Introduction

Julian Young

Writing at the end of the Second World War, almost certainly with the question of the intellectual ancestry of Nazism at the front of his mind, Bertrand Russell claimed that the only thing Nietzsche values is the flourishing of exceptional individuals, from which it follows that, for Nietzsche, "the happiness of common people is no part of the good *per se*".[1] In a slogan, "only the superman counts". This is the interpretation that has made Nietzsche a source of both scandal and fascination to the popular mind. But it has also been, for some considerable time, the dominant view in Anglo-American scholarship. Yet although they are frequently overlooked, there are in fact numerous passages in Nietzsche's writings that it is possible to read as valuing the flourishing of the community as a whole alongside – possibly even above – that of the exceptional individual. And so there arises a question that the ten following essays, each in its own way, reflect upon: Does Nietzsche value the community *as well as* the exceptional individual, and if he does, does he value one more highly than the other?

In "Nietzsche: The Long View", Julian Young attempts to highlight the passages that, he argues, locate Nietzsche's philosophy in a tradition of religious, or at least quasi-religious, communitarianism. In German philosophy, Young argues, this tradition begins with Hegel and is then passed on by Wagner to Nietzsche, who in turn passes it on

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[1] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1947), 796.

to Heidegger. According to this communitarian outlook, the health of a society, and of the individuals who belong to it, depends on a communal 'myth' or ethos, a shared understanding of the proper life of the community as a whole and of the individuals in it. This is why Nietzsche describes the fragmentation of myth in modern society as reducing it to a state of "nihilism". Since meaning depends upon communal ethos, the modern individual can find no genuine meaning to live by. How, then, does the undoubted value Nietzsche attaches to the exceptional individual cohere with this demand for community? For Nietzsche, Young argues, the principal importance of such an individual is that he is the agent of change. The exceptional individual is (like Hegel's "world-historical" individual) one who perceives the way in which a community's ethos needs to evolve (the way it needs to "revalue its values") for it to continue to thrive in an ever-changing environment.

In "'The Time Is Coming When One Will Have to Relearn about Politics'", Hans Sluga attends, like Young, to Nietzsche's diagnosis of modernity as the age of nihilism. Although we have values, we have no shared *hierarchy* of values (no communal ethos) and consequently no ranking of human beings. But without such ranking, without relations of authority and respect, there can be no *willing* subordination, and without that there can be no stable political order. The liberal democratic state is, Nietzsche argues, the decay of the classical "tutelary" state, a state that *was* based on divinely sanctioned rank and respect. As Nietzsche predicted, Sluga observes, the modern state has been reduced to a battleground of selfish interests, with its traditional functions increasingly farmed out to private agencies. Given this process of disintegration, Nietzsche's prediction of its eventual demise seems far from foolish, as does his raising the question of what kind of political order we should hope to succeed it. Nietzsche's answer (like Plato's, though with artists taking the place of philosophers) is that we need "artist-tyrants" who will create a new hierarchy of values. While this might seem to be unrealistic and possibly distasteful (but compare Richardson's essay, as discussed later), it does not invalidate Nietzsche's acute diagnosis of the political crisis we inhabit.

In "The Culture of Myth and the Myth of Culture", Ken Gemes and Chris Sykes agree with Young concerning Nietzsche's outlook prior to his break with Wagner in 1876. The unity of a culture or community,

they see Nietzsche as arguing, requires a meaning-giving myth that will enable the individual to be "consecrated to something higher than himself". Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* is the attempt to create an inspirational – "monumental" (UM II) – narrative that makes Wagner the heir to the community-gathering artwork that was Greek tragedy. After abandoning Wagner, however, Nietzsche's normative project acquires a much more limited scope. *Zarathustra* is indeed an attempt to create a new mythology for a new community, but this is a mini-community, a community not for everyone but only for a diachronic elite of geniuses.

In "Festivals of Recognition: Nietzsche's Idealized Communities", Kathleen Higgins defends a view similar to that of Gemes and Sykes. Nietzsche presents negative images of human groups – "the herd", "the rabble" – images in which community appears as an anony-mous force constraining the individual to conformity in the manner of Heidegger's *das Man.* These negative images manifest Nietzsche's preference for solitude. Yet there are also positive images of commu-nity: the Dionysian throng and the agonistic contest that presupposes the communal rules that make the contest possible, for example. Nietzsche's ideal community, however, is a diachronic, 'spiritual' com-munity (not a community in the full-blooded sense that the term pos-sesses in Young's essay), a community of exceptional people in which one finds kinship in the common quest for a more perfect humanity without there being any loss of individuality. That this is Nietzsche's ideal is hardly surprising given his taste for solitude, for being at least a "part-time hermit".

