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Nietzsche: Suffering as a Value

Throughout Nietzsche's writings we find severe criticism of various attitudes to suffering. His attack upon the ascetic for turning suffering into a second nature is notorious. Yet, besides the ascetic Nietzsche is outraged by several other attitudes toward suffering, such as that of Christianity, Stoicism, Pessimism and Romanticism.

This article raises the question whether there is a thread connecting the causes of Nietzsche's outrage in the different treatments of suffering mentioned above. And then, does Nietzsche confine himself to the attack or has he an *alternative* approach to suffering of his own?

Concerning the first question the article shows that the attitudes to suffering condemned by Nietzsche have this in common, that they all view suffering as a first principle. Suffering for them determines the scale of values and the sense of life in general. Nietzsche's critique traces the origin of this phenomenon to human weakness, and points to its results: decadence.

In reply to the latter question, it is found in this article that in opposition to this weakness and decadence Nietzsche advances what he considers as a noble and valorous attitude: the tragic hero determines his own values without any concern for the amount of suffering involved in their affirmation, and he thereby attains freer and loftier values (such as full affirmation of life, *amor fati*, or more power even at the cost of risking his life).

The conclusion of the article is that Nietzsche's fierce attacks are directed at setting suffering as central and determinative of the sets of the values in the shadow of suffering. Nietzsche's preferred approach regards suffering as a necessary by-product of the affirmation of (what Nietzsche regards as) lofty values.