Nietzschean Perfectionism: Theoretical Foundations and Moral Structure

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Abstract: Many people consider Nietzsche to be a philosopher who is fundamentally anti-theoretical. According to Bernard Williams, Nietzsche is so far from being a theorist that his writing "is booby-trapped not only against recovering theory from it but, in many cases, against any systematic exegesis that assimilates it to theory." Many people would specifically relate this viewpoint to Nietzsche's moral philosophy. They would contend that his arguments lack the structure and substance of ethical theory, even when he is making positive normative assertions rather than merely criticizing accepted morality.

In my opinion, this widely held belief is the antithesis of illuminating. In my opinion, Nietzsche's positive moral beliefs are uncontroversial since they come under the broad category of what is now known as perfectionism. They are based on an idea of the good that they praise actions for bringing about or advancing, but this idea does not associate the good with pleasure or the fulfillment of desires; rather, it locates the good in objective human excellences that, according to Nietzsche, are centered on the ideas of strength and power. Perfectionism can be constructed as a systematic theory, just like other moral beliefs, and when it is, several issues regarding its composition and structure come up.

When reading Nietzsche with these problems in mind, it is remarkable how frequently he offers solutions to them without stating them directly. Combining those responses yields a perfectionist philosophy with a distinctly Nietzschean undertone. Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Leibniz, Hegel, Marx, Bradley, Brentano, Rashdall, and Moore are just a few of the thinkers who have embraced perfectionism. Before Brentano, for example, Nietzsche was, in my opinion, the most theoretical perfectionist; that is, he was more prone to identify and respond to theoretical queries.

There is also a distinctive worth to his responses. Moral philosophers and philosophers are often tempted to sidestep challenging theoretical issues by asserting positive facts about the universe that allow for the compatibility of opposing solutions. Nietzsche is known for rejecting such hopeful assertions and demanding that the issues be addressed head-on. He does this, for instance, when he disputes the idea that the ideas that are most beneficial to us are also the most likely to be accurate, as well as numerous times throughout his presentation of perfectionism. The end effect is a rendition of the perspective that particularly highlights its unique characteristics and hazards. This paper will examine three facets of Nietzsche's perfectionism: his most basic explanation of human perfection, the moral framework he uses to support it, and the more particular human states he uses to define perfection.

1. The Will to Power and Human Nature:

It is helpful to differentiate between the term "perfectionism" in its broad and restricted connotations. Any moral philosophy based on an understanding of the good that honors human excellence regardless of how much an individual appreciates or desires it is, in general, perfectionism. In this sense, perfectionism can support a wide range of ideals, including knowledge, accomplishing challenging objectives, moral virtue, producing or appreciating art, close interpersonal relationships, and more. A variant of this viewpoint that bases its substantive values on a more abstract ideal of achieving human nature is perfectionism, in a more limited meaning. Its main argument is that the development of any qualities that are essential to human nature constitutes the human good, and if it affirms qualities like achievement and knowledge, it is for the sake of embodying these qualities.

Although it is frequently claimed that Nietzsche was a narrow perfectionist as well, I believe that this is uncontroversial. According to this interpretation, it is the urge to power is a basic aspect of human nature, and the most powerful people are thus the best. The Will to Power has

a large number of passages that support this interpretation, but Nietzsche also wrote books like Thus Spoke Zarathustra and Beyond Good and Evil. His other points of view remain unaffected by his acceptance of narrow perfectionism; they can still have the same structure and core principles even in the absence of it. However, it is useful to inquire about how he resolves the different problems narrow perfectionism brings up if he does embrace it. The first step for a narrow perfectionism is to define its understanding of human nature, or what qualities it considers essential to our species. Different opinions have been expressed in this regard, such as that the pertinent characteristics are those that make humans unique, vital to humans, or both essential and distinctive to humans. It is best to interpret perfectionists who discuss distinctive human qualities as appreciating only the subset of those that are also necessary for humans or that make up our unique differences, as many of these qualities are morally insignificant, such as starting fires.

However, despite this limitation, Nietzsche doesn't seem to be interested in distinguishing qualities. He claims that the want to power is essential to humans since it is intrinsic to all living things, and even to everything in general, regardless of what makes humans different from other species. Furthermore, he frequently uses the word "fundamental" to signify essential when he refers to "a world whose essence is will to power" and the will to power as "the innermost essence of being." Accordingly, if Nietzsche is a limited perfectionist, he identifies human nature with those qualities—or the one quality—that are fundamental to both people and the universe. This trait is instantiated to varying degrees by different beings: the will to power of a human is stronger than that of a snail, which is stronger than that of a rock. But they are all dependent on the same underlying trait. Nietzsche's restricted perfectionism is consequently structurally identical to Hegel's, according to which everything has the same essence—that of instantiating Absolute Spirit—which various beings do to varying degrees of sufficiency and worth.

