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# Nietzsche on the good of cultural change

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**Abstract**

This paper attributes to Nietzsche a theory of cultural development according to which *pyramid societies*—steeply hierarchical societies following a unified morality—systematically alternate with *motley societies*, which emerge when pyramid societies encounter other cultures or allow their strict mores to relax. Motley societies contain multiple value systems due to individual innovation or intercultural contact, and are less stringent in dictating individuals' roles. Consequently, many people are torn between incompatible values and lack direction, so they are drawn to a *morality of mediocrity*, which offers the modest goals of comfort and conformity. However, the need to mediate between conflicting values also tends to yield exceptional individuals who create new values, and can reshape the society into a new pyramid society governed by those values. I argue that Nietzsche favors neither type of society at the expense of the other, but believes the alternation itself is valuable: a pyramid society develops a value system to its full potential; then, when it encounters alternative values, the extraordinary individuals in the resulting motley society synthesize the competing systems into a fuller vision of human flourishing.

> A people is a detour of nature to get to six or seven great men.
> —Yes, and then to get around them.
> —F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, aphorism 126

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In his later works, especially *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche put forward some claims about the societal conditions under which different types of values emerge and flourish. In this paper, I argue that there is a coherent general theory of cultural evolution underlying Nietzsche's accounts of specific instances of value change as well as his remarks and recommendations regarding contemporary European politics. According to this theory (described in more detail in Section 2 below), *pyramid societies*—steeply hierarchical societies following a unified morality—systematically alternate with *motley societies*, which emerge when pyramid societies encounter other cultures or allow their strict mores to relax during an extended period of peace. Motley societies contain multiple value systems due to individual innovation or intercultural contact, and are less stringent in dictating individuals' roles. Consequently, many people are torn between incompatible values and lack direction, so they are drawn to what Nietzsche calls a *morality of mediocrity*, which offers the modest goals of comfort and conformity. If this morality of mediocrity were to prevail, and an entire culture devoted itself solely to its aims, the result would be the "last men" that Nietzsche warns of in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883). However, the need to mediate between conflicting values in a motley society also tends to yield exceptional individuals who invent new rules for living. Some of these extraordinary individuals have the potential not only to fashion themselves according to their own laws, but also to reshape their society in accordance with their new values, thus transforming it into a new pyramid society.

It is tempting to conclude from many of Nietzsche's discussions of large-scale social evolution that he simply prefers pyramid societies, with unified and cohesive moral and aesthetic values, and opposes the development of motley societies as well as (obviously) the last-man society. In Section 3, I canvass the texts that seem to support such a conclusion, as well as a number of commentators who have drawn it. However, this reading would neglect a number of passages in which Nietzsche praises the distinctive cultural productions of motley societies and the extraordinary individuals that arise in them, and even promotes the kind of ethnic and cultural commingling that produces motley societies. In Section 4, I offer an interpretation of these prima facie puzzling passages. Then, in Section 5, I resolve the apparent tension by arguing that, far from fetishizing racial or cultural purity, Nietzsche believes that the kind of alternation described in *BGE* 262, between consolidation of a type and the introduction of diversity via internal variation or external admixture—that is, between pyramid and motley societies—is both natural and beneficial. Unlike traditional political philosophers, Nietzsche does not favor any single societal model that ought to endure forever—nor does he think it possible for a society to endure forever in the same form. Nietzsche not only recognizes change as inevitable, but also welcomes the opportunities it provides to discover new and potentially fruitful ways of living and valuing.

I suspect that the reason this theory has largely gone unexplored[1] is that much of the textual evidence for it is embedded in the kind of racialist language that most recent Anglophone Nietzsche commentators tend to apologize for before rushing past. In what follows, I will attempt to disarm some of the racialism of the source texts by reading Nietzsche's remarks as being primarily about cultural milieus and values (which I believe was his true concern when he wrote about races), and to extract an interesting view about the value of a balance between independent development and cultural interchange.

This article is a preliminary outlining and presentation of the textual evidence for the theory of cultural change that I attribute to Nietzsche. A full exposition of the sources of his conceptions of the specific societies and time periods that he offers as examples, as well as others that might have been in the background of his thinking when he formulated this theory, would require a monograph, which I hope to develop out of the present paper.

## 2 | A NIETZSCHEAN TAXONOMY OF SOCIETAL TYPES

The social theory I explore comes closest to being laid out explicitly in *BGE* 262, in which Nietzsche describes two distinct stages of society. The first is the stage during which "a *species* [*Art*][2] comes to be, a type becomes fixed and strong," when the society is still in the process of consolidating its power and culture. This stage occurs when a

people is existing in "*unfavorable* conditions," perhaps "in a constant fight with its neighbors or with the oppressed who are rebellious." Nietzsche plainly identifies this stage with the aristocratic societies he has been describing in earlier sections of Part IX ("What Is Noble"): societies "that believe[ ] in the long ladder of rank-ordering and differences in value between man and man," whose "ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance" (*BGE* 257). He mentions "aristocratic commonwealth[s]" such as "an ancient Greek *polis*, or Venice" as examples of "human beings […] who are dependent on themselves and want their species [*Art*] to prevail, most often because they have to prevail or run the terrible risk of being exterminated" (*BGE* 262), and attributes their survival in these difficult circumstances to the very same "hardness" that, he claimed in *BGE* 260, noble moralities prize. These societies strictly enforce an "intolerant" morality (*BGE* 262) that imposes sharp separations between the rungs on the ladder of rank, dictating vastly different privileges and duties to different castes and firmly regulating interactions between them, intermarriage almost certainly being forbidden. I will refer to such societies as *pyramid societies* (for the orderly shape of their class structure).

The second stage of society arrives "when conditions become more fortunate," when "perhaps there are no longer any enemies […], and the means of life, even for the enjoyment of life, are superabundant." During such periods, the uniformity produced by harsh conditions and strict mores gives way to "[v]ariation, whether as deviation (to something higher, subtler, rarer) or as degeneration and monstrosity" (*BGE* 262). In other sections, as I discuss below, Nietzsche attributes the "variation" within this type of society to encounters with different societies and the intermarriage of people with different heritage and values. This variation produces "a splendid, manifold, jungle-like growth and upward striving, a kind of *tropical* tempo in the competition to grow." It is in this environment that "the 'individual' appears, obliged to give himself laws and to develop his own arts and wiles for self-preservation, self-enhancement, self-redemption" (*BGE* 262). I refer to societies of this second type, or in this second stage, as *motley societies*.[3]

But, Nietzsche warns, this stage of society is "dangerous": when the struggle is no longer between societies, but between individuals with different goals and even between value commitments within a single individual, then "the moral philosophers emerging in this age" come to realize that

> [t]he mediocre alone have a chance of continuing their type and propagating—they are the men of the future, the only survivors. "Be like them! Become mediocre!" is now the only morality that still makes sense […] But this morality of mediocrity is hard to preach: after all, it may never admit what it is and what it wants. It must speak of measure and dignity and duty and neighbor love […]  (*BGE* 262)

Why do the moral philosophers come to this conclusion? Nietzsche seems to be implying here that the extraordinary individuals are likely to destroy each other "as the savage egoisms that have turned, almost exploded, against one another wrestle 'for sun and light,'" leaving only the mediocre to "continu[e] their type" (*BGE* 262). In an earlier section, however, Nietzsche gives a different explanation for the ascendancy of the morality of "neighbor love" under the conditions of peace and security that produce motley societies:

> In the last analysis, "love of the neighbor" is always something secondary, partly conventional and arbitrary-illusory in relation to *fear of the neighbor*. After the structure of society is fixed on the whole and seems secure against external dangers, it is this fear of the neighbor that again creates new perspectives of moral valuation. Certain strong and dangerous drives, […] which had so far […] had to be trained and cultivated to make them great (because one constantly needed them in view of the dangers to the whole community […]), are now experienced as doubly dangerous, since the channels to divert them are lacking, and, step upon step, they are branded as immoral and abandoned to slander. […] High and independent spirituality, the will to stand alone, even a powerful reason are experienced as dangers; everything that elevates an individual above the herd and intimidates the neighbor is

henceforth called evil; and the fair [*billige*], modest, submissive, conforming mentality, the *mediocrity* of desires attains moral designations and honors. (*BGE* 201)

Here Nietzsche implies that the threat to extraordinary individuals comes not from other such individuals with competing goals, but from the mediocre herd, who embrace the morality of mediocrity in order to punish and suppress those whose exceptional abilities and strength of will threaten to "wreck the self-confidence of the community" (*BGE* 201). Pearson's explanation of *BGE* 262 appears to unify the two stories: "when societies deteriorate into an atomistic chaos of amorally self-interested individuals," he says, "[i]n order to maintain law and security, the default course of action [...] is to enact a blanket *suppression* of social conflict [...] by promoting moralities that generate homogeneous mediocrity" (Pearson, 2022, p. 195).

If this morality of mediocrity were to successfully enforce its standards on the whole community, a third type of society would result: the "last men" described in the Prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This is a society which has set universal comfort as its only goal, and once this is achieved, it stagnates in self-satisfied complacency: "'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' thus asks the last man, and he blinks [...] 'We have invented happiness'" (*Z* P, 5). As the term "last men" suggests, there is no return from this point; once a motley society has given way to a last-man society, it will persist in this form forever: "His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest" (*Z* P, 5). It is not clear whether Nietzsche thought any society had actually descended into the last-man stage, or merely viewed it as a terrible possibility. Some of his remarks about China suggest that he might have thought it had arrived there, since he rehearses at various points the common 19th-century myth that Chinese society was no longer capable of change (*GS* 24; *EH* IV, 4), and dreads that in Europe "things will continue to go down, down, to become thinner, more good-natured, more prudent, more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian" (*GM* I, 12).

