

## BOOK REVIEWS

Alfano, Mark. *Nietzsche's Moral Psychology*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. 314. \$99.99 (cloth).

While Nietzsche's interpreters come from impressively diverse intellectual perspectives, very few of them are cyborgs. Mark Alfano has done a valuable service to the field by becoming one to write *Nietzsche's Moral Psychology*.

Alfano digitally searches Nietzsche's corpus to count which words appear most frequently in Nietzsche's finished works, and which appear most closely with which others. His cyborg implants tell him that "what Nietzsche actually talks about when he engages with moral psychology are constructs like *life, virtue, value, instinct, fear, doubt, emotion, contempt, courage, nobility, disgust, laughter, solitude, drive, forgetting, and conscience*" (27). So that's what the book focuses on.

The book's structure is mostly determined by the search results above. Alfano describes the relations between instincts, drives, types, and virtues in the early chapters of the book and investigates curiosity, courage, pathos of distance, sense of humor, solitude, conscience, and integrity as virtues in the later chapters. Surprisingly left out are "life" and "value," which the computer treats as the two "most prominent constructs in Nietzsche's corpus" (25), but which don't get as focused and detailed a treatment as other concepts. This is partly because Nietzsche's use of these terms is genuinely hard to interpret, but it's also a consequence of a damaging error concerning the nature of drives that I'll discuss shortly. The book is nicely organized to include the other concepts on the list, with his chapter on "pathos of distance" encompassing "contempt" and "disgust," and "nobility" being discussed under "type" because noble character is one of the types in which Nietzsche is most interested.

So, for the most part, Alfano is letting the prevalence of various terms and their associations with each other throughout Nietzsche's corpus dictate the plan of the book. Interpreters more typically plan to describe Nietzsche's position on some topic of broader interest like the ontological status of value or the metaphysics of material objects, investigate a colorful Nietzschean idea like the eternal recurrence or the will to power, or connect Nietzsche to another figure in the history of philosophy like Kant or Montaigne. Letting the computer decide the basic direction of the inquiry is a new and interesting approach. After discussing the substance of his interpretation, I'll conclude by assessing this methodology itself.

The first topic is the relationship between what Nietzsche calls "types," such as the noble type or the philosophical type, and the motivational states of drive and instinct. Alfano regards instincts as innate drives and types as defined by what sorts of drives they have. His interpretation helps us understand the connection between Nietzsche's interest in the psychology of motivation and his evaluations

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of historical and contemporary figures. Nietzsche bases his evaluations of people on what sorts of drives they have. The distinction between instinctual and non-instinctual drives gives Nietzsche room to distinguish how nature and culture combine to shape one's character and to analyze how various cultures develop individuals with various instincts.

Alfano follows Paul Katsafanas's recently influential view that drives are act-directed so that they motivate agents to "perform an action of the relevant type," rather than John Richardson's view that they're outcome-directed so that they motivate agents to "accomplish some goal" (58). Alfano thinks that the act-directed view will help to explain Nietzsche's idea that a single drive can express itself through different actions depending on the social context: "Forbidden expression through carnal intercourse, the sex drive did not disappear or dissipate, but instead found a new way to express itself as passionate love" (59). As I see Alfano's acceptance of the act-directed view as the most damaging error in the book, I'll explain at length why the outcome-directed view is superior.

The act-directed view makes it harder, not easier, to explain how drives can express themselves through new types of actions. If drives essentially aim at actions of a particular type, the physical actions of intercourse will be among the central types the sex drive aims at. Why would a drive essentially directed toward those types of actions find satisfaction in expressions of love like having a nice dinner with the beloved, or singing the beloved a love song? The outcome-directed view can explain all these actions as aiming at outcomes that intercourse, dinner, and singing will produce, like having pleasure together. Act-directed views make drives inflexible about the types of actions they motivate and are suitable only for mental states that can't motivate actions of different types in this way.

Further explanatory problems for act-directed views of drives abound. Some people's sex drives aim at situations in which they don't act and may be physically restrained from action. A less kinky example from Nietzsche himself is the "drive to restfulness" mentioned in *D* 109, as restfulness is better characterized as an outcome than anything involving action. The act-directed view can't deal with drives like these whose objects don't involve action. The outcome-directed view handles them easily.