Metaethical naturalism is frequently linked to narrow perfectionism. According to this view, the theory begins with assertions about human nature that are merely factual and come, for example, from biology, and then proceeds to draw conclusions about value directly from them. The primary attraction of perfectionism, according to philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre and Bernard Williams, is that it gives our moral convictions external moral support.5. However, I believe that naturalist definitions of perfectionism should be disregarded since they are susceptible to the common criticisms of naturalism made by Sidgwick, Moore, and others. However, we shouldn't disregard them in favor of another interpretation put forth by some modern philosophers. Because its assertions about human nature are evaluative in and of itself, designating as vital to humans those qualities we already believe are most worth cultivating, they contend that perfectionism does not draw values from facts.6. This proposal's problem is that it renders the limited theory meaningless, reducing its assertion that it is beneficial to develop the qualities that are necessary for human survival to the tautology that it is beneficial to acquire the qualities that are necessary for human survival. Additionally, there is a different interpretation that falls somewhere in between this and naturalism. While any assertion that particular attributes are important is factual, it regards the general concept that the development of human good consists in the development of properties vital to humans as substantive or non-analytic. The latter claim has no evaluative implications on its own; only when the substantive moral principle is taken into consideration do those implications arise. However, for the idea to have substance, the factual statements are necessary. According to this interpretation, a coherentist defense of restricted perfectionism is required. It must demonstrate that the general perfectionism principle is intuitively appealing in and of itself, as many philosophers have found it to be, and that the principle has appealing implications regarding which particular states of beings are excellent given which traits are actually necessary to people. The opinion would greatly benefit by passing both of these tests

because they are independent. However, the general perfectionism principle is evaluative, but the assertions about human nature that give it substance are not, therefore they are independent.

It's uncertain if Nietzsche embraces this alternative form of restricted perfectionism or a naturalist one. Does he assume his evaluative conclusion to flow immediately from his premise about life, or is it merely given an additional substantive principle, when he states, "There is nothing in life that has value, except the degree of power -- assuming that life itself is the will to power" (WP: 55)? In my opinion, Nietzsche's writings do not unequivocally endorse one response over another or, more generally, any particular metaethical stance. However, since all of these interpretations take his assertion about human nature to be true, I'll presume that he at least accepts it as true. Furthermore, Nietzsche's defense of that assertion lends more credence to this supposition. Narrow perfectionism must not only give assertions about human nature non-evaluative meaning but also have a method of substantiating those assertions independent of moral convictions if it is to prevent vacuity. Here, a lot of perfectionists employ a technique that aligns with current literature on important qualities. According to Hilary Putnam and others, we can determine a kind's essential characteristics by observing which of those characteristics are crucial in explaining its other characteristics.

For instance, the atomic structure of gold is essential to gold because it explains its color, weight, and other characteristics. Similar to this, a lot of perfectionists contend that some characteristics are fundamental to human nature since they play a key role in explaining human behavior. The justifications they offer are frequently teleological. They contend that all human behavior is focused on achieving a single objective, which is the development of particular qualities, and that these qualities are fundamental to humanity since they make up this objective. Thus, a "teleological conception of human nature" and restricted perfectionism are frequently linked. Nietzsche undoubtedly agrees with this broad explanatory approach to determining fundamental characteristics. He writes in Beyond Good and Evil-

> Suppose, finally, we succeeded in explaining our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of one basic form of the will -- namely of the will to power, as my proposition has it ... then one would have gained the right to determine all efficient force univocally as -- will to power. The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its "intelligible character" -- it would be "will to power" and nothing else (BGE: 36).

His justifications appear teleological as well. They mention will to power and even to the fullest extent of power, in addition to will itself. According to The Will to Power, "the intention to increase power" is the source of all deliberate actions (WP: 663);8 According to the Genealogy of Morals:

> Every animal ... instinctively strives for an optimum of favorable conditions under which it can expend all its strength and achieve its maximal feeling of power; every animal abhors, just as instinctively, ... every kind of intrusion or hindrance that obstructs or could obstruct this path to the optimum (I am not speaking of its path to happiness, but its path to power, to action, to the most

powerful activity) (GM III: 7).

However, a claim about essence can be supported by more than just teleological reasons; even while gold has no propensity to actualize that structure to higher degrees, its atomic structure is vital to it. Furthermore, Nietzsche should avoid the problems that arise from his reliance on teleological explanations.