## 3 | NIETZSCHE AS OPPONENT OF MOTLEY SOCIETIES?

### 3.1 | Racial/cultural mixing and mediocrity

Many of Nietzsche's remarks suggest that he exclusively favors the "fixed and strong" type of pyramid societies (*BGE* 262)—or, in the cruder terms of other sections on similar themes, that he is opposed to the mixing of races. By contrast, the terms in which Nietzsche describes motley societies tie them to institutions and worldviews of which his net assessment is negative. His description of the terms in which the morality of mediocrity, which emerges in motley societies to protect its adherents in the struggle among individuals, must advertise itself—"measure and dignity and duty and neighbor love" (*BGE* 262)—serve to identify it with Christian morality and its philosophical descendants (Kantianism, utilitarianism). Elsewhere Nietzsche expresses his dread about the impending success of this morality: "What today constitutes *our* antipathy to 'man'? [...] that the maggot 'man' is swarming in the foreground; that the 'tame man,' the hopelessly mediocre and insipid man, has already learned to feel himself [...] as 'higher man'" (*GM* I, 11).

In other parts of *BGE*, Nietzsche relates the descent into mediocrity, or the appeal of the morality of mediocrity, to the mixing of races. We find the latter in *BGE* 200:

In an age of disintegration that mixes races indiscriminately, human beings have in their bodies the heritage of multiple origins, that is, opposite [...] drives and value standards that fight each other and rarely permit each other any rest. Such human beings of late cultures [...] will on the average be weaker human beings: their most profound desire is that the war they *are* should come to an end. Happiness appears to them, in agreement with a tranquilizing (for example, Epicurean or Christian)

medicine and way of thought, pre-eminently as the happiness of resting, of not being disturbed, of satiety, of finally attained unity, as a "sabbath of sabbaths" [...]. (*BGE* 200)

A first remark on this passage is that it provides evidence that we should take Nietzsche's true concern to be not race mixture *as such*,[4] but cultural encounter. The reason why persons of mixed race are supposed to be weak and desire rest is that they possess "opposite [...] drives and value standards [*Werthmaasse*] that fight each other" (*BGE* 200). Interpreted literally, Nietzsche is claiming that members of a given ethnic group have a certain drive structure and hierarchy of values as an innate trait, because (in evolutionary terms) it was selected for: at the individual level because members who internalized these values received favorable treatment from the group, and at the group level because having those values helped the group to prevail in competition with others. Nietzsche's language in *BGE* 262 corroborates this evolutionary reading in regard to the *virtues* promoted by a certain value system (if not the *values* themselves); of the aristocratic pyramid society he says, "Manifold experience teaches them to which qualities above all they owe the fact that, despite all gods and men, they are still there, that they have always triumphed: these qualities they call virtues, these virtues alone they cultivate" (*BGE* 262).

However, consistent with our current understanding of heredity, we can consider these values to be inculcated by socialization and acculturation rather than innate. In that case, the "mixing of races" in *BGE* 200 might refer to the coexistence of different value systems in a place where several cultural groups have come together, through trade routes, migrations, or invasions. The "mixed-race" persons, then, would not have conflicting value systems "in their bodies" from mixed ancestry, but would grow up with conflicting value systems in their cultural milieu. Another consideration in favor of a primarily cultural understanding is the fact that Nietzsche uses the word "race" (*Rasse*) to refer to groups much smaller than the ones we think of as "races" today. He speaks, for instance, of the "Latin race" (*BGE* 48, 256), meaning Southern European speakers of Romance languages, and of the English as a "race" (*BGE* 252). The fact that by "race" he often means a relatively small ethnolinguistic group gives us further evidence that the categories he is interested in are at least as importantly cultural as biological.[5] Even if Nietzsche really did believe that values are passed through generations of an ethnic group in their "blood,"[6] his claims about the consequences of mixing "races," however baseless when read literally, may still have merit if read as concerning the mixing of value systems within a culture. I use the term "racial/cultural mixing" to mark the ambiguity.

It is not immediately obvious that Nietzsche is discussing the same process in *BGE* 200 as in 262. After all, in *BGE* 200 he is talking about "mix[ing] races indiscriminately," whereas in 262 it is a matter of the transition from "unfavorable conditions" to peaceful ones when "the means of life [...] are superabundant." Two main considerations lead me to believe that he is discussing the same or closely related phenomena. The first is that the "morality of mediocrity" from *BGE* 262 and the "tranquilizing [...] medicine" that, according to *BGE* 200, appeals to "mixed" individuals can both be identified with Christianity. My second reason for connecting the two phenomena is circumstantial: the fact that making peace with foreign enemies is naturally accompanied by intermarriage and cultural exchange, and that such a broadening of both the gene pool and the sources of cultural influence is exactly the kind of event that could produce the variation among individual characters described in *BGE* 262. The disappearance of the external dangers mentioned in *BGE* 262 may result from two formerly hostile groups becoming allies or trade partners, or from one conquering the other and absorbing it into a larger empire. In any of those scenarios, there will be more intimate contact between the groups. Ideas, trade goods, and marriage partners are likely to flow between them. Children who grow up in border areas or annexed regions will absorb different sets of values from different adults in their community, while children raised in mixed households will learn different values from each parent. Eventually, an entire society emerges in which two perhaps incompatible value systems coexist within the fabric of the culture, constantly in tension or outright conflict.[7]

*BGE* 200 claims that members of such societies will experience this conflict of values within themselves. The incompatible value systems will pull their actions in opposite directions and dictate opposite evaluations of themselves and others. Such people, Nietzsche says, are likely to become exhausted by this constant internal strife and

will seek a philosophy or religion that prescribes a tranquil existence (like Epicureanism) or promises eternal rest after death (like Christianity). Thus these mixed-race individuals resemble the "sick herd" to whom the ascetic priest administers the ascetic ideal as medicine, for whom Nietzsche clearly displays disgust and contempt (_GM_ III, 14–15). Periods in which races mix are alarmingly described in _BGE_ 200 as "ages of disintegration [_Auflösungs-Zeitalter_]," in which the cohesion and integrity of both societies and individuals are threatened.[8]

## 3.2 | Racial/cultural mixing in modern Europe

In _BGE_ 208, Nietzsche echoes the idea from _BGE_ 200 that the problem with mixing races/cultures is that it produces individuals who are constantly internally conflicted because they are committed to conflicting values. He then goes on to relate his general anthropological theorizing to the contemporary situation: "Our Europe of today, being the arena of an absurdly sudden attempt at a radical mixture of classes, and hence races, is therefore skeptical in all its heights and depths" (_BGE_ 208). Let us interpret this claim piece by piece. First of all, how is a mixture of classes _thereby_ a mixture of races? Nietzsche argues in _GM_ I, 5 that Indo-European words contrasting nobles with commoners reflect the contrast between (fair-haired) Indo-Europeans and the (dark-haired) pre-Aryan inhabitants of Europe. So Nietzsche's claim in _BGE_ 208 that class mixture _amounts to_ race mixture may imply that he believes the European nobility is predominantly Indo-European in heritage (genetic, cultural, or both), whereas the lower classes are mainly descended from pre-Indo-European peoples—who Nietzsche speculates may have espoused a democratic or anarcho-socialistic version of slave morality (_GM_ I, 5).[9]

Second, what does Nietzsche have in mind when he describes the Europe of his day as "the arena of an absurdly sudden attempt at a radical mixture of classes" (_BGE_ 208)? The shift in European economies from agriculture to industry and the rise of the capitalist middle class, starting as early as the 15th century, meant that impoverished nobles had incentive to marry newly wealthy members of the middle class. The power of the nobility in many nations declined further due to democratic and statist reforms in the 18th and 19th centuries. The boundaries between nobles and commoners were disappearing. Interestingly, instead of making the intuitive claim that the mingling of classes was the _consequence_ of democratic ideals, Nietzsche claims that the "cause" of "the slowly arising democratic order of things" was "the intermarriage of masters and slaves" (_BGE_ 261). He is probably referring to strategic marriages between titled nobility and bourgeois capitalists, and perhaps also to a metaphorical intermarriage: the intellectual and political influence that middle-class financiers and philosophers began to have in aristocratic courts and salons in the 17th and 18th centuries. Democratic ideals, then, represent the "morality of mediocrity" that arises in motley societies when rival groups merge, their value systems mix and collide, and individuals seek to retreat from the looming conflicts among and within themselves. Accordingly, Nietzsche claims that "the democratic movement is [...] a form of the decay, namely the diminution, of man, making him mediocre and lowering his value" (_BGE_ 203).

In what sense, though, does this merging of classes represent a mixture of "diverse standards and values" which would inhibit the virtues and paralyze the will (_BGE_ 208)? Nietzsche regards the modern European situation as a continuation of the conflict between noble and slave moralities that, he argues in _GM_ I, began with the Roman occupation of Judea and the invention of Christianity. He indicates that noble morality persisted, in a Christian guise, in the nobilities of medieval and early modern Europe (see _BGE_ 260). He repeatedly identifies the French nobility of the 16th and 17th centuries as an example of a vibrant aristocratic culture (_BGE_ 224, 253, 258; _GM_ I, 16). While all of Europe was officially Christian by the Middle Ages, noble and slave moralities continued to coexist, perpetually in conflict in both society and the individual, until, with the French Revolution, slave morality gained the upper hand (_GM_ I, 16; _BGE_ 46; _GS_ 350). So slave morality, perhaps in slightly different versions, plays two roles in this drama: it is one of the conflicting sets of values that mix in a motley society, _and_ it is the morality of mediocrity that threatens to prevail after the mixture as the reigning morality in a society of last men.