A more formal advantage of the outcome-directed view is that all actions can be treated as outcomes, but not all outcomes can be treated as actions. Any drive seeming to aim at an action can be treated as aiming at the outcome in which the action is performed. For example, a drive to dance aims at the outcome in which one is dancing. The outcome-directed view therefore is guaranteed to successfully deal with every case that the act-directed view can. There is no similar trick by which all outcomes can be converted into actions, at least not without trivializing what "action" means. The act-directed view could come out better only if each drive aimed inflexibly at one specific type of action, with no drives aiming at nonaction outcomes. Then, the act-directed view could claim to explain why drives are this way. But as we've seen, drives are flexible in the actions they aim at, and some drives don't aim at actions at all. So the act-directed view fails to explain phenomena that the outcome-directed view explains and can't have any offsetting explanatory advantages. There is no reason for action theorists to accept the act-directed view or for interpreters to attribute it to Nietzsche. As we'll see, this view prevents Alfano's project from fully realizing its ambitions.

Alfano then investigates Nietzsche's account of virtue. Nietzsche evaluates types in terms of the drives that are their instincts, so one might expect his theory of virtue to specify conditions for when a drive is a virtue. And that's exactly how Alfano presents it. On his interpretation, "a drive is a virtue to the extent that it respects three constraints":

1. The drive is consistent with or supportive of what Nietzsche calls *life* and *health*
2. The drive does not systematically or reliably induce negative self-directed emotions (e.g., guilt, shame, disgust, contempt) that respond to fixed or essential aspects of the self
3. The drive does not systematically or reliably induce reactions from the agent's community that are liable to be internalized as negative self-directed emotions that respond to fixed or essential aspects of the self. (86)

Nietzsche indeed sees negative self-directed emotions as reducing one's virtue, in line with the second constraint. Throughout his works, he criticizes ascetic disapproval of the instincts, extending this criticism to its philosophical expression in things like Kantian uneasiness with the desire-driven nature of human beings. But I can't see a plausible interpretation on which the first and third constraints add anything significant to the account. The third constraint collapses into the second constraint, and the first constraint comes close to doing so as well. I'll explain how.

The problem with the first constraint arises in trying to understand what "life" and "health" are. The most Alfano can do in explicating these terms is to say that "interrelations among drives have the potential both to enhance life or health and to thwart life or health. Drives can relate to one another in a mutually destructive way, or they can relate to one another by supporting, recruiting, or at least ignoring or neglecting one another" (96). So life and health are harmed when drives interact destructively. These destructive interactions cause negative self-directed emotions—in *GM II* and sections like *D 109*, Nietzsche treats self-torment as a symptom of one drive complaining about another. So the first criterion isn't adding much to the second. Perhaps it adds bonus points for drives supporting each other in motivating the same action or generating positive emotions, going slightly beyond the second constraint, which only concerns conflicts that generate negative emotions. But without more information about life and health, that's it.

There is a better way to account for value, life, and health, but the act-directed view of drives prevents Alfano from pursuing it. Since life and health clearly are things that Nietzsche regards as valuable, a good strategy would be to understand Nietzsche's account of value, locate life and health within it, and use this to illuminate his account of virtue. Alfano's cyborg implants suggest this strategy, informing him that "the connection between *value* and *virtue*" is "the strongest connection in Nietzsche's entire corpus" (91). Alfano recognizes that Nietzsche understands value as grounded in drives. So a natural way to understand "life" and "health" would be to treat values as "the target outcomes of drives," following Richardson (91). But Alfano knows he can't do this, because he rejected Richardson's outcome-directed view in favor of Katsafanas's act-directed view. Life and health can't merely be acts, so Katsafanas's view won't help him account for their value. This leaves

Alfano with no way to account for the concepts of life, health, and, more generally, value. I sympathize with Alfano's point that "it's not easy to say what Nietzsche means when he employs them" (97), which is true on any view, but the act-directed view makes it impossible. Here we see how destructive the act-directed view is to Alfano's project. It prevents him from giving any serious account of the two concepts most central to the semantic network. The problems radiate outward through the network, leaving him with an impoverished account of virtue.

