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Introduction

Paul Katsafanas

It's no surprise that interest in Nietzsche's work continues to grow. Nietzsche offers insightful and

challenging critiques of traditional views in ethics, moral psychology, and political philosophy. He

presents novel accounts of motivation, human psychology, the nature and justificatory status of

evaluative claims, and the status of philosophical inquiry, among many other topics. He is

increasingly recognized as a central figure in the philosophical tradition.

Nonetheless, Nietzsche's writings are exceptionally difficult: he presents his critiques and proposals

in a compressed and sometimes enigmatic fashion, with a literary style that sets him apart from most

philosophers. He asserts that some of his philosophical claims must be understood in the context of

his entire oeuvre, and occasionally goes so far as to remark that certain texts are designed to conceal

his meaning from all but the most careful readers. For these reasons, there is a great need for clear,

analytically rigorous discussions of his work.

This volume is designed to answer that need by offering both newcomers and experts on Nietzsche

a wealth of resources. While no single volume could cover all of Nietzsche's thought, this volume

does address many of his central concerns: after a six-essay foray into some of his major works,

there are twenty-two essays covering philosophical psychology, agency, the self, value, culture, topics

in epistemology and metaphysics, and, finally, something dear to Nietzsche's heart: the possibility of

affirming life. Throughout, these essays aim not just at exposition of Nietzsche's views, but at relating them to live philosophical concerns.

I. Major works

The first section contains an introduction to some of Nietzsche's key works. This section is not completely comprehensive: for reasons of space, some central texts are omitted (including *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*). However, the essays cover six of Nietzsche's most important works, ranging from *Human, All too Human* to *The Antichrist*.

Keith Ansell-Pearson reads *Human, All too Human* as centrally concerned with fanaticism. Although fanaticism is an underexplored topic in Nietzsche scholarship (and in philosophy generally), Ansell-Pearson argues that it is a crucial concept for Nietzsche. If we read Nietzsche as diagnosing and responding to fanaticism, we thereby illuminate his criticisms of morality as well as his approach to the practice of philosophy.

Rebecca Bamford provides an overview of Nietzsche's ethical thought in *Dawn*. She focuses on his critique of modern morality as well as his examination of pity and compassion. She argues that Nietzsche is concerned with revealing the possibility of a new approach to ethical questions, which he describes as experimentalism. A central component of this experimentalist ethical project, Bamford argues, is the role of *mood* and its social transmission.

A key question about the *Gay Science* is what, exactly, gay science is supposed to be. Isn't gaiety incompatible with rigor and precision? Scott Jenkins argues that gaiety is not only compatible with,

but necessary for, philosophical inquiry. In addressing these points, Jenkins examines the central

concepts in *The Gay Science,* including the way in which human beings misunderstand themselves; the

role of the arts in life; the death of God; the notion of eternal recurrence; and the value of the

pursuit of truth.

Christa Davis Acampora turns to *Beyond Good and Evil.* She focuses on the way in which Nietzsche's

philosophical writing identifies limitations of perspectives at both the individual and communal

level. Acampora argues that we can extract a positive contribution from Nietzsche's philosophical

practice: a notion of mental modeling that enables us both to draw on and to produce empirical

evidence. She considers the way in which this complicates Nietzsche's pursuit of naturalism.

Allison Merrick raises a central question about *On the Genealogy of Morality.* In that text, Nietzsche

suggests that a genealogical or historical approach to morality either constitutes or enables a critique

of morality. But how, exactly, does this work? Merrick argues that Nietzsche offers an immanent

critique of morality. This critique draws on internal standards of modern morality in order to offer

reasons for us to abandon or modify modern morality. She explains how this internal critique

requires a genealogical approach.