Teleological perfectionists are devoted to the idea that people have an innate tendency to fully develop their natures. A variant of this assertion, linked to According to Hegel and Marx, the overall course of human history is toward the fuller development of humans' fundamental qualities, regardless of what occurs in individual lives. According to other interpretations, people have a natural tendency to develop their essence because that is what they most deeply seek, either as such or in a more comprehensive sense, with everything else being desired as a means to this one purpose. A similar assertion is that it is most enjoyable to develop one's essence, possibly because pleasure is just the experience of one's perfection increasing; considering that most people want pleasure, this suggests at least a propensity toward perfection. Now, these different assertions are hopeful in two respects. First, they contend that because of the way the universe is set up, good things tend to happen naturally and that people will naturally live their best lives provided they are not hindered. Second, the assertions suggest that perfection and other potential products are not incompatible. The most ideal life is the one that fulfills people's wishes the most if their primary goal is to develop their essence; if perfectionist pursuits are the most enjoyable, then the life with the greatest number of them also has the greatest amount of pleasure. Why this existence is the best—because it fulfills goals, is pleasurable, or realizes the human essence—can still be a philosophical conundrum. Additionally, a lot of perfectionists believe that this question is crucial. However, the tendency claims optimistically suggest that there is no conflict between non-perfectionist goods like pleasure and want satisfaction and perfection. You can have it all when it comes to value.

Nietzsche stands out from other perfectionists in his frequent and forceful rejection of these optimistic assertions of actuality. Nietzsche believes that natural selection consistently works against the highest values and prevents their realization, in contrast to some who believe that Darwinian evolution tends to produce ever-higher life forms. He also doubts that human history has seen any development. According to "the law of absurdity in the whole economy of mankind," the circumstances for the success of the well-constituted are more complex and, hence, less frequently supplied. in other words, he maintains that the more a person's capacity for perfection, the less probable he is to accomplish it (BGE: 62). Nietzsche is renowned for rejecting the idea that the most ideal life is the most enjoyable; rather, he believes that true success requires suffering, even extreme suffering. Twelve He occasionally refutes the assertions on desire as well. In his accounts of resentment and the slave revolt in morality, which involve people choosing lesser forms of will and therefore less value for themselves as well as others, he implies that powerful people need self-discipline and hardness toward themselves, presumably to control impulses that would lead them away from perfection. He also defines decadence as a state in which "the will to power is lacking" and an individual "prefers what is detrimental to itself."(A: 6)

This significant theme in Nietzsche's philosophy suggests that barriers to perfectionist success might originate both internally, in a person's own anti-perfectionist inclinations or "inner hopelessness," as well as externally, in unfavourable external conditions (BGE: 269). However, how does this viewpoint align with his apparent use of teleological explanations to pinpoint the essence of humanity, particularly with his assertion that every human activity strives for a power "optimum"? Doesn't the latter suggest an innate propensity for power? In his book *Nietzsche's System*, John Richardson makes this challenge quite evident.

Richardson supports a limited perfectionist interpretation of Nietzsche similar to the one I'm examining, according to which the desire for power is the highest good since it is fundamental

to all beings and serves as the objective of all their actions. Richardson also asserts that there are two kind of power: "active" and "reactive." Nietzsche acknowledges that people occasionally favor the lower types of power, such as resenting others over growing their own abilities. However, in what way does this final assertion align with the robust teleology Richardson assigns to Nietzsche? How do humans occasionally choose less power even if they always strive for the highest strength?

His efforts to overcome this challenge are unconvincing. The reactive forms of volition are logically dependent on the active forms, he states first,15 but this does not explain how the reactive may ever be desired. He goes on to state that since we "discover the essences of things when we find the highest and best they can become," Nietzsche's assertion on essence is "ineliminably, a claim of the valuative priority of the active."16 However, this suggestion reduces Nietzsche's strict perfectionism to the previously stated vacuousness: that we ought to cultivate the qualities we ought to cultivate. Furthermore, as long as Nietzsche maintains that all action strives for the greatest amount of power, it does nothing to address the problem. And the problem, in my opinion, is just intractable. The teleology that appears to underpin Nietzsche's power ontology is blatantly at odds with his acknowledgment that humans occasionally, if not always, favor lower to greater exercises of power and do so for internal rather than external reasons.

As previously stated, teleological explanations are not required for traits that are fundamental to a kind; this is not the case for gold or people. According to Nietzsche, humans fundamentally have a will to power since they attempt to change the world by a predetermined objective in every action they take, and some of these actions have greater power than others. They operate in this way, for instance, when accomplishing their objective entails changing a larger portion of the globe; hence, a person who can reroute all human activity for millennia to come possesses greater power than if he only knotted his shoelace. A more elaborately constructed

aim also gives actions more power, therefore, accomplishing it requires creating more sophisticated relationships between its components. However, Nietzsche does not have to state that, in that sense, individuals are constantly looking for power, much less the greatest amount of it. He can permit that their primary commitment is to that aim rather than the more ethereal concept of power since they always exercise their will by working toward a specific objective. More precisely, he can permit that their commitment to a certain objective may cause them to favor it over other objectives whose accomplishment would need more powerful means, and especially permit them to favor reactive to active forms of will. They exercise power whenever they take action, yet they may be sidetracked from using their full potential by their pursuit of specific objectives.

