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Two concepts of culture in the early Nietzsche

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Abstract

Culture remains a divisive issue in liberal democracies, and this article argues Nietzsche offers a principled middle ground between the conservative and progressive camps of recent and ongoing ‘culture wars’. Hence, this article challenges the ‘aristocratic’ versus ‘democratic’ Nietzsche debate by making the case that Nietzsche defended two opposed notions of culture in his early period work: a national or group culture and a cosmopolitan culture. This opposition is salutary, however, in that each form of culture moderates the excesses of the other so that both jointly can aim to perfect what Nietzsche claims is our bifurcated human nature.

Keywords

culture, Nietzsche, perfectionism

The scholarship on Nietzsche’s ‘politics’ has become increasingly sophisticated in recent years but no less divisive. The camps are familiar – Nietzsche the ‘aristocratic radical’, the arch-critic of democracy, defending a ‘discipline and breeding’ program to produce a ruthless, powerful overman, versus Nietzsche the perfectionist liberal, the agonistic democrat, who anticipates postmodern challenges to identity and defenses of difference and play.¹ The outlook for resolving this dispute is dim, as Nietzsche offers no extended discussion of concrete institutional design nor of an ideal conception of the good regime to adjudicate the dispute directly. In his early period work, Nietzsche discussed politics negatively, that is, as an obstacle to culture. Yet despite Nietzsche’s distinction between culture and politics, the scholarly readings of Nietzsche’s early essay *Schopenhauer as Educator* reflect the same divisions between aristocratic and democratic Nietzsche. This impasse can be overcome, then, if we attend to Nietzsche’s views of the nature of culture and its difference from and relationship to politics. What emerges is a more nuanced view of Nietzsche’s politics than those suggested by the aristocratic and democratic readings.

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The view that I will develop in this article, in short, is this: Nietzsche, I argue, saw culture as the arena in which humanity achieves wholeness against, on the one hand, the disintegrating effects of nature, and on the other, the barbarous tendencies of human society. These two problems afflicting humanity call for two different kinds of culture, one that enlists politics and one that eschews it. Nietzsche is hence neither an aristocratic radical nor a liberal purveyor of personal perfectionism. Rather, in defending both political and anti-political forms of culture at the same time, he sees that each arouses and moderates the impulses of the other, producing a dynamic and pluralistic cultural politics. This article thus not only offers a new interpretation of Nietzsche's view of culture, but it also provides a compelling alternative to contemporary conservative and progressive theories of culture and politics.

Culture and the problem of humanity

Many scholars understand Nietzsche's notion of culture quite broadly. As Warren describes the concept, culture is a 'medium of human activities in sensuous and intersubjective contexts'.² However, this broad definition will not do if we are to understand the difference between culture and politics. In particular, for Nietzsche, the fundamental way to understand different forms of human interaction is to grasp their purpose. Nietzsche suggests throughout his early work that culture be accorded a very noble purpose, that of the perfection of humanity.³ Many contemporary scholars of Nietzsche agree that the famed German philosopher held the realization of humanity as the highest goal for human life – in short, he was a 'perfectionist'. Nietzsche himself did not use the term, but rather it was attributed to him by John Rawls and subsequently endorsed by scholars discussing (and disagreeing about) Nietzsche's *Schopenhauer as Educator* – Thomas Hurka, Stanley Cavell, and James Conant.⁴ Perfectionism is an ethical theory – it provides a basis for our judgments about what sort of human life is good and what is not worth living. It shares a family resemblance with natural law theory in founding its judgments on a notion of what 'constitute[s] human nature', what is 'definitive of humanity', or what 'make[s] humans humans', and then arguing that the good life is what 'develops these properties to a high degree or realizes what is central to human nature', in Hurka's terms.⁵ Though the term 'perfectionism' can be misleading when applied to Nietzsche – he rejects metaphysically grounded views of teleology – it indeed captures, in my view, Nietzsche's fundamental meta-ethical commitment, the perfection or completion of humanity.⁶

The 'perfectionists' often fail, however, to see that, for Nietzsche, the notion of 'humanity' and its end is intrinsically problematic. In this section, we will explore the problematic notion of 'humanity' that grounds Nietzsche's notion of culture, before turning to the two different instantiations of humanity in culture. Nietzsche, like all moderns, rejected the ancient and medieval view of nature, according to which human beings possessed a natural function or end in virtue of our position within a hierarchically or teleologically ordered universe. We human beings had

our function as did the beasts beneath us and the angels above us, and our behaviour and character could be assessed based on this cosmic standard. With the development of modern science, nature came to be regarded not as having some cosmic order or plan, but rather as matter-in-motion, as an endless chain of efficient causes and effects stretching back infinitely into the past and forward endlessly into the future. Without natural, objective ends, the notion of a 'telos' for the species or for individuals within that species came to be rejected. Indeed, as Nietzsche puts it, this new view of nature is characterized by the 'doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types, and species, of the lack of any cardinal distinction between man and animal', such that there ceases to be a 'given' function or calling or *telos* of human beings derived from the structure of things 'out there' that would orient our perfectionist ethical claim of the good life.⁷

The question of the calling of humanity within a meaningless modern nature vexed the young Nietzsche. In *UM* 3.1, Nietzsche argues that culture is an answer to a basic metaphysical and ethical problem. Within the stream of 'becoming' that human beings, like all things, are part of (*UM* 2.1, 3.4), human life may appear to be no more than a 'mindless act of chance' (*UM* 3.1). The task of *UM* 3 is to show how we can avoid the fate of being a mere link in the chain of becoming and rather 'live according to our own laws and standards' (*UM* 3.1). Or, as Nietzsche puts the point later in the text, leading a truly human life means that we not 'belong wholly to the history of becoming ... [for] this eternal becoming is a lying puppet-play in beholding which man forgets himself' (*UM* 3.4). Human beings must learn how to 'cease to be the toy [becoming] plays with' (*UM* 3.4).. The life of the animal, Nietzsche claims, is 'a harsh punishment', for it means to 'hang on to life madly and blindly, with no higher aim than to hang on to it' while enduring tremendous suffering (*UM* 3.5). However, living through 'blind impulse' is 'what we all do for the greater part of our lives: usually we fail to emerge out of animality, we ourselves are the animals whose suffering seems to be senseless' (*UM* 3.5). For Nietzsche, the crucial task of human life is to provide a 'justification' (*Rechtfertigung*) for one's existence, to show 'why and to what end we came into existence now and at no other time' (*UM* 3.1).

Nietzsche's view of humanity can only be understood in dialogue with the previous three 'stages' in thinking about this problem in the modern age. First, early modern empiricists like Thomas Hobbes reduced human beings to our animalistic passions so that we could fit squarely into the stream of natural becoming. Hobbes argued that we are moved by our passions acting through us, and hence a deliberative decision is merely the last appetite in a series of alternating appetites. What we call 'good' and 'evil' are merely words we use to refer to the natural pleasure and pain we feel in having our appetites satisfied or frustrated. The terms 'just' and 'unjust' are artificial and self-imposed in order to ameliorate the harsh state of nature, not moral terms that exist independently of human association.⁸ Second, Rousseau and Kant were deeply dissatisfied with this understanding and aimed to restore the distinctness and dignity of the human being.⁹ Our humanity consists not

in our continuity with natural passions, but precisely in our capacity to transcend natural determinations. As Rousseau puts it, the difference between the animal and human ‘machine’ is that ‘nature alone does everything in the operations of an animal, whereas man contributes, as a free agent, to his own operations’.¹⁰ Kant claims that human freedom consists not in acting in accordance with natural inclination, but according to a rational law that I have freely given to myself. The cosmic order of the old world is replaced by the rational ordering of the world coming from within each of us as rational beings.¹¹ Humanity becomes a perfectible ideal for creatures prone to the temptation of the appetites, an ideal we live up to in acceding to rational duties towards others and ourselves.

