

## Nietzsche's polychrome exemplarism

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**Abstract:** In this paper, I develop an account of Nietzschean exemplarism. Drawing on my previous work, I argue that an agent's instincts and other drives constitute her psychological type. In this framework, a drive counts as a virtue to the extent that it is well-calibrated with the rest of the agent's psychic economy and meets with sentiments of approbation from the agent's community. Different virtues are fitting for different types, and different types elicit different discrete emotions in people with fine-tuned affective sensitivity, making Nietzsche's exemplarism doubly pluralistic. Exemplars show us how a type is expressed in different social and cultural contexts. Some live up to the full potential of their type, while others are stymied and demonstrate how pernicious influences can wreck a person's psychology. While some exemplars inspire admiration that leads to emulation, others elicit a range of other emotions, such as envy, contempt, and disgust. If this is right, then Nietzschean exemplarism offers a richer, more evaluatively and motivationally nuanced moral psychology than the monochrome admire-and-emulate model currently popular.

**Word count:** 6113

**Keywords:** Nietzsche, exemplar, virtue, vice, moral psychology, digital humanities

## 1 Introduction

In this paper, I develop an account of Nietzschean exemplarism. As I argue elsewhere, an agent's instincts and other drives constitute her psychological type (Alfano forthcoming b). In this framework, a drive counts as a virtue to the extent that it is well-calibrated with the rest of the agent's psychic economy and meets with sentiments of approbation from the agent's community. Different virtues are fitting for different types. Using the digital humanities methodology pioneered in my recent and ongoing research (Alfano 2017, forthcoming a, forthcoming b, forthcoming c), I explore the timeline of Nietzsche's engagement with exemplars and the types they represent, along with the semantic network surrounding the concept of an exemplar in Nietzsche's writings.

Here is the plan for this chapter. In section 2, I review the most prominent contemporary exemplarist theory: Linda Zagzebski's (2004, 2017) admiration-emulation model. Next, in section 3, I employ digital humanities methods to show which other moral psychological constructs Nietzsche engages with while engaged with exemplars; I also demonstrate that Nietzsche engaged with exemplars during his entire productive career — from 1873 (*David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer*) to 1889 (*Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo*). Finally, in section 4, I close-read relevant passages to establish a better understanding of Nietzschean exemplarism. In particular, I argue that exemplars are always exemplars of types, and that novel exemplars can bring new types into existence. Nietzsche's evaluation of types and their exemplars proceeds at two levels. At the level of types, Nietzsche seems to think that there is a hierarchy of types, a fact to which the pathos of distance makes one sensitive. While exemplars of some types inspire admiration that leads to emulation, others elicit a range of other emotions that lead to different behavioral patterns, such as envy leading to agonistic one-upsmanship. By contrast, exemplars of bad or deplorable types provoke contempt and disgust. If this is right, then Nietzsche's polychrome exemplarism offers a richer, more evaluatively and motivationally nuanced moral psychology than the monochrome admiration-emulation model. In addition, within a given type, an agent may manage to different degrees to express her drives and enjoy social approbation for doing so. The agent is and counts as virtuous to the extent that she succeeds both in expressing her type and in receiving approbation for so doing.

## 2 Zagzebski's admiration-emulation exemplarism

Exemplarism has a long history in both Christian philosophy (emerging especially in Augustine, on which see Kondoleon 1970) and Chinese philosophy (most notably in Confucianism, on which see Olberding 2012). In both traditions, the basic idea is to start not with abstract principles that guide the cultivation and expression of virtue, but with admired individuals, whom one imitates or emulates. In the Christian tradition on which Zagzebski's (2004) exemplarism is based, the prime exemplar is God. Becoming divine may seem like a tall order, so this version of exemplarism comes with a bridge: the incarnation of Jesus Christ. While emulating the disembodied Father may be intimidating, modeling oneself on the embodied Son is expected to be less daunting. In this model, one begins by admiring the exemplar. Admiration, if it survives reflective scrutiny, motivates the admirer both to understand better the psychic economy of the exemplar and to emulate the exemplar's (inner and outer) life.

