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PART I

Introduction

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CHAPTER I

Précis

What does Nietzsche have to say?

What do we have to say about what Nietzsche has to say?

These simple-minded questions motivate the book you're now reading. In it, I map the prevalence and interconnections among the main topics and theses of Nietzsche's philosophical writings as they develop over time. Along the way, I compare this map with the composite map produced by other scholars. If the last decade of titles in the *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* is any guide, my fellow commentators think that, to understand Nietzsche's philosophy, you need to pay attention primarily to what he has to say about affirmation, agency, the ascetic ideal, drives, embodiment, emotions, the eternal recurrence, friendship, genealogy, health, history, inquiry, justice, life, nihilism, perspectivism, the self, the sovereign individual, tragedy, value, virtue, and the will to power. Of these, the topic that garnered the most attention from commentators was the will to power.

How accurate and informative is this composite map? If every scrap and trace of Nietzsche's writings were to disappear instantaneously, could we reconstruct his philosophy from the secondary literature? Would that reconstruction better resemble a map of the London Tube or Jackson Pollack's *Autumn Rhythm*? Could novices effectively use it as a guide to the philosophical terrain of Nietzsche's thought, or would they bloody their noses on unforeseen obstacles, wander through barren deserts, and fall down rabbit holes? I argue in this book that, while a few coastlines of Nietzsche's philosophy have been adequately sketched, we cartographers have generally done a poor job. We have marked several spots with an *X* even though little philosophical treasure lies buried there. At the same time, we have neglected whole El Dorados of insight.

Commentators have a penchant for making claims like, "Nietzsche often talks about *W*," "Nietzsche typically associates *X* and *Y*," and

“In his middle works, Nietzsche seldom engages with Z”? When I read these claims, I ask flat-footed questions like, “How often?” “What do you mean, ‘typically’?” And, “how seldom is seldom?” If these sorts of claims have any probative value, it should be possible to verify or falsify them. Or – to turn the conditional around – if it’s not possible to verify or falsify them, then these sorts of claims have no probative value and commentators should stop making them. My flat-footed questions ask about *prevalence*, *association*, and *change*. If we label each passage in Nietzsche’s corpus based on its semantic content (i.e., whether it contains an expression for concept W, X, Y, and/or Z), it becomes possible to answer these questions. A concept is prevalent to the extent that it shows up in a large proportion of passages. It’s associated with another concept to the extent that it’s more likely to be present in a passage when the second concept is present. A concept becomes more prevalent over a philosopher’s career to the extent that it shows up in higher proportions of passages over time. My default assumption in what follows is that prevalence and association correlate – albeit imperfectly – with importance. The more Nietzsche talks about something, the more he cares about it and the more we interpreters should pay attention to it. This default does not hold without exception; indeed, I will argue that the pathos of distance is an important Nietzschean virtue despite the fact that he refers to it in only six passages. Nevertheless, it is a better default than any available alternative.

Chapter 2 demonstrates how to do this using a synoptic digital humanities approach, which makes it possible to both visualize and analyze his use of various constructs within a given work and over the course of his philosophical career. I begin by explaining how to select the core constructs of a distant-reading inquiry. Next, I demonstrate how to operationalize these constructs for querying the *Nietzsche Source*. I then walk through the methodology for conducting systematic queries that can be reproduced by other researchers. The main content of this chapter visualizes and lays the groundwork for interpreting the semantic networks captured by my methodology. Here, I show that the most central constructs in Nietzsche’s philosophy are *life*, *value*, *virtue*, *fear*, *instinct*, *courage*, *emotion*, *conscience*, *contempt*, and *laughter* respectively. While this list overlaps somewhat with the catalog of topics in the secondary literature, there are significant differences. In addition, tracking changes in what Nietzsche emphasizes over the course of his philosophical career shows that he initially focused more on drives than instincts but, in the mid-1880s, shifted strongly toward instincts. At the same time, he largely ceased engaging with deontological constructs such as *obligation* and *justice* while

intensifying his engagement with aretaic and axiological constructs such as *virtue*, *value*, and various discrete virtues and values. These developments suggest that Nietzsche should be understood as an idiosyncratic philosopher of virtue who associates virtues less with rational dispositions acquired through habit and more with instinctual activity.