In the third stage in conceiving of humanity’s place in nature, philosophers rejected the Kantian bifurcation between nature and freedom. Herder and the German Romantics criticized Kant on the grounds that the identification of humanity with rational freedom rendered what is human all too abstract. The prizing of abstract reasoning and the demoting of passions engender a lifeless, homogeneous character in individual and society, or possibly, as in the French Revolution, a ruthless destructive instinct towards all concrete institutions that do not measure up to the bar of abstract reason.¹² Philosophers such as Herder, Schiller, and Hegel sought to heal the wound Kant had revealed in the modern human soul, to heal the rift between nature and freedom through history.¹³ For Hegel, human freedom is not given as some separate ‘substance’ or ‘realm’ that somehow must be squared with an unfree Newtonian nature, but rather human freedom and civilization are self-generated by a developing collective self-consciousness – which Hegel calls ‘Spirit’ – that emerges out of nature and develops through history. According to Hegel, human passions become increasingly rationalized through human history from humanity’s youth in Greece to its maturity in the modern world. For Hegel, rational human beings can find satisfaction in nature by recognizing that the ‘ethical life’ of the modern world – comprising the totality of institutions, practices, and mores of modern life – is itself the product of the labour or the *Bildung* of human reason throughout history.

Nietzsche does not return to a pre-modern notion of nature, nor does he return to any of these previous three stages of modern thinking. Rather, he appropriates insights from each while moving beyond them to establish a fourth stage.¹⁴ He accepts the first-stage claim that there is no essential, given difference between the animal nature and human nature. Yet he also inherits the Kantian aspiration that humanity can claim a dignity transcending nature. To marry his naturalism with his aspiration to the ideal of humanity, Nietzsche takes a Hegelian turn to history, that we human beings can give ourselves laws and conventions that are shaped by but also shape our natures.¹⁵ We can habituate ourselves to certain conventions such that we can ‘implant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature’ that we have ‘given [ourselves] (*sich geben*)’ (*UM* 2.3). Yet Nietzsche is very critical in *UM* 2.8 of the Hegelian optimism that this historical habituation or *Bildung* is a wholly rational process culminating in the modern state (cf. *UM* 1.2). Instead, the ‘founding of cities and states, their wars, their restless assembling and scattering again, their confused mingling, mutual imitation, mutual outwitting and

downtreading, their wailing in distress, their howls of joy in victory – all this is a continuation of animality’, not the final expression of humanity (*UM* 3.5, cf. *UM* 3.4). Politics concerns the animal longings of honour and self-preservation and hence does not distinguish human beings from nature.

By contrast, Nietzsche argues that in culture, not in politics as for Hegel, humanity finds its realization. The three activities comprising culture are art, religion, and philosophy (the universal activities ironically constituting Hegel’s Absolute Spirit).¹⁶ For Nietzsche, art is the foundational activity, as religion and philosophy turn out to be forms of art themselves – Nietzsche rejects revelation and hence the distinctness of religion, and he rejects the self-grounding character of reason and rather claims that philosophy is irreducibly ‘personal’ in nature.¹⁷ Yet these activities are all distinctively human because they create a meaningful world in which humanity can transcend nature and reflect on itself.¹⁸ As we will see, culture is created precisely in opposition to the becoming of nature on the one hand and that of society, politics, and the market on the other. To exist in culture is to lead a life of freedom from the cycle of natural becoming. Though Nietzsche rejects any notion of a ‘cardinal distinction between man and animal’ (*UM* 2.9), human beings can achieve this difference by participating in the establishing and maintenance of a distinctive human practice of culture that houses humanity (*UM* 3.5). Artists like Raphael and Goethe, for instance, fought ‘against the blind power of the actual’ (*Wirklichen*) and participated in promoting humanity as such by interacting with one another, not with the blind forces of becoming (*UM* 2.8). Philosophers like Socrates and Schopenhauer are a ‘self-revelation (*Sich-offenbaren*) of . . . nature’ and are a ‘means to come to rest in the restless stream [of becoming] by coming to consciousness of the enduring types and scorning unending multiplicity’.¹⁹

However, Nietzsche defines the political instantiation of culture in two very different ways.²⁰ First, culture is the ‘unity of artistic style in all the expressions of the life of a people’ (*UM* 1.1). Culture is not, then, defined broadly as we contemporaries define it, as the intersubjective norms or customs that often account for the explicit, visible, legal and political actions of an institution or government (see, for instance, the ‘culture’ of Enron or the ‘culture’ of the South, etc.). Rather, Nietzsche reserves culture for the artistic (also, religious and philosophical) activity that shapes the character of a people. By contrast, those intersubjective norms of honour, discipline, or cunning that for Nietzsche characterize the German victory over the French are not indications of German culture, but rather the very opposite, the sacrifice of a distinctively human character for something animal. According to this first definition, then, culture is associated with a particular group or nation. Second, by contrast, Nietzsche speaks of culture in a universal sense. Being cultured involves interacting with the ‘republic of geniuses’ that stretches across time. Goethe and Raphael – and Nietzsche himself – are untimely men, as are the monumental individuals in *UM* 2.2 and the exemplary modern human beings in *UM* 3.4, who all explicitly repudiate the claims of their time and engage with a higher community, that of humanity as a whole. These two notions of culture are themselves responses to the two perennial challenges to the

appearance of the distinctively human: nature and society. These two challenges give rise to two opposing views of culture, one national and one cosmopolitan.²¹ In other words, Nietzsche's 'fourth stage' of making a home for human beings in nature is not optimistic and harmonious like his predecessors, but rather is tragic, characterized by an ineradicable tension between two notions of culture.

Culture and the transcendence of nature

The first fundamental problem of humanity, according to Nietzsche, is our vexed relationship to nature. In *UM* 2.1, Nietzsche contrasts the ruminant animal with the human being, and argues that the cow 'is a hard sight for man to see; for, though he thinks himself better than the animals because he is human, he cannot help envying them their happiness'. The cow is immersed in nature, living from moment to moment, without memory and hence without a reflective distance from nature. By contrast, the human being, with both natural instincts but also a capacity to distance himself from nature with reflection and memory, 'braces himself against the great and ever greater pressure of what is past'. We can never achieve completion or wholeness like the 'unhistorical' cow who lives from moment to moment, because the human being exists as having one foot within nature – as the desiring, forgetful animal – and one foot beyond it – as the animal who can resist and question natural impulses. Nietzsche will in his later work describe this tension as the 'sickness' of the human being, that we are both a living and a spiritual creature.²² The central problem is that human beings are not 'at home' in nature as other animals are. Unlike animals, human beings reflect on the contingency of past and future suffering, on the inevitability of death, on the random distribution of suffering among the just and unjust, and ask for a justification or a meaning for such suffering. Nature provides no reasons, and is rather indifferent to human concerns. We hence project our own purposes onto nature in order to make sense of its incomplete rationality.

However, the modern world makes such projection of meaning onto nature increasingly difficult. Nature's purposelessness is the implication of the new natural science and its 'deadly' truths (*UM* 2.9). Furthermore, Kant and Schopenhauer have revealed the 'tragic wisdom' that human reason cannot penetrate to the bottom of nature and discern natural aims or purposes.²³ These twin forces force us to long for meaning in a purposeless world, causing widespread discontent. Indeed, Nietzsche suggests that if 'Kant ever should begin to exercise any wide influence we shall be aware of it in the form of a gnawing and disintegrating skepticism and relativism' (*UM* 3.3). Heinrich von Kleist is Nietzsche's recurrent example of the modern man stricken with existential melancholy upon reading Kant, who proclaims that 'all endeavor to acquire a possession which will follow us to the grave is in vain' (*UM* 3.3).²⁴

The fundamental philosophical problem Nietzsche encounters here derives from Schopenhauer, as Nietzsche reveals in his extended encounter with Schopenhauer in *The Birth of Tragedy*.²⁵ For Schopenhauer, the moment of self-awareness or

individuality on the part of human beings is the moment of great suffering. Human beings break away from our immersion in the 'will' of nature, and this freedom comes with a price – first, endless suffering on account of our awareness of the perpetually incomplete satisfaction of our desires, and, second, unjustified suffering on account of an indifferent 'will' of nature.²⁶ Nietzsche redescribes Schopenhauer's view famously in terms of the Dionysian 'will' and the Apollinian 'representations' of human beings. For Nietzsche, the natural conclusion to Schopenhauer's view is the existential melancholy of Silenus's truth. In answer to King Midas's question to Silenus of 'what is the best and most excellent thing for human beings', Silenus responds that 'the very best thing is utterly beyond your reach, not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon' (*BT* 23).