Jessica N. Berry, in "Nietzsche's Scientific Community: Elective Affinities", picks up the notion of community as something whose members need not know one another personally, a community that is, as she puts it, "virtual". In his scientific affinities, Nietzsche, she suggests, belonged to a circle of fellow spirits bound together by a rejection of disinterested "objectivity". Against this expression of the "ascetic ideal" they affirm the irreducible subjectivity of scientific inquiry (of inquiry, not truth, a quite different matter). Goethe's deployment of his "polyphonic" artist's sensibility to arrive, by super-imposing one observational image on another, at the idea of the leaf as the *Urpflanze* from which all other botanical organs are derived, is a paradigm of such inquiry, a paradigm that underlies the non-ascetic

notion of objectivity arrived at in the *Genealogy of Morals.* This kind of objectivity is to be achieved not by avoiding interest and subjectivity but rather by synthesizing the many, irreducibly subjective and interested interpretations of the phenomenon in question in the manner of Goethe.

Maudemarie Clark and Monique Wonderly, in "The Good of Community", take issue with Young's claim that Nietzsche's highest value is the flourishing of the community as a whole and particularly with the claim that the exceptional individual has value only as a means to that goal; has, that is to say, merely instrumental value. Defending a position that bears some similarities to Russell's, they point out that there is no incompatibility between attributing *both* intrinsic and instrumental value to the exceptional individual, and there are, in fact, many texts that make it very difficult to deny that such an individual has, for Nietzsche, intrinsic value. It is equally difficult to deny, they argue, that it is the production of exceptional individuals that constitutes the highest source of value of the community. This does not mean that a well-formed community lacks intrinsic value for Nietzsche. His praise of the Roman Empire as, in virtue of its structure, a beautiful artwork attributes to it, at one and the same time, intrinsic aesthetic value and instrumental value in promoting the flourishing of exceptional individuals.

Ivan Soll's "The Self versus Society: Nietzsche's Advocacy of Egoism" provides a sophisticated defense of something very close to Russell's account of the relation between individual and community in Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche, Soll observes, is a psychological egoist. But he advocates a "noble" kind of egoism, one that finds satisfaction in constructing one's life as an artwork and experiences no guilt in acting for the sake of one's own satisfaction. Nietzsche has no interest in promoting the "common" good, the well-being of humanity at large. It is true that he charges exceptional individuals such as himself with a "comprehensive responsibility for the overall development of man". But this is compatible with his advocacy of egoism, since the "development" of mankind consists not in raising the average level of happiness but in the achievements of its exceptional individuals. We admire the Greeks for their artists and philosophers and ignore the fact that their achievement was built on slavery.

Like Soll, Christine Swanton, in "Nietzsche and the 'Collective Individual'", addresses Nietzsche's affirmation of "egoism". Nietzsche admires the "egoist", Swanton observes, because she does not sacrifice herself for the "common good". Nietzsche distinguishes, however, two forms of egoism: strong, mature, and admirable, on the one hand, and weak, immature, and "contemptible", on the other. While the immature egoist devotes herself to gratifying hedonistic impulses of the moment, the strong egoist exemplifies the virtues of strength: self-discipline, grace, and a strong disposition to forget insult and injury. The mature egoist will, moreover, be neither exploitative nor cruel, since cruelty is an immature *perversion* of the natural drive to aggression. Thus, as she cultivates her individuality within her life in art, science, or business, the mature egoist will at the same time, in Nietzsche's words, "work for our fellow men". There is thus no incompatibility between Nietzsche's 'individualism' and the plausible 'communitarian' thesis that his highest value is the flourishing of the community as a whole.

Like Swanton, Jeff Malpas, in "'We Hyperboreans': Toward a Nietzschean Topography", seeks to dissolve the idea that there is an incompatibility between Nietzsche's individualism and his communitarianism. Nietzsche was a close reader, Malpas notes, of the works of Friedrich Ratzel, the originator of the idea that culture is strongly influenced by geography. This may explain Nietzsche's disposition to find his moods and thoughts disclosed in the landscapes that were important to him, his dissolution of the division between 'inner' and 'outer'. This is how we should read his philosophy: not in terms of propositional formulas such as 'will to power' and 'eternal recurrence' but as showing us the world – the landscape – that we inhabit in all its plurality and ambiguity. Ernst Bertram suggests that Venice, which Nietzsche loved, is simultaneously a place of beauty and death, happiness and tragedy, solitude and gregarious community. This is part of what Nietzsche wants to reveal to us. There is no 'contradiction' between community and the exceptional individual in his philosophy. The idea that there is comes from the mistake of thinking that the point of his philosophy is propositional. Once we think topographically, we see that what Nietzsche is revealing to us is an agonistic world, a world in which there are dynamic tensions but no contradictions.