In the final paper in this section, I argue that the rarely discussed *Antichrist* can serve as perhaps the

best guide to Nietzsche's mature ethical theory. Commentators often argue or assume that while

Nietzsche makes many critical points about traditional morality, he cannot be offering a positive

ethical theory of his own. This, I argue, is a mistake. *The Antichrist* offers a substantive ethical

theory. It explicitly articulates Nietzsche's positive ethical principles, shows why these principles are

justified, and uses them to condemn traditional Christian morality. The chapter reviews and explains

Nietzsche's ethical theory. It also considers why commentators so often assume that Nietzsche cannot have an ethical theory: I argue that commentators tend to be driven by the assumption that all ethical theories embrace seven commitments. These commitments are, I suggest, definitive of *Enlightenment* ethical theory, but not of ethical theory as such; Nietzsche's rejection of them in no way precludes his having a positive ethical theory of his own.

II. Philosophical psychology and action

Much of Nietzsche's writing is concerned with what we'd today call philosophical psychology and action theory. Nietzsche claims that "psychology shall again be recognized as the queen of the sciences," for it is "once again the path to the fundamental problems" (BGE 23). And his texts make good on this claim: he offers subtle analyses of topics ranging from the way in which human beings are motivated, to the nature of various emotions, to the production of action, to the role of unconscious phenomena in human life. The four papers in this section tackle many of these topics.

Bernard Reginster examines a central concept in Nietzsche's philosophical psychology and ethics: the will to power. He argues that the will to power should be understood primarily in psychological terms. Reginster relates the concept of will to power to Nietzsche's conception of *life*. He explicates the core features of will to power: its antagonistic and insatiable nature, as well as its motivational independence.

Mark Alfano critiques standard treatments of Nietzsche on the emotions. Alfano argues that instead of assimilating all emotions to one category, we should explore the features of distinct emotions. One of the emotions to which Nietzsche gives a central role is the pathos of distance. Alfano argues that the pathos of distance is associated with both contempt and disgust. Alfano analyzes the pathos of distance and discusses the way in which it bears on Nietzsche's concerns about democracy.

Nietzsche is critical of traditional accounts of agency. But just how critical is he? How far does he depart from the standard views? Tom Bailey argues that the answer is: not as much as you might think. Bailey argues that Nietzsche's targets five claims about agency: that conscious choice is sufficient for action; that the source of willing is the self; that willing is independent from prior events; that willing can involve changing one's capacities and inclinations; and that willing is associated with a form of rationality. Although Nietzsche rejects each of these claims, Bailey argues that this leaves space for a robust positive conception of agency.

Neil Sinhababu focuses on the causal antecedents of action. Sinhababu argues that Nietzsche endorses a roughly Humean claim: that "desire" drives human action and practical reasoning. According to Sinhababu, Nietzsche's criticisms of Kantian theories of action are basically Humean: we can account for reflective endorsement, deliberation, and so forth by positing no other motivational forces than those of desires. Sinhababu claims that this reading of Nietzsche enjoys certain philosophical and textual advantages over its competitors.

III. The self

Nietzsche's claims about the self are as evocative as they are difficult. He tells us that the self is a "social structure of drives and affects" (BGE 12), that the intellect "is actually nothing but *a certain behavior of the drives towards one another*" (GS 333). He claims that most of us *lack* selves: "we absolutely should not assume that many human beings are 'people' [*Personen*]," he tells us (KSA 12:10[59]). But he also tells us to become selves: "Be yourself! All you are now doing, thinking, desiring is not you yourself " (UM III.1). GS 335 claims that we "want to become those we are," and urges people to "create themselves." HH II.366 claims that if you "*will* a self you shall *become* a self." The four papers in this section attempt to make sense of these claims, which have at least the initial appearance of inconsistency.

Gabriel Zamosc examines Nietzsche praise of selves that exhibit unity or wholeness. Commentators tend to assume that Nietzschean wholeness involves some kind of psychic integration. Zamosc argues that this is a mistake: Nietzschean wholeness requires cultural, rather than psychic, integration. The wholeness in question involves a form of autonomy, but an autonomy that involves a commitment to realizing genuine culture. The individual striving for wholeness participates in some form of collective project that can lend coherence to his individual life; and, through this, he becomes connected to others. Zamosc investigates the ways in which this early model of selfhood draws on and develops certain Kantian themes.