Since his vehement denial of hopeful statements about natural tendencies is one of Nietzsche's most significant contributions, I have argued that he should give up his strong teleology. However, the framework of his perfectionist perspective is also at odds with his teleology, and I now let's talk about that subject. Nietzsche might support this framework in the context of a purely broad perfectionism, one that does not base its principles on human nature, but he might also combine it with a limited perfectionist identification of the human good. After discussing the possibility that Nietzsche is a narrow perfectionist in the first section of this article, I move on to discuss issues regarding the organization of his viewpoint that are unrelated to that one.

2. Moral Structure

It is time to clarify what I mean when I say that perfectionism is "cantered on" a notion of the good. As it is currently understood, perfectionism is a form of consequentialism, in which judges' actions are based on the overall quantity of goods they generate. It is more precisely a form of maximizing consequentialism, which holds that the best course of action is always the

one that will produce the greatest amount of good. Consequentialism does not require a maximizing framework; it can just as easily make the satisfying argument that actions are morally correct if they result in "good enough" consequences. For hedonic values like pleasure, however, satisficing might make sense, but not for perfectionist values. These values naturally demand a maximizing strategy, as the phrases "excellence" and "perfection" imply. (The Olympic motto is not "Reasonably fast, reasonably high, reasonably strong," and the U.S. Armed Forces' catchphrase for recruiting was not "Be at least two-thirds of all that you can be." Additionally, there is another way that hedonistic consequentialism and perfectionism diverge. The latter assesses actions based on their effects in the common meaning of the word, i.e., on subsequent, independent states of events. Sometimes perfectionism accomplishes this; it can claim that a certain action, like self-education, is right because of the benefits it will produce. However, perfectionism also frequently praises actions for exemplifying excellence. It can claim that an action is proper if it instantiates these goods and therefore contributes to positive outcomes as a constituent rather than a causal cause if it values moral virtue or the accomplishment of challenging objectives. This is a key component of perfectionist consequentialism: to assess actions primarily based on their inherent qualities.

In this regard, Nietzsche's moral philosophy undoubtedly appears consequentialist. He can render an action immoral even when it has the optimal result and rejects all of the prohibitions that set deontological morality apart from consequentialist morality. For instance, his explanation of promising focuses solely on the values and, more specifically, the types of will that the practice of promising implies, rather than any obligation to maintain promises at the price of positive results. He occasionally evaluates actions based on their everyday effects; for instance, if he praises pain, it is not for its inherent qualities but rather for the perfection it paves the way for in the future. However, he also frequently evaluates actions based on their

inherent excellence and, most importantly, their power of will, so their positive effects are a result of their very nature. He makes claims about maximizing as well.

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Nietzsche's consequentialist moral philosophy raises two additional issues: Who's good should each individual strive for—their own or everyone's? Furthermore, how are specific products aggregated across a person's life and, if applicable, throughout a society's members? Since social aggregation is central to Nietzsche's perfectionism framework, I start with the final query. Given practically any set of presumptions about the universe, a Maximax view is incredibly radical since it Favors unequal distributions of opportunities and resources. Even if everyone has the same talent, society will function best if it chooses a small number of people at random and gives them all of its attention since that is when the highest level of perfection will be achieved. Some writers attempt to downplay the principle's significance in Nietzsche's thinking, maybe due to its extreme nature. According to Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche's fascination with the best people stems from his conviction that most lives are worthless and that "no addition of such zeroes can ever lead to any value." Even though one passage supports this reading (WP: 53), it does not align with Nietzsche's overall line of reasoning. Remember the assertion made in Beyond Good and Evil that inferior people must be "reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings," that is, denied the possibility of achieving some level of perfection (BGE: 258). James Conant has recently made an effort to refute Nietzsche's antiegalitarianism in greater detail, arguing that his admiration for exceptional people reflects their potential to be role models who can encourage everyone to live better lives rather than

just their accomplishments.26 Conant, however, just discusses Schopenhauer as an Educator and the sentence from it that was previously referenced, ignoring the entirety of Nietzsche's statement. Furthermore, he is extremely picky in how he handles this paragraph. First, he ends the passage in the middle of a sentence without mentioning that Nietzsche adds, "and not for the good of the majority, that is to say, those who, taken individually, are the least valuable wertlosesten exemplars," after instructing us to live for the good of the most valuable exemplars (U III: 6). An egalitarian would scarcely say this. Second, Conant fails to mention that the passage's first and last two sentences are separated by roughly a page of text that contains additional strongly antiegalitarian assertions, such as that a biological species' "only concern" is "the individual higher exemplar" rather than "the mass of its exemplars and their well-being."