Subsequent chapters are divided into three groups. The first group (Chapters 3–5) establishes the general contours of Nietzsche's socio-moral framework by connecting the constructs of *drive*, *instinct*, *type*, *virtue*, and *value*. The second group, (Chapters 6–10) is a series of case studies of distinctively Nietzschean virtues. These include *curiosity*, *courage*, the *pathos of distance*, *sense of humor*, and *solitude*. The third and final group (Chapters 11 and 12) shows how the Nietzschean virtues are held together by *conscience* and *integrity* and then points the way to future research in moral psychology, in Nietzsche studies, and in digital humanities approaches to the history of philosophy more broadly.

Chapter 3 begins by identifying the main questions and points of contention in the secondary literature concerning *instinct*, *drive*, and *type*. Next, I track Nietzsche's engagement with each construct over the course of his philosophical career and establish the further constructs most closely associated with them. I then offer an interpretation according to which drives are act-directed motivational and evaluative dispositions. An agent's drives move her to engage in and positively evaluate a range of characteristic actions, regardless of the consequences that may eventuate from those actions. Drives thus differ from preferences and desires in being associated primarily with the processes of agency rather than with teleologically specified states of affairs. This feature of drives explains and unites a range of seemingly irrational behaviors in which an agent performs an action that is drive expressive despite the fact that she knows or could easily come to know that the action will not produce a desired state of affairs. I also argue that instincts are innate drives, though other drives can be acquired. In addition, instincts and other drives are mutable on several dimensions, including their intensity, their objects, and the structural interrelations. Finally, I argue that an agent's instincts and other drives constitute her psychological type.

Chapter 4 argues that a Nietzschean virtue is a well-calibrated instinct or other drive. What it takes for a drive to be well calibrated involves both internal and external (social) integration, or at least noninterference. In particular, a drive is a virtue to the extent that it is conducive to life, does not systematically or reliably induce negative self-directed emotions that respond to fixed aspects of the self, and does not systematically or reliably

induce reactions from the agent's community that are liable to be internalized as negative self-directed emotions that respond to fixed aspects of the self. The first and second constraints together are what I call "internal integration." One drive integrated with another when expressing it typically also expresses the other (strong integration) or at least does not frustrate the expression of the other (weak integration). Since drives induce not only characteristic patterns of action but also characteristic patterns of evaluation, integrated drives will tend to result in actions that the agent approves of or at least is not disposed to disapprove. I call the third constraint "external integration." Like internal integration, external integration can be strong (the agent's community tends to approve of her actions and the drives that motivate them) or weak (the agent's community is not disposed to disapprove of her actions and the drives that motivate them). Since types are constellations of drives, different virtues are fitting for people who belong to different types. In many cases, just a few virtues will best fit a given type. If this is right, then Nietzsche held a *type-relative unity of virtue thesis*. I also argue that Nietzsche was an exemplarist about virtue. In his framework, exemplars of different types elicit different discrete emotions in people with fine-tuned affective sensitivity. While some exemplars inspire admiration that leads to emulation, others incite envy and the motivation to agonistic one-upmanship. Exemplars of bad or deplorable types provoke contempt and disgust, which serve as signposts of what to avoid. Negative exemplars are also the targets of Nietzsche's *ad hominem* arguments, which turn out not to be the simple-minded fallacies that he is sometimes accused of committing. If this is right, then Nietzschean exemplarism offers a richer, more evaluatively and motivationally nuanced moral psychology than the contemporary monochrome admire-and-emulate model.

In Chapter 5, I argue that one's community and the language used by that community play a constitutive role in the cultivation of virtue. This chapter begins by arguing that, for Nietzsche, part of what it means for a person to be of a certain type is that she is susceptible to social determination of her character. Some types are *metatypes*. They're not dispositions to *act* in certain ways, but dispositions to *become the sort of person who acts* in particular to-be-specified ways. I then distinguish two Nietzschean styles of becoming what one is called: the social and the reflexive. Someone whose character is built according to the social plan becomes what others consider and call him – good, bad, or mixed. Nietzsche associates this blueprint for the construction of character with slavishness. By contrast, someone whose personality is built according to the reflexive plan becomes

what she considers and calls herself. Nietzsche associates this method of personality construction with masterliness. I advance the following interpretation of the relation between virtues (and vices) and the terms that designate them: Nietzsche thinks there is a *looping effect* between the psychological disposition named by a character-trait term and the practice of using that term. While he affirms that people are differentially disposed to certain patterns of behavior, he conceives of these dispositions as fluid both in their objects and, to a lesser degree, in their strength and aim. The valence and content of the labels applied to an agent, together with the power relation between the labeler and labeled, interact with her preexisting psychological dispositions to produce the kind of person she eventually becomes. Moreover, as people's dispositions shift under the impress of labels, Nietzsche's exemplarism implies that the meaning of the labels themselves evolves. If nobility is whatever noble people are disposed to think, feel, and do, then when noble people's psychological dispositions change, so too does the meaning of nobility (and of 'nobility'). In addition, I discuss Nietzsche's frequent references to eponymous types, which represent new values. And I argue that by praising an ambiguously defined type of person, one can induce type-relevant actions and dispositions in one's audience.