Mattia Riccardi examines an apparent tension in Nietzsche's analysis of the self: Nietzsche sometimes suggests that the self is a fiction, while at other times insisting that we realize or create genuine selves. Riccardi resolves the apparent tension by distinguishing two notions of the self: the conscious self and the arrangement of one's drives. Nietzsche treats our ordinary thoughts about

the conscious self to be mistaken, and offers a revisionary account of it; according to Riccardi, this account involves appeal to a harmonious relation between conscious self and drives.

Donald Rutherford offers a somewhat different reading of the same problem. Rutherford argues that Nietzsche's denials of the self should be understood as a denial of a unitary, substantial soul. But Nietzsche also has a positive conception of the self. Rutherford argues that attaining this positive conception of selfhood involves achieving a particular form of autonomy. The attainment of autonomy involves critical examination of the grounds of one's values.

While the first three papers in this section link Nietzschean selfhood to cultural integration, psychic unity, and autonomy, Ariela Tubert approaches these issues from a different direction. She examines self-constitution views in contemporary philosophy. In general, self-constitution views hold that persons are a kind of creation: we don't automatically possess, but instead somehow fashion or achieve, our selves. These views take different forms, including narrative self-constitution views, Kantian self-constitution views, and so on. Tubert reads Nietzsche as endorsing a particular form of self-constitution, according to which practical considerations and the first-person point of view are emphasized. She argues that if we read Nietzsche along these lines, many of his anti-metaphysical claims about the self fall into place.

IV. Value

One of the most familiar, and also the most striking, aspects of Nietzsche's thought is his condemnation of traditional moral values. He argues that some of our most cherished values must

be rejected (for example, see TI IX.38 and BGE 225); he claims that traditional morality undermines human flourishing (GM Preface 6); he urges us to create new values; and he argues that, as we critically inquire into the grounds of traditional morality, we will find no satisfying answers. As a result, he predicts that "morality will gradually perish now: this is the great spectacle in a hundred acts reserved for the next two centuries—the most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps also the most hopeful of all spectacles" (GM III.27). These claims raise a host of questions: how should we understand Nietzsche's claims about morality? What is it to create values? How do these claims about value creation relate to traditional ethical and metaethical debates? The papers in this section attempt to make headway on these questions.

Peter Kail's "Value and Nature in Nietzsche" discusses different concepts of value and the relations that these have to nature. Nietzsche wants to "translate man back into nature," but what does this mean? Kail argues that by considering the relation of drives, affects, and values, we can make progress on this question. Nietzsche wants us to clear away certain errors about human nature, evaluative psychology, and the drives. In doing so, we rule out certain metaethical theories. However, Kail argues, we do not arrive at a unique metaethical theory: Nietzsche's claims are compatible with more than one metaethical theory, and he does not aspire to go beyond this.

Alex Silk offers a different reading of Nietzsche's metaethics. Silk examines the way in which Nietzsche's concerns about value intersect with debates in contemporary metaethics. Although Nietzsche seems to make antirealist claims—insisting that there are no evaluative facts—he constantly engages in evaluative discourse and speaks of creating values. Silk critiques fictionalist, constitutivist, subjectivist, and non-cognitivist readings of Nietzsche. Instead, he argues for a

constructivist interpretation. On this interpretation, values are grounded in facts about evaluative attitudes. So Silk claims that Nietzsche does have a metaethic, specifically a constructivist one.

Reid Blackman agrees that Nietzsche has a determinate metaethic, but disagrees about what this is. In particular, Blackman argues for a fictionalist interpretation of Nietzsche's evaluative discourse. Blackman bases his reading on an examination of Nietzsche's claims about *interpreting* various phenomena, including moral phenomena. Nietzschean interpretations, as Blackman reads them, consist in giving *false* causal or teleological explanations of phenomena, in such a way that the explanations serve the needs of the interpreter. Applying these points to Nietzsche's own attempts to create new values, Blackman argues that Nietzsche knowingly offers false causal and teleological explanations for his own values. He does not believe these explanations, and in fact knows them to be false; but he wants others to believe them.