It is uncommon to read Nietzsche's philosophy as agent-neutral. The majority of observers view it as egoistic, advising everyone to pursue their perfection. This is an uncontested premise of Nietzsche: Life as Literature by Alexander Nehamas, for instance. 35 The idea that perfectionism, particularly its limited forms based on human nature, must be egoistic due to its classical Greek formulations may be one explanation for this presumption. However, the assertion regarding Greek perfectionism is debatable, and it is just untrue that perfectionism in general must be egoistic; in its best forms, it encourages people to consider both their own and other people's well-being. Nietzsche's frequent extolling of egoism could be a second factor. The greatest people typically limit their adulation to egoism; only those whose lives will be ruined by altruism will receive this distinction. However, Nietzsche is so preoccupied with these people that it may appear that he is endorsing egoism in general. The desire arguments that support Nietzsche's contention that people must have the will to power are egoistic, stating that each person pursues his or her own greatest power rather than power for others. This is the last justification for the assumption. Furthermore, the only moral conclusion that can be drawn from such assertions is egoistic. Indeed, if the assertions were

accurate, Morality could not change people's behavior by telling them to forgo their perfection for the benefit of others. Classical utilitarians like Bentham attempted to base an agent-neutral hedonism on the egoistic psychological assertion that everyone seeks only their pleasure, and Nietzsche's situation here is comparable to theirs. However, the latter assertion contradicts the former, and later utilitarians like Sidgwick abandoned psychological egoism in favor of agent-neutral moral hedonism alone. The same might be said for a benevolent interpretation of Nietzsche. In section 1, I demonstrated that Nietzsche's restricted perfectionism does not require his egoistic assertions; yet, it now seems that they also run counter to his maximax conception of social aggregation, at least if that is meant to have an action-guiding power. Nietzsche's positive moral philosophy is based on a maximax principle, which organizes his arguments regarding the virtues of egoism and altruism and appears in all his writings. However, his sporadic assertions regarding desire also obscure it, which is another reason to disregard them.

3. Extent and Organic Unity

Nietzsche's more detailed assertions regarding the virtues of numerous human states, such as joy, bravery, pride, self-awareness, overflowing charity, and more. It is uncertain if all of these states may be combined under a single, more abstract ideal, such as a strict perfectionist will to power or another one. I will look at a few of Nietzsche's statements that convey a unique Nietzschean perspective on human perfection and that can connect at least many of his works without resolving this matter.

Rather than merely reflecting on the universe, many of Nietzsche's ideas are active, involving the pursuit and, most importantly, the accomplishment of goals. An explanation of which objectives are most worthwhile to pursue or whose accomplishment has the greatest

significance is necessary for their further specification. Nietzsche's method is notably formal in this instance. He rejects the idea that achieving perfection necessitates pursuing certain concrete objectives, such as virtue, knowledge, or the production of beauty. Rather, he assesses objectives using formal characteristics that are consistent with a wide range of substantive contents. The degree of value of an activity is determined by how far its specific goal instantiates formal qualities, not by that goal itself. He lists two of these characteristics: one is inherent to a goal, and the other is related to how it relates to other goals.

The first characteristic is the scope of the objective, both in terms of duration and the quantity of items or individuals involved. This characteristic is inherently linked to concepts of power, as someone who accomplishes a larger objective, changes more of the world, and thus has more influence over it. Nietzsche is particularly interested in the duration of a goal. According to The Genealogy of Morals, the primary benefit of making promises is that it shows a "prolonged and unbreakable will," which enables a person to control his future behaviour and thereby elevate himself above "all more short-willed and unreliable creatures" (GM II: 2). A great person can "extend his will across great stretches of his life," according to Nietzsche, who also praises the "tensing of a will over long temporal distances" and anticipates the rise of a new caste that will govern Europe with "a long, terrible will of its own that would be able to cast its goals millennia hence" (WP: 65, 962; BGE: 208).37 However, he also appreciates the scope of a goal for all people. The ability to force one's will on others and hence dictate their behavior is one facet of power; the more people one can influence in this way, the more power one can exercise.

Thus, Nietzsche was drawn to a conquering race that "unhesitatingly lays its terrible claws upon a populace perhaps tremendously superior in numbers but still formless and nomad" (GM II: 17), as well as to those "artists of violence and organizers who build states" and who use their "form-giving and ravishing" force on "some other man, other men" (GM II: 18).38 According to him, the greatest people are those that establish new principles that will influence

millions of people's lives for a very long time. They are distinguished by the scope of the objectives they accomplish.