We can understand the third constraint as saying either that a virtuous person must not be the target of community disapproval or that a virtuous person must avoid internalizing disapproval. If avoiding community disapproval is necessary for virtue, someone can fail to have virtue simply because of scornful responses from prejudiced and closed-minded masses who dominate the community. But Nietzsche rejects the idea of community disapproval indicating a lack of virtue, let alone constituting it. Consider *UM* 2:2: "if one goes so far as to employ the popular referendum and the numerical majority in the domain of art, and as it were compels the artist to defend himself before the forum of the aesthetically inactive, then you can take your oath on it in advance that he will be condemned." Sometimes one can change or leave the community. But if this is impossible, that shouldn't render one nonvirtuous. So the best way to read the third constraint seems to be that the virtuous person must avoid internalizing community disapproval. This collapses the third constraint into the second. Internalizing community disapproval is acquiring negative self-directed emotions.

Chapter 5, "Socializing Nietzschean Virtues," discusses a number of relations through which society shapes individuals' virtue. This chapter is rich in interesting material. Two related ideas stand out. One is an account of noble and slavish ways in which character develops. Alfano sees noble character as developing toward the noble person's own self-conception, while slavish character develops toward society's conception of the person. Alfano connects this to his intriguing psychological idea of "Nietzschean summoning," in which describing people with a virtue term leads them to develop the virtue. These two ideas combine into a picturesque account of the noble/slave distinction where slavish characters are summoned by society, while noble characters are distinguished by being able to summon themselves.

I would've liked to hear more about how Alfano interpreted *Z* Passions. He takes this section to suggest that "when we introduce eponymous trait terms that pack an evaluative punch, we sometimes create new virtues and vices—new objects of liking, loving, hating, and despising" (129). But it seems that the passage Alfano cites addresses only virtues that already exist before they're named and therefore aren't created by naming. Zarathustra's suggestion to "let your virtue be too high for the familiarity of names" requires the virtues to exist prior to their naming, as he suggests that we leave these virtues unnamed. Focusing on a narrower set of relations between naming and virtue might have improved this chapter. Dealing with too many of these relations in one chapter makes it hard to explain in detail how each one works, and it invites errors that result from failing to properly distinguish them.

Chapters 6–11 deal with Nietzschean virtues—curiosity, courage, pathos of distance, sense of humor, and solitude, before concluding with conscience and integrity. Alfano focuses more on virtues that express themselves in thought and

inquiry than in direct actions that affect the world. This seems to me properly reflective of Nietzsche's central concerns. He writes mostly about intellectual figures like Wagner, Kant, Socrates, Schopenhauer, and Goethe. People of action like Napoleon figure less prominently in his writings. Alfano's digital methodology does a good job of picking up on this. While I found each of these chapters somewhat scattered in the range of topics they discussed, there were many interesting things there, and I'll note some of the most picturesque attractions before concluding.

First up is curiosity, which has been of interest in recent discussions of epistemic virtue for its role in creating knowledge. One section of this chapter addresses the idea of perspectivism. Alfano rightly notes that perspectivism is discussed far more in the secondary literature than it should be, given its rare appearance in Nietzsche's own writings. Alfano's methodology reveals that "for Nietzsche, perspectives are deeply enmeshed with affects, emotions, values, and virtues" (149). On his view, the idea of perspectivism is "to reveal, through the controlled cycling-through of various emotional and evaluative points of view, properties that would otherwise be invisible and to rectify inquiry by pitting the biases of perspectives against each other" (155). This is a sort of emotional curiosity, in which one tries to feel different ways about a thing to learn the different things that one's emotions will reveal.

Courage is usually seen as a practical virtue that makes one act to achieve important goals in the face of physical danger or social disapproval. Alfano's treatment of it as an intellectual virtue is unusual, but true to Nietzsche's own writing. What one should have courage against, according to Alfano's perceptive interpretation, is the "minotaur of conscience" (*BGE* 29). One might wonder how conscience might oppose courage—wouldn't conscience be naturally aligned with the virtues? The answer comes from Nietzsche's interest in discovering unpleasant truths, among which he'd count the nonexistence of any objective moral facts. Conscience itself pains us at the thought of this idea, as it's contrary to morality in an unusual but very direct way. Courage is needed to stand up against the pain conscience can inflict and to believe the immoral truth.

The next chapter deals with "pathos of distance," a Nietzschean phrase that Alfano uses to cover both contempt and disgust. Both of these emotions suggest putting distance between oneself and their objects—hence the phrase. These emotions figure heavily in Nietzsche's writing, and as Alfano notes