Maria João Mayer Branco and João Constâncio argue that Nietzsche's philosophical judgments should be seen as *aesthetic* judgments. They argue that Nietzsche treats philosophical judgments as creative evaluative judgments, and that the free-spiritedness of the philosophers who make those judgments is best interpreted aesthetically. There is a sense in which philosophical judgments in general are thus to be evaluated aesthetically. But this does not mean that they are purely individualistic or idiosyncratic: these aesthetic judgments are intersubjectively constrained. Branco and Constâncio explicate these points in part by drawing on Kant's third critique.

V. Culture, Society, and Politics

Throughout his works, Nietzsche is concerned with degenerate and flourishing culture. His first book, *The Birth of Tragedy,* diagnoses a cultural pathology and offers an aesethetic remedy; and in his final works of 1888, he still worries about the "cunning, stealthy, invisible, anemic vampires"— namely, the Christians—who ruined Roman, Islamic, and Renaissance culture and might do the same today (A 59-61).

Part of what promoted flourishing in the ancient world, Nietzsche claims, was the *agon.* The first two papers in this section address this aspect of Nietzsche's thought. David Owen argues that the Greek institution of the *agon* is treated as a model throughout all of Nietzsche's works. In particular, the *agon* provides an image of individual and collective government. Owen argues that Nietzsche links the *agon* to his notion of will to power, freedom, perfectionism, and genealogy. After drawing these connections, Owen explores the ways in which the Nietzschean conception of the *agon* is related to issues in contemporary political philosophy.

Herman Siemens offers a different reading of this important notion. Siemens begins by tracing the history of the *agon* in German thought prior to Nietzsche. Turning to Nietzsche, Siemens reads the early essay *Homer's Contest* as the best guide to what Nietzsche means by the *agon.* There, Nietzsche links the *agon* to life affirmation, radical individualism, pluralism, openness, and other Nietzschean ideals. Siemens argues that the Nietzschean *agon* is treated as reconciling the competing demands for individualism and sociality. In addition, it serves as a model for how the self becomes what it is through antagonistic striving.

Frederick Neuhouser turns to a more general issue in Nietzsche's analysis of culture: how is cultural decline to be understood? Neuhouser reconstructs a notion of spiritual illness that plays a crucial

role in Nietzsche's texts. Neuhouser argues that spiritual illness is exhibited in bad conscience and can lead to a form of cultural pathology. Spiritual illness involves four features: a drive to make oneself suffer, self-opacity, life denial, and a self-undermining dynamic in which vitality is diminished. Neuhouser concludes by sketching a notion of spiritual health, as involving the ability to endure and negotiate internal divisions.

But how are social and cultural entities to be approached and studied? Robert Guay examines Nietzsche's genealogical method, arguing that it manifests certain commitments that are also present in the social sciences. In particular, Nietzsche's genealogies involve three features that Guay labels "interpretation," "immanence," and "practices." Guay illuminates these features by relating them to debates in the social sciences. He argues that Nietzschean genealogy operates by studying the meanings and understandings that operate within social practices: it examines the ways in which these meanings are generated, how they become productive of new meanings and practices, and how they are normatively relevant.

VI. Metaphysics and Epistemology

Nietzsche routinely criticizes traditional philosophical approaches to metaphysics and epistemology. Nonetheless, he sometimes seems to offer metaphysical and epistemological claims of his own. To give just a few examples, he tells us that philosophers have wrongly prioritized "Being" over "Becoming" (PPP 4; GS 357; EH 'Birth of Tragedy' 3); that philosophical treatments of concepts have been erroneously ahistorical (TI 'Reason' 1); and that philosophy in general has been misled by

its attempt for systematicity (BGE 6). The three essays in this section delve into these important topics.

Matthew Meyer argues that Nietzsche defends an ontology that reduces everything to relations of force. Although such views are often thought to be untenable, Meyer argues that Nietzsche's version can be understood as a defensible form of ontic structural realism. Ontic structural realism denies the existence of things-in-themselves and offers, in its place, a relational ontology of force. Meyer defends the attribution of this view to Nietzsche and examines a Nietzschean response to a common objection to ontic structural realism.