The second formal property is the degree to which a goal is unified with a person's other goals, so they form a system in which many different ends are pursued as means to a single overriding one. In The Gay Science Nietzsche writes-

> One thing is needful. -- To "give style" to one's character -- a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye ... In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small. Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste" (GS: 290).

Similar thoughts are expressed in Beyond Good and Evil, which states that "there should be obedience over a long period and in a single direction" is "essential" (BGE: 188). Additionally, The Will to Power defines power through assertions about organizations:

> Weakness of will: that is a metaphor that can prove misleading. For there is no will, and consequently neither a strong nor a weak will. The multitude and disgregation of impulses and the lack of any

systematic order among them result in a “weak will”; their coordination under a single predominant impulse results in a “strong will” (WP: 46).39

However, Nietzsche does not Favor unity of action alone, which can be found in a life that is solely focused on one activity. Instead, he disparages the specialized academics he encounters among European thinkers, referring to them as "fragments of humanity" and "nook-dwellers." A person's grandeur is found in his "range and multiplicity, in his wholeness in manifoldness," as opposed to his ideal of unity that blends many aspects. It is an ideal of unity-in-diversity, or organic unity as it is commonly known. It calls for a person to have a single leading impulse that coordinates all of his other impulses, as well as for those impulses to be strong, diverse, and unique. His objectives then blend the qualities of individual uniqueness and organizational oneness.

Many argue that this value of organic unity cannot be quantified in the manner required by consequentialism. Those who use literary parallels to explain the value—such as the "narrative unity" of life or the unity of a fictional character—in Nietzschean or other commentary appear to be suggesting this.41 However, these comparisons are inaccurate in several ways. The most common examples of narrative unity, a particular type of unity with a particular structure, include building tension that culminates in an emotional climax and a quick denouement. Nothing in Nietzsche's discussion of unity, in my opinion, limits it to this particular story.

However, the literary character analogy is also overly lenient in another way. Nietzsche believed that an individual's impulses must be united by an end that she wills, even if unconsciously, and that she wills as unifying her desires. However, a literary character's unity may rely on relationships between elements of her personality that she is unaware of and does

not choose; this more external unity does not appear to be adequate for what Nietzsche refers to as power. Furthermore, the parallels' anti-theoretical connotations are deceptive. Let me briefly outline how the value of organic unity might be quantified cardinally in principle without blaming Nietzsche.

Think of a unified action model in which an individual accomplishes one objective by doing two others as means to it, and accomplishes each of them by accomplishing two more as means to it. The individual's goals are hierarchically arranged in this case, and we can gauge how well they are ordered by requiring that each goal in the hierarchy has a value of one unit on its own, plus an extra unit for each subsequent goal that is accomplished as a method of achieving it.

There are seventeen units in the hierarchy overall, with the four goals at the bottom having one unit of value each, the two in the centre having three units each, and the one at the top having seven units. This exceeds the seven value units the individual would obtain if he accomplished seven unrelated goals in an intermediate structure, where six subordinate goals are accomplished as a means to an overriding seventh, there are also more than thirteen units of value. To calculate the worth of a particular objective, count the number of goals that are subordinate to it. The importance of more intricate hierarchies of purpose is neatly captured by this measure. And it performs even better if it is altered to prioritize variety within a cohesive framework. Rather than It can count, either in addition to or instead of, the number of goals of various kinds that are meant to a certain aim, rather than just the individual goals subordinate to that one.

A goal will then receive no more than ten units of value if it has ten extremely similar goals subordinate to it, such as ten pulling of the same lever. However, it gains ten + ten, or twenty units, if it has ten subordinate goals of various kinds, which improves the more diverse unity. This account can be changed in more ways, and it shouldn't be taken too literally in any case.

However, it does demonstrate how the value of biological unity can be quantified, at least in theory.

A more significant criticism claims that if Nietzsche relies solely on formal standards of perfection, he must acknowledge that the moral leaders of the slave revolt had incredibly meaningful lives because they had a significant impact on millions of people for centuries.43 Nietzsche now believes that the slave uprising had some positive aspects. Along with bringing a new spirituality to human existence, it also featured some cunning, which is undoubtedly preferable to passively resenting the masters. An explanation of his viewpoint must acknowledge that he does not view the revolt's founders as models of perfection. A widely formal account can do this in at least two ways.

The first is to base an activity's worth on both its historical context and present characteristics. If a comprehensive activity with broad objectives stems from strength and confidence, as it most likely will in Nietzsche's idealistic builders of values, it has enormous value. However, it doesn't if it's the result of bitterness and weakness. Since the instigators of the slave uprising ultimately acted out of animosity, this shift allows the account to deny that they were extremely valued. However, if the criteria identifying the starting motives as weak are also formal, then this will be consistent with the formal method. This could be Nietzsche's opinion. Because resentment is primarily reactive, taking its primary goals from outside the self and being unable to resist doing so, rather than finding them within the self as a completely integrated personality would do, he would believe that it is a sign of weakness.44 If this is his opinion, he can denounce resentful behavior without citing concrete metrics of worth.