Nietzsche's exemplarism is more complex. His first engagement with and rejection of admiration-emulation exemplarism is in *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* (1874 /

1997). In this essay, he distinguishes three contemporary approaches to history and historical exemplars: monumental, antiquarian, and critical. These approaches are distinguished by their galvanizing emotions and sentiments, which relate to their aims. Monumental history emerges from admiration (of the exemplar) and collective pride (in belonging to the same culture as the exemplar). When we practice monumental history, we lionize and emulate exemplars. Antiquarian history springs from nostalgia for the times and practices associated with past exemplars. When we practice antiquarian history, we preserve the past because it is our own. Critical history surveys past exemplars with a skeptical and contemptuous eye. When we practice critical history, we clear the brush: anything unworthy ends up on the trash heap.

As Jensen (2016) shows, Nietzsche recognizes the value of each of these approaches to the past, but he also rejects all three because they come with significant drawbacks. I won't rehearse the problems with the antiquarian or critical orientations here, but it is worthwhile to see why he rejects monumental history, since this also provides us with a reason to reject admiration-emulation exemplarism. According to Nietzsche, one of the main advantages of monumental history is also one of its fatal flaws: monumentalized exemplars inspire us to imitate them (Nietzsche 1874 / 1997, section 2). They also give us the confidence that what they've done is possible (after all, actual implies possible). Nietzsche argues, though, that they function as boundary-markers: yes, it is possible to follow in the footsteps of exemplars, but it is (or seems) impossible to go one step further. As we know from Davidson (1978, pp. 100-101), you can't intend what you take to be impossible. So even if monumentalized exemplars only make it falsely seem as though surpassing them is impossible, that very seeming can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. In Nietzsche's view, this constraint most directly affects artists and other creative people who might otherwise do something new. As he puts it, such artists' "path will be barred, their air darkened, if a half-understood monument to some great era of the past is erected as an idol and zealously danced around, as though to say: 'Behold, this is true art: pay no heed to those who are evolving and want something new!'" Later in the same passage, Nietzsche suggests that less creative types "do not desire to see new greatness emerge: their means of preventing it is to say 'Behold, greatness already exists!'"

This problem is most obvious if the exemplar is perfect, as in Zagzebski's divine exemplarism. After all, it takes chutzpah to think you can perfectly imitate Christ's virtue — and even more to think you can surpass him. But even a secular version of admiration-emulation exemplarism falls prey to Nietzsche's criticism. Recall that the characteristic motivation in this model is to emulate or imitate the exemplar. Doing better — or even simply differently — from the exemplar does not appear as an option. If this is right, then admirable exemplars are essentially liminal. On the one hand, they stake out a field of possibility and potential. On the other hand, they foreclose any prospect of going further. In the remainder of this paper, I show how Nietzsche's more variegated approach takes advantage of the strengths of admiration-emulation exemplarism without succumbing to its weaknesses.

### **3 A digital humanities approach to Nietzschean exemplarism**

What does Nietzsche talk about when he talks about exemplars? To answer this question, I employ a digital humanities methodology that identifies all passages in which Nietzsche uses or mentions 'exemplar' [*Exemplar*] or a cognate. In his published and authorized writings, there are eleven such passages: DS 7, HL 6, HL 9, SE 2, SE 6, HH 114, HH AOM.62, D 549, TI Errors 1, TI Improving 2, and EH Books.HH.5. In addition, I annotate each of these passages for the

presence or absence of forty-seven other key concepts, thirty-two of which occur in the same passage as ‘exemplar’ at least once (Table 1).

**Table 1: Exemplars and other important concepts in Nietzsche published and authorized writings.** An asterisk means that all words beginning with the indicated stem are included.

<b>concept</b>	<b>operationalization</b>	<b>co-occurrences with ‘exemplar’</b>
admiration	bewunder*	3
affect	affekt*	4
	affect*	
anger	zorn*	0
base	niedrig*	4
	niederträch*	
	schnöd*	
chastity	keusch*	0
comedy	komisch*	0
conscience	gewissen*	4
contempt	verach*	2
	hohn*	
courage	muth*	3
cruelty	graus*	1
curiosity	neugier*	0
	wissbegier*	
disgust	ekel*	2
	widerlich*	
doubt	zweifel*	5
drive	trieb*	2
emotion	emotion*	4
	gefühl*	
	rührung*	
fear	furcht*	6
forgetting	verges*	2
guilt	schuld*	0
health	gesund*	2
herd	heerd*	0
honesty	erlich*	1
	redlich*	
humor	humor*	1
instinct	instinkt*	2
	instikt*	
	instinct*	
integrity	rechtschaffen*	0
joy	freude*	2
	wonne*	
justice	gerecht*	3
laughter	lachen*	2

	lacht*	
	lustig*	
	gelächter*	
life	leben*	9
nobility	vornehm*	4
obligation	pflicht*	4
<i>pathos of distance</i>	‘pathos der distanz’	0
perspective	perspectiv*	1
	perspektiv*	
rank	rang*	1
resentment	ressentiment*	0
responsibility	verantwort*	0
revenge	rache*	0
	räch*	
sadness	traurig*	0
shame	schand*	0
solitude	einsam*	2
surprise	überrasch*	1
	wundern*	
tragedy	tragöd*	0
	tragik*	
trust	vertraue*	1
type	typ*	3
value	wert*	6
virtue	tugend*	4
vice	laster*	1
will to power	will* & ‘zur macht’	0

