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Beauty, Desire and Ignorance

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Critical Notices

Beauty, Desire and Ignorance

A critical notice of Alexander Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art*. Princeton University Press, 2007. Pp. ix + 186. ISBN 978–0–691–09521–9. £17.95 (hbk).

Because individual tastes vary in no end of ways there is a challenge that all critics face: Why should we care about their work? What reason could a reader have for bothering to read about what does or doesn't meet with a particular critic's approval?

This challenge has its roots in philosophical questions about judgements of taste, but it is in non-philosophical contexts that the challenge is at its most vivid. Suppose that you are reading a restaurant review. You may learn that a particular meal got the reviewer's juices going, but that says nothing about how you might have felt if it had been you who was eating it. Why, then, is the reading of restaurant reviews anything other than a waste of time? The question cannot simply be dodged. Even if we want to say that restaurant reviews are just amusing, dammit, and that no further reason need be given for reading them, we still face the question of *why* they are amusing. How could it even be amusing, never mind worthwhile, to read a detailed account of someone else's fancy dinner?

The review of Le Café Anglais in the 20 January edition of the *Observer* magazine suggests a possible line of response. Jay Rayner, that newspaper's regular restaurant critic, tells us that the menu of Le Café Anglais is:

poetry in four dozen dishes. [...] It is swoon and dribble worthy. Or, to put it another way, if I showed you the menu and you didn't do at least a little swooning and dribbling, I would know we could never be friends.

Rayner's review does not pretend to 'speak with a universal voice'¹ – it acknowledges the possibility that we may remain unswoning and dribble-free. But Rayner is a good critic whose taste is not an arbitrary cluster of likes and dislikes. He has a coherent style that, the reader imagines, says a good deal about the sort of person he is. When the reviewer's life has been shaped by the aesthetic enthusiasms that figure in it he may know that the reader who doesn't share some of those enthusiasms – who doesn't do a little swooning and dribbling – must have a style so different from his own that they could never be friends.

The reader, for his part, knows that nothing obliges him to swoon where Rayner swoons or dribble where he dribbles. But even if we don't share the reviewer's taste and even if, as is almost invariably the case, there is no chance that we'll be dining in that restaurant, the reviews will at least display a coherent style that can be enjoyed for its own sake.

This story relating taste and style to the shaping of one's life (and so to judgements about friendship) provides an account that explains why restaurant reviews aren't a complete waste of time. The thought that it might also enter into more substantial explanations in philosophical aesthetics is the motivating idea behind much of the work of Alexander Nehamas.

The role of taste and beauty in determining the shape of one's life story – one's 'style' – has been at the heart of Nehamas's philosophy for more than twenty years. It is central to his recent work on aesthetics, the most extended treatment of which is given in his new book, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art*. It is also a theme of many of his essays on ancient philosophy, collected in *Virtues of Authenticity* (1999),² and it figures prominently in the lectures on literature that comprise his 1998 book, *The Art of Living*.³ The central ideas can be traced back to Nehamas's seminal 1985 work on Nietzsche⁴ and to his attempt to say what's right about Nietzsche's idea that one should 'become what one is'.⁵

There surely is something that's laudable about the effort to become what one is, but, as with much else in Nietzsche, there is also something that's repellent. Not that the opposite advice has much to recommend it. One who made 'Be what you're not!' his maxim would be thwarted, if not by false consciousness and the fixities of human nature, then by the law of non-contradiction. The problem is that treating the attempt to be who one is as a matter of the first moral importance seems to be a recipe for self-regard and self-indulgence. It might be forgivable on the part of early adolescents. It is surely intolerable when we encounter it in grown-ups.

In Nehamas's treatment the Nietzschean imperative to become what one is appears in rather urbane guise as the thought that we should live in such a way as to cultivate and sustain a coherent and distinctive style, not because it will lend interest to our work if we are ever called upon to act as restaurant critics, but just for its own sake. Nehamas has returned repeatedly to Nietzsche's remark that 'One thing is needful: To "give style" to one's character – a great and rare art!'"⁶ With at least the first part of this remark he agrees.