Yet Nietzsche breaks from Schopenhauer by resisting his pessimistic conclusion about human life and he instead asserts that we human beings can give our own lives meaning and value by justifying it to ourselves. This justification, as we will see, is offered in culture, through the artistic transcendence of nature. Through artistic transcendence, culture is able to justify the senseless suffering of human beings and hence make life worth it. Nietzsche's great example from *BT* is the institution of Greek tragedy which expressed and embodied the artistic character of the Greeks. Because of these artistic institutions and norms, the Homeric heroes, for instance, were able to reverse 'the wisdom of Silenus, that "the very worst thing for them was to die soon, the second worst ever to die at all"' (*BT* 23–4). The Greek gods, for another example, 'justify the life of men by living it themselves – the only satisfactory theodicy!' (*BT* 24).

For Nietzsche, cultures can adopt different approaches to liberating a people from nature.²⁷ The Buddhist culture accepts Silenus's truth and encourages the ascetic life that minimizes material desires and hence approaches immersion into the 'will' of nature. Nietzsche attributes this kind of outlook also to Schopenhauer and criticizes it based on its essentially life-denying attitude. The Buddhist culture does not embrace the distinctively human, the fact that we are moved by both self-consciousness and life, but seeks to squelch life (*BT* 85). Alternatively, the Socratic culture rejects Silenus's truth on the grounds that, though the world may appear to be meaningless, it can in fact be made meaningful by being corrected. This culture, like the Hellenic, involves tremendous hubris in the form of an exemplary individual (Socrates) who struggles mightily against nature. Yet this kind of struggle against nature founders both theoretically (in Kant and Schopenhauer's recognition of the limits of rationalism) and practically (in the practical fact of the limits of human reason to satisfy human desires and minimize suffering coupled with our increasingly frustrated expectation that it should do this very thing, *BT* 86).

By contrast, Nietzsche endorses a 'tragic' conception of culture that recognizes the limits of human transcendence from nature (*BT* 87). This 'tragic' conception, with its high point in Greek tragedy, recognizes and justifies the bifurcated character of human beings, as both living, needy beings and as beings in need of poetic justification for our neediness and suffering. Thus, on the one hand, the tragic

culture justifies the claims of an indifferent nature by reminding human beings of our essential continuity with nature. Tragedy puts on stage the ‘fictitious state of nature’ in the form of the chorus, a chorus of ‘satyrs’ among whom ‘cultured Greeks felt themselves absorbed, elevated, and extinguished (*aufgehoben*) in exactly the same way’. This state of nature reveals that despite all the differences among human beings, the different classes, the importance of mores, all the self-conscious worries about rank and duty and social status, all these ‘give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity which leads men back to the heart of nature’. The Greeks were reminded in the artistic chorus that they arose from nature and will return to it, and that ‘life goes on ineradicably behind and beyond all civilization, as it were, and who remain eternally the same despite all the changes of generations and in the history of nations’ (*BT* 39). Human beings are natural creatures and nature is represented as powerful and good.²⁸ It is powerful in that it continues unchanged while all human things rise and fall – nature represents the ‘eternal life of that core of being’ that makes sense of the endless stream of ‘becoming’ within it (*BT* 41). It is good in that it generates new life and vivacity to rejuvenate a culture and shake up the human hubristic attempt to hold too tightly on to any one artificially created order. Nature can liberate in the sense introduced by Nietzsche’s critical history, in which, from the perspective of eternal nature, every human order ‘is worthy to be condemned’ (*UM* 2.3). Tragedy upsets social and political order and allows new human individuality and creativity to be introduced into a regime by reminding of the utter finitude of all human forms of control, of human insignificance.

On the other hand, this insignificance is balanced against the tragic hero who liberates himself and his people from nature by founding – by ‘fighting for and achieving his own’ – ‘culture’ (*BT* 48). The tragic hero upholds the ‘Apolline part of Greek tragedy’ and hence serves as the ‘radiant patches . . . to heal a gaze seared by gruesome night’, the glance into the abyss of Dionysian meaningless nature (*BT* 46). The great founders of culture in section 9 of *BT*, Oedipus and Prometheus, were ‘titanically striving individuals’ who turned against nature, were punished for it, yet in their punishment they redeemed the suffering of a community and established a culture, an artistic way of life that future individuals could pattern their own lives against. Oedipus, for instance, revealed in his character the ‘glory of passivity’ in his unnatural activity of marrying his mother and killing his father. In recognizing this deed and blinding himself – an act orchestrated not by him but by the gods – Oedipus takes on the guilt of the deed and thereby redeems the community of Thebes from the plague hanging over it. Nietzsche asks, about Oedipus, ‘how else could nature be forced to reveal its secrets, other than by victorious resistance to her, i.e. by some unnatural event?’ (*BT* 48). Prometheus, further, reveals the ‘glory of activity’, in unnaturally turning against the gods and assisting human beings to assume a power not intended for them. He is punished severely for this deed, but the deed itself lives on as the foundation of cultural meaning, of the value of human resistance or transcendence over nature.

This transcendence over nature has two parts, both of which derive from Kant, as we can see in Nietzsche’s discussion of Prometheus.²⁹ First, the hero must suffer,

in part to reveal the limits of human striving, but more importantly, to reveal human freedom and dignity. For Nietzsche, the myth of Prometheus describes the perennial condition of man who must 'fight for and achieve his own culture'. To fight for culture means to be motivated by a cause that is self-given, or, in Kantian terms, spontaneous, as opposed to being moved by natural desires. Yet for Nietzsche, as for Kant, it is difficult to tell when human beings are acting freely and when we are acting based on material desires for pleasure and the avoidance of pain and death.³⁰ Indeed, nature makes such examples of human freedom extremely difficult – it is much easier to fall into being selfish, animalistic, or grasping. Yet when these rare individuals stake their natural lives for a cultural cause, the individual's 'dignity' (*Würde*) and freedom are revealed (*BT* 50).³¹ The tragic hero gives his life for the cause of humanity and in doing so reveals that his own action was free from natural determinations. 'Dignity' is accorded to the tragic hero as humanity makes its appearance in human action as opposed to mere nature.

Second, the tragic hero's action – the self-blinding on the part of Oedipus, for instance, or the suffering of punishment for stealing fire on the part of Prometheus – is the founding moment for culture. For Nietzsche, the foundation of culture by the hero means providing 'value' or 'meaning' to the life of the community. The hero offers his own life and his own action as an exemplary life of human dignity to be imitated. Nietzsche imagines, then, Prometheus as holding 'existence and its limits in his hands'. Nietzsche quotes a poem by Goethe in which the tragic hero states that 'here I sit, forming men in my own image' (*BT* 48). Prometheus and other heroes – and here Nietzsche includes philosophers – are founders in a comprehensive sense, founders of a notion of the good life and hence of the 'unity of artistic expression of a people' (*UM* 1.1). In a similar discussion of philosophers in the 'tragic age of the Greeks', Nietzsche reveals the Kantian self-legislative element of his account when he argues that philosophers 'legislate greatness (*Gesetzgebung der Grösse*)' (*PTAG* 43).