What Nietzsche is claiming in _BGE_ 208 is that the 19th-century products of the modern intermarriage of classes are pulled in different directions by middle class slave morality and early modern noble morality. "[T]he very virtues

do not allow each other to grow and become strong" because the virtues that each morality encourages them to cultivate are condemned as vices by the other. "[B]alance, a center of gravity, and perpendicular poise are lacking in body and soul" in that agents lack a unified set of priorities around which to orient their lives. Their instincts are divided between the two value systems, meaning that their actions over time may be erratic or incoherent; this condition of disordered instincts is what Nietzsche refers to as "decadence."[10] This is why, Nietzsche says, their will "becomes sick [...] and degenerates," why "they no longer know independence of decisions and the intrepid sense of pleasure in willing" (_BGE_ 208). The point about skepticism is that a subject in this situation does not even have the strength of will to make up his mind about what to believe—partly because different value systems make different beliefs appealing, so a person torn between incompatible value systems will be similarly torn between incompatible worldviews.[11,12]

Other scholars who have discussed Nietzsche's views on the structure of societies have tended to conclude from texts like the ones considered in this section that Nietzsche generally condemns the mixed or "decadent" cultures of what I call motley societies, and favors only the existence of culturally unified pyramid societies with orderly hierarchical caste structures. This is the conclusion that Young draws from what he calls Nietzsche's "'motley' critique" of modern Western society (2015, p. 19).[13] Young stresses that Nietzsche's "'formula for happiness' is 'a Yes, a No, a straight line, a _goal_' (_TI_ I 44, _A_ 1)," and claims that such happiness requires that we "organize our souls into a disciplined, pyramidal hierarchy with our leading drive at the top" (2015, pp. 20–21). Since Young takes Nietzsche to accept the Platonic view that individual souls come to mirror the structure of the surrounding society (2015, p. 20), this in turn requires a society strictly molded into a hierarchical "broad-based pyramid" (_A_ 57). "Most of us," according to Young's Nietzsche, "need the discipline of a unified ethical substance that assigns us a given 'station' and meaning within the organic whole" (Young, 2015, p. 21). Pearson (2022, pp. 199–200) acknowledges some evidence that the disintegration into motley societies may not be as dangerous as it first appears, but emphasizes that "Nietzsche is more often than not openly critical of disintegrative processes, which he describes as 'very unhealthy' (KSA 13:14[157])" (2022, p. 200). Even if such commentators acknowledge, as Conway does (1999, p. 27; 2009, p. 41), that Nietzsche regards "decadent" periods of "decay" and "disintegration" as inevitable, and thus is not recommending that they be permanently averted, they seem to interpret this as a regrettable inevitability (perhaps like the eternal recurrence of the small man; _Z_ III, "Convalescent" 2). But I will argue that Nietzsche's attitude toward motley societies is more complex, and that he regards their development as a fortunate inevitability rather than a regrettable one, even if his evaluation of many of their features is negative.

## 4 | NIETZSCHE ON THE VIRTUES OF MOTLEY SOCIETIES

From the passages discussed in Section 3, one might get the impression that Nietzsche is a racial/cultural purist who believes that different races/cultures should remain isolated from each other's influence (and gene pools) and encounter each other only on the hostile terms that (according to _BGE_ 262) enable them to hone their distinctive virtues—that is, that he would prefer that pyramid societies never give way to motley societies. However, some of his remarks on racial/cultural mixture are ambivalent or even approving, which suggests that he holds a more complicated view. In fact, when he first introduces the opposition between noble and slave moralities, Nietzsche says:

> I add immediately that in all the _higher and more mixed_ cultures there also appear attempts at mediation between these two moralities, and yet more often the interpenetration and mutual misunderstanding of both, and at times they occur directly alongside each other—even in the same human being, within a single soul. (_BGE_ 260, my emphasis)

There is something Nietzsche considers *higher* about the "mixed" cultures in which different moralities mingle and compete, and also about the individuals in whom the same occurs: "today there is perhaps no more decisive mark of a '*higher nature*,' a more spiritual nature, than that of being divided in this sense and a genuine battleground of these opposed values" (*GM* I, 16). In this section I will examine Nietzsche's words of praise for motley cultures and the mixed individuals that inhabit them.

## 4.1 | Motley societies and taste

The spiritual consequences of the mixing of races are discussed again in *BGE* 224:

> [The] historical sense to which we Europeans lay claim as our specialty has come to us in the wake of that enchanting and mad *semi-barbarism* into which Europe has been plunged by the democratic mingling of classes and races: only the nineteenth century knows this sense, as its sixth sense. The past of every form and way of life [...] now flows into us "modern souls," thanks to this mixture; our instincts now run back everywhere; we ourselves are a kind of chaos. (*BGE* 224)

Here, Nietzsche starts to talk about these consequences in a more positive light. He even remarks that "'the spirit' sees its advantage in this": the situation represents an opportunity, maybe even an advance, rather than a regression in the development of human culture.

Nietzsche makes clear that this "historical sense" is *not* noble: "Through our semi-barbarism in body and desires we have secret access in all directions, as no noble age ever did [...] 'historical sense' almost means [...] the taste and tongue for everything—which immediately proves it to be an *ignoble* sense" (*BGE* 224). But, surprisingly, this is not entirely a bad thing; ignobility has advantages and nobility has shortcomings when it comes to appreciating certain cultural achievements:

> Perhaps it is our most fortunate advantage that we know how to relish Homer whom the men of a noble culture (say, the French of the seventeenth century, like Saint-Évremond, who reproached him for his *esprit vaste* [...]) cannot and could not assimilate so easily. The very definite Yes and No of their palate, their easy nausea, their hesitant reserve toward everything foreign, their horror of the poor taste even of a lively curiosity, and altogether the reluctance of every noble and self-sufficient culture to own a new desire, a dissatisfaction with what is one's own, an admiration for what is foreign—all this inclines and disposes them unfavorably even against the best things in the world which are not theirs or *could* not become their prey. (*BGE* 224)

This passage shows unusual ambivalence about the traits of nobility. It may be good to be "self-sufficient" and not suffer from "dissatisfaction with what is one's own," but "easy nausea" and refusal even to expose oneself to anything foreign are potential weaknesses—especially if Nietzsche believes, as he hints in *BGE* 39, that a major component of strength is the ability to take in new truths and pieces of experience. In any case, these traits deprive them of some of "the best things in the world" that are too foreign for their delicate palates (*BGE* 224).

The claims that Homer in particular appeals to a plebeian taste, and that a noble culture could not appreciate him, are counterintuitive, given that in *GM* I, 11 Nietzsche cites "the Homeric heroes" as a paradigmatic "noble race." But in the same section he speaks of "the contradiction presented" to Hesiod "by the glorious but at the same time terrible and violent world of Homer," which Hesiod resolved by designating different aspects of that era as separate ages: "the form in which that world had survived in the memory of the noble races who were those heroes' true descendants" was labeled the silver age, and "the form in which that same world appeared to

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the descendants of the downtrodden, pillaged, mistreated, abducted, enslaved" was interpreted as the later, further-fallen bronze age (cf. *D* 189). The suggestion implicit in the discussions of Homer in *GM* I, 11 and *BGE* 224 is that Homer managed to portray the contradiction, to show the age of the heroes of Troy as *both* glorious and terrible; and only the members of a mixed culture that is committed to both the noble and the slave moralities, and endorses both evaluations of that age, can appreciate Homer's standpoint. The idea seems to be that the Greece which Homer portrayed was a pyramid society, but by the time of Homer himself, another value perspective had entered the culture.

Nietzsche's remarks on Shakespeare suggest a similar reading:

> It is no different with Shakespeare, that amazing Spanish-Moorish-Saxon synthesis of tastes that would have all but killed an ancient Athenian of Aeschylus' circle with laughter or irritation. But we— accept precisely this wild abundance of colors, this medley of what is most delicate, coarsest, and most artificial, with a secret familiarity and cordiality; we enjoy him as a superb subtlety of art saved up especially for us; and the disgusting odors and the proximity of the English rabble in which Shakespeare's art and taste live we do not allow to disturb us [...]. (*BGE* 224)

Shakespeare's plays were aimed at a mixed-class audience which often contained simultaneously the least educated of "the English rabble" and Queen Elizabeth I. Accordingly, the plays alternate between sensitive treatments of political and familial difficulties facing generals and monarchs, and crude humor delivered by servants of the aristocratic heroes. A person of noble taste, Nietzsche suggests, such as "an ancient Athenian of Aeschylus' circle," would demand unity of tone: confine the two registers to separate works; do not interlace the tragedy with the satyr play.[14] But it is precisely the incongruous mixture that makes 19th-century Europeans feel Shakespeare to be "a superb subtlety of art saved up especially for" them, because the same mixture exists within their own souls; their own sensibility is half noble and half rabble. And note that Nietzsche does not exempt himself from the "semi-barbaric" qualities that make Shakespeare appeal to the Europeans of his day: he, too, was a great admirer of Shakespeare (see, e.g., *BT* 7; *GS* 98; *EH* II, 4).

That said, Nietzsche's remarks on the historical sense and the taste of modern "mixed-race" Europeans are not entirely positive, either. First let us examine the "virtues" Nietzsche attributes to the "men of the 'historical sense'"—among whom he appears to include himself: "we are unpretentious, selfless, modest, courageous, full of self-overcoming, full of devotion, very grateful, very patient, very accommodating" (*BGE* 224). They comprise a mix of noble and slave virtues, as is to be expected, given the premise that modern Europeans are a product of mixing these two value systems. "Courage" is clearly noble, given that Nietzsche associates nobility with a warlike bent (*BGE* 260, 262; *GM* I, 5, 10–11). So is "self-overcoming": Nietzsche claims that this "craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states" grows out of the "*pathos of distance*" that emerges "when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects" (*BGE* 257). "Full of devotion" and "very grateful" are also noble virtues: Nietzsche takes "artful and enthusiastic reverence and devotion" to be a "symptom of an aristocratic way of thinking and evaluating" (*BGE* 260), and he remarks, "it is a very noble type of man that confronts nature and life" with "the enormous abundance of gratitude" evinced by ancient Greek religion (*BGE* 49). But "selflessness" is a paradigm slave virtue, as are "patience" (Nietzsche calls it a "flattering name" for the "cowardice" of "the weak man," "his lingering at the door, his being ineluctably compelled to wait"; *GM* I, 14), "unpretentiousness," and "modesty."

"But for all that," Nietzsche continues,

> we are perhaps not paragons of good taste. Let us finally own it to ourselves; what we men of the "historical sense" find most difficult to grasp, to feel, to taste once more, to love once more [...] is precisely the perfection and ultimate maturity of every culture and art, that which is really noble in a

work or human being, the moment when their sea is smooth and they have found halcyon self-sufficiency [... and] consummated themselves.

