by whomever or whatever we experience as promising us a home in the world.⁴² Another formulation May uses is that such people or things provide us with "ontological rootedness."⁴³ I will prescind from the question of whether

⁴⁰ Rilke, letter to Ilse Jahr, 22 Feb 1923, In Rilke 1946.

⁴¹ There are several interesting questions around this idea of making beautiful that I will not have the space to address here. Nietzsche touches on these issues in GS 290 especially. It is striking that in GS 334 Nietzsche uses the metaphor of the veil being gradually shed and a "new and indescribable beauty" coming into view. Perhaps after a certain amount of beautifying, the underlying beauty of things starts to come into focus for us?

⁴² May 2019.

⁴³ May 2019, ch. 6.

this is the best account of love as such. Even if we are not convinced that it tells us what all love is, or what the core of love essentially is, this is a helpful starting point for shedding light on a neglected *form* of love that exclusive focus on the usual trio of *eros*, *agape*, and *philia* can obscure.⁴⁴ At the very least, May is identifying an important aspect or species of love, and one, I believe, very helpful for thinking about *amor fati*. Yet what to call it, if not love *an sich*? There is perhaps a contest for the least unattractive of several highly unattractive invented adjectives; ‘oikotic,’ anyone? I am going to call it ‘dwelling’ love. That too is imperfect, because there is a Heideggerian inflection on that word, following the customary translation of ‘*wohnen*’ as ‘to dwell.’⁴⁵ I do not mean that term in its specific Heideggerian sense. Nietzsche’s conception of what it would take to be at home in the world is importantly different. But this terminology, and its connection to the idea of home, underscore Nietzsche’s participation in a broader post-Kantian discourse. In line with May’s conception as well, I am understanding this love as connected with finding a home, whether with a person, with a place, with fate, or with the world as such. It is this conception of love, I want to suggest, that best articulates the love in Nietzsche’s notion of *amor fati*. If you love fate, you seek to find, or to make, a home in the world amidst your fatedness.

Yet what is it to *be* at home? One familiar – but of course not Nietzschean – idea of home is that it is where we find comfort, security, and rest. Being at home is often thought to come with the peace of reconciliation, or perhaps with returning to a place of origin, or to a final Promised Land. Or maybe some combination of these things.⁴⁶ As May notes, an original paradigm of this cosmic home is God, who affords all of these things at once.⁴⁷ Hence St. Augustine’s famous remark: “[O]ur hearts are restless until they rest in thee.”⁴⁸ As one might expect from an iconoclast like Nietzsche, he upends many of our ideas of what being at home would amount

⁴⁴ We have not so far canvassed the third form of love usually distinguished in classical Greek philosophy, namely, *philia*, in the form it might take in the love that we have for friends. For further discussion, see Cooper 1977; Price 1989. *Philia* is even less promising, it seems to me, than *agape* or *eros*, in elucidating *amor fati*.

⁴⁵ Heidegger 1971.

⁴⁶ May writes: “This new world opened up by love is not merely a consoling shelter; it is a home, which we *learn* to inhabit, and which impatience or complacency (itself often the result of impatience: what is difficult takes too much time and effort, so we convince ourselves that things will sort themselves out or are fine as they are) can easily cause us to lose. And what we find in this new world – in this home – is not stasis but the dynamism of roots. For roots involve continual growth, both probing down into the soil from which they draw life-giving nutrients and also driving the transformation of the organism,” (May 2019, 42).

⁴⁷ May 2011a; May 2019, 24.

⁴⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, I.i.1.

to. Home, for Nietzsche, is *not* a place of comfort, security, and rest, but a place of danger, insecurity, and continued striving. We are not reconciled, in the sense of a Christian theodicy or its more moderate Hegelian cousin. Why then still think of him as interested, with the ideal of *amor fati*, in finding the world of fate a home, given that he rejects so much from the tradition of what a home in the world would be?⁴⁹

The key link, I want to suggest, is a positively-valenced form of *belonging*: home, that is to say, is *where you feel you belong*. Pessimists take the view that they do not belong in this world; better never to have been born into this cycle of suffering. So too, Nietzsche would say, for Christianity, tendentious and inaccurate though his construal of it may be. Christians, on Nietzsche's (perhaps simplistic) reckoning, think they do not *really* belong here in this vale of tears, but instead in heaven with God. They might, perhaps, think they 'belong' in the world in the sense that they deserve the earthly punishment in atonement for sin; this would be a negatively-valenced form of belonging, as when we say the criminal belongs in prison. But what they *positively aspire to* is something and somewhere else, namely heaven, and that really is their home of homes, where they as children of God can at last abide in God. "Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:6, NIV). *Amor fati* involves feeling that sense of belonging toward earthly life, whatever blows fate may dole out.