Chapter 6, on curiosity, is the first of five studies of the virtues of a specific type in context: Nietzsche's own. If we want to discern Nietzsche's virtue theory, we need to look at his self-attributions. This allows us to pick out the set of traits he considers virtues *for his type* – a modern type – and therefore perhaps a set of virtues that would be attainable by and appropriate to some other modern individuals. Thus, Chapters 6–10 are not a universal account of “the virtues.” It's impossible to give such an account within the Nietzschean socio-moral framework.

Chapter 6 shows how Nietzsche uses perspectives to support inquiry. For him, a perspective is emotional and evaluative. The perspective someone inhabits leads them to see some things as good, right, noble, admirable, desirable, or enviable, while also leading them to see other things as bad, wrong, base, contemptible, disgusting, aversive, or pitiable. One's perspective reveals and emphasizes (sometimes overemphasizes) some of the evaluative properties of the things in one's ambit. But the world is a complex place. Inhabiting only one perspective is liable to make complex evaluative phenomena difficult or impossible to appreciate. Since perspective-free inquiry is impossible, Nietzsche recommends combatting these unavoidable distortions by taking up different perspectives over time. But emotions need to be induced and cultivated in distal and indirect

ways. This leads me to Nietzsche's repeated injunctions to get control over one's emotions, which I argue is an epistemic methodology. Perspectivism is meant to reveal, through the controlled cycling-through of various emotional and evaluative points of view, properties that would otherwise be invisible and to rectify inquiry by pitting biases of perspectives against each other. Next, I argue that the reason Nietzsche developed this methodology was to express the virtue of curiosity. Nietzschean curiosity is a drive to engage in inquiry, especially when that inquiry is into interesting subjects and is both intellectually and morally challenging. In addition, Nietzschean curiosity does not stop when it arrives at an answer; it always finds a new question, a new investigation, a new inquiry. The curious person is concerned with the product of investigation; she would not be satisfied with false beliefs, unsupported beliefs, or the withholding of judgment. But she is even more concerned with the process of investigation; she can't stop thinking, inferring, refuting, synthesizing, and so on. This makes sense if the virtue of curiosity is a drive, since drives impel their bearers to act. Nietzschean curiosity is a matter of struggling with difficult, interesting questions.

In Chapter 7, I argue that Nietzschean courage is a disposition to engage in characteristic patterns of activity and evaluation. Unlike courage as we might intuitively conceive it, his version of courage is more a matter of intellectual confrontation than of martial or physical contest. It's a matter of managing one's fears in the midst of inquiry and of approaching epistemic phenomena with aplomb and self-assurance. It's also a matter of doubting where others are certain, of exercising one's conscience about questions, and of laughing contemptuously at the sacred values and sacred cows of one's community. While it may be uncontroversial to say that courage is the virtue most relevant to responding to threats, Nietzsche has an idiosyncratic take on which threats are most worth finding and facing. Nietzsche sees curiosity and thinking well of people (both others and oneself) as implacable enemies. If one seeks the truth only to do the good, he says, one "finds nothing" (BGE 35). The curiosity of the moral psychologist must be ruthless. If Nietzschean curiosity is a matter of investigating difficult problems, of overcoming great intellectual resistances, then one of its purest expressions is in the investigation precisely of the most nauseating facts about ourselves. The soul of the intellectually courageous investigator is the battleground on which curiosity contends with "life-preserving errors," where the question "To what extent can truth endure incorporation?" is put to the torture (GS 110).

In Chapter 8, I argue that the pathos of distance is the Nietzschean virtue distinctively associated with the emotions of contempt and disgust,

which tend to motivate people in their own characteristic ways and lead them to adopt a characteristic pattern of evaluative perspectives. I begin by examining the state of the art in contemporary moral psychology on contempt and disgust. Then I argue that Nietzsche appropriated and modified a medieval taxonomy of *spernere mundum* (contempt for the world), *spernere neminem* (contempt for no one), *spernere se ipsum* (contempt for oneself), and *spernere se sperni* (contempt for being contemned). Each of these, though especially the last two, serve epistemic functions by making it possible to investigate contemptible aspects of oneself and one's community. Next, I turn from contempt to disgust. While these emotions are sometimes put to the same use, disgust in particular is Nietzsche's favored tool for detaching from an ideal. Such detachment is essential for those who wish to investigate ideals with clear eyes and thus serves an epistemic function. If this is right, then contempt and disgust support the intellectually courageous inquiry that Nietzsche associates with the virtues discussed in the previous two chapters.