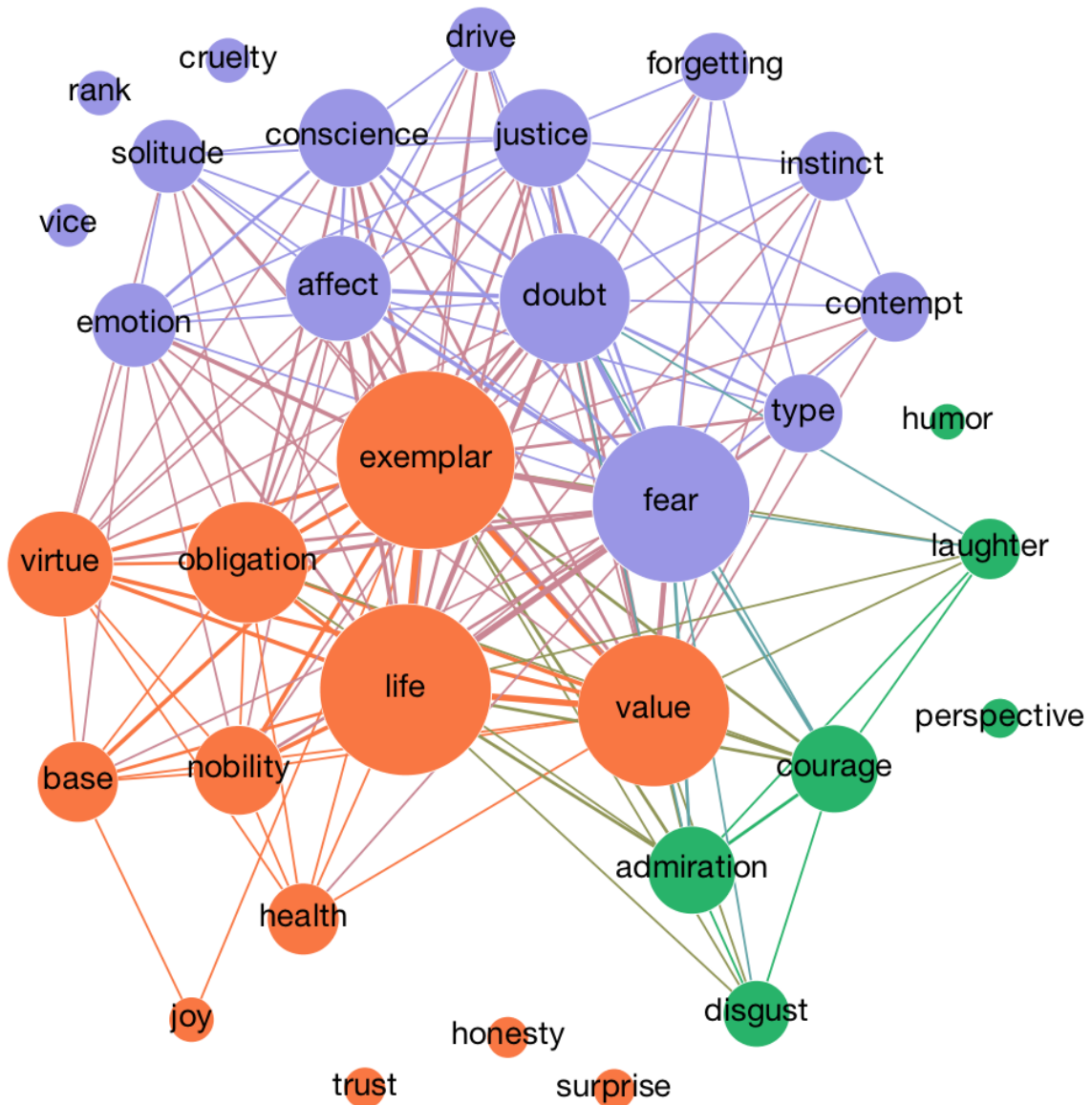
As Table 1 illustrates, the strongest connections between *exemplar* and other concepts of interest are, in order: *life* (9 passages), *value* (6 passages), *fear* (6 passages), *doubt* (5 passages), and a seven-way tie among *virtue*, *nobility*, *emotion*, *affect*, *base*, *obligation*, and *conscience* (4 passages each). Note that *admiration* co-occurs with *exemplar* in just three passages.