Nietzsche accords a great deal of power and influence to individuals over peoples, but Nietzsche does not have in mind some kind of divine individual, a stranger, who arrives in a society and implants in its citizens a notion of existential value, or molds them like clay figurines. On the contrary, Nietzsche argues that the individual hero or 'genius' 'steps into appearance [*Erscheinung*, cf. *BT* 25] ... [that is,] dives forth from out of the midst of a people, that [the genius], so to speak represents the reflected image, the saturated play of colours of all the peculiar forces of this people' (*FEI* 67).³² To put the point in another way: for Nietzsche the spectators of the drama must accept the tragic hero as a hero, and to be a hero, the individual cannot coerce his audience into submission. To return, then, to the two parts of the genius's activity – first, the individual hero's activity is one characterized by humanity or 'dignity'. Nietzsche hence characterizes the relationship between individual and community not as a causal relationship (that is, a relationship of force, manipulation, or deception), but rather as a normative relationship. It is for this reason that Nietzsche invokes the Kantian term aesthetic 'justification' (*Rechtfertigung*) for existence (*BT* 33). These individual lives are making a case – an

aesthetic, rather than a rational case, to be sure – for the goodness of the life within the community. All human beings in virtue of their humanity are attuned to the humanity of the action of the heroic individual. As such, the tragic hero's life is an aesthetic justification in the Greek sense that it is a beautiful or noble (*kalos*) life, one that motivates everyone to make humanity triumphant against the indifference of nature. Prometheus taunts that human beings will accordingly be erotically aroused by this action such that they will 'heed you [nature, the gods] not, like me!' (*BT* 48).

Second, to be a hero, the individual's legislation of value cannot be arbitrary or self-involved, but rather must speak to the suffering of this community, to the character and history of this community and hence why it has endured this suffering. The hero's task, then, is not to stamp the community with his own image, but to offer the community a reason or justification for its own suffering, such that the community can find meaning in its existence. For Nietzsche, this 'justification' (*Rechtfertigung*) is a 'theodicy', that which makes sense of the seemingly meaningless suffering in nature (*BT* 24). The suffering is meaningful, the life of the hero reveals, because it has given rise to this individual's striving, and this individual, in death, founds a way of life, a culture, that the entire community strives to live up to in their own actions. This individual 'signifies the highest destiny (*Bestimmung*) of a people ... [by] tying up its people in the eternal and redeeming it from the changing sphere of the momentary' (*FEI* 67).

Nietzsche's account of the struggle of humanity against nature is meant to be a replacement of the Schopenhauerian 'Semitic' account of the 'fall' from our immersion into nature, which itself is essentially a secularization of the biblical account that views the human fall as a regrettable sin. By contrast, Nietzsche's 'Aryan' myth aims to justify the 'active sin' committed by the Prometheus, to affirm human freedom as something with 'dignity' rather than a shameful act of lasciviousness in the Garden of Eden (*BT* 49–50). According to Nietzsche, then, the active sin of human freedom from nature is justified, just as the downfall of all human freedom in the face of an indifferent nature is justified. Both human freedom and nature are justified at the same time, revealing the 'contradiction at the heart of the world' (*BT* 50). The 'divine world' of nature and the 'human world' of culture, Dionysus and Apollo, are both justified, such that 'all that exists is just and unjust and is equally justified in both respects' (*BT* 51).³³ This contradiction is not resolved, but nor is the tragedy inconsolable – transformed into an aesthetic or cultural relationship, the contradiction becomes a source of impetus for ever new forms of creative struggle.

Culture and the transcendence of society

The first kind of culture forms a group or national culture around the lives of tragic individuals while recognizing the essential limits of the human transcendence of nature. Yet for Nietzsche, culture is not only a solution to the problem of a group's meaningless suffering. The second fundamental problem that Nietzsche diagnoses

is the dehumanizing tendency of modern human politics, society, and economy. These forms of human relationship are alternatives to a cultural community, and their empirical instantiations have varying degrees of dehumanizing effects. In the modern age, Nietzsche argues, these associations are dehumanizing in a way they have never been before.³⁴ Modern science has exploded pre-modern mythologies and cultural meaning that previously had moderated our material desires. Coming face-to-face with Silenus's truth, Nietzsche fears, the void left by a fading culture is replaced with the authority of the state, the vanity of society, or the indulgences of the market.

First, throughout his early period work, Nietzsche repudiates the rise in state power in the modern age, witnessed especially in the unification of the German Reich under Bismarck in 1871. The purpose of the state ceases to be, as Nietzsche envisions its function, to 'provide protection against forces from without, protection against forces from within, and protection against the protectors' (*UM* 3.7, cf. FEI 78). Instead, the state begins to occupy the void left by culture as the highest calling in human life, as the 'absolutely complete ethical organism' (FEI 79), and hence 'wants men to render it the same idolatry they formerly rendered the church' (*UM* 3.4). In so doing, the state 'makes an attempt to organize everything anew out of itself and to bind and constrain all those mutually hostile forces' (*UM* 3.4), including, for instance, philosophers. The state puts 'truth' in service of the state's goals by appointing prestigious university positions, for instance, only to professors who tow the state line, who will, in turn, 'recognize something as being higher than truth, namely the state' (*UM* 3.8). For Nietzsche, the life of politics is essentially a continuation of animality – the pride of the patriotic citizen is essentially the same as that of the animal defending its territory. Yet further, the sacrifice of the human intellect to this artificial 'coldest of all cold monsters' is a betrayal of the humanity that extends far beyond any state border.

Second, Nietzsche also concerns himself with the natural temptations of conforming to a mass society. *UM* 3.1 suggests that a universal characteristic of human beings is that we 'have a tendency to laziness', that is, we 'hide ... behind customs and opinions'. We 'cloak' ourselves in conventions and clichés from 'fear of his neighbour', from the natural herd desire to fit in and be accepted. The habituation to the life in society destroys 'man as he is, uniquely himself to every last movement of his muscles'. Rather, 'on account of [our] laziness' we 'seem like factory products'. For Nietzsche, the life of vanity and conformism involves 'putting yourself in pawn and losing yourself'. It means making oneself into a factory product and hence failing to answer the question as to 'why and to what end we came into existence now and at no other time' (*UM* 3.1). It means falling into a stream of social becoming and not coming up for air.

Third, Nietzsche argues that the most visible effect of the decline of cultures will be that a 'people perishes of petty egoism, ossification and greed, falls apart and ceases to be a people; in its place systems of individualist egoism, brotherhoods for the rapacious exploitation of the non-brothers, and similar creations of utilitarian vulgarity may perhaps appear in the arena of the future' (*UM* 2.9). The decline of

culture throws individuals back upon themselves, back upon their natural desires. Yet the modern market provides for and encourages a 'more prudent egoism than heretofore, an egoism which imposes certain restraints upon itself so as to ensure its endurance'. The greed of the market becomes 'our god' to replace the void left by culture (*UM* 2.9). The life of the market is in some ways the most powerful temptation of all, since it at once satisfies deeply held natural or animal desires while also apparently fulfilling core modern dogmas – the market involves individual 'freedom' and it is the best instrument for the utilitarian goal of the greatest happiness for the greatest number (*UM* 3.6).

At the same time, it is not just that politics, society, and the market tempt us away from our humanity by enticing us with natural desires, but also that these actively discourage culture. The task of this second form of culture reveals what it means to lead a distinctively human life, the life that transcends the animal life of politics, society, or the market. For this very reason, the leaders of politics, society, and market worry about the destructive effects of culture, about culture's capacity to 'instantly revolutionize the entire system of human pursuits' (*UM* 3.8, quoting Emerson) by revealing the subhuman character of their own pursuits. The cultural life threatens not just the psychological self-satisfaction of the 'happy' life in these domains, but it also threatens the illusory order that states, societies, and market-places are built on. That is, the statesman relies on the patriotic devotion of citizens, and this devotion is based on a claim as to the goodness of the state and the state's aims. The cultural human being undermines the basis of the state's claims on the citizen and reveals instead the citizen's servitude to the state. Similarly, the socialite becomes unhappy when social fads are revealed as empty or arbitrary and the businessman is enraged when the luxuries he sells are revealed as corrupting of human dignity. Nietzsche speaks of Schopenhauer's plights in *UM* 3.3, the 'danger facing uncommon men who live in a society tied to convention', how difficult it was to be 'untimely' by attacking the great pillars of power in German society, the state, mass society, and the university.