Andrew Huddleston examines an important epistemological issue. Philosophers often try to understand concepts by defining them. Paradigmatic instances of definition involve finding necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept. Yet Nietzsche sees this task as misguided, maintaining that only things without histories are susceptible to this form of definition. As Huddleston reads him, Nietzsche is not primarily concerned with whether we can come up with necessary and sufficient conditions for a concept; rather, he wants to show that even if we can do this, it would be uninformative. It would not enable us to comprehend the concept. Huddleston distinguishes comprehension from analysis and explains how Nietzsche pursues the former.

Jessica Berry tackles a metaphilosophical issue: is there something problematic about the way in which philosophy is typically pursued? Berry reads Nietzsche as diagnosing a deep problem: the activity of philosophy involves a "will to a system", which is a pathological deformation of the common desire for understanding. Berry discusses the way in which this will to a system is present in philosophical endeavors as disparate as Platonism, Cartesianism, and German idealism.

VII. The affirmation of life

The volume closes with three essays examining different facets of one of Nietzsche's most central ideas: the affirmation of life. Accusing the ideals and values embodied in traditional religions, philosophies, and cultures of fostering a hostility toward life, Nietzsche wonders whether the alternative might be possible. "I was the first to see the real opposition," he claims, between "the *degenerate* instinct that turns against life… (Christianity, Schopenhauer's philosophy, and in a certain sense even Plato's philosophy, the whole of idealism as typical forms) and a formula of the *highest affirmation*" (EH III "Birth of Tragedy" 2). Nietzsche holds this up as an ideal: the "final, most joyful, effusive, higher-spirited yes to life is not only the highest insight, it is also the most *profound*, the most rigorously confirmed and supported by truth and study" (EH III "Birth of Tragedy" 2). And he associates this total affirmation with taking joy in the thought of the the eternal recurrence of one's life: "how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently"* than its eternal recurrence, he asks (GS 341). But what exactly is affirmation? How is it linked to eternal recurrence? The three papers in this section investigate these questions.

Daniel Came examines Nietzsche's notion of an "aesthetic justification" for existence. What exactly is an aesthetic justification of existence? Commentators usually read it as an attempt to respond to Schopenhauer's pessimism: art is supposed to provide a justification of existence by enabling us to repudiate Schopenhauer's claim that it would be better never to have been. Came argues that this is too simplistic. Although Nietzsche countenances the possibility of an aesthetic justification of existence, he does not present it as the *unique* or *only possibly* response to Schopenhauer. On the

contrary, Nietzsche explores the possibility of whether a non-aesthetic justification of existence could be provided by "Socratism" (or some form of scientific/philosophical approach).

Paul Loeb focuses on Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence. When he presents the eternal recurrence, what exactly is Nietzsche asking us to envision? According to a standard reading, we are asked to examine whether we *could* experience a moment when we would crave the eternal repetition of our lives. Loeb argues that Nietzsche is instead asking whether we *have* experienced such a moment and, with it, an amplification of the pleasure that we were feeling at the time. GS 341 would thus introduce the possibility of discovering that a cosmological version of the eternal recurrence, and of treating this discovery as the grounds for life-affirmation.

In the final essay, Beatrice Han-Pile argues that standard readings of life affirmation go wrong in two ways. First, it is a mistake to interpret life affirmation as assessed only by whether one can affirm the repetition of one's life; and second, we should not associate life affirmation with Nietzsche's notion of amor fati. Instead, Han-Pile argues that there are two different ways to affirm life. The first is unreflective: life is affirmed whenever an agent seeks and overcomes resistance in the pursuit of a desire that is expressive of love of life. The second is reflective: it is a holistic, ecstatic act of blessing the whole of life as good, which involves rendering life fully affirmable on erotic grounds. Han-Pile further argues that we should not identify affirmation of life with Nietzsche's ideal: that position is instead occupied by *amor fati,* which involves an agapic form of love and goes beyond the erotic forms of love manifest in life affirmation.