This methodology also enables me to visually map the other concepts with which Nietzsche engages in the passages under consideration (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> Semantic network analysis then reveals that *exemplar* belongs most centrally to a group of concepts that also prominently features *life*, *value*, *obligation*, *virtue*, *nobility*, *base*, and *health*. Together, these results suggest that, while Nietzsche does associate exemplars with virtue and nobility, he also considers negative exemplars (who are base rather than noble) and approaches exemplars through a wide variety of emotions, including not just admiration but also fear, doubt, disgust, and contempt.

**Figure 1: The semantic network of Nietzsche’s engagement with *exemplar*.** Layout = ForceAtlas with a few manual interventions during post-processing. Node size = weighted

<sup>1</sup> For details on the methodology, see Alfano (forthcoming b, forthcoming c).

degree. Line width = edge weight; in the aid of visual legibility, edges with weight one are not shown. Node color = modularity class.



As Figure 1 shows, in addition to the central semantic cluster just described, there are two additional semantic clusters. In one, *emotion*, *affect*, and various specific emotions and affects such as *fear*, *doubt*, and *contempt* feature prominently. In the other, we find *admiration*, *courage*, *disgust*, and *laughter*. To shed further light on Nietzschean exemplars, in the next section I close-read all eleven passages, along with several others that — though they do not use the term ‘exemplar’ — are clearly relevant.

#### 4 Exemplars and their types

Let's begin by noting that, among the eleven passages identified in the previous section, two can be disregarded because Nietzsche there uses '*Exemplar*' to refer to a copy of a book, not to a human exemplar (TI Errors 1 and EH Books.HH.5). What follows is recounting and interpretation of the remaining nine passages, along with several others that provide valuable context.

The first passage to consider is *David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer* 7, in which Nietzsche accuses Strauss of hypocritically neglecting his own Darwinism when it suits him. Nietzsche writes:

'Do not ever forget,' says Strauss, 'that you are a man and not a mere creature of nature: do not ever forget that all others are likewise men, that is to say, with all their individual differences the same as you, with the same needs and demands as you — that is the epitome of morality.' But whence sounds this imperative? How can man possess it in himself, since, according to Darwin, he is precisely a creature of nature and nothing else, and has evolved to the height of being man by quite other laws: precisely, in fact, by always forgetting that other creatures similar to him possessed equivalent rights, precisely by feeling himself the stronger and gradually eliminating the other, weaker exemplars [*Exemplare*] of his species?

Setting aside Nietzsche's misunderstanding of Darwinism, the criticism implied by his rhetorical question should be clear. Exemplars needn't be perfectly admirable and imitable. Instead, they can exemplify better and worse types of people, where types are construed as biological or quasi-biological kinds of human animals. Some types — and thus also the exemplars of those types — are better or at least feel themselves better than others. I'll return to this point below in connection with Nietzsche's notion of the pathos of distance and the hierarchy of types.

Turn next to *Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* 6. In this passage, Nietzsche expresses a more familiar admiration-based notion of exemplarism, saying that "no one has a greater claim to our veneration than he who possesses the drive to and strength for justice. For the highest and rarest virtues are united and concealed in justice as in an unfathomable ocean that receives streams and rivers from all sides and takes them into itself." As I've argued elsewhere (Alfano 2015, forthcoming b, forthcoming c), Nietzsche subscribes to a type-relative unity of virtue thesis, according to which an agent's instincts and other drives constitute their type, and constitute virtues only when they manage to express themselves effectively, they constitute virtues. Later in HH 6, Nietzsche makes clear that by 'justice' he has in mind a sort of *epistemic* virtue, which empowers its bearer to make fair and accurate judgments about both axiological matters (what or who is good, bad, virtuous, and vicious) and deontic matters (what must be done). He then asserts that this sort of justice is "the rarest of all virtues," and that it sets its bearer "on a solitary height as the most *venerable* exemplar [*ehrwürdigste Exemplar*] of the species man; for he desires truth, not as cold ineffectual knowledge, but as a regulating and punishing judge."