The second part of Nietzsche's remark – the claim that giving style to one's character is a 'great and rare art' – is less congenial to Nehamas's project, which aims to capture something that's important, not only in the lives of great artists, but in the ordinary lives of everyday folk. He writes that:

Whether among the greatest artists or the most ordinary people, character and style are an essential part of what distinguishes a person from the rest of the world. They are the grounds of individuality.⁷

Style, on this view, is a relatively quotidian matter. It involves following through the commitments that are implicit in the judgements one makes *whenever* one exercises taste. This may be a taste for a particular television programme, or for one sport rather than another: '[T]aste or sensibility is manifested whenever we act on our own and not only along lines drawn by routine and convention.'⁸ Precisely because it is quotidian, its influence on the shape of one's life can be pervasive:

The judgement of taste, even at its most specific, implicates a vast number of other works and a large variety of other people: it commits you to nothing less than a whole mode of life.⁹

The exercise of style is an everyday matter, but the having of a style is nonetheless an *achievement*: 'It is no mean feat to exhibit a consistent sensibility.'¹⁰ It is, despite that, a feat that is supposed to be within reach. The image of a well-lived life that guides Nehamas's thinking here is not that of the melodramatic Nietzschean Übermensch. The presiding hero of Nehamas's work is closer to the hero that Auden identified as characteristic of modern poetry:

neither the 'Great Man' nor a romantic rebel, both doers of extraordinary deeds, but the man or woman in any walk of life who despite all the impersonal pressures of modern society, manages to acquire and preserve a face of his own.¹¹

It isn't obvious that this talk of style and taste as determining 'whole modes of life' is true to the facts of human psychology. Do coherent styles really play a significant role in shaping the life stories of normal people? Montaigne is among those who have been sure that they do not:

We are entirely made up of bits and pieces, woven together so diversely and so shapelessly that each one of them pulls its own way at every moment. And there is as much difference between us and ourselves as there is between us and other people.¹²

Nehamas can't allow for this (and Montaigne appears nowhere in *Only a Promise of Happiness* – which is surprising since his influence is clearly on display elsewhere).¹³ The question of whether there is anything in the actual determinants of human conduct corresponding to a 'style' as Nehamas conceives it is a question that goes beyond anything that could

be settled from the philosophical armchair. Nor is it a matter that any simple empirical work might resolve, although the empirical evidence that we have on such matters points more in Montaigne's direction than in Nehamas's.¹⁴ Nehamas's picture of a life the shape of which is guided by a style must be understood as an *idealization* that abstracts away from the inconstancy that Montaigne emphasized, but it is not an ideal, at least not in any moral sense.

I said earlier that Nehamas is concerned with the cultivation of style for its own sake. This is accurate, but it needs to be handled with considerable care. Nehamas does not share the explanatory goals of those thinkers who see a theory of individual style and of the possibility of self-creation as crucial ingredients in a virtue-centred ethical theory (thinkers such as Charles Taylor and, perhaps, Alasdair MacIntyre¹⁵). When Nehamas praises the cultivation of style, it is not because he thinks that the cultivation of a style is always worthwhile from the point of view of the person whose style is in question:

What that life will bring is impossible to predict: you can't know in advance what sort of person it will make you. You can't even know for sure that what you will eventually find is something you will consider to have been worth your while.¹⁶

Nor is the claim that style can be cultivated for its own sake intended to entail that the having of a style is worthwhile from an *absolute* point of view. Nehamas's argument here is harder to make out, but the conclusion is relatively clear. When he writes that: 'morality [...] is neither the only nor obviously the most important issue we consider when we try to determine how best to lead our lives',¹⁷ the non-moral considerations that he has in mind are considerations of style.

If Nehamas's claims about style and taste are not moral claims, or empirical conjectures about the actual causes of actual behaviour, what are they? It would seem that they must be expressions of his own style. His advocacy of individuality of style is delivered in terms that are explicitly based on personal taste. It is not said that the existence of distinctive styles is good, but only that 'the idea of *two* individuals whose aesthetic judgments are absolutely identical sends shivers down my spine'.¹⁸ If this is *just* a matter of taste, then it faces its own version of the challenge that was faced by the restaurant critic. If this is merely Nehamas's own taste, then do his considerations have any force for one whose taste simply happens to be different?

One tempting response would be to claim that, since matters of style are 'the grounds of individuality', this is a point about which tastes could not possibly differ, on pain of being trapped in a self-defeating bind: an individual taste that included no esteem for individual tastes wouldn't be a taste at all, but would be an advocacy of the extreme conformity in which taste cannot be expressed. Although there are places where Nehamas toys with a

response along these lines, it is not his final answer and it would not be satisfactory since it mislocates the point of controversy. Consider the view found in Philip Larkin's 'Dockery and Son':¹⁹

... Where do these
 Innate assumptions come from? Not from what
 We think truest, or most want to do:
 Those warp tight shut like doors. They're more a style
 Our lives bring with them: habit for a while,
 Suddenly they harden into all we've got
 And how we got it [...]