This problem of dehumanization is different from the problem of Silenus's truth, and hence calls for a different solution – a different type of culture. This second type of culture also brings about human freedom, but it is freedom from society, rather than nature. As Nietzsche puts the point in *UM* 3.1, 'culture is liberation, the removal of all the weeds, rubble, and vermin that want to attack the tender buds of the plant'. With this liberation we can 'refuse to allow our existence to resemble a mindless act of chance' as a mere contingent feature of a political or social system (*UM* 3.1). The escape from becoming, from animality, is the task of this second form of culture as for the first, but this second form of culture must extricate human beings from our attachment to local, particular, national goods – to 'overcome the *Zeitgeist*' (*KSA* 7.19(7)) – as opposed to the task of the first form of culture, which was to attach us to the group or the nation.

This second form of culture is hence transnational and transhistorical. Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer by calling it the 'republic of geniuses'. This 'republic' is populated by 'individuals' who transcend the 'excited chattering dwarfs who

creep about beneath them' (*UM* 2.9), or rather the political, social, and economic activity of human beings, the 'confused mingling, mutual imitation, mutual outwitting and downtreading' which is a 'continuation of animality' and an immersion in the sea of becoming (*UM* 3.5). These individuals engage in an 'exalted spirit-dialogue' (*Geistergespräch*) among one another (*UM* 2.9). This dialogue of spirits consists of those artists like Raphael, Goethe, Schiller, and those philosophers like Plato, Rousseau, and Schopenhauer, who 'live contemporaneously with one another' in the sense that they debate and inspire one another having transcended the concerns of animality (*UM* 2.9). Nietzsche says in a similar passage earlier on 'monumental history' that the 'great moments in the struggle of the human individual constitute a chain, that this chain unites mankind across the millennia' (*UM* 2.2). The thoughts and lives of these individuals are thoroughly interlaced with one another in this vast republic of letters which 'form a kind of bridge across the turbulent stream of becoming' (*UM* 2.9). This culture redeems humanity by liberating us from our own purposeless animality, by offering a purpose for all this political, social, and economic restlessness. It is for this reason, Nietzsche says, that the 'goal of humanity cannot lie in its end but only in its highest exemplars' (*UM* 2.9), a sentiment he repeats in the infamous passage that one's life has significance 'only by your living for the good of the rarest and most valuable exemplars' (*UM* 3.6).³⁵ It is hence the 'task of history to be the mediator between [these individuals] and thus again and again to inspire and lend the strength for the production of the great man' (*UM* 2.9). Or, as Nietzsche puts the point in *UM* 3.5, 'it is the fundamental idea of culture, insofar as it sets for each one of us but one task: to promote the production of the philosopher, the artist, and the saint within us and without us'. All individuals have a duty, in other words, to promote the ideal of humanity 'within us and without us'. Nietzsche is playing on the Kantian imperative, the 'circle of duties', as he calls it, to become 'worthy of the humanity that dwells within' us.³⁶

All human beings have then a duty to perfect humanity insofar as we ourselves can engage in this 'spirit-dialogue' (or support and maintain it through our political, social, and economic activity). Fortunately, Nietzsche does not fall prey to the Kantian 'rigorism' charge about this cultural duty, because, for Nietzsche, each of us as human being has an inner aesthetic connection to humanity that far transcends our animalistic endeavors. Our recognition of our own distance from humanity makes us 'hate ourselves as we usually are', but also arouses our *eros* for this ideal of humanity, the 'bright sparks of the fire of love in whose light we cease to understand the word "I" ... and we are thus possessed of a heartfelt longing for bridges between here and there' (*UM* 3.5). Indeed, what arouses this shame and this longing are those 'exemplars' of humanity, those great individuals who speak to one another in the spirit-dialogue, the Socrateses or Goethes (*UM* 3.6). These individuals 'educate' in the German sense of *er-ziehen*, to draw us out of ourselves and up. In this sense, Nietzsche again connects his theory with the ancient notion of *eros* both in the sense that *eros* draws us out of our love of our own, but also that *eros* is aroused by the beauty or nobility

(*kalos*) of human action, a beauty that itself stems from the idea of humanity revealed therein.³⁷

Nietzsche describes the means by which culture arouses this human longing in *UM* 3.6. The ‘consecration to culture’ involves two steps. First, our encounter with culture and the exemplars who engage in it brings with it ‘self-knowledge and dissatisfaction’ with oneself. This dissatisfaction stems from our recognition that, ‘I see above me something higher and more human than I am.’ The *eros* or ‘love’ bestowed by culture cannot be taught, but rather it is imparted in our encounter with exemplary human beings, such that we gain a ‘clear, discriminating, and self-contemptuous’ view of ourselves, and we ‘hate [our] own narrowness and shriveled nature’ in our ‘feeling of sympathy for the genius’ (*UM* 3.6). We see our own animalistic selves as fragmented among a thousand different concerns in society, enthralled to a thousand business transactions, and we find our erotic longing, we find ‘we have an immeasurable longing to become whole’.³⁸ This first consecration to culture is very similar to Alcibiades’s shame in the face of Socrates in the *Symposium*, which, as Nietzsche’s *Liebblingsdichtung*, Nietzsche is surely thinking of here. Alcibiades, the great embodiment of the political, social, and economic life in Greece, feels ‘shame before [Socrates] and him alone’.³⁹ Socrates’ exemplary character and relentless arguments undermining Alcibiades’s self-knowledge produces in him this feeling of shame in the face of distinctly human, as opposed to animal, activity.

Second, the ‘more difficult’ task is to move from this inner shame and longing to outward action on behalf of culture. That is, we must ‘act, that is to say struggle on behalf of culture and hostility towards those influences, habits, laws, institutions in which he fails to recognize his goal’ (*UM* 3.6). Nietzsche describes the activity of individuals in culture most clearly in *UM* 2. The injunction of ‘monumental history’ in particular resembles the cultural consecration, in that the ‘commandment which rules over’ the individual is this: ‘that which in the past was able to expand the concept “man” and make it more beautiful must exist everlastingly, so as to be able to accomplish this everlastingly . . . that is the fundamental idea of the faith in humanity’ (*UM* 2.2).

This task is indeed difficult for the reason Alcibiades gives, that is, because the pull of our animal desires is particularly strong. Yet for Nietzsche, action within culture is difficult for a deeper reason. That is, action within culture demands not that we slavishly submit ourselves to some abstract notion of ‘humanity’ – doing so would simply mirror the enslavement characteristic of the life slavishly devoted to the abstract entities of the state, mass society, and money. Rather, for Nietzsche, action within culture requires that we fulfill the law that ‘every man is a unique miracle’ (*UM* 3.1). That is, we must submit ourselves to the task of producing a unique voice and personality within that ‘spirit-dialogue’ among humanity. Such ‘uniqueness’ is much more difficult than we can imagine, for Nietzsche. When we often consider ourselves to be ‘unique’, to be ‘finding ourselves’, we are in fact merely uncovering larger historical and social determinations that have come to make me who I am. Discerning my own uniqueness requires the arduous effort of

self-knowledge, uncovering and mastering the determinations that make me me. This self-knowledge encompasses our activity in the first consecration to culture, that of learning about how I am shaped by political, social, and economic forces. But the self-knowledge of the second consecration to culture involves understanding those cultural determinations that have come to shape me, which means therefore submitting myself to a rigorous, disciplined education in the great minds of the past, a necessary prerequisite for discovering my own place or voice within this republic of geniuses. Nietzsche sums up this task when he claims that the 'individual has to employ his own wrestling and longing as the alphabet by means of which he can now read off the aspirations of mankind as a whole' (*UM* 3.6). The great minds of the past have made the individual who he is, but they have also given rise to this individual who can in turn shape the spirit-dialogue based on his own unique perspective.