As Anthony Jensen (2016, p. 145) has shown, in this second Untimely Meditation, Nietzsche argues for an agonistic approach to historical exemplars in which history is a "selective construction out of only that which in the past was [epistemically] 'justly' judged worthy to serve as an . . . [other] which, by its opposition, can sharpen and strengthen the qualities in the reader that best serve life." Jensen calls this approach to historical exemplars

*affirmative* (as opposed to the monumental, antiquarian, and critical approaches that Nietzsche criticizes in this work), suggesting that it is about “neither recognition nor emulation, but both legislation and competition” (p. 146). In this way, affirmative history serves life better than monumental history, which closely aligns with the admiration-emulation model, and which tends to erect idols that shout, “Here and no further!” In an agonistic setting, even the highest exemplars are not perfect and can, in principle, be outdone. Thus, even if they are admired to some extent, they are also envied and viewed (by those capable of besting them) as competitors.

Later in HL 9, Nietzsche restates his conception of exemplarism: “The time will come,” he says,

when one will regard not the masses but individuals, who form a kind of bridge across the turbulent stream of becoming. These individuals do not carry forward any kind of [Hegelian] process but live contemporaneously with one another; thanks to history, which permits such a collaboration [...] one giant calls to another across the desert intervals of time and, undisturbed by the excited chattering dwarfs who creep beneath them, the exalted spirit-dialogue goes on.

How does history facilitate this dialogue? According to Nietzsche, the role of history is to serve as “the mediator between [these individuals] and thus again and again to inspire and lend the strength for the production of the great man.” In a nutshell, history makes it possible for potential exemplars in the here-and-now to survey a fuller, more diverse, and more impressive array of other exemplars against whom to measure themselves and with whom to compete. On this view, the rest of humanity is not an end in itself but rather condition for the possibility of this agonistic competition between far-flung exemplars. Nietzsche concludes with one of the most famous theses in his entire oeuvre: “the goal of humanity cannot lie in its end but only in its highest exemplars [*Exemplaren*].” As Huddleston (2014) has argued, this shockingly elitist conception of human value and dignity is what Nietzsche sometimes calls “consecration to culture” (SE 6), and it survives from the *Untimely Meditations* through both his middle and his late works.

Nietzsche thus offers an alternative to admiration-emulation exemplarism, which we might call the envy-agonism model. Whereas, in the admiration-emulation model, the admired exemplar is evaluated with a wholly positive emotion, in this alternative framework the crucial emotion is envy. Like admiration, envy is a socially upward-looking emotion; to admire or envy someone you must see them as superior on some valued dimension or as possessing a good that you lack. As Sara Protasi (2016, forthcoming a, forthcoming b) has argued, envy differs from admiration on a number of further dimensions. First, whereas admiration is pleasant, envy is painful. Second, admiration is affiliative; it tends to be accompanied by identification with the admired. Envy, by contrast, is competitive; it carries no affiliative sentiments and may even sunder people who were previously connected. Third, admiration tends to motivate either passivity or emulation of the admired, while envy is more multifarious. Protasi (forthcoming b) helpfully distinguishes four types of envy depending on whether the envied good is perceived as obtainable and whether the envier focuses primarily on the good itself or the envied individual, as indicated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Protasi’s taxonomy of envy.**

	focus on the good	focus on the envied



<b>good is obtainable</b>	emulative (agonistic) envy	aggressive envy
<b>good is unobtainable</b>	inert envy	spiteful envy

Nietzsche is especially interested in what Protasi calls emulative envy, though I prefer to call it *agonistic envy* for reasons that should be clear.

What first comes to mind when one thinks of envy is most likely one of the other three varieties. Protasi argues that aggressive envy may motivate the envier to steal, while spiteful envy motivates her to spoil and inert envy motivates her to sulk. Agonistic envy, by contrast, tends to motivate competition and leveling up (or one-upmanship) rather than leveling down. While painful, agonistic envy leads the envier to think (and to try to show), “I can do better than that.” Agonistic envy thus makes sense only in some contexts. If I envy your possession of a non-fungible good (e.g., a painting or a child), then the only way for me to obtain it is to take it from you, while the only way for me to become your equal is to destroy or ruin the good. However, if I envy your achievements, honors, skills, or virtues, it is possible for me to do as well as you (or even better) without you losing anything other than relative rank or position. Indeed, one-upping someone by tearing them down is hardly sporting, and in agonistic cultures such underhanded methods are frowned upon (Burckhardt 1872 / 1999). The point of the agon, in other words, is to establish the conditions for the possibility of demonstrations of excellence. Exemplars serve, in this context, as milestones to surpass or worthy competitors. Besting an unworthy opponent is not a cause for celebration but its own form of humiliation. If this is right, then resentment is inconsistent with agonistic envy.