The idea that habits and disposition determine a style which, in turn, plays a fundamental role in shaping our lives is ground that Nehamas shares with the protagonist of Larkin's poem. Nehamas is enthusiastic about this, and he takes it to reveal that possibilities of self-creation are open to us. Larkin's protagonist is not enthusiastic in the least. The point of controversy does not turn on a straightforward difference of attitude to the same facts. The difference of attitude is rooted in a disagreement as to what, exactly, the facts are. Nehamas does not recognize the contrast drawn by Larkin between 'a style our lives bring with them' and 'what / We think truest, or most want to do'. His view depends on the idea that style interacts with what we think truest and most want to do, and, much more specifically, it depends on the idea that style is subject to influence from the experience of beauty:

Every judgement of beauty prompts, or rather includes, the question 'Why is that thing beautiful?' [...] By forcing these questions, my aesthetic judgements literally determine the course of my life, directing me for their answers to other people, other objects, other habits and other ways of being.²⁰

Since style is, as we have said, not being thought of as a moral matter, the claim that the experience of beauty influences style, and with it the shape of one's life, is not the claim that beauty is morally edifying. Nonetheless, some of the doubts that are traditionally associated with that latter claim arise here too. To acknowledge that the claims that Nehamas is making are founded, *inter alia*, on considerations of taste does not obviate the need for proof. The idea that lives are shaped by the beautiful things that figure in them needs support.

Nehamas's approach to getting the necessary support is to draw attention to one particular case in which a life-shaping influence from beauty is plausible, and to claim that this particular case is paradigmatic. The particular case for which it is plausible that the experience of a beautiful thing does shape one's life is the case where the beautiful thing is a person with

whom one then proceeds to fall in love, enter into marriage, have children, and so on. Nothing could be more clearly life-altering than that, and it is a case in which beauty clearly figures.

Personal love and friendship enter the discussion rather abruptly when, halfway through the second chapter of *Only a Promise of Happiness*, Nehamas tells us that:

This is the time to stop thinking of the arts in isolation, as I have done so far in this discussion, and realize that reviewers have a very ordinary counterpart in the rest of life: friends who want me to get acquainted with someone they believe I will appreciate.

(p. 52)

We are then presented with a very brief discussion of meeting the friends of friends and, in case that ‘may seem an anemic parallel to the fervid power of art’ (p. 53), with several pages of discussion on the topic of what it is like to see a gorgeous stranger in a public place. Central to Nehamas’s view of art is his conviction that this is not a non sequitur. The beauty of art attracts him exactly as does the beauty of people, and it is his contention that, when we have understood that these two impulses are of the same form, we will see that the recognition of beauty is the acceptance of a promise, not the making of a judgement, and is therefore apt to play a role in shaping one’s style (and, with it, one’s life).

Two themes are prominent in the account that Nehamas gives of the experience of setting eyes on a gorgeous stranger, each of which owes much to his readings of Plato (the *Symposium* is especially relevant here), and to his love of Proust. The first of these themes is the acknowledgement of a phenomenon known as ‘the halo effect’, which (although Nehamas doesn’t look to the empirical literature on this point) has long been familiar to students of social psychology.²¹ When we find people good looking we also tend to feel a quite irrational temptation to attribute other sorts of virtues to them – a tendency that is evidenced by the fact that good-looking people tend to get lighter prison sentences for the same crime and higher grades for the same work.²² Our thinking of good-looking people as having other virtues (like our seeing of the lines in certain optical illusions as having different lengths) need not involve anything like a judgement that they actually have those virtues, and it persists even if we know this tendency to be irrational. In Nehamas’s account the effect is described like this:

I have no way of knowing what to expect from our interaction.