Nietzsche reveals his two very different notions of culture in the two different accounts of how these individuals come to be. As we have seen, in the first culture, the 'people' has as its 'motherly vocation . . . the begetting of the genius' (FEI 67). Yet here, individuals arise in opposition to their people. They do not provide an answer to their suffering, but a challenge to their self-complacency. Nietzsche recounts Emerson's warning 'when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk' (*UM* 3.8).⁴⁰ Far from contradicting himself here, Nietzsche points to the two very different fundamental needs human beings have, liberation from nature and society, and the two opposed forms of community that meet these needs. Yet furthermore, I want to suggest, that had Nietzsche articulated these two notions of culture in this explicit way, he would not have regarded this opposition as a problem. On the contrary, the opposition between national and universal culture can be salutary in that each could serve to check the excesses of the other. On the one hand, the excessive emphasis on national culture can lead to chauvinism, vanity, and ultimately a nationalism that could break out into war such as in Bismarck's unified Germany. Universal culture could help moderate this tendency, and Nietzsche seems to suggest that the German cultural connection to a broader ancient heritage in ancient Greece can help moderate German self-satisfaction (see e.g. FEI lecture 3). On the other hand, the excessive extraction from national culture can lead to a rootless, rarefied culture that has no connection to the labours and sufferings of actual peoples. Throughout his life, from his early attachment to the particularism of German culture to his late faith in European culture, Nietzsche recognized the necessity of particular attachments to give human longing substance. Finally, given Nietzsche's pessimism about the modern human devotion to culture – human beings will by and large, he suggests, devote themselves to the animal pursuits of glory and pleasure, while it is rare for the genuinely human to arise – the two forms of culture could work in tandem to moderate the excesses of these animalistic desires. An education in culture could arouse our love of the distinctively human just enough to elevate the passions of politics, society, and the economy, to make them more reflective, less prone to depravity and deception, more imaginative and thoughtful.⁴¹

Conclusion

We are finally prepared to adjudicate the dispute over Nietzsche's politics, then, by reading that most contentious passage in *UM* 3.6 so often cited –

How can your life, the individual life, receive the highest value, the deepest significance? How can it be least squandered? Certainly only by your living for the good of the rarest and most valuable exemplars, and not for the good of the majority, that is to say those who, taken individually, are the least valuable exemplars. And the young person should be taught to regard himself as a failed worker of nature but at the same time as a witness to the grandiose and marvelous intentions of this artist: nature has done badly, he should say to himself; but I will honor its great intentions by serving it so that one day it may do better. (*UM* 3.6)

In the immediate sequel, Nietzsche remarks that 'by coming to this resolve, he places himself within the circle of culture, for culture is the child of each individual's self-knowledge and dissatisfaction with himself' (*UM* 3.6). Nietzsche argues here not that we should sacrifice our lives literally for the 'most valuable exemplars', as if politics or society should be forcibly rearranged such that the many are to sacrifice ourselves in battle for the new Caesar, as Rawls and Hurka suggest. That is, Nietzsche is not offering a principle of justice here in any material sense that Rawls and Hurka has in mind. Material redistribution contributes little to cultural production and in most cases corrupts the cultural ideal. Indeed, in following Kant, Nietzsche sees the cultural and the material as largely opposed – the more we think of the tragic hero, for instance, as in it for power or his own good the less we think of him as a hero, as acting spontaneously out of a cultural ideal to advance humanity. Furthermore, it is not as if the 'majority' must sacrifice their happiness or be coerced in any way. Indeed, Nietzsche argues that it is the exemplars like Schopenhauer who lead the unhappy lives of poverty, not the titans of government and industry. Rather, what Nietzsche means here fundamentally is a cultural imperative, that we think of the goal of human life not as lying in political, social, or economic ends, but in cultural terms. Acting based on this cultural imperative will not mean much for the average person, according to Nietzsche, but the average person is not Nietzsche's target. Rather, he takes aim at those reformers of politics, society, and especially education, who put Enlightenment ideals of utilitarian justice and equality above the ancient ideals of cultural excellence.⁴² Nietzsche emphasizes that education, for instance, should retain its 'classical' character, disciplining students in the training in culture, and not succumbing to 'dumbing down' education for a mass audience or by seeing the task of education as acquiring useful skills to be employed in politics or industry (*FEI* 66ff.). In such a case, education becomes 'instrumentalized' for political or economic pursuits that are themselves instruments for material, not spiritual needs.

Nietzsche does not have in mind the kind of political elitism Rawls and Hurka attribute to him, then. However, Nietzsche does, as we have just seen, subscribe to

a kind of cultural elitism that should restrain the leveling tendencies of Enlightenment thought. In this way, Cavell and Conant's liberal egalitarian reading fails to capture the spirit of Nietzsche's claims. Individuals indeed must work to promote the genius 'within them', and in this sense Nietzsche is an egalitarian, arguing that all human beings have the capacity to recognize the value of humanity within us.⁴³ However, Nietzsche argues that the actual participation in humanity will turn out to be for the rare and talented few, and that these few are devoted not to their own self-perfection, but are those who are capable of submitting themselves to the rigorous education to the republic of geniuses, who can attain a stature of a Goethe or Schiller, and hence who can put forth a unique voice, embody humanity, and become a genius or exemplar for others.⁴⁴

The political implications of Nietzsche's view are far from horrendous or destructive, and indeed Cavell and Conant are closest to being right with regard to Nietzsche's politics (even if they fail to grasp Nietzsche's view of culture).⁴⁵ For Nietzsche, no one can be forced to lead a life of culture, indeed, force and culture are incompatible as the material or animal and the free or spiritual. As such, the political should not directly serve cultural ends. However, the political should indirectly serve cultural ends by providing protection against those who would coerce the cultured. Culture provides in turn a function for the majority in two ways: first, by providing meaning for the suffering of particular groups or nations, and, second, by moderating the excessive passions often destructive of political, social, and market orders. Despite these less than oppressive political views, Nietzsche's decidedly elitist view of culture is anathema to democratic ears, and his view of the human good is difficult to swallow for liberals.

Still, Nietzsche makes a powerful case that deserves to be aired. I want to suggest in conclusion that Nietzsche's view can actually be very useful in contemporary discussions of culture and democracy. This matter of 'culture' is a recurring and vexed problem in modern pluralist democracies. Disputes between conservative defenders of a national cultural identity and liberal proponents of multiculturalism proceed unabated. Nowhere is this more evident than in debates concerning education and the curriculum for primary and secondary schools. Is it desirable (and even possible) to cultivate a sense of national identity in schoolchildren through the design of a U.S. History curriculum? Or is national identity a remnant of the pre-liberal past, so that we should cultivate individual identities, whether through cosmopolitan celebrations of difference, or, by contrast, in minority culture-specific charter schools that seek to promote and cherish a particular group identity, for instance?

Nietzsche offers a principled middle ground between these two positions. Nietzsche's model of cultural education is at once national and universal, corresponding to Nietzsche's two forms of culture. On the one hand, national culture is desirable, but not for the purposes of indoctrination or any end related to politics, society, or the market. Rather, national culture is valuable as an answer to the question of why human life is valuable in a meaningless universe. In this regard, founders of culture are particularly important as demonstrations of the free and

noble life. Moreover, such tragic heroes can be founders of nations, but also of groups – perhaps Nietzsche would not agree, but a founder of culture such as Frederick Douglass or Martin Luther King, Jr. helped make sense of African-American suffering in the US in providing a model of how to live nobly through suffering. On the other hand, universal culture is desirable because human beings, as animals, are naturally inclined toward the animalistic lives within politics, society, and the market. Universal culture provides a corrective to the narrowness and bigotry of national and group culture, but, equally important, it arouses the human soul beyond the narrow confines of a material existence and moderates the intrinsic excesses of a power-hungry politics, a greedy marketplace, or a shallow society – universal culture reveals those exemplars whose nobility or beauty (*kalos*) arouses individual *eros* to attain in their own lives a measure of a full human life.

Abbreviations of Nietzsche's Works

BT: *The Birth of Tragedy*, tr. Ronald Spiers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

FEI: *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, trans. Michael W. Grenke. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press. 2004

GS: *Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, tr. Josefine Nauckhoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

KSA: *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari. Dordrecht: de Gruyter, 1988.

PTAG: *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. Marianne Cowan. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc. 1962.

UM: *Untimely Meditations*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale (cited by essay number, then section number), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Notes

Thanks to the anonymous reviewers for helpful comments that improved the final manuscript. Paul Franco, Paul Stern, and Catherine Zuckert also helped me conceptualize the issues here through numerous conversations about Nietzsche and culture.