John Richardson, in "Nietzsche, Language, Community", takes note, like Higgins, of Nietzsche's eremitic tendencies. He discusses them in the context of language, the arena, he suggests, in which the tension between individual and community most decisively appears. Nietzsche views language with suspicion, suspicion of virtue words, above all, for it is these that determine our conscious goals. His suspicion is based on the fact that language "commonizes" us: in establishing the shared viewpoint (communal ethos) that is the basis of community, it simultaneously represents a threat to the radical individuality he wants at least a few of us to exemplify. Just what, however, is it that constitutes this radical individuality? Surely not the catatonic withdrawal from language and community of a Steppenwolf. Or, at least, not a permanent withdrawal: Zarathustra's solitude is a preparation for his return to community armed with a new language, with, above all, a new register of virtue words. In teaching the new language, in seeking to prize us away from the prevailing moral sense, Nietzsche seeks to establish a new community (community in the full-blooded rather than 'virtual' sense), thereby exercising his will to power. Sometimes he speaks of establishing a mini-community of exceptional people. But it is clear that he has wider ambitions, clear that, through a change in language, he wishes to establish a community at least as wide as that to which all "good Europeans" would belong.

Given the range of views it contains, this volume cannot claim to settle the question of Nietzsche's understanding of the proper relation between individual and community. Yet as well as demonstrating the centrality of the issue, it does, I think, clearly show that reading Nietzsche through the prism of community opens up a fruitful, and largely neglected, perspective on his philosophy as a whole.

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Nietzsche

The Long View

Julian Young

Prior to 1870, 'Germany' was no more than an ideal, the reality being a fragmented patchwork of petty principalities. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that, from Herder to Gadamer, almost all German philosophers have been communitarians. They have been concerned, that is, for general human flourishing and have believed that only within the unity of community can it be fully realized. It follows that either Nietzsche is the great exception to the rule or the claim by Bertrand Russell and many others that Nietzsche cares only for the flourishing of the exceptional individual, that "the happiness of common people is no part of the good *per se*" (Russell 796), is mistaken. In this essay I locate Nietzsche within the communitarian tradition and so argue that, with respect to his social and political philosophy, he was no exception to the German rule. Specifically, I am going to exhibit a continuity of communitarian concerns passing, via Wagner, from Hegel to Nietzsche and from him, in turn, to Heidegger.

HEGEL'S COMMUNITARIANISM

Communitarianism was something Hegel shared with virtually every thinker associated with German romanticism; with, *inter alios*, Herder, Schiller, Novalis, Schleiermacher, Fichte, Hölderlin, and Friedrich Schlegel.[1] Common to all was an intense admiration for the republics

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[1] This is a point emphasized by Frederick Beiser in chapter 10 of his excellent *Hegel*, a work to which I am greatly indebted for my understanding of Hegel.

of the ancient world, for the Greek and Roman polis. What they admired about the ancient polis, and hoped to emulate once the idea of Germany became a reality, was that its unity was not the result of absolutist tyranny but was the expression of a shared agreement as to the proper way of life for the community as a whole. Hegel refers to this underlying agreement as the *Volksgeist*, the 'spirit of the people' (Beiser 285), and says that it consists in the *Sittlichkeit*, the ethos or 'ethical substance' of a community. A shared ethical substance is what constitutes a community *as* a community, as – another important word in the Hegel lexicon – an "organic" society.

Why were the romantics so attracted to the idea of an organic society? Above all because it provided an answer to the question of the meaning of life. In the age of the 'death of God' (announced by Hegel seventy-six years before Nietzsche) (Beiser 137–8), the idea that the meaning of life lies in realizing one's membership of the 'city of God' was no longer credible. And so the idea that it consisted, as in the ancient world, in devotion to one's earthly city, in fulfilling the duties appropriate to the 'station' allotted one by communal ethos, became very attractive. In the ancient republic, Hegel observes, "the worth of individuals is measured by the extent to which they reflect and represent the communal spirit, and have adopted a particular station within the affairs of the state as a whole" (Beiser 277).