But what is it to feel we belong somewhere, whether ultimately with God, here in this transitory world, or in some more specific place? It has, it seems to me, an importantly normative and telic flavor. In this positively-valenced sense of belonging, your life makes sense, and makes sense to you, through this belonging. And, for Nietzsche, it has an existential-agential flavor as well, in the sense that where we belong is (partly, anyway) up to us. Part of what it is to be at home somewhere is to *decide to commit to it because you feel you belong there*. Of course, it is also partly a matter of responsiveness as well, in that the place, as it were, calls to us. Its features, to that extent, resonate with us. In the beautiful lines of Ruth to Naomi, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16, NIV). Ruth, though a Moabite by birth, feels she belongs with Naomi and the Israelites, and commits herself to this as her physical and spiritual home.⁵⁰ Her love is, in my terms here, a *dwelling* love.

Nietzsche aspires to this dwelling love – this sense of belonging – when it comes to fate and the world characterized, for good and for ill, by this fate. The world is

⁴⁹ My thanks to Claire Kirwin for pressing me to clarify this point.

⁵⁰ Cf. the treatment of this story in May (2019, 57).

manifestly not a place of finality and security, let alone a place of comfort and rest. To love fate, moreover, is not just to grudgingly accept it as what we are stuck with. For Nietzsche, that will involve *wanting* to belong in the messy fray of fate, not in some final peace or security or rest. It is a place of danger, as one would expect of a home built on the side of Vesuvius. But it is a home of sorts all the same, *because* it is where we feel we belong and where we commit ourselves to belonging. *Amor fati* calls us to dwell here, as we might have dwelt with God.

8 Conclusion: (Why) Should We Love Fate?

Much of the contemporary literature on love is occupied with the question of its ground. Is there something that justifies our love? Is love a matter of appraisal? If so, what features ground it? Features of the beloved? Features of the relationship? Or is it a matter of our bestowal? Do the reasons flow from us? A number of familiar problems arise – about continuing to love through substantial alteration, or not trading up to a seemingly preferable substitute.⁵¹ If we operate within this sort of space of questions, and perhaps even if we do not, we are left with the philosophical problem of seemingly unlovable fate. It is, after all, a natural question to ask about Nietzsche's view: *Why* should we love fate?

I do not think Nietzsche has an answer here with a justification couched in the form: we engage in a reckoning to determine that fate (or the earthly world) is good, and love it on this basis. There is not an intelligible justification of this kind, and indeed in places Nietzsche suggests that it is wrongheaded to look for such a justification.⁵² Han-Pile's agapic reading sought to address this worry about seemingly unlovable fate by claiming that *amor fati* is a form of *agape* that is spontaneous and without grounds. But as we have seen, there are textual and philosophical reasons for thinking that *agape* (thus understood) is not the right way to interpret *amor fati*. According to Pippin, Nietzsche exalts a kind of cheerful love in *amor fati* that he is never himself actually able to achieve. This tries to solve the problem by saying that there is a tension within Nietzsche's position. He sets this *amor fati* as an ideal, but never gets there.⁵³ Wherever we stand on the question of whether Nietzsche himself reaches this condition, I have tried to bring into sharper focus

51 Murdoch 1970; Badhwar 1987; Frankfurt 1988; Velleman 1999; Kolodny 2003; Frankfurt 2004; Wolf 2014.

52 TI, "The Problem of Socrates," 2. For helpful discussion of this issue, see Richardson 2020, 354.

53 For a reply to Pippin on this point, see Anderson and Cristy 2017, who usefully thematize the idea of a 'home in the world.' See also Ansell-Pearson and Serini 2022.

what it would involve. The *amor* in *amor fati* is instead, I have argued, a matter of coming to make one's home here with fate, to embrace and live with it and to love it.

Nonetheless, the basic intuition motivating Han-Pile and Pippin in different ways is, I think, correct. There is not justification for this sort of love. To be clear, I am not proposing that my dwelling interpretation answers this fundamental concern either, and tells us *why* we should love the Lisbon earthquake and cancer and the like. That would be preposterous. But I think my interpretation helps to bring into better view what sort of ideal of love Nietzsche might be working with when he says he aspires to a form of *amor fati*.