Perhaps our great virtue of the historical sense is necessarily opposed to *good* taste, at least to the very best taste; and precisely the highest little strokes of luck and transfigurations of human life that briefly light up here and there we can recapture only poorly, hesitantly, by forcing ourselves—those moments and marvels when great power voluntarily stopped this side of the immeasurable and boundless, when an excess of subtle delight in sudden restraint and petrification, in standing firm and taking one's measure, was enjoyed on still trembling ground. *Measure* is alien to us [...]  (*BGE* 224)

The main criticism of the historical sense in this passage appears to be that it is "opposed to [...] the very best taste" (*BGE* 224), by which Nietzsche may mean *unified* taste (which, he stresses in *GS* 290, is one of the most important aspects of style), or a taste for the polished and elegant rather than anything rough around the edges. The members of a culture like 19th-century Europe's—a "semi-barbaric" patchwork of older cultures whose values still stand in tension, hence something of a work in progress—are uniquely well placed to understand and appreciate artworks that express the same kind of social and spiritual tension and multiplicity that they know so intimately. They have a feel for cultures that, like theirs, are still in the process of "becoming."

What they cannot "grasp" is "the perfection and ultimate maturity of every culture and art" (*BGE* 224)—art that reflects the moment when a culture has finished becoming what it was going to be, has "consummated" itself, and simply *is*; when it "voluntarily stop[s]" for a moment of "standing firm and taking [its] measure," feeling itself to be at the height of its power.[15] Art from a pyramid society shows "restraint" and "measure" in a way the art of a motley society cannot. "*Measure* is alien" (*BGE* 224) to members of a motley society, perhaps because they do not know their own skills well enough to exercise them with perfect control. This is probably part of the reason Nietzsche judges "the art of being" (a term from *GS* 370), created by a consolidated pyramid society, to show better *taste* than the art of "becoming," of either a fledgling society still finding its character or a declining society losing its sense of itself[16]—and I will argue in Section 5 that a motley society can represent *either* the decline or the development period of a pyramid society, and often both simultaneously.

Nietzsche himself prefers the measured art of a mature aristocratic society like 17th-century France: "my artist's taste vindicates the names of Molière, Corneille, and Racine, not without fury, against a wild genius like Shakespeare" (*EH* II, 3).[17] But he also argues that both the art of being and the art of becoming can reflect an "*over-fullness of life*" and "creative abundance": "The desire for *destruction*, change, and becoming can be an expression of an overflowing energy that is pregnant with future," but "[t]he will to *immortalize*" can also be "prompted [...] by gratitude and love" (*GS* 370). Both can be great and valuable, though their styles are so different as to be mutually inaccessible: "*Measure* is alien to us" means both that moderns cannot achieve it in their own art, and that they cannot understand how to appreciate it in foreign art (*BGE* 224). Rather, as Nietzsche goes on to say in the final lines of the section, "our thrill is the thrill of the infinite, the unmeasured. Like a rider on a steed that flies forward, we drop the reins before the infinite, we modern men, like semi-barbarians—and reach *our* bliss only where we are most—*in danger* [*Gefahr*]" (*BGE* 224).

The way I interpret this metaphor is that the "steed that flies forward" is the culture itself, rushing toward an unknown destiny, while the riders, perhaps the far-sighted members of the culture, are unwilling to rein it in, lest it stagnate in a still formless state. They even find a kind of "thrill" in the unpredictability of its development—whether it rushes toward growth or decline, what the culture's mature character will be. But what is the "*danger*" in which they find their "bliss"? For this we should refer back to *BGE* 262. In motley societies,

[t]he dangerous [*gefährliche*] and uncanny point has been reached where the greater, more manifold, more comprehensive life transcends and lives beyond the old morality [...] All sorts of new what-fors and wherewithals; no shared formulas any longer; misunderstanding allied with disrespect; decay,

corruption, and the highest desires gruesomely entangled; the genius of the race overflowing from all cornucopias of good and bad; a calamitous simultaneity of spring and fall, full of new charms and veils that characterize young, still unexhausted, still unwearied corruption. Again danger [*Gefahr*] is there, the mother of morals, great danger, this time transposed into the individual, into the neighbor and friend, into the alley, into one's own child, into one's own heart, into the most personal and secret recesses of wish and will [...]. (*BGE* 262)

The conclusion of *BGE* 262 implies that most inhabitants of motley societies *do not* find bliss in this kind of danger: they turn to the morality of mediocrity because they genuinely fear the danger and wish to evade it. But some members find the danger inherent in this stage of society, the *uncontrolled* aspect of life in it, exhilarating. Why should this be? Nietzsche indicates repeatedly that he regards motley societies as presenting not only a danger, but an opportunity—"a calamitous simultaneity of spring and fall" (*BGE* 262), of decline and ascent—which I will discuss in the next subsection. I suspect that those, like Nietzsche, who sense this duality derive from it the thrill of a gambler who has access to the possibility of vast gains only by risking enormous loss.

## 4.2 | Great individuals and "good Europeans"

What is the valuable opportunity presented by motley societies? It is, as mentioned in the passages of *BGE* 262 quoted above, the possibility of great individuals: "Variation, whether as deviation (to something higher, subtler, rarer) or as degeneration and monstrosity, suddenly appears on the scene in the greatest abundance and magnificence; the individual dares to be individual and different"; "the 'individual' appears, obliged to give himself laws and to develop his own arts and wiles for self-preservation, self-enhancement, self-redemption."

The idea that motley societies present an especially fertile opportunity to produce great individuals is reinforced in *BGE* 200. The section begins with a discussion of how members of cultures in which multiple value systems coexist tend to be wearied by constant internal conflict and seek moralities and religions that encourage or promise rest. But then Nietzsche continues:

But when the opposition and war in such a nature have the effect of one more charm and incentive of life—and if, moreover, in addition to his powerful and irreconcilable drives, a real mastery and subtlety in waging war against oneself, in other words, self-control, self-outwitting, has been inherited or cultivated, too—then those magical, incomprehensible, and unfathomable ones arise, those enigmatic men predestined for victory and seduction, whose most beautiful expression is found in Alcibiades and Caesar [...],[18,19] and among artists perhaps Leonardo da Vinci. They appear in precisely the same ages when that weaker type with its desire for rest comes to the fore: both types belong together and owe their origin to the same causes. (*BGE* 200)

Nietzsche is not saying that great individuals *cannot* originate in pyramid societies; but in *BGE* 262 he makes it sound as if it is much more difficult and improbable for individuals to arise who, in the words of *GS* 335, "are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves." Pyramid societies aim at "hardness, uniformity, and simplicity of form"; to this end, "every aristocratic morality is intolerant," allowing only "a type with few but very strong traits" to persist (*BGE* 262). No doubt many members of the nobility turn out as strong, capable leaders, but few will be extraordinary, where deviation from the norm is so strongly discouraged—and (just as importantly) unnecessary. When the norm regularly produces persons with coherent goals and a strong will, there is little need to make laws for oneself. But motley cultures offer no clear rules to follow. When the norm is incoherence, indecisiveness, and weariness from internal struggle, the only way ambitious, energetic individuals can live effective

lives is to deviate from the norm and devise their own rules for living (often creative syntheses of the competing value systems within the society). So motley societies are more likely to foster interesting innovations in values.

Nietzsche clearly admires the "magical, incomprehensible, and unfathomable" individuals who "owe their origin" to the very same conditions of racial/cultural mixing that produce the weak-willed and mediocre (*BGE* 200). There is another such extraordinary individual whom he does not mention here. As I noted before, Nietzsche considers the French Revolution to represent the ascendancy of a morality of mediocrity in the wake of the mixing of class-based value systems, and the beginning of a descent (albeit still a reversible one) into a last-man society. But, Nietzsche says,

> in the midst of it there occurred the most tremendous, the most unexpected thing: the ideal of antiquity itself stepped *incarnate* and in unheard-of splendor before the eyes and conscience of mankind [...] in opposition to the will to the lowering, the abasement, the leveling and the decline and twilight of mankind [...] Like a last signpost to the *other* path, Napoleon appeared, the most isolated and late-born man there has ever been, and in him the problem of the *noble ideal as such* made flesh [...] Napoleon, this synthesis of the *inhuman* and *superhuman*. (*GM* I, 16)

Surely Nietzsche thinks that the world is better for the existence of people like Caesar, Leonardo, and Napoleon. In fact, in *GS* 23—an earlier account of a society's "corruption" that corroborates my understanding of the transition from a pyramid to a motley society via internal decay—he says it is only during ages of corruption that "this fruit of fruits," the individual, "hangs yellow and mellow from the tree of a people—and the tree existed only for the sake of these fruits." Plainly Nietzsche would not prefer a world in which the societal conditions of "corruption" and motley culture that made these individuals possible never obtained.