What Hegel and the romantics admired in the ancients was, then, their meaning-giving commitment to a shared ethical substance. Yet as heirs of the French Revolution, their admiration was tempered by the fact that, while giving full weight to 'fraternity', the ancients did less well on 'liberty'. As the fate of Socrates shows, the Greek polis did not give sufficient weight to the rights and liberties of the individual, rights that, for Hegel, include freedom of speech, religion, morals, and political dissent. This indeed was the 'tragic flaw' in the Greek polis: the main reason for its eventual demise was its failure to satisfy the just and inevitable demand for such rights (Beiser 231). It thus follows, as Beiser has emphasized, that the Hegelian project was not to defend communitarianism *as opposed to* liberalism but rather to *synthesize* the two into a coherent social and political ideal (225). I shall refer to this ideal as 'liberal communitarianism'.[2]

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[2] As this essay progresses I shall claim that Wagner, Nietzsche, and Heidegger are all 'liberal communitarians'. I do not mean to suggest, however, that they are 'liberals' in

The question arises, however, as to whether liberal communitarianism is, even theoretically, a possibility. As soon as one guarantees rights to speech, conscience, morals, and religion, it might seem inevitable that the centrifugal forces inherent in the diversity of human nature would undermine the unity of ethical substance, the possibility of a shared conception of the good life.

Hegel's response to this problem is to emphasize the indispensability of two institutions to his ideal state: a system of state-supervised education and a civic religion. These institutions he sees as essential forms of what one might call 'soft power', centripetal, community-preserving forces that counterbalance the centrifugal forces of individualism.

Like Plato and Aristotle, Hegel views education as essential to community because it is through it that we acquire a second nature, become habituated to the *Sittlichkeit* of the community (Beiser 236–7). Properly conducted, education is *Bildung*, that untranslatable German word that binds 'education' and 'character formation' into an indissoluble unity. Hegel is aware of the dangers of authoritarian mind control inherent in such a conception and criticizes Plato's system of education as too rigorous and too comprehensive, but it is not clear how he intends to avoid this danger. Later I shall suggest that Nietzsche's philosophy of education offers a resolution of this difficulty.

Two aspects of Hegel's second centripetal force, his civic religion, need to be mentioned. The first is that it must be post-Christian. Since Christianity, and particularly Protestantism, promotes alienation from worldly life – the "unhappy consciousness" described in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* – it is unsuited to be a civic religion, the point of which is precisely to *affirm* life, to affirm and solidify the life of the community. The affirmation of life within communal ethos is, indeed, *all* that is essential to a civic religion; gods are of secondary

the sense that, like Hegel, they make the question of liberal rights a central topic of discussion and affirmation. All I mean to claim is that in considering the question of the measures to be employed to prevent the disintegration of community, all of them in fact observe, albeit usually unemphatically, J. S. Mill's 'harm principle': the principle that, as Mill calls it, a "civilized community" can compel individuals to act against their wills only when they threaten harm to others. My phrase thus resembles Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein's "libertarian paternalism": the aim is to softly "nudge" individuals in directions beneficial to both themselves and the community, never to compel them in those directions by the threat or use of force.

importance, and a doctrine of personal immortality is irrelevant. Hegel's conception of a healthy religion is, in short, close to that of Émile Durkheim, who defined religion in general as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things … which unite into a single moral community … all those who adhere to them" (47).

The second important characteristic of the required religion is that it appeal not merely to "reason" but also to the "heart and imagination" (Beiser 133). Although Christianity is unsuited to be a civic religion, concerning the techniques of such an appeal it understands what to do. "Without his divinity", writes Hegel, Christ "would have just been a man", whereas with it he is "a truly superhuman ideal" (Beiser 128), an inspirational ideal of ethical greatness (or, as one might say with an eye to Nietzsche, a 'superman'). The way in which a civic religion is to gather individuals into communal ethos is by endowing the exemplars of communal virtue with charismatic power, by making them, in Nietzsche's language, "shine" (Z I 15; cf. GS 85, HH II 99). How it might do this is a topic to which I shall shortly return.

WAGNER'S MODIFIED HEGELIANISM

Nietzsche's intimacy with Wagner began in 1869. By this time Wagner had been, for more than a decade, a Schopenhauerian pessimist. This is the Wagner whom Nietzsche repeatedly attacks as the "decadent" embodiment of the "will to death" once he has recovered from his own Schopenhauerianism in about 1876 (GS 344, GM III 24, CW 4, KGW 12 2 [127]). But as Nietzsche himself observes, before becoming a Schopenhauerian, Wagner had been "as revolutionary as any Frenchman". He had belonged to the 'young Germany' movement, a movement devoted to, in Nietzsche's phrase, "free love" on the grounds (grounds revived in the 1960s by Herbert Marcuse) that erotic liberation and political liberation constitute a single, indissoluble goal (CW 4; NCW 3 = GM III 3). Prior to his Schopenhauerian conversion, that is, Wagner not only had read Hegel, but was himself an extreme 'left' Hegelian, a self-declared communist of the anarchist variety whose active participation, alongside Mikhail Bakunin, in the Dresden manifestation of the 1848 revolution cost him twelve years of political exile. It is because there are these two Wagners – the utopian, 'left' Hegelian optimist and the Schopenhauerian pessimist – that