Sometimes, half-knowingly, I may allow myself to expect more than I should. I persuade myself to think that you are more intelligent,

engaging, serious or sensitive than I have reason to believe – either because I am unwilling to acknowledge the sexual elements in my attraction or, more generously, because I hope that in time I will discover such features in you.²³

Nehamas is probably mistaken in attributing the halo effect to unacknowledged sexual attraction. For one thing, halo effects show rather little sensitivity to gender,²⁴ and, for another, children of 7–9 years of age who don't, one supposes, have much sexual attraction to deny, show the same pattern as adults in tending to rate attractive people as more sociable, intelligent, and altruistic than unattractive people.²⁵

It is unfortunate, therefore, that these claims about the unwillingly acknowledged 'sexual elements' of beauty's appeal are treated with Nietzschean seriousness: shortly after the passage quoted above, Nehamas quotes Nietzsche's remark that 'the degrees and kind of one's sexuality reach up into the ultimate pinnacles of one's spirit'. But although his explanation for the fact is off the mark, Nehamas is surely right to say that we go beyond our rational entitlements when crediting beautiful people with various appealing traits. This is enough to make the point he wants.

'Sexual elements' also make an appearance in the second of this discussion's themes, which is that when we see gorgeous people we often want to get involved with them: 'Like beautiful people, beautiful works spark the urgent need to approach.'²⁶ For some readers the appearance of sexuality here will again be unwelcome. Nehamas's natural allies in reacting against the thought that beauty is morally suspect (writers such as Mary Mothersill, or Elaine Scarry²⁷) have sometimes preferred to play down the erotic associations of beauty. Nehamas refuses to be coy. The 'urgent need to approach' that beauty prompts is, in part, a desire for literal *approach*: 'I am attracted, impelled to move forward and approach, come close to you, so to speak, geographically.'²⁸ But it brings with it a desire to engage with beautiful persons or things in much more complex ways – 'my need to become actively engaged – sexually, psychologically, ethically – with another person'²⁹ – and to bring them into one's life in a way that is often aptly (though metaphorically) described as a desire to *possess* them: 'Our reaction to beautiful things is the urge to make them our own.' This metaphor of possession has, as Nehamas notes, 'a sour note to contemporary ears', but the thing that's desired is much more equitable than that sour note would suggest. The point could be made just as aptly by saying that our reaction to beautiful things is a desire for them to make us their own. Were it not for a recent slippage of English we could have said, unmetaphorically and without the infelicitous connotations of possessiveness, that what we desire from beautiful things is to have intercourse with them, but alas, 'intercourse' now refers only to intercourse of one rather particular sort.

The recognition that we tend to go beyond our rational entitlements in thinking well of beautiful people and the recognition that we have a desire to engage with them are accurate enough as pieces of introspective phenomenology. Nehamas's trick for turning these commonplace observations into a philosophically substantive account of beauty is to take the first of these – the going beyond what is rationally grasped – and to put it into the content of the second, so that our desire to engage with beautiful people is understood, on his account, as being a desire for an engagement with people whose desirability goes beyond anything we have rationally grasped:

as long as we find something beautiful we feel certain that it can still yield something of value, despite the fact that we don't know what that is.

(p. 76)

The resulting account of our experience of beauty is one in which neither our rationally unguided expectations of good nor our desire to bring the beautiful person or thing into our lives is treated as accidental. For Nehamas these are not contingent features of the way in which beautiful things affect irrational and acquisitive beings like us but are essential to the experience of beauty. This claim of a necessary connection between beauty, ignorance and desire can seem to have unwelcome consequences.

If irrational expectation and desire are essential to the experience of beauty, then no experience of beauty remains if either one of them is taken away. It follows that if we are thinking straight and feeling thoroughly contented, it is impossible to find anything beautiful. Nehamas trades on the claimed connection between the experience of beautiful persons and of beautiful things to make this *prima facie* awkward conclusion seem true to the phenomenology:

The experience of beauty is inseparable from interpretation, and just as beauty always promises more than it has given so far, so interpretation, the effort to understand what it promises, is forever work in progress. It is completed only when beauty has nothing more to offer: understanding comes into full blossom as attraction withers, as it always does – unless death comes first.

(p. 105)

If this sounds melodramatic, it is not entirely Nehamas's fault. (The context is a discussion of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*.) The idea is not, in fact, a melodramatic one, but is the simple and powerful thought that finding something beautiful is not a matter of detecting that it has a certain

property, but of engaging with it in a continuing way which, on account of this continuation, requires the beautiful thing ‘always [to be] *promising* more than it has given so far’ (p. 105, my italics). For this reason, and not because beauty can only be seen by those whose understanding is defective, things thought of as beautiful must be taken to have virtues that are imperfectly understood. If we were to get a rational grip on the virtues that a beautiful thing actually possesses, and so were no longer tempted to think that there is some as-yet-undisclosed virtue further to the properties we have recognized, or if we were to lose the urge to make the beautiful thing our own, we would, *ipso facto*, have ceased to find that thing beautiful.