In Chapter 9, I turn to the fourth characteristically Nietzschean virtue: having a sense of humor. A sense of humor, which often expresses contempt, is allied most closely with the pathos of distance, but it also integrates with both curiosity and intellectual courage. Moreover, a sense of humor can be elicited, shaped, and sharpened through social processes — especially the laughter of others who share the agent's type. For Nietzsche, a sense of humor is essential to opening up the path to inquiry into the laughable and contemptible. Someone with this kind of sense of humor doesn't just wait for risible moments and encounters; he hunts down the laughable things in life. Some of his inquiries terminate in laughing affirmation of truths that would be hard to take without a mirthful buffer. Some of his inquiries terminate in laughing negation of cherished illusions. And some of the most important inquiries that having a sense of humor fosters are into oneself and one's own character. Nietzsche thinks that the ability to laugh at oneself supports *spernere se ipsum*, which in turn makes possible both self-knowledge and self-overcoming. Someone who is able to laugh at his own imperfections is also, sometimes, able to see those imperfections as unimportant. This makes it possible to abandon them, to change, to become a different and perhaps more worthy and interesting person.

In Chapter 10, I address the fifth characteristically Nietzschean virtue: solitude. At first blush, it might seem odd to call solitude a virtue. Virtues are traits (drives) of agents, whereas solitude is a relation between an agent and the community from which he withdraws or is excluded. However,

I show that solitude must be understood in Nietzsche's own idiosyncratic way. When he talks about solitude, he has in mind emotional rather than physical distance. Solitude is the drive to get away from (and often above) one's in-group or local community and view it critically. Because Nietzschean virtues are constitutively social, this motion tends to be associated with pangs of loneliness, alienation, self-doubt, and even despair. However, just as the ability to laugh at oneself is an important part of self-criticism and self-improvement, so the ability to look from a distance down on one's community is an important part of cultural critique. Solitude is thus the virtue that opposes vices like chauvinism, narrow-mindedness, and cozy cultural smugness.

In Chapter 11, I show how conscience ties the Nietzschean virtues together. Nietzsche distinguishes several types of conscience. First, there is conscience *simpliciter*, which he identifies with the herd instinct. This conscience dictates some actions as obligatory and forbids others as impermissible. Second, there is the good conscience, which someone enjoys to the extent that expressing her drives neither induces negative self-directed emotions that respond to fixed aspects of the self nor provokes reactions from the agent's community that are liable to be internalized as negative self-directed emotions that respond to fixed aspects of the self. In other words, the good conscience names some of the components of internal and external integration that transmute a drive into a virtue. Third, there is the bad conscience, which Nietzsche construes as the instinct of cruelty turned upon oneself or some aspect of oneself. It might at first seem that Nietzsche thinks the bad conscience is to be done away with, but he actually associates it with *spernere se ipsum*. The bad conscience thus has work to do in the cultivation of virtue. But it can only do that work if it is directed or aimed at aspects of the self that are not fixed. Moreover, it can only do that work if it does not, as a side effect, undermine or destroy the embodied and psychological conditions conducive to the life of the agent. Thus, Nietzsche aims to harness the bad conscience in the service of virtue. This is especially the case when it comes to the intellectual conscience, which turns out to be an epistemic manifestation of the bad conscience.

In the concluding prospectus, I point to three directions for future research that draws on or is inspired by this book. First, empirical moral psychology may benefit from systematic inquiry into the traits Nietzsche identifies as virtues. In particular, the constructs of intellectual courage, the contemptuous aspect of the pathos of distance, the nature and potential functions and benefits (and risks) of having a sense of humor, and the nature and potential functions and benefits (and risks) of Nietzschean

solitude have yet to be investigated. Second, I point to both gluts and gaps in the philosophical commentary on Nietzsche. As should be clear already, I think that various constructs have received far more attention than they deserve. These include the sovereign individual, what Swanton (2015) calls “mature egoism,” resentment and – perhaps most of all – the will to power. Of course, it’s easy to throw stones. So what I mainly aim to do here is show that there are exciting prospects for Nietzsche scholars to examine, such as admiration, trust, and shame.