But why did he aspire to such an ideal in the first place? Perhaps Nietzsche's reasoning was that if he did not love fate, then he would somehow be entrapped in *ressentiment* and life-hatred. Yet why, one might wonder, these extreme poles?⁵⁴ Why should we not have a sort of measured ambivalence, which seems, after all, the most reasonable attitude to have. Why *love* fate as opposed simply to affirming it? It would seem one can affirm something without loving it. Why might Nietzsche have overlooked, or at least downgraded these more moderate possibilities, when sketching the sort of ideal reaction he was striving for?

I have a suspicion about this: this attitude reflects an important way in which Nietzsche still, in some sense, has the flavor of a religious thinker. His idea of *amor fati* has this trace as well, despite his rejection of all doctrinal orthodoxy and other-worldly metaphysics.⁵⁵ Against the backdrop of philosophical and religious views that said our real home was elsewhere: beyond this illusory realm, in the Forms, or in God, Nietzsche says that a home is to be made here, in this imperfect world. Channeling the mystical psychic energy of a saint, he wants to come to love the world and fate with the sort of love previously reserved for God. Of course, this proposed redirection of our loving energy from God to the world and fate may simply seem to add all the more to Nietzsche's apostasy and make his view even less plausible. But only when we see something like this as his basic orientation does *amor fati* really come into sharper focus.

But why think it is important to be at home in the world in the way Nietzsche aspires to? We might think, for instance, that the only real home, in the grand, cosmic sense Nietzsche is seeking, is to be found in God, *pace* Nietzsche. Or we might think, in the vein more simply of rejection, that the world just *should not* be a home for us. Here it is instructive to compare Nietzsche's position to Adorno's

⁵⁴ This is echoed in GS 341, where Nietzsche presents two stark possibilities for reaction to news of the eternal recurrence: falling down and gnashing one's teeth or saying you are a God and never have I heard anything more divine. But why not some middle ground of ambivalence?

⁵⁵ Related avenues of exploration are to be found in Young 2006; May 2011b; Richardson 2020, ch. 12.

in *Minima Moralia*. The latter text is stylistically modeled on *The Gay Science*, particularly in its use of aphorisms. But in diametrical contrast, it describes itself as a “Melancholy Science” instead. As Adorno puts it, ethics today counsels “not being at home in one’s house (*nicht bei sich selber zu Hause zu sein*).”⁵⁶ In saying this, he has Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger in view as figures still pining for some sort of home in the world. Adorno contends that it is profoundly wrong still to be championing this, given what our world is like. The world is rife with horror, so rife with horror that loving fate, à la Nietzsche, seems utterly grotesque. It is difficult not to agree, in some sense, with Adorno here, and to regard Nietzsche’s weird resolution with considerable distaste, all the more so with a further century plus of world history. As Adorno says about Nietzsche in connection with the eternal recurrence, he is like someone confined to a prison who has fallen in love with the bars of his cell.⁵⁷

Negativity is the centerpiece of Adorno’s work, and it comes in tow with the seeming conviction that there is no sort of moral life we can lead at all. The best we can do is live less wrongly.⁵⁸ Yet one might think that trying to eke out an existence where we are reasonably satisfied and happy is something like a human right, even when the existence surrounding us is awful in all kinds of ways. Adorno indeed seems to acknowledge precisely this point in the beautifully poignant passage from *Minima Moralia* in which the remark about not being at home appears, a section which he titles “*Refuge for the Homeless (Asyl für Obdachlose)*.” We long for a home, and yet the world is not a home for us, and it is morally abhorrent to accept it as one. It is the mark of negative dialectics to bring forward these sorts of tensions and leave them unresolved.

Is our home to be found in God? In the onward march of rationality in history? Here with fate? Are all homes to be refused? These are not questions to be settled here. And I have not tried to defend Nietzsche’s ideal of *amor fati*, but instead to try to explain what sort of love it involves. Misguided though it may be, there is, to my mind, something movingly tragic in Nietzsche’s desperate hope for a cosmic home, in a world where – for him at least – only God’s shadow is to be found.

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⁵⁶ Adorno 2005, § 18.

⁵⁷ Adorno 2005, § 61.

⁵⁸ On this theme, see Freyenhagen 2013.

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