The metaphor of the accepting of a promise (in contrast to the issuing of a verdict) is central to Nehamas’s conception of what gives beauty its special epistemic status – ‘descriptions [...] can’t support conclusions about aesthetic value: statements full of aesthetic terms won’t do any better’³⁰ – and it is the basis for his claim that, through influencing style, beauty plays a role in the shaping of our lives. This conception of beauty’s special ‘promissory’ status is never given a concise non-metaphorical articulation (nor could it be). Instead it is demonstrated to us in the extended discussion of Manet’s *Olympia* that forms the lion’s share of the book’s second half.

This discussion of *Olympia* is not a piece of philosophy, nor of art criticism, but it is, undoubtedly, a virtuoso performance, ranging enormously widely, and thereby illustrating the way in which Nehamas has, as his theory dictates, made the painting part of his life in ways that go beyond anything he could have known would be desirable when first finding it to be beautiful. Parts of the discussion could certainly be objected to. As with all bravura there are moments that seem like the merest showing off – it is certainly *impressive* to learn that Nehamas knows the birth-date of the maid who stands behind *Olympia*, but it contributes little to our reading of the painting. There are also moments when he strikes the wrong note. If Nehamas really wants to claim that the painting ‘attracts its viewers and doesn’t let them go, remaining incomprehensible,’³¹ then it is too pat to claim that the painting is of ‘*Olympia* herself being photographed – [...] *Olympia* as she might have looked to – and at – a photographer taking her picture’ and that ‘That explains immediately why the *Olympia* [...] failed, and continues to fail, to make narrative sense.’³²

But to disagree about these matters is not to take issue with the point that the discussion is intended to convey. F. R. Leavis was right to say that a critic’s assertions should always have the form ‘This is so, isn’t it?’, and our response to Nehamas’s discussion of *Olympia* is the ‘yes, but ...’ response that Leavis recommended.³³ To take issue with the things Nehamas says is not to object to his discussion, since that discussion is not presented with the intention of persuading us that the things it says are true. The discussion is introduced as something to disagree with:

When I say, then, that I find the beauty of Manet's *Olympia* overwhelming [... most] critics and art historians, I suppose, will consider my judgement banal, although some may actually disagree with me on aesthetic and perhaps political grounds. [...] No one will learn anything about the painting from my statement; they may, though, learn a little about me.³⁴

We learn quite a lot from Nehamas's discussion, and not only about him but about the influences on Manet's painting, about the women depicted in it, and its relationship to its contemporary art world. But informativeness is not what this discussion aims for. The pages that discuss *Olympia* do not have the job of informing the reader; still less do they attempt to provide compelling arguments that will lead the reader to know that Nehamas's conclusions are true. Their role is to display the business of talking and thinking about art in such a way as to show that, especially when that talking engages us with peers who we can disagree with, it brings us into contact with ideas and experiences that we could never have expected when we found a thing beautiful and decided that it was worth bringing into our lives in ways that would need to be talked through and thought about.

Nehamas's work has always shifted between literary criticism and philosophical argument. This book has elements of both, as well as a considerable quantity of art history. But there are also places where Nehamas's prose is not in the business of straightforward assertion or of philosophical argumentation. In the discussion of *Olympia*, his prose displays and advertises its claims for us to bear in mind, engage with for a longer or a shorter time and take or leave according to how they strike us. Nehamas's view that judgements of beauty are not verdicts, and so that they can never be backed by anything more than considerations of this sort, has a counterpart in his view of judgements about responses to beauty:

[W]henever we find something beautiful – whether it is a person [...] or a painting [...] – we are actively engaged in interpretation. To interpret is to try to see in things what is distinctly their own. That is in turn to see them in ways that are distinctly *our* own and, to the extent that they are ours alone, these ways of seeing turn out to be aesthetic features in their own right and have themselves a claim to beauty.³⁵

If this were intended as a rationally compelling argument for the claim with which we started – the claim that experiencing beautiful things influences one's style in life-changing ways – then it would be quite unsatisfactory. The move from claiming that interpretation is the attempt 'to see in things what is distinctly their own' to claiming that it is the attempt 'to see them

in ways that are distinctly *our own*' would be a patent non sequitur. But, while one would be grateful for a thorough philosophical defence of that claim, it is Nehamas's stance that such a defence is out of the question. Just as there is something suspect about the idea that a deductive argument for the conclusion 'x is beautiful' could provide knowledge of the same fact as an experience of beauty, so claims about *responses* to beautiful things, including claims in philosophical aesthetics, are unsuited to figuring as the conclusions of arguments that aim for rational authority.