1. The literature here is vast. The 'aristocratic radical' defenders include: B. Detwiler (1990) *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. F. Appel (1998) *Nietzsche contra Democracy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. D. Dombowsky (2009) 'Nietzsche as Bonapartist', in H. W. Siemens (ed.) *Nietzsche, Power, and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought*, pp. 347–369, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. The liberal democratic reading has (at least) three strands – one that stems from the postmodernist reading of Nietzsche from Foucault and includes those agonist democrats like: M. Warren (1988) *Nietzsche and Political Thought*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. B. Honig (1993) *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. W. Connolly (2002) *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

- Press. L. Hatab (1995) *A Nietzschean Defense of Democracy*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing. The second arises from the liberal 'ironist' bourgeois appropriation of Nietzsche in R. Rorty (1989) *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. The third responds to Rawlsian liberalism with a democratic perfectionism in S. Cavell (1990) *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. J. Conant (2000) 'Nietzsche's Perfectionism: A Reading of Schopenhauer as Educator', in R. Schacht (ed.) *Nietzsche's Postmoralism*, pp. 181–244. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Warren (n. 1), p. 47.
 3. Nietzsche's view of culture in some ways matches with Scruton's view of 'high culture', but Nietzsche does still follow Herder in incorporating something of what Scruton calls 'common culture'. See R. Scruton (1998) *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Culture*, ch. 1. South Bend, IN: St Augustine's Press. For helpful general discussions of Nietzsche's early view of culture, see R. McGinn (1975) 'Culture as Prophylactic: Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy as Culture Criticism', *Nietzsche Studien*, vol. 4, 75–138. Q.P. Taylor (1997) *The Republic of Genius*, pp. 69–91. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press. C. Zuckert (1976) 'Nature, History, and the Self: Nietzsche's Untimely Considerations', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 5: 55–82, offers an illuminating discussion that seeks to synthesize the philosophy of *UM*, and brings out Nietzsche's worries about the consequences of modernity for the possibility of achieving common ground among individuals. P. Franco (2007) 'Nietzsche's Human, All Too Human, and the Problem of Culture', *Review of Politics*, vol. 69, 215–43, insightfully develops Nietzsche's notion of culture in the middle-period works, yet wrongly, as I will argue, attributes to the early period works an excessive reliance on art at the expense of knowledge.
 4. J. Rawls (1971) *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 285–292. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. T. Hurka (1993) *Perfectionism*, pp. 75–9. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Cavell (n. 1), pp. 49–53. Conant (n. 1). For a defense of Nietzsche's 'perfectionism' across his entire corpus see Daniel Conway (1997) *Nietzsche and the Political*, pp. 6–27. New York: Routledge.
 5. Hurka (n. 4), p. 3.
 6. For a nice elaboration of Nietzsche's fundamental commitment to realizing 'humanity' throughout his writings see B. Yack (1992) *The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosophic Sources of Social Discontent from Rousseau to Marx and Nietzsche*, pp. 310–64. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. C. Zuckert (1983) 'Nietzsche on the Origin and Development of the Distinctively Human', *Polity*, vol. 16, no. 1 Autumn 1983, 48–71, shows that Nietzsche's later *Genealogy of Morality* is concerned with locating and perfecting the 'distinctively human'. Despite a general agreement that Nietzsche's fundamental meta-ethical commitment is to perfecting humanity, there are dissenters. B. Leiter defends a naturalized understanding of Nietzsche's metaethics: (2002) *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality*. New York: Routledge. While A. Nehamas and others have defended a formal understanding of Nietzsche's ethics based on aesthetic principles of order and harmony: Nehamas (1987) *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
 7. F. Nietzsche (1983) *Untimely Meditations*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale, 2.9. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This is abbreviated in the text as *UM*.
 8. T. Hobbes (1994 [1651]) *Leviathan*, pp. 33, 34–5, 81. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
 9. John Locke was an important transitional figure from Hobbes to Rousseau and Kant in attempting to restore human dignity to an empiricist anthropology. See on Locke on dignity

- M. Zuckert (2007) 'Human Dignity as the Basis of Justice', *The Hedgehog Review*, 9(3): 32–48, Fall 2007 and on Locke's influence on Hegel, J. Church, 'Personhood and Ethical Commercial Life: Hegel's Transformation of Locke', in L. A. Ward (forthcoming) *Natural Rights and Political Philosophy*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame.
10. J.-J. Rousseau (1987 [1755]) *Basic Political Writings*, p. 44. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
 11. On this point, see Kant's remarks about the 'Copernican revolution in philosophy' at Bxvi in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
 12. See Herder, *Another Philosophy of History*, pp. 11, 50–4; G.W.F Hegel (1991) *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Trans. H.B. Nisbet, para. 5, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 13. See F. Schiller (2004 [1794–5]) *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, pp. 68–89. Dover.: 'To watch over these two impulses, and to secure for each its boundaries, is the task of culture, which therefore owes justice equally to both, and has to uphold not only the rational impulse against the sensuous, but also the latter against the former.'
 14. Nietzsche 'establishes' this stage only in an inchoate form in his early period work – Nietzsche's mature period writings on the will to power and genealogy are required to fully flesh this stage out.
 15. F. Nietzsche (2001) *Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, tr. Josefine Nauckhoff, aphorism 357. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Cited in text as *GS*, with aphorism number.) For a rich, illuminating discussion of Nietzsche's approach to history, see C. Emden (2008) *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This article has benefited greatly from Emden's research into Nietzsche's skepticism about Enlightenment humanism and the modern state.
 16. The three character types representing these activities are the artist, saint, and philosopher – for insightful analysis see *UM* 3.5 and L. P. Thiele (1990) *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. T. Heilke offers a useful grasp of Nietzsche's 'musical' politics: (1997) *Nietzsche's Tragic Regime: Culture, Aesthetics, and Political Education*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press. This is not to say that politics is irrelevant to cultural activity – indeed, culture and politics will always be interdependent – but rather that human beings are not 'political animals' in the way Hegel retrieves Aristotle's famous claim and makes political participation the standard of a good human life.
 17. See preface to F. Nietzsche 'Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks', tr. Marianne Cowan (cited as *PTAG* in the text, with page numbers).
 18. Cf. *UM* 3.5 in which Nietzsche claims that 'nature needs knowledge', and 'all nature presses towards man . . . [and] thereby intimates that man is necessary for the redemption of nature from the curse of the life of the animal, and that in him existence at last holds up before itself a mirror in which life appears no longer senseless but in its metaphysical significance'. The 'fundamental idea of culture' consists of this 'perfecting of nature'.
 19. F. Nietzsche (1988) *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, 7.19 (16–17). Dordrecht: de Gruyter. (Cited in text as *KSA*.)
 20. Though Nietzsche fails to distinguish explicitly the two senses of culture in his early work, he does invoke both forms in *UM* 3 (it is not as if he conceives of one notion of culture in *BT* and then drops it in *UM* – he stays rather consistent in his inconsistency in his early period). He does use two different German terms that are often rendered as