Turning now to *Schopenhauer as Educator*, we find two passages of interest: SE 2 and SE 6. In the first, Nietzsche laments the educational system of his time, arguing that it sacrifices the humanity of the youth. As evidence, he points to “the numerous exemplars [*Exemplare*] of those who through an unthinking and premature devotion to science have become crookbacked and humped.” He then asks “where are we, scholars and unscholarly, high placed and low, to find the moral exemplars and models [*Vorbilder und Berühmtheiten*] for our time?” As I mentioned above, Nietzsche accepts a type-relative unity of virtue thesis, according to which an agent’s drives are virtues just in case they manage to express themselves without provoking destructive internal feedback or harsh social sanctions. In this passage, he is especially concerned by the former problem: an over-eager educational system that stuffs its pupils with more knowledge than they can digest wrecks their psychic economy. Students who might, under a different pedagogical regime, have enjoyed a healthy vitality and become model scholars end up instead crookbacked and humped exemplars. Nietzsche clearly does not enjoin the emulation or imitation of such exemplars; instead, he laments their ruination and advocates reforming the educational system in hopes of better cultivating future generations. If this is right, then in addition to admirable exemplars whom one might emulate and enviable exemplars whom one might outdo, Nietzsche’s palette includes pitiable exemplars whose fate one should seek to avoid for oneself and prevent for future generations.

Next, in SE 6, Nietzsche returns to his elitist position from HL 9, arguing that “Mankind must work continually at the production of individual great men — that and nothing else is its task.” He goes on to claim that society’s “only concern is the individual higher exemplar, the more uncommon, more powerful, more complex, more fruitful.” These exemplars are definitively not to be emulated or imitated by just anyone; Nietzsche seems to presuppose that

only those who are gifted both in their biological inheritance and in their upbringing and social position have a chance of living up to the standards in play here. For this reason, he suggests that

the goal of [a species'] evolution lies, not in the mass of its exemplars and their wellbeing, let alone in those exemplars who happen to come last in point of time, but rather in those apparently scattered and chance existences which favorable conditions have here and there produced.

If this is right, suggests Nietzsche, then society

ought to seek out and create the favorable conditions under which those great redemptive men can come into existence. [...] For the question is this: how can your life, the individual life, receive the highest value, the deepest significance? [...] 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.

In this passage, Nietzsche further complicates and nuances his position on exemplars. Some are to be admired. Others to be competed with. Still others to be pitied. But he also makes clear that the admiring, competing, and pitying subject is not a generic one: it matters a great deal *who* is doing the admiring, competing, and pitying. Only those who are cut out for it should try to outdo the greatest exemplars history has to offer. Others (and in Nietzsche's view, this means almost everyone) would do best not to get above themselves; their highest value and deepest significance, he suggests, lies not in being admirable or enviable exemplars but in creating the social and cultural conditions for the possibility of the flourishing of rare exemplars.

While the *Untimely Meditations* are early and flawed works, Nietzsche continued to theorize about exemplars in his middle works. In later writings, Nietzsche further develops this hierarchical conception of the organization of society and the individuals who inhabit it. Acute sensitivity to such vertical relations is part of what he means by the pathos of distance (Alfano 2017), which countenances not just a binary of high and low but a whole range of intermediate steps. For example, in *Human, All-too-human* 114, Nietzsche argues that

The Greeks did not see the Homeric gods as set above them as masters, or themselves set beneath the gods as servants, as the Jews did. They saw as it were only the reflection of the most successful exemplars of their own caste, that is to say an ideal, not an antithesis of their own nature. They felt inter-related with them, there existed a mutual interest, a kind of symmetry. Man thinks of himself as noble when he bestows upon himself such gods, and places himself in a relationship to them such as exists between the lower aristocracy and the higher.