For these reasons Nehamas's book resists attempts at critical evaluation. It presents us with a battery of claims, many of them contestable, concerning style, taste, character, beauty and art. These claims display an elegant coherence. Thinking in their terms is revealing and fruitful. But the question of whether anything in this picture is true remains open. If the book is a worthwhile one, then its value lies not in the truth of the theses it presents, or in the arguments it offers for them. Those arguments must, if the view is right, be inconclusive, and the theses have, anyway, been presented elsewhere.³⁶ The value of presenting them again here, in this handsomely bound, richly illustrated book, is that we now have them in a form that looks well on the coffee table, is pleasant to have around and is inviting to dive into. This may sound like faint praise, but if, by presenting its claims in an engaging and appealing way, the book induces us to make attending to beautiful things a part of our lives, then its achievement is, on some accounts, including Nehamas's own, the highest that criticism can be known to make. As Frank Kermode noted in his 1985 book, *Forms of Attention*:

What matters, so far as I can see, is that ways of inducing such forms of attention should continue to exist, even if they are all, in the end, dependent on opinion. The mere possibility that something of value will not fall under the rule of time – and here we need not raise the question of how that value originated, whether inherent or the creation of interpreters – is the real justification for our continuing the clamorous, opinionated conversation.³⁷

Nehamas would be quite happy with the conclusion that the only achievement his book can be *known* to make is the achievement of contributing to a clamorous, opinionated conversation, and thereby prompting us to pay attention to beauty. His earlier claim that beauty is 'valuable – precisely because its value is always in question'³⁸ is not repeated here (and rightly not, since it adds little while leading into some awkward paradoxes), but the emphasis on the uncertainty of beauty's value is still prominent, with the result that the achievements that criticism can be known to make are treated as less important than the achievements that still remain unknown. Our verdict here must be that Nehamas's achievements fall short of providing us with certain knowledge of any facts about the value of beauty, but if

his view is right, that does not prevent his book from being, and may indeed qualify it as, a beautiful one.³⁹

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Notes

- 1 The phrase, of course, is Kant's. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §9, p. 101. Quoted in Alexander Nehamas, *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 79. All page references in this article are to the latter work unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 A. Nehamas, *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Aristotle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- 3 A. Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).
- 4 A. Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).
- 5 A. Nehamas, 'How One Becomes What One Is', *Philosophical Review*, 92 (3) (1983), pp. 385–417.
- 6 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §290, quoted by Nehamas, p. 87. (See also Nehamas, *The Art of Living*, p. 142.)
- 7 P. 86.
- 8 P. 85.
- 9 A. Nehamas, 'A Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art', *Tanner Lectures on Human Values Vol. 23* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002), p. 228.
- 10 P. 88.
- 11 W. H. Auden, 'The Poet and the City' (1948) in his *The Dyer's Hand* (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 84.
- 12 M. Montaigne, 'On the Inconstancy of our Actions' (1580), in Michel De Montaigne, *The Essays of Michel De Montaigne*, trans. and ed. M. A. Screech (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 380.
- 13 See 'A Face for Socrates' Reason: Montaigne's "Of Physiognomy"', Chapter 4 of Nehamas, *The Art of Living*.
- 14 See J. Doris, *Lack of Character* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- 15 A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd edn (London: Duckworth, 1985); C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
- 16 Nehamas, 'A Promise of Happiness', p. 228.
- 17 P. 89f.
- 18 Ibid., p. 211 (see also *Only a Promise of Happiness*, p. 84).
- 19 Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems*, ed. Anthony Thwaite (London: Marvell Press and Faber & Faber), pp. 152–3.
- 20 Pp. 84f.
- 21 See R. E. Nisbett, and T. D. Wilson, 'The Halo Effect: Evidence for Unconscious Alteration of Judgments', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35 (4) (1977), pp. 250–6.
- 22 See R. A. Kulka and J. B. Kessler, 'Is Justice Really Blind? The Influence of Litigant Physical Attractiveness on Juridical Judgment', *Journal of Applied*

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