Nietzsche's discussions of European integration in Part VIII of *BGE*, "Peoples and Fatherlands," provide further evidence for this conclusion. Here Nietzsche expands on the idea that modern Europe is the site of extensive racial/cultural mixture: "The Europeans are becoming more similar to each other [...] they become increasingly independent of any determinate milieu that would like to inscribe itself for centuries in body and soul with the same demands. Thus an essentially supra-national and nomadic type of man is gradually coming up" (*BGE* 242). He reinforces the claims we saw earlier (in *BGE* 200, 208, and 262) that such conditions "will on the average lead to the leveling and mediocritization of man—to a useful, industrious, handy, multi-purpose herd animal" (*BGE* 242). He also states the idea from the second parts of *BGE* 200 and 262 even more clearly and succinctly: that these "very same new conditions [...] are likely in the highest degree to give birth to exceptional human beings of the most dangerous and attractive quality" (*BGE* 242); that

> while the democratization of Europe leads to the production of a type that is prepared for *slavery* in the subtlest sense, in single, exceptional cases the strong human being will have to turn out stronger and richer than perhaps ever before—thanks to the absence of prejudice from his training, thanks to the tremendous manifoldness of practice, art, and mask. (*BGE* 242)

Nietzsche speaks approvingly of the process of pan-European mixture throughout *BGE* Part VIII. It is, he says, only "[o]wing to the pathological estrangement which the insanity of nationality has induced [...] among the peoples of Europe" that "the most unequivocal portents are now being overlooked, or arbitrarily and mendaciously reinterpreted—that *Europe wants to become one*" (*BGE* 256). Nationalism is a "relapse" that can only temporarily "retard" the "tempo of this process of the '*evolving European*'" (*BGE* 242); he diagnoses nationalism as a "nerve fever" (*BGE* 251), as "scabies of the heart and blood poisoning" (*GS* 377). "In all the more profound and comprehensive men of this century," moreover, "the over-all direction of the mysterious workings of their soul was to prepare the way for this new *synthesis* and to anticipate experimentally the European of the future"; among these Nietzsche lists "Napoleon, Goethe, Beethoven, Stendhal, Heinrich Heine, Schopenhauer" (*BGE* 256). At some point he

describes most of these figures as a "European event" or something similar—which he opposes favorably to, say, a merely German event (*BGE* 245; *GS* 357; *TI* VIII, 4; *TI* IX, 49).

It is in such contexts that he uses the term "good European," by which he seems to mean partisans of the merger of European cultures (see *BGE* 241, 254). It is not always clear in *BGE*, where he puts the term in scare quotes, that this is a good thing to be; his tone is a touch ironic when he speaks of the need to "overcome […] attacks of fatherlandishness and soil addiction and to return to reason, meaning 'good Europeanism'" (*BGE* 241). In *GS* 377, however, Nietzsche identifies himself *proudly* as a "good European" and a product of racial/cultural mixture, advocates the continuation of such mixing, and decries the racialized nationalism that poses an obstacle to it:

> We who are homeless are too manifold and mixed racially in our descent, being "modern men," [… to] feel tempted to participate in the mendacious racial self-admiration and racial indecency that parades in Germany today as a sign of a German way of thinking and that is doubly false and obscene among the people of the "historical sense." We are, in one word—and let this be our word of honor—*good Europeans*, the heirs of Europe, the rich, oversupplied, but also overly obligated heirs of thousands of years of European spirit. (*GS* 377)

This section, in conjunction with Nietzsche's remarks about European integration in *BGE* Part VIII, provides good evidence that Nietzsche's view of motley cultures and the individuals who inhabit them is partly favorable—so long as they do not claim or attempt to be something they are not, that is, a culturally unified pyramid-type society.

## 5 | NIETZSCHE'S VIEW: THE VALUE OF THE ALTERNATION

In this last section, I offer an explanation of Nietzsche's apparently conflicting remarks in both praise and condemnation of racial/cultural mixing and motley societies more generally. In brief, my interpretation is this: Nietzsche is not a traditional political or social philosopher, in that he does not endorse any single ideal model of society and governance that should be instituted permanently.[20] He does not favor either pyramid or motley societies at the expense of the other. Rather, Nietzsche values the dynamic pattern that societies naturally tend to follow. He regards it as *good* that pyramid societies tend to mature in isolation for a time, then either decline internally or merge with other cultures to form motley societies, which are well-suited to produce great individuals who can create new value systems—and pliant masses ready to follow them. These great individuals can then shape their society in accordance with their new values, producing a new pyramid society to start the cycle over.

### 5.1 | How motley societies become pyramid societies

Here I outline my understanding of how Nietzsche thinks this societal alternation works; laying out systematically some of the ideas introduced earlier. Pyramid societies—which have steeply hierarchical social structures and clearly defined values, and thus clearly dictate their inhabitants' societal roles and personal aims—consolidate in periods of hardship, because of scarcity or violent conflict. Motley societies form either when a pyramid society enjoys a period of peace and plenty and allows its strict mores to relax, *or* when it merges with one or more other groups through alliance or conquest, and the resulting society faces no imminent threats. But motley societies are unstable, because they provide insufficient direction to the lives of most of their members. This might be because their mores have loosened and, for example, no longer preordain everyone's occupation (see *GS* 356); or, in the case of mixed cultures, it might be because they contain contradictory sets of values that prescribe opposing beliefs and actions, and individuals, unable to adjudicate between them, become paralyzed. For this reason, they risk collapsing into last-man

societies, governed by a morality of mediocrity that urges all members to adopt only modest desires and aspirations—such as (in the case of English utilitarianism) "comfort and fashion (and at best a seat in Parliament)" (*BGE* 228).

Fortunately, however, motley societies also tend to produce truly exceptional individuals, because they present both the opportunity and the necessity to experiment with new ways of living and valuing. Such individuals may take advantage of the clash of values in their society and themselves by turning their internal struggle into great art—or by forging a new system of values, perhaps one that combines the strengths of the old systems. These individuals may be threatened by the pressure to conform imposed by the morality of mediocrity; their society may label them as deviants, as arrogant, presumptuous, even evil (see *BGE* 201). But one such individual, or a small coterie, may also seize the opportunity to fill the normative vacuum in their society by taking it over and reshaping it according to their new values. And the weak-willed majority can provide prime material for this kind of reshaping, provided that they have not so thoroughly bought into the morality of mediocrity that, like the anarchists Nietzsche despises, they reject any form of leadership as tyranny (see *BGE* 204; *TI* IX, 41). In this way, a motley society can be transformed into a new pyramid society: highly structured, with consistent and well-defined values that lend its members a clear sense of identity and purpose.

Nietzsche provides evidence that he thinks it is possible for one great individual or a small class to remake a society from within. In *GS* 23, he states explicitly that true individuals "carry the seeds of the future and are the authors of the spiritual colonization and origin of new states and communities." His discussions of the Law of Manu, in *Twilight of the Idols* Part VII ("The 'Improvers' of Mankind") and section 57 of *The Antichrist*, can furnish a more detailed explanation of how he thinks this "spiritual colonization" works.[21] In these passages, he suggests that he thinks of these Hindu caste laws as the invention of a founding lawgiver or a small class of visionaries. In *TI* VII, he contrasts Christianity, which he regards as an effort to "tame" human beings, with the Law of Manu as a strategy for "breeding" (*TI* VII, 2–3):

> Here the task set is to breed no less than four races at once: one priestly, one warlike, one for trade and agriculture, and finally a race of servants, the Sudras. Obviously, we are here no longer among animal tamers: a kind of man that is a hundred times milder and more reasonable is the condition for even conceiving such a plan of breeding [...] (*TI* VII, 3).

And here is his commentary in *A* 57 (which will require some unpacking):

> At a certain point in the development of a people, the most circumspect stratum, that is, the one which sees farthest back and ahead, declares the experience according to which one should live—that is, *can* live—to be concluded. Their aim is to bring home as rich and complete a harvest as possible from the times of experiment and *bad* experience. Consequently, what must now be prevented above all is further experimentation, a continuation of the fluid state of values, testing, choosing, criticizing values in infinitum. Against this a double wall is put up: one, *revelation*, the claim that the reason in these laws is not of human origin, not sought and found slowly and after many errors, but of divine origin, and hence whole, perfect, without history, a gift, a miracle, merely communicated. Then, *tradition*, the claim that the law has existed since time immemorial and that it would be irreverent, a crime against one's forefathers, to raise any doubt against it. [...] The higher reason in such a procedure lies in the aim, step by step to push consciousness back from what had been recognized as the right life (that is, *proved* right by a tremendous and rigorously filtered experience), so as to attain the perfect automatism of instinct—that presupposition of all mastery, of every kind of perfection in the art of life. To set up a code of laws after the manner of Manu means to give a people the chance henceforth to become master, to become perfect—to aspire to the highest art of life.

What story is being told in these passages? Nietzsche envisions a society that has existed for a long time: the code "sums up the experience, prudence, and experimental morality of many centuries" (_A_ 57). Nietzsche remarks that "a kind of man that is a hundred times milder and more reasonable" than the barbarians of late-antique Europe, whom Christianity tried to tame, "is the condition for even conceiving such a plan of breeding" (_TI_ VII, 3)—alluding to the idea that "old cultures" grow "mellow," "weaker, more civilized, more peaceful" (_BGE_ 257). The culture now finds itself in a "fluid state of values, testing, choosing, criticizing values" (_A_ 57): it has let its old morality relax, perhaps because of an era of peace that enabled its people to become "milder and more reasonable," perhaps because contact with other cultures exposed them to diverse values among which they must consciously adjudicate. In short, it is a motley society. It is then that "the most circumspect stratum" of society (not a priestly _caste_, since none has yet been created; probably a cabal of likeminded, strong-willed individuals of the priestly _type_) takes it into their hands to bring an end to this "fluid state" and solidify their society's values (_A_ 57). They have made a study of their people's history, spanning times both of flourishing and of "experiment and _bad_ experience"—and they see this period of "testing, choosing, criticizing values," however necessary it may have been for enabling their own project, as a "_bad_ experience" for society as a whole. A certain way of life, Nietzsche says, has been "_proved_ right by tremendous and rigorously filtered experience" (_A_ 57).