Any society that has both a higher and a lower aristocracy must, of course, have many further classes (merchants, laborers, etc.). In this passage, Nietzsche argues that the pathos of distance as it manifested in ancient Greece involved precisely this sort of nuance in ascertaining levels of a hierarchy. The Greeks countenanced a whole range of levels and grades, which enabled them to think of themselves in fairly glorified terms without thereby imagining themselves to be divine perfections or abject sinners. Agonistic competition thus becomes possible between those of

roughly equal rank. Moreover, such competition has an internal component (truly being at least as good as the exemplar) and a social component (being recognized and lauded for this accomplishment). In *Human, All-too-human* section 170, Nietzsche points this out:

Hesiod's good Eris, ambition [*Ehrgeiz*], gave [Greek artists'] genius its wings. Now this ambition demands above all that their work should preserve the highest excellence in *their own eyes*, as *they* understand excellence, that is to say, without reference to a dominating taste or the general opinion as to what constitutes excellence [...]. It is thus they aspire to victory over their competitors as they understand victory, a victory before their own seat of judgment, they want actually to *be* more excellent; then they exact agreement from others as to their own assessment of themselves.

It should be clear that someone who competes with exemplars in this fashion will not partake of aggressive or spiteful envy, let alone inert envy, since none of these would lead them to actually *be* more excellent than the exemplars with whom they compete. Nietzsche continues his reflections on Eris in section 29 of the "The Wanderer and His Shadow," which was appended to *Human, All-too-human* in 1880. In this section, titled "*Envy and its nobler brother*," he writes, "The envious man is conscious of every aspect in which the man he envies exceeds the common measure and desires to push him down to it — or to raise himself up to the height of the other: out of which there arise two different modes of action which Hesiod designated as the evil and the good Eris." This distinction maps directly onto Protasi's taxonomy. What Nietzsche here calls "good Eris" is what I called above agonistic envy, which prompts the envier to rise to or above the height of the envied. In HH "Assorted Opinions and Maxims" 62, Nietzsche continues his reflections on agonism and that pathos of distance. In this passage, he contrasts (some) humans with non-human animals, suggesting that, whereas the other animals only care about and attend to the pains of those around them, "to imagine the joy of others and to rejoice at it is the highest privilege of the highest animals, and among them it is accessible only to the choicest exemplars [*Exemplaren*] — thus a rare *humanum*." The idea here seems to be that humans — at least those high enough up in the hierarchy who feel secure in their position — feel no need to tear others down, and so are distinctively capable of empathizing with and appreciating the joys of others.

The next passage in which Nietzsche discusses exemplars is *Daybreak* 549. This is arguably Nietzsche's first philosophically mature book. In the relevant passage, he considers several eponymous exemplars. In the context of the Christian (an eponym whose etymology is often forgotten) and Shakespeare, Nietzsche writes,

if one is Byron one longs for *action*, because action draws us away from ourself even more than do thoughts, feelings, or works. And so could all impulse to action perhaps be at bottom flight from oneself? — Pascal would ask. And the proposition might indeed be demonstrated in the case of the supreme exemplars [*Exemplaren*] known to us of the impulse to action: for consider — in the light of the experience of psychiatry, as is only proper — that four of the most active men of all time were epileptics (namely, Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed and Napoleon), just as Byron was also subject to this complaint.

Nietzsche here considers a range of “supreme exemplars” of a type of person, where types are, as usual, distinguished and individuated by their characteristic drives (in this case the “impulse to action”). As I point out in Alfano (2015, forthcoming b), a tour through Nietzsche’s writings will acquaint any reader with “an enchanting abundance of types” (*Twilight of the Idols* “Anti-nature” 6), many of which are eponymous. In addition to such types as slaves, nobles, priests, free spirits, and free thinkers, Nietzsche speaks of the Apollonian, Dionysian, Socratic, Christian, and Kantian, along with the Schopenhauers, Buddhas, Napoleons, Julius Caesars, Cesare Borgias, and Goethes. Just to add one more example, in SE 3, he says, “An Englishman [Walter Bagehot in *Physics and Politics*] recently described the most general danger facing uncommon men who live in a society tied to convention: ‘Such alien characters at first become submissive, then melancholic, then ill and finally they die. A Shelley would not have been able to live in England, and race of Shelleys would have been impossible.’” I want to suggest that, beyond simply diversifying the range of discourse in moral psychology, Nietzsche brings up eponymous types because their originary exemplars demonstrate the constitution of new types and the virtues associated with those new types. Recall that his criticism of monumental history was that it suggests that new virtues and ways of excelling cannot come into existence. Monumental history is liminal insofar as it simultaneously shows what is possible and seemingly forbids any attempt to expand the horizons of potentiality. Focusing on exemplars of eponymous types is one of Nietzsche’s ways of showing that novel virtues are possible. The exemplars themselves are not the point; rather, they serve as fingerposts to the creation of new virtues.