The second method is to make an activity's worth somewhat dependent on its intended outcome. If a comprehensive, integrated activity seeks to encourage more of the same on the part of of the greatest people, as Nietzsche's aspirational authors would have it, it is once more

extremely valuable. However, it doesn't work if it's intended to thwart such behavior, as the slave insurrection was. In this case, the value of the intentional object of the activity undermines its value rather than its source.45 However, if that object is solely evaluated using formal metrics and an aggregate principle such as maximax, the method is still formal. If the goal of the slave uprising diminishes its significance, it is because it incorporates fewer of the pertinent formal qualities into the actions of the sole individuals whose actions are significant.

Nietzsche never specifically discusses why supporting slave values is not just instrumentally but also fundamentally worse than promoting higher ones, so I can't claim that he openly accepts either of these alternatives. However, the two demonstrate his ability to continually denounce the slave uprising while relying solely on formal and meaningless standards of personal excellence. Nietzsche's embrace of these metrics links his perspective to numerous other philosophical perspectives of the nineteenth century. The primary value of Hegel's ethics and those of succeeding Idealists like F. H. Bradley is organic unity, which he defines in his Ethical Studies as the union of "homogeneity" and "specification," or "not the extreme of unity, nor of diversity, but the perfect identity of both." Bradley occasionally incorporates issues of extent with this good.

> To reduce the raw material of one’s nature to the highest degree of system, and to use every element from whatever source as a subordinate means to this object, is certainly one genuine view of goodness. On the other hand, to widen as far as possible the end to be pursued, and to realize this through the distraction and dissipation of one’s individuality, is certainly also good.

Other philosophers of the era who reject idealist metaphysics but maintain a core value of "personality," which includes organizing one's goals and extending them beyond one's current states, make similar claims. Therefore, Nietzsche's broad explanation of human perfection is entirely consistent with nineteenth-century philosophy; nonetheless, there are a few unique aspects to his exposition.

First, the idealists regard the theoretical benefit of knowing truths—which they believe involves the same formal qualities of mental states—as much as the practical benefit of accomplishing objectives. They believe that the best information is about the most extensive states of events and that it plays the biggest systematizing role, this time by explaining the majority of other knowledge that a person possesses; understanding scientific or philosophical concepts is particularly helpful on both counts. Furthermore, the Idealists see knowledge as the highest good, especially greater than any practical value, in line with prior perfectionists like Plato and Aristotle. Nietzsche is adamantly against this viewpoint. He draws no comparisons between achievement and knowledge, and rather than elevating knowledge to the highest good, he gives it no inherent worth. This is best shown by his assertion that a belief's untruth does not negate it; rather, it only counts to the extent to which the belief promotes life and cultivates species, or how instrumental it is to other values. Nietzsche's assertion that knowledge has no inherent value may be consistent with his natural desire theories, which hold that a person's views might reveal his or her desire for power. But even without that, it adds a unique dimension to Nietzsche's perspective. He goes to the extreme of identifying only practical or conative qualities, in contrast to many perfectionists who elevate theoretical or introspective ones to the highest level.

Second, according to idealists, the consciousness of an object in the mind is more united than any physical relationship between objects, and self-consciousness—where the object of the mind is itself—is even more united. For this reason, Hegel argues that historical evolution is

moving in the direction of spirit's complete self-consciousness.51 The greatest actions, however, are unconscious, according to Nietzsche, who also claims that consciousness "gives rise to countless errors" (GS: 11) and even describes "an imperfect and often morbid state in a person" (WP: 289).52 His explanation might be that consciousness introduces a foreign element that interferes with the unconscious urges' ability to function normally, so diminishing their unity. However, Nietzsche disparages conscious states, while others cite the idea of organic unity to support the superiority of such states.

Lastly, the Idealists maintain that acting in a typically moral manner is a prerequisite for attaining the formal goods of unity and extent. They make this assertion on two grounds, however they don't always make a clear distinction between them. One is that one should look for biological unity in something bigger, like one's society, rather than in oneself. As a means to the organic good of society, one should determine what Bradley refers to as one's "station" in this society and carry out its "duties."The alternative argument is that conventional virtue is necessary even for self-unity. In the Republic, Plato makes the case that a person who is internally cohesive will inevitably treat others fairly. Aristotle rejects the idea, arguing that a cruel individual might unite behind his terrible objectives. Bradley, however, accepts it, referring to Aristotle's malevolent character as a "creature of theory" and maintaining that a morally repugnant self can never be appropriately unified.55 He links his formal value of biological unity with socially acceptable behavior by doing this. Both of these arguments are rejected by Nietzsche. Nietzsche does not appear to favor organized unity in societies or in persons, despite Richardson's suggestion that his power-ontology should lead him to do so. For instance, he believes that the diversity he appreciates must define individual lives rather than existing in a community where everyone specializes in a separate field. Similar to his concern that people "die at the right time," he views individual lives as the morally fundamental units that define the core values.