- 'culture' in English translations – *Kultur* and *Bildung* – but Nietzsche employs these terms interchangeably, despite the venerable tradition of German theory of *Bildung*. See helpful discussions of *Bildung* by W. Bruford (1975) *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. R. Geuss (1996) 'Kultur, Bildung, Geist', *History and Theory* 35(2): 151–64. However, Nietzsche does reserve scorn for the Enlightenment understanding of *Bildung*, represented by the 'gebildet' (*UM* 1.1), those philistines like Strauss who take themselves to be 'cultured' (*gebildet*) while reflecting the worst excesses of a shallow fashionable intellectual snobbery. In his famous discussion of the 'last men' in his *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche will again use *Bildung* more broadly but also derisively to refer to the modern pride in civilized society, a society Nietzsche sees as spiritually bankrupt (See F. Nietzsche (1966) *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Trans. Walter Kaufmann, preface, section 5, New York: Penguin Books). Yet despite these derogatory remarks, Nietzsche employs *Bildung* (and *Kultur*) to refer to his own positive cultural ideal.
21. See, for instance, F. Nietzsche (n.d.) 'On the Future of Our Educational Institutions' (FEI), tr. Michael W. Grenke, p. 17, where Nietzsche articulates two 'drives' that make up a proper cultural education – on the one hand, education fosters the 'narrowing and concentration of education', and, on the other, education aims for the 'strengthening and self-sufficiency of education'. These two drives roughly line up to the aims of the two kinds of culture I elicit in Nietzsche – the 'narrowing' pairs up with the first, particularist notion of culture, while the 'self-sufficiency' view matches the second, universal view.
 22. At the same time, Nietzsche thinks that this sickness is 'like pregnancy' – that is, it is not a fact to be regretted, but rather to be celebrated for its creative potential. See F. Nietzsche (1994) *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Trans. Carol Diethe, essay 2, section 19, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 23. F. Nietzsche (1999) *The Birth of Tragedy*, tr. Ronald Spiers, p. 87. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Cited in the text as *BT*.)
 24. See, further, *UM* 2.9 on the deadly truths that would reveal the meaninglessness of nature and hence reintroduce Silenus' truth on a mass scale, which, in Nietzsche's mind would lead to the 'people perish[ing] of petty egoism, ossification and greed'.
 25. J. Young also nicely describes Nietzsche's early encounter with Schopenhauer as the existential concerns that animated his interest. See J. Young (2010) *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, pp. 81–98. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 26. See A. Schopenhauer (1969 [1818]) *The World as Will and Representation*, tr. E. F. J. Payne, pp. 283, 309, 311–26. New York: Dover.
 27. My reading of Nietzsche takes aim at the interpretation of Nietzsche's culture that prizes a mythology, a mere distraction from the tragic wisdom of the truth about nature and an immersion into artwork. Rather, Nietzsche's culture specifically incorporates tragic wisdom and justifies human life nonetheless.
 28. Nietzsche emphasizes the point that it is the representation of nature, not an exact revelation of nature, that absorbs the cultured Greek – Nietzsche claims that it is not just our 'existence' but also the 'world' that is 'eternally justified' as an 'aesthetic phenomenon'. For Nietzsche, the world has no 'justification' in itself, but rather must be supplied one by human art.
 29. Some excellent new studies have shed considerable light on Nietzsche's debt to Kant – see, for instance, R. K. Hill (2003) *Nietzsche's Critiques: The Kantian Foundations of his Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. M. S. Green (2002) *Nietzsche and the*

- Transcendental Tradition*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. See also D. Owen (2009) 'Autonomy, Self-Respect, and Self-Love: Nietzsche on Ethical Agency', in K. G. May (ed.) *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, issue 24, pp. 197–222. Oxford: Oxford University Press. K. Gemes (2009) 'Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual' in K. G. May (ed.) *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, pp. 33–50. Oxford: Oxford University Press. These have rightfully elicited Nietzsche's commitment to an ethical ideal of 'autonomy.'
30. Immanuel Kant (1981) *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. James W. Ellington, p. 19, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.
 31. Emphasis Nietzsche's. Schiller's elaborated Kant's point about the difficulty in discerning human freedom in his essay *Über Anmut und Würde* (F. Schiller (2005) "On Grace and Dignity," in Schiller's 'On Grace and Dignity' in Its Cultural Context, ed. Jane V. Curran and Christophe Fricker. Rochester, NY: Camden House. pp. 123–170). Schiller argued that human freedom is most clearly revealed through 'dignity' (*Würde*), that is, through the conflict of our natural inclinations and our duties. Nietzsche is in turn appropriating this Schillerian point for his theory of culture. See BT 92 for Nietzsche's appropriation of Schiller's *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*. See N. Martin for the judgment that BT 'engages in a constructive and at times even deferential manner with Schiller's aesthetic theory' and, I think here, with the moral theory: Martin (1996) *Nietzsche and Schiller: Untimely Aesthetics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
 32. Cf. also KSA 7.19(13): the individual does not 'stand so wholly removed, as an exception, from the people: the will [of the people] wants something of him as well. The aim is the same as in art – its very own transfiguration and redemption (*Erlösung*)'
 33. Nietzsche's account of the moment of liberation of the human from nature is complicated in a further way – that is, Nietzsche wants to emphasize that the liberation from nature as represented by Prometheus is assisted by nature itself as represented by the 'Titan Atlas, brother of Prometheus' (BT 51). Nietzsche again wants to emphasize that human freedom is not some supernatural power, but is essentially consistent with a thoroughly naturalistic view of the world. On this matter, see Nietzsche's ambivalence towards Schiller's idealism on BT 38–9.
 34. For Nietzsche, ancient communities did not lead to this dehumanization or alienation of citizens from the political community, in part because politics and culture were not disentangled as they have become in the modern age. See UM 2.10 on Nietzsche's praise of the Greeks and for further discussion J. Church (forthcoming) *Infinite Autonomy: The Divided Individual in the Political Thought of G. W. F. Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche*, ch. 7. Philadelphia: Penn State Press.
 35. J. Conant does not discuss this passage from UM 2.9 where Nietzsche is explicit about the inegalitarian character of his notion of 'exemplar'. See J. Conant (2000) 'Nietzsche's Perfectionism: A Reading of Schopenhauer as Educator', in R. Schacht (ed.) *Nietzsche's Postmoralism*, pp. 181–244. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 36. Immanuel Kant (1996) *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Mary Gregor, pp. 150–1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 37. For an elaboration of Nietzsche's appropriation of Socrates and eros, see J. Church (2006) 'Dreaming of the True Erotic: Nietzsche's Socrates and the Reform of Education', *History of Political Thought*, 27(4): 685–710, Winter 2006.
 38. See Aristophanes' account of eros as a desire to become whole in *Symposium* 189aff. As V. Lemm rightly points out, Cavell and Conant only emphasize this first consecration to culture in their intrapsychic account of Nietzsche's perfectionism. They overlook the

- second consecration, which, in Lemm's words, hence overlooks Nietzsche's account of individuals' 'responsibility' to culture. See V. Lemm (2007) 'Is Nietzsche a Perfectionist? Rawls, Cavell, and the Politics of Culture in Nietzsche's Schopenhauer as Educator', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 34: 5–27.
39. Plato (1994) *Symposium*, trans. Robin Waterfield, p. 216b, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 40. See also Nietzsche's suggestion that the 'whole life of a people reflects impurely and confusedly the image offered up by its highest geniuses: these are not the product of the masses, but the masses show their repercussion,' an indication of Nietzsche's view of the second view of culture and the productive character of its individuals (*KSA* 7.19(1)).
 41. As Nietzsche puts it at *KSA* 7.19(41): 'The culture of a people is revealed in the unifying taming (*Bändigung*) of the drives of this people: philosophy tames the knowledge-drive, art the form-drive and the drive for ecstasy, *agape* controls *eros*, and so forth.' See also *KSA* 7.23(14) on philosophy's role in either 'preparing for', 'maintaining', or 'moderating' culture.
 42. On this point, see D. Owen (2002) 'Equality, Democracy, and Self-Respect: Reflections on Nietzsche's Agonal Perfectionism', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 113–31, who situates Nietzsche's critique of the Enlightenment with other critics of mass society and defenders of human excellence, such as John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville. See also, among other contemporary democratic theorists, J. Tully, who defends an ideal of civic participation and excellence indebted to these 19th-cent. critics (part 1): Tully (2008) *Public Philosophy in a New Key*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. These theorists are defending a notion of 'perfectionism' that is Nietzschean – a 'processual' perfectionism, rather than a substantive *telos*, in Owen's terms, glossing Conant.
 43. Thus, there is reason to think that Nietzsche would reject a legally exclusive or aristocratic system of education. Education, for Nietzsche, would be open to all, but the content ought not be lowered in order to accommodate a more general audience.
 44. Nietzsche makes an empirical assumption that many Enlightenment thinkers have questioned, that the cultural distinction between the few and the many is unbridgeable. Accordingly, I disagree with those theorists like Owen (n. 42) who seek to find the egalitarian elements in Nietzsche.
 45. Indeed, if we take *UM* 3.7 and FEI 78 as guides, Nietzsche is closest to a classical liberal in his politics, though he repeatedly makes reference to the Hobbesian 'war of all against all', e.g. *UM* 1.7.