If this is on the right track, it also helps to explain Nietzsche’s frequent ad hominem attacks. Just as positive eponymous exemplars showcase both the diversity of human types and the possibility of instantiating new types, so negative eponymous exemplars dramatize either deplorable types or failures to successfully express a type. This point is not too different from Katsafanas’s (2011) argument that Nietzsche uses genealogy to criticize the evaluative orientations represented by the characters who make up the *dramatis personae* of the genealogy. In particular, Katsafanas argues that Nietzsche’s genealogies show the dire consequences of undermining people’s capacities to express the drives that constitute their type. In *Twilight of the Idols* “‘Improving’ Humanity” 2, he does just this:

To call the domestication of an animal an ‘improvement’ almost sounds like a joke to us. Anyone who knows what goes on in a zoo will have doubts whether beasts are ‘improved’ there. They become weak, they become less harmful, they are *made ill* through the use of pain, injury, hunger, and the depressive affect of fear. — The same thing happens with domesticated people who have been ‘improved’ by priests. In the early Middle Ages, when the church was basically a zoo, the choicest exemplars [*Exemplare*] of the ‘blond beast’ were hunted down everywhere, — people like the Teuton nobles were subjected to ‘improvement’. But what did an ‘improved’ Teuton look like after being seduced into a cloister? He looked like a caricature of a human being, like a miscarriage: he had turned into a ‘sinner’, he was stuck in a cage, locked up inside all sorts of horrible ideas.... There he lay, sick, miserable, full of malice against himself, hating the drive for life, suspicious of everything that was still strong and happy. In short, a ‘Christian’.

In this passage from his late works, Nietzsche uses “the choicest exemplars” of the human equivalent of lions to show what happens when someone’s drives are turned against themselves. As we saw in many of the passages canvassed above, the exemplar is intended not as an object of admiration and emulation but as an object of disgust, contempt, and pity, all of which motivate avoidance rather than approach.

While reflecting on his own methodology in *Ecce Homo* “Why I am so Wise” 7, Nietzsche explicitly states that this is the point of his ad hominem. In his “practice of war,” he says, “I never attack people.” This might seem obviously, almost laughably, false. The entirety of *David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer*, is an attack not only on Strauss’s book but on Strauss himself. Two of his last books are titled ‘*Nietzsche Contra Wagner*’ and ‘*The Anti-Christ*’. Yet Nietzsche has a point to make here, even if he gives himself more credit than he likely deserves. To clarify his seemingly outrageous self-characterization, Nietzsche says, “I treat people as if they were high-intensity magnifying glasses that can illuminate a general, though insidious and barely noticeable, predicament.” In other words, he treats negative exemplars as highly illustrative case-studies in moral psychology. He goes on:

This is how I attacked David Strauss or, more precisely, the *success* of an old and decrepit book in German ‘culture’, — I caught this culture in the act... And this is also how I attacked Wagner or, more precisely, the falseness, the half-couth instincts of our ‘culture’ that mistakes subtlety for richness and maturity for greatness.

In the case of Richard Wagner and probably some others, Nietzsche’s self-description here is most likely self-serving and false. Nevertheless, he identifies a use of negative exemplars that is both (at times) a genuine aspect of his own rhetoric and philosophically interesting and distinctive.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I argued that Nietzsche offers an idiosyncratic and attractive version of exemplarism. Unlike prominent historical and contemporary accounts, his view does not center primarily on admiration and emulation of (near-)perfect exemplars of the human type. Eschewing this monochromatic palette, Nietzsche articulates a polychromatic account that treats exemplars not as generic humans but as embodying particular types — where types are individuated by their characteristic instincts and other drives. Different virtues are fitting for different types, and exemplars serve either to show what a type is capable of (when it is successfully expressed) or the depths it can sink to when it is internally or externally stymied or undermined. If this account is on the right track, it shows that Nietzsche has much to contribute to our understanding of exemplars and exemplarism. Perhaps more importantly, it suggests that contemporary exemplarist models are impoverished because they deal only with perfect individuals who are meant to be admired and emulated, thereby ignoring (deeply) imperfect exemplars who provoke a range of other — sometimes negative — emotions and patterns of motivation and behavior.

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