He also doesn't believe for a second that a united existence has to be traditionally moral. It doesn't matter if the taste that drives a person's behavior is good or evil as long as it is a single taste, according to his early assertion regarding giving one's character style (GS: 290). This grants a person total moral flexibility in determining how to treat others as well as in selecting self-regarding endeavors. His later discussions of power exhibit the same flexibility. If Nietzsche's ideal of power includes at least some authority over others, it can be used either benevolently—by assisting them in bettering their lives—or cruelly—by injuring them against their choice. Since the idea of power is neutral in and of itself between both options, it is also neutral between traditional morality and immorality.

Unlike other perfectionists, Nietzsche recognizes that formal assessments of value are only that—formal. They simply take into account the scope of a goal and the method by which it is accomplished, not any substantive goals—and most definitely morally righteous ones. The example of games provides a clear illustration of what this means. When playing a game, one voluntarily accepts rules that prohibit the most effective ways to achieve a goal, like piloting a helicopter up the mountain or manually dropping the ball into the hole, to pursue an intrinsically trivial objective, like standing atop a mountain or guiding a ball into a hole in the ground. Because playing a game entails using sophisticated methods to achieve a small objective, it’s worth is solely in the process rather than the final product, the trip rather than the destination. On a larger scale, Nietzsche's theory of perfection is similar in that it simply appreciates the formal aspects of an individual's actions and makes no pretenses that these in any way support certain substantive endeavors.
This is a significant advance in the history of perfectionism. The majority of earlier perfectionists did link a person's practical perfection to meaningful objectives, specifically to the objectives outlined by traditional morality using reasoning akin to Bradley's. However, this

makes it possible for their assertions about the goodness of every individual to be tainted by assertions about what is right or how the individual should behave in all circumstances.

This method is rejected by Nietzsche, who asserts that the good is independent of assertions about the right because it exclusively pertains to that subject. Nietzsche-inspired perfectionism on this issue, specifically one that solely employs formal Nietzsche's perfectionism is antagonistic to the components of ordinary morality since its maximax aggregative measures of practical perfection do not necessarily have to be antagonistic to each other. According to this notion, the perfection of the majority of people has no inherent value for some people. However, a perspective that employs the same standards for personal excellence can incorporate them into a more recognizable framework in which everyone must care equitably for the welfare of all. This way, his desire for long-term, intricate accomplishments for himself should be restrained by his concern to permit and support others' similar accomplishments. Many other-regarding obligations are captured by the resulting version of perfectionism, but they are derived from its form—more precisely, from its statements about whose good each person is to pursue—rather than being included into its claims about each person's good.

As I mentioned earlier, one of Nietzsche's contributions was to highlight the unique characteristics of perfectionism as a moral philosophy. He accomplishes this first by disproving the many assertions of an optimistic inclination, which distinguishes perfectionism from any perspective that emphasizes enjoyment or the gratification of desires. Additionally, he accomplishes this by acknowledging that perfectionist ideals naturally need unique aggregative principles, particularly—and unsettlingly—antiegalitarian ones. Finally, he does this by creating a purely formal explanation of individual perfection that excludes assertions concerning obligations pertaining to others. Sidgwick asserted that the ancient Greek moral philosophers failed to correctly distinguish between the good of oneself and the good of others, or between what will maximize one's own life and how one should, in general, behave.

Many later perfectionists can be criticized in the same way, but Nietzsche is exempt since he provides an explanation of personal perfection that stays within the bounds of the good and isn't tainted by opinions about what is proper. Nor have I asserted that Nietzsche is a wholly theoretical philosopher or that his opinions on moral issues are consistently held.

After all, he is Nietzsche. However, I have argued that he frequently, albeit subtly, responds to the primary theoretical questions that emerge in a systematic development of perfectionism; that his responses to these questions frequently exhibit strong tendencies toward particular theoretical views, which are expressed in various works; and that these views respond to the unique characteristics of perfectionist values by making assertions that, although striking, intuitively fit those values.

Together, these facets of Nietzsche's moral philosophy make him more influential for modern moral theorists than any previous member of the lengthy tradition of perfectionist ethics writers, if not a completely theoretical philosopher.

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