But of course, to know which rules for living are the "right" ones, one must choose what outcome one wishes to achieve, and more fundamentally, the values that this favored outcome satisfies. To that extent, these "circumspect" individuals are creating new values (despite Nietzsche's claim that, "like every good code of laws," it merely "concludes: it creates nothing further": _A_ 57), or at least making themselves the arbiters of which values will be enforced in their society. The only thing experience has "_proved_," or ever can prove, is which societal norms and forms of organization produce the outcome that some social engineers desire. Nietzsche glosses over this point, presenting "the end of the Law of Manu" as if it were given or favored by nature itself. Perhaps he is helping himself to the same stratagem that he says the inventors of the Law of Manu used as legitimation, only instead of appealing to a god as the author of the values he favors, he appeals to nature—"Nature, not Manu, distinguishes the pre-eminently spiritual ones, those who are pre-eminently strong in muscle and temperament, and [...] the third type, who excel neither in one respect nor the other, the mediocre ones"—or to _life_ as an overarching force or principle: "The order of castes, the _order of rank_, merely formulates the highest law of life" (_A_ 57).[22]

These lawgivers, we can infer, have determined that it is only through a well-defined, pyramid-shaped, hereditary caste system that a society can attain what they consider "the right life." So they institute this in a monolithic code of laws, to be enshrined as holy and uncontestable and obeyed religiously through the generations, in order "to push consciousness back" from the conduct of life and allow people "to attain the perfect automatism of instinct" that Nietzsche considers a "presupposition of all mastery, of every kind of perfection in the art of life" (_A_ 57; cf. _BGE_ 188). This instinctive automaticity in action enables not only an individual but "_a people_ [...] to become master, to become perfect—to aspire to the highest art of life" (_A_ 57, my emphasis). These words recall the description in _BGE_ 224 of the productions of aristocratic pyramid societies as "the perfection and ultimate maturity of every culture and art." My hypothesis is this: in _TI_ VII, 3 and _A_ 57, Nietzsche is saying that by deliberately instituting a code of laws like the Law of Manu, especially far-sighted, visionary members of a motley society can _transform_ it into a new pyramid society.

Nietzsche also implies that an individual or a small group can refashion society in the many passages where he draws on the metaphor of a society as a work of art and its shaper as an artist.[23] In _GM_ II, 17, Nietzsche describes the conquerors who first "weld[ed] [... a] shapeless populace into a firm form" as "involuntary, unconscious artists," whose conquest was "artists' violence," and whose "terrible artists' egoism [...] knows itself justified to all eternity in its 'work.'" In _GS_ 356 he laments the disappearance of the "human type" of "the great 'architects'" capable of making "plans that encompass the distant future"—plans for "_a great edifice_" like the Roman Empire. He characterizes the Roman Empire as a "most admirable work of art in the grand style [...] designed to prove itself through thousands of years" (_A_ 58). Who would have been the artist(s) or architect(s) of that great work? No doubt one of them was Caesar, whom Nietzsche names as one of "those magical, incomprehensible, and unfathomable ones [...] those

enigmatic men predestined for victory and seduction," who "owe their origin" to the conflict of values in a mixed culture (_BGE_ 200).[24] Imperial Rome, being a major source of the strand of noble values that persisted into modern Europe, was very likely a pyramid society; it weakened, according to Nietzsche, when it allowed in too many cultural influences from the lands under its rule—specifically, from Judea (see esp. _GM_ I, 7–8; _A_ 58). My interpretation is that pyramid societies—being highly structured and unified, with every member assigned a role and no one superfluous (unlike in the modern state, per _Z_ I, 11)—not only _create_ the best works of art, but _are_ the best works of art, according to Nietzsche's criteria of taste (discussed in Section 4.1). In the words of _A_ 57, they can achieve "the highest art of life." Accordingly, they are sometimes actually designed as works of art by one architect, or a small committee, from the crop of extraordinary individuals produced by motley societies.

Nietzsche sees late-19th-century Europe as a motley society on the verge of devolving into a last-man society, which would be a disaster for the future of human cultural achievement.[25] But it is not there yet, and given that a strong-willed, visionary individual or group can transform a motley society into a new pyramid society, there is hope that the descent into a herd of last men can be averted. Recall from Section 4.2 his description of the blending of the European nations into "a useful, industrious, handy, multi-purpose herd animal" (_BGE_ 242). He continues:

> [...] the overall impression of such future Europeans will probably be that of manifold garrulous workers who will be poor in will, extremely employable, and as much in need of a master and commander as of their daily bread. But while the democratization of Europe leads to the production of a type that is prepared for _slavery_ in the subtlest sense, in single, exceptional cases the strong human being will have to turn out stronger and richer than perhaps ever before [...] I meant to say: the democratization of Europe is at the same time an involuntary arrangement for the cultivation of _tyrants_—taking that word in every sense, including the most spiritual. (_BGE_ 242)

The very same conditions that pose the danger of descent into a last-man society also present a great opportunity for the emergence of a new pyramid society. The vast majority of Europeans are pliant and moldable, and thanks to the indiscriminate mixing of classes and nationalities, represent no particular type. Because "they have never been weaker or in greater need of guidance and direction," Nietzsche "regards the nations and peoples of late modern Europe as uniquely susceptible to the imposition of a unifying form," perhaps by the "_genuine_ philosophers" who can act as "'commanders and legislators'" (Conway, 2009, p. 43, citing _BGE_ 211). "The consolidation of a new European order would be the result [...] of a massive imposition of cultural form onto the pliable, amorphous, entropic stuff into which the peoples and nations of Europe have degenerated" (2009, p. 51).

The "nerve fever" of nationalism does nothing to improve the will or creativity of the average European. It represents only a stubborn resistance to the inevitable merging, and perhaps also—what is worse, by Nietzsche's lights—an insistence by the weak-willed, mediocre majority on a self-rule and self-determination for which they are not suited (the model of the "_autonomous_ herd," _BGE_ 202). Nietzsche encourages the continued blending of the nations into a single mass because he thinks the European populace would present better material for a potential architect if they simply allowed this blending to go to completion.[26]

## 5.2 | Why alternation is valuable

If Nietzsche hopes that his own motley society will soon transition back into a pyramid society, and considers motley societies valuable only for the production of individuals who can in turn create a new pyramid society, should we conclude (along with readers like Conway, 1999, 2009; Pearson, 2022; Young, 2015) that Nietzsche in fact prefers pyramid societies to the exclusion of motley ones? In other words, should we decide that his ideal world would contain only culturally homogeneous societies whose members clearly represent a "type" that is "fixed and strong" (_BGE_ 262), and instinctively, unthinkingly obey a stringent ethical code reflecting a unified set of values?

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Nietzsche indicates that his own taste runs to highly structured aristocratic societies and the measured, controlled art they produce. But he nonetheless sees the advantage in the periodic disruption of such societies, whether through an endemic process of decline during times of peace, or especially through peaceful interchange and cultural admixture from other societies. First of all, these disruptions present an opportunity for truly exceptional individuals to arise who would have been unlikely, if not impossible, in a pyramid society. Aside from their potential role in reshaping society, these individuals' lives have value in themselves. As mentioned, they may turn their internal value-conflict into great art, as Nietzsche says Leonardo da Vinci did (*BGE* 200). And even if, like Napoleon, they do not succeed in redirecting the course of society, they still leave a mark on history, and leave behind a grand or tragic story (in the manner of what Nietzsche, in *UM* II, calls "monumental history"). The world is richer, more interesting, perhaps more beautiful for their having existed.

Second, when an established value system is challenged either by individual experimentation from within or by contact with another society's values, the competing systems can enrich each other and correct each other's defects. True, a situation in which two inconsistent value systems coexist in the same society is not stable or sustainable. But without these periods of mixing and confusion, there would be no opportunity for inventive individuals to forge the value systems they are presented into new, more comprehensive systems that promote a fuller vision of human flourishing. The confluence of noble and slave moralities that has occurred, starting with the Christianization of the Roman Empire, furnishes an example. As much as he admires the warrior-noble morality of the Homeric Greeks and the pre-Christian Romans, Nietzsche does not deny that it is somewhat boring and shallow in contrast with others:

> it was on the soil of [that] *essentially dangerous* form of human existence, the priestly form, that man first became *an interesting animal* [...] only here did the human soul in a higher sense acquire *depth* and become *evil*—and these are the two basic respects in which man has hitherto been superior to other beasts! (*GM* I, 6)

It should be noted that priestly values are a form of noble values, *not* slave morality (*GM* I, 6–7; see Anderson, 2011). The point, though, is that the warrior-noble morality was *lacking* depth that needed to be supplied from elsewhere; and insofar as elements of priestly values influenced the slave morality that the priests invented and disseminated, the new slave morality could supply that depth.[27]

And indeed, Nietzsche gives indications that certain aspects of (Christian) slave morality have combined with aspects of (originally Roman) noble morality to produce hybrid attitudes. An especially notable synthesis is the character of the free spirits:

> At home, or at least having been guests, in many countries of the spirit; having escaped again and again from the musty agreeable nooks into which preference and prejudice, youth, origin, the accidents of people and books or even exhaustion from wandering seemed to have banished us; full of malice against the lures of dependence that lie hidden in honors, or money, or offices, or enthusiasms of the senses; grateful even to need and vacillating sickness because they always rid us from some rule and its "prejudice," grateful to god, devil, sheep, and worm in us; curious to a vice, investigators to the point of cruelty, with uninhibited fingers for the unfathomable, with teeth and stomachs for the most indigestible [...], ready for every venture, thanks to an excess of "free will" [...], conquerors even if we look like heirs and prodigals, arrangers and collectors from morning till late, misers of our riches and our crammed drawers, economical in learning and forgetting, inventive in schemas [...], occasionally pedants, occasionally night owls of work even in broad daylight [...]. (*BGE* 44)

The traits of these free spirits, like the virtues of modern men enumerated in *BGE* 224 and discussed in Section 4.1, are a combination of noble and slave virtues; many of them cannot be easily categorized as one or the other. As Nietzsche remarks in *BGE* 224, their "vice" of curiosity is impermissible in a noble morality; and their "teeth

and stomachs for the most indigestible," even their feeling "at home [...] in many countries of the spirit," are marks of ignobility. Their industriousness as "night owls of work" is a virtue of slave morality (*BGE* 260). Their courage and "conqueror" spirit are noble, as is their gratitude even to things that seem harmful, like "need" and "sickness"—even to their slavish aspects, the "sheep and worm in us." But what should we say about their aversion to "agreeable nooks," "lures of dependence," and the "prejudice" inherent in rules (*BGE* 44)? Does it reflect the noble's "delight[...] in being severe and hard with himself" by denying himself the comfort of familiar routines? Or does it express the slave's "longing for *freedom*, the instinct for happiness and the subtleties of the feeling of freedom" (*BGE* 260), his objection to "the tyranny of capricious laws" (*BGE* 188)? It may be some indistinguishable blend of both.

Note that the value-creators Nietzsche anticipates, the "new philosophers," will share this eclectic mix of virtues: "Need I still say expressly [...] that they, too, will be free, very free spirits, these philosophers of the future— though just as certainly they will not be merely free spirits but something more, higher, greater, and thoroughly different" (*BGE* 44). What kind of values they may institute for the newly united Europe Nietzsche hopes for, I do not know (and probably neither does Nietzsche). But considering the characteristics of the new philosophers themselves, they are unlikely to merely reinstate the warrior-noble morality. Rather, the culture they fashion is likely to be more open-minded, placing more value on intellectual and spiritual pursuits, on the (not unconditional) desire for truth and the ability to withstand "unsweetened" truth (*BGE* 39). And without the slave morality—without "the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience" (*GS* 357); without a humble "hospitality" to new experiences and truths (*BGE* 207)—these pursuits and qualities would not have been recognized in European society as valuable parts of human life.

It may be that Nietzsche values periodic cultural mixture because he believes there is a pinnacle of human flourishing that can only be reached through a certain amount of trial and error, and through allowing different attempts at reaching this pinnacle to correct each other's errors; but I doubt it. I suspect that just as Nietzsche does not have in mind a well-specified model of the ideal great individual,[28] he does not have a unique vision of the ideal society and the legal and ethical codes it would live by. If, as Huddleston persuasively argues, Nietzsche views a culture as "a massive piece of collectively-embodied art" (Huddleston, 2019, p. 48), then it is just as impossible to specify in advance what the great societies of the future will look like as to describe the details of great works of art that have not yet been produced. Great cultures and their moments of glory are, like great individuals and artworks, "a fortunate accident" (*A* 3), "the highest little strokes of luck and transfigurations of human life that briefly light up here and there" (*BGE* 224). A social structure can be engineered to last for millennia, but periods of cultural greatness cannot; even great cultures inevitably peak and decline. The only way to enable more of these peaks, these brief "transfigurations," is to infuse a stagnating culture with new ideas and influences, through individual variation or intercultural contact, and see what kind of new and potentially enchanting individuals, cultures, artworks, and other cultural achievements emerge. In short, cultural change, and the alternation between types of society that tend to produce different kinds of greatness, keeps human cultural history fruitful and interesting.

These explanations of the value of motley societies still take their value to be solely instrumental: to the production of great individuals (who may or may not be able to found a new pyramid society), or to the enrichment of the unified value system that will shape and animate the pyramid societies that succeed them. Thus it might still be objected that Nietzsche considers the existence of motley societies to be merely a necessary evil: necessary to produce the extraordinary individuals who can revitalize cultures after the inevitable decline of their healthy pyramid form. However, I believe my reading of *BGE* 224 (in Section 4.1) points to the *aesthetic* value of such societies as well as the art that comes out of them, which tends to mirror the aesthetic qualities of the culture as a whole. The classical unity of pyramid societies and their art, Nietzsche admits, is more to his taste. But he can also recognize the genuine aesthetic value of eclectic art like that of Homer and Shakespeare, and even the potential value (both aesthetic and more broadly spiritual) of a motley culture like modern Europe—which is "prepared like no previous age for a carnival in the grand style, for the laughter and high spirits of the most spiritual revelry, for the transcendental heights of the highest nonsense and Aristophanean derision of the world," whose denizens can still be inventive as "parodists of world history," whose "*laughter* may yet have a future" (*BGE* 223).[29]

## 6 | CONCLUSION

Sluga observes, quite correctly: "Human beings are, according to [Nietzsche], not made to attain an end state in which they can once and for all be happy. 'The destiny of man is designed for _happy moments_,' he reminds us, 'not for happy ages' (_HH_ I, 471)" (Sluga, 2015, p. 47). He says this by way of contrasting Nietzsche with Hegel, for whom the modern liberal state is the (presumably eternal) rational _telos_ of human history. In laying out Nietzsche's view of "the historical process as blindly generating ever new configurations," all of them "inevitably imperfect" (2015, p. 47), Sluga seems to paint Nietzsche as merely resigned to this non-ideal world, perhaps wishing to be a Hegelian if only his intellectual conscience would allow it. But I submit that Nietzsche would not _want_ any one culture, however well-formed, to reign forever. Just as there is no one perfect configuration of society for Nietzsche, there is no final "correct" value system that humanity will eventually reach (or fail to reach) and come to rest at. There might be infinite possible ways of living and valuing, as Nietzsche hints in _GS_ 374: "the world has become 'infinite' for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that _it may include infinite interpretations_."

Of course, human society and culture are not on a uniform upward trajectory, and there will be steps backward as well as forward (from Nietzsche's perspective). But there is also no limit to how high those peaks of culture might rise, or how magnificent their brief "transfigurations of human life" (_BGE_ 224) may be. We should recall that Nietzsche's ideal of "the great health" is not a static condition of the absence of sickness, but the capacity to heal, learn, and even profit from periods of sickness (see _GS_ Preface; _EH_ I, 2): it is something "that one does not merely have, but also acquires continually, and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up" (_GS_ 382). Societies, and humanity as a whole, possess the great health not if they _never_ go through periods of "corruption" (_GS_ 23) or decadence, but if they can use these periods to their advantage in producing extraordinary individuals, interesting art, and a wider conception of the human good.[30]

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## ENDNOTES

[1] A few other commentators have taken note of parts of the theory I ascribe to Nietzsche. Conway (1997) also argues that Nietzsche envisions an indefinitely extended process of human evolution by means of great individuals who expand the possibilities for excellence in new and unpredictable ways, rather than any "_final_ perfection or completion of the species" (1997, p. 9). Elsewhere, he notes that Nietzsche believed "cultures and epochs naturally partake of cyclical patterns of growth and decay" (2009, p. 41; cf. 1999, p. 27) and relates this to his diagnosis and prescriptions for late-modern Europe (to which I return in Section 5 below). However, Conway does not detail the mechanics of this "cyclical pattern," nor does he take note of Nietzsche's positive remarks about "decadent" cultures, as I will in Section 4.

Townsend (2016) has come closest to describing the theory I lay out here: he also notes, drawing especially on _BGE_ 262, that Nietzsche distinguishes between culturally unified societies that Townsend calls "bound societies" (2016, p. 621) and mixed societies, of which "[m]odern European states are paradigmatic" (p. 623); and that although Nietzsche

seems to prefer bound (aristocratic) societies in some respects (p. 630), his views also entail that "the capacity to be a higher individual is more widely dispersed [in modernity] than in bound societies" (p. 624). Townsend's aim in describing the distinction between types of societies is different from mine: his main argument is about the contextually specific diversity of types of higher individuals rather than the social theory as such. As I explain later, my analysis of key texts indicates that Townsend's conclusions about the types of higher individual produced by the different types of society are not entirely correct.

[2] The word is ambiguous between "species" as a biological term and the more general notion of a "kind."

[3] This term is inspired in part by Young (2015), who points to Nietzsche's "'motley' critique" of modern European culture. Young assumes (as I do) that the name of "the town that is the object of Zarathustra's scorn and love," *die bunte Kuh*, which Kaufmann translates as "The Motley Cow," is intended as a commentary on modern culture (Young, 2015, p. 19). Both Hollingdale and Kaufmann use the word "motley" to translate the expression *Jahrmarkts-Buntheit*, which Nietzsche uses on occasion to disparage modern culture (Hollingdale renders it as "fairground motley" in *UM* I, 1, Kaufmann as "village-fair motleyness" in *BGE* 10). Cf. Pearson (2022), p. 187.

[4] This is in contrast to many of his contemporaries, who quite literally believed that non-white races represented a more primitive stage of evolution and therefore worried that race-mixing would lead to the "degeneration" of the white race (see Moore, 2002, p. 117). Nietzsche may have shared these beliefs to some extent, as suggested by his remark in *GM* II, 7 that "Negroes" may be "taken as representatives of prehistoric man." But most of his (sparse) comments on non-white races do not reflect a belief that they are all inferior or less "evolved," from his remark that the Spanish conquistadors "exterminate[d] entire *higher* cultures such as those of Peru and Mexico" (*D* 204, my emphasis), to his enumeration of the "Arabian" and "Japanese nobility" alongside "noble races" who embody the "splendid *blond beast*" (*GM* I, 11), to his designation of India as the place with the maximum of "philosophical endowment" (*GM* III, 7). Nietzsche troublingly suggests in *D* 206 that sending dissatisfied European workers out to colonize other lands would provide a proper outlet for aggressive instincts that had turned to criminality at home, but also muses that it might be helpful to inject Europe with an infusion of foreign blood to supply new *virtues* that Europe lacks—which provides further support for my case in Section 4 that Nietzsche is not categorically opposed to racial/cultural mixture (see Bamford, 2014, for a critical discussion of *D* 206).

[5] Pearson concurs that Nietzsche is interested in races primarily as cultural units, "as something akin to 'people' (*Volk*) or 'social class'" (2022, p. 188, n. 8). Bernasconi (2017, pp. 56–57) points out that this conception of "race" as encompassing culture as well as biology was not unique to Nietzsche, but was standard in the 19th century.

[6] Another text that suggests this is *BGE* 264: "One cannot erase from the soul of a human being what his ancestors liked most to do and did most constantly [...] This is the problem of race."

[7] Further evidence for the connection comes from *BGE* 201 (excerpted in Section 2 above), which, along with *BGE* 200, is part of a sequence of sections on the theme of "Morality as Timidity," announced in *BGE* 197. In *BGE* 201, Nietzsche is clearly talking about the same phenomenon as in *BGE* 262: the replacement of a warlike noble morality by a morality of mediocrity during an extended period of peace, as a way for the mediocre majority of the society to protect themselves against extraordinary individuals. The proximity and thematic unity between *BGE* 200 and 201 strongly suggests that the connection of *BGE* 201 with 262 should be extended to *BGE* 200.

[8] See Pearson (2022), Chapter 4.

[9] Nietzsche was hardly alone in the view that the noble and commoner classes of feudal Europe represent distinct conqueror and conquered races. Moore points out that Comte Arthur de Gobineau ("often described as the founding father of modern racism," 2002, p. 124), in his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853–1855), espoused a similar view about the racial dimension of class differences, which he extended from a historical commonplace about a division between a Frankish nobility and Gaulish commoners in France into a general theory that every society was divided into a noble class consisting of a superior (often Aryan) conqueror race, an oppressed slave or commoner class of "an inferior human variety," and a hybrid bourgeoisie (Moore, 2002, p. 126). Moore writes that, contra many of Nietzsche's early French interpreters, there is little evidence that Nietzsche read Gobineau, but says "Nietzsche was almost certainly aware of Gobineau's work to some degree" (2002, p. 124); and Drochon notes that Gobineau "was an intellectual companion to Wagner when Nietzsche frequented his circle in the late 1860s and early 1870s" (2016, p. 84).

[10] See Conway (1999), pp. 23–24; Moore (2002), pp. 120–121.

[11] Cf. Pearson (2022), pp. 189–190.

[12] The connection between the situation of racial/cultural mixing discussed in *BGE* 200 and 208 and the model outlined in *BGE* 262 is reinforced by the fact that in *BGE* 208, Nietzsche does not only attribute the "sickness of the will" indicated by indecisive skepticism to the "radical mixture of classes, and *hence* races"; he also claims that "it appears strongest and most manifold where culture has been at home longest," and "disappears to the extent to which the 'barbarian' still—or again—claims

his rights under the loose garments of Western culture." In other words, Nietzsche sees the situation in modern Europe as the decay of an old civilization *as well as* racial/cultural mixing, and attributes the same symptoms to both phenomena.

[13] Young locates the "most important formulation" of this "'motley' critique" in *BGE* 223 and 224 (2015, p. 19); in Section 4.1 below, I will draw on *BGE* 224 to develop Nietzsche's *defense* of motley societies.

[14] Sophocles, unlike Aeschylus, was not above mixing high and low styles: the character of the guard in *Antigone*, like the drunken porter in *Macbeth*, furnishes a brief opportunity for jokes and wordplay. Sophocles (a contemporary of Socrates) was writing some 50 years later than Aeschylus; tastes might have become more "ignoble" in the interim.

[15] See Townsend's discussion of Nietzsche's conception of "grand style" (2016, pp. 628–629). Contrary to Townsend's analysis, which associates this style with "the anti-modern type" of higher individual that emerges from mixed modern society, *BGE* 224 seems to attribute it primarily to the great artists of pyramid societies.

[16] Consider, for example, his discussion of Mozart and Beethoven in *BGE* 245. Mozart, he says, is the "swan song" of "the 'good old time,'" "the last chord of a centuries-old great European taste," while "Beethoven is the interlude of a mellow old soul that constantly breaks and an over-young future soul that constantly *comes*; on his music lies that twilight of eternal losing and eternal extravagant hoping." Beethoven is the music of a society in a transition that is simultaneously the decline of one way of life and the incipience of another.

[17] This seems ironic, given that Nietzsche's style in *EH* (1888) is more "wild genius" than measured and restrained. He must have been somewhat aware of the irony, considering the "not without fury" remark.

[18] In *GS* 23 (1882), Nietzsche makes a distinction between the "tyrants" or "Caesar[s]" and the true "individuals" of whom they are "the precursors and as it were the precocious harbingers." On this account, individuals develop in the shelter of peace and stability provided by the tyrant's victory. By *BGE* (1886), Nietzsche appears to have collapsed the categories, designating tyrants like Caesar and Napoleon as true individuals.

[19] Conway (1997) claims that, according to Nietzsche, "Healthy ages and peoples tend to produce world-historical commanders and lawgivers as their highest specimens, while decadent peoples and ages tend to produce philosophers and critics as their representative exemplars" (1997, pp. 24–25). The fact that Nietzsche attributes Alcibiades and Caesar to decadent or "disintegrating" conditions of society (*BGE* 200), and identifies Napoleon alongside Goethe and Schopenhauer as an exemplar of the new mixed European (*BGE* 256), should cast doubt on this generalization. Townsend (2016) argues for nearly the opposite of Conway's claim: that "the appearance of the artist-genius type correlates with societies of bound spirits" and "injects innovation into an otherwise inert and stupid community" (2016, p. 622); whereas the higher type that emerges in modernity, "the anti-modern type," as "one who has, through a sheer act of will, conquered his chaotic drives" (p. 627), is well-suited to undertake "long-term, wide-scale projects," especially to "create laws, religions, and customs" (p. 629). This generalization also seems too strict, especially since many examples of self-squandering artist-geniuses, including Leonardo, Shakespeare, and Goethe, belong to eras that Nietzsche characterizes as motley societies.

[20] Brobjer is correct that Nietzsche never explicitly describes "a future ideal society" (1998, p. 300), but his conclusion that this makes him "an in the main a- and anti-political thinker" (p. 309) seems to be based on the assumption that Nietzsche must be a *traditional* political philosopher to be a political philosopher at all.

[21] Berkowitz (2003) notes that Nietzsche's understanding of the Law of Manu is based on a translation by Louis Jacolliot which differs significantly from scholarly versions generally accepted as authoritative, and that some of Nietzsche's claims are drawn not even from Jacolliot's dubious translation, but from a long footnote in which he set forth a bizarre theory about the origins of various other cultures in India (2003, pp. 1133–1134; cf. Brobjer, 1998, pp. 303–304). I make no claims for the *accuracy* of Nietzsche's judgments; I use them only as an indication of his views on how societies can be refashioned.

[22] It's debatable how sincerely Nietzsche means the language of ethical naturalism that he sometimes uses, attributing his vision of spiritual hierarchy and glorification of the will to power to the "law" or fundamental character of "Life." Stern (2020) argues that he does mean it literally, at least in the works of 1887–1888.

[23] Huddleston (2019) insightfully explores and elaborates this metaphor, especially in Chapter 3, and discusses its implications for Nietzsche's conception of human flourishing in Chapter 6. Berkowitz (2003) also emphasizes the artistry involved in Nietzsche's conception of lawgiving.

[24] I am not sure what cultural mixture Nietzsche thought Caesar was the product of. Perhaps he has in mind the gradual merging of the patrician and plebeian classes after the legal status differences between them were abolished, or contact between Roman civilization and the less sophisticated culture of the Germanic tribes.

[25] An anonymous reviewer asked how *likely* Nietzsche thinks it is that any given motley society will collapse into a last-man society, rather than being reshaped into a pyramid society. If such collapses had happened frequently in history, we would expect to see convergence into this state worldwide, since the last-man society as Nietzsche describes it does not have the internal resources to transition away from it. But we do not see this convergence, which might suggest that the

risk of such devolution is much lower than Nietzsche implies in his warnings about modern Europe. Other than his remarks about China (noted in Section 2 above), I am not aware that Nietzsche identifies any specific historical examples of motley societies degenerating into last men. He does, however, speak of *conquest* of motley societies by invaders, as in *BGE* 257: "barbarians in every terrible sense of the word […] hurled themselves upon weaker, more civilized, more peaceful races […] or upon mellow old cultures, whose last vitality was even then flaring up in splendid fireworks of spirit and corruption" (cf. *GM* II, 17). In such situations, he says, the conquerors established themselves as the noble caste of a new pyramid society, while the conquered people became the lower classes. If Nietzsche thinks there are few historical examples of last-man societies, it may be because he thinks that in the past, most societies that either had reached that stage or were on the cusp of it have been conquered and thus subsumed into the lower strata of a pyramid society.

[26] In later works, it sometimes seems that Nietzsche has lost hope that Europeans *are* still capable of being reshaped into a new pyramid society. Conway (1999, p. 26) and van Tongeren (2008, pp. 82–83) both point to his statement in *GS* 356 (1887) that "[w]hat will not be built anymore henceforth, and cannot be built anymore, is—a society in the old sense of that word […] *All of us are no longer material for a society*." Conway (1999) cites even more fatalistically pessimistic prognoses for Europe from *TI* "Skirmishes" (1888), foretelling nothing but a continued descent into decadence. However, Nietzsche continued to express hope for Europe's future in *GM* (I, 17; II, 24; III, 27) and *EH* ("Destiny"); and as Drochon (2010) details, in his very latest writings of 1888–1889, Nietzsche was still making plans for his "Party of Life" to breed a new European aristocracy from those who "represent […] ascending life" (2010, p. 75) and to weed out "everything degenerate and parasitical" (*EH* "BT" 4) by preventing those with life-denying tendencies from reproducing (2010, p. 76). So perhaps Nietzsche's pessimistic claims about Europe's prospects in 1887–1888 apply only to its current condition, and he still hoped his planned breeding program could salvage the situation.

[27] Cf. Huddleston (2019), pp. 61–65 on the (perhaps surprising) benefits of Christian morality for cultural greatness.

[28] As Nehamas argues (1985), pp. 225–229; cf. Conway (1997), p. 9, and Pearson (2022), p. 264.

[29] This account of Nietzsche's social philosophy may help resolve a debate about whether Nietzsche should be read as a *communitarian*, who places primary importance and value on the health of the community as a whole (as argued by Young, 2006, 2015), or as an *individualist*, who regards great individuals as the primary bearers of intrinsic value, while most of the value of communities derives from their role in producing and supporting such individuals (as Clark and Wonderly, 2015, argue; Townsend, 2016, also takes this position). Young's case in favor of communitarianism largely rests on Nietzsche's praise for pyramid societies (discussed at the end of Section 3 above), while Clark and Wonderly point to his explicit claims (as in *UM* III, 6) that societies should be viewed as a means to the cultivation of great individuals, not vice versa. My view about the beneficial alternation between pyramid and motley societies concretely illustrates a way in which "the exceptional individual and the community each have instrumental value for the other, while still retaining their respective intrinsic value," as Clark and Wonderly admit might be a viable interpretation (2015, p. 132).

[30] Gemes (2021) makes a related point regarding Nietzsche's use of the rhetoric of societal sickness, "degeneration," "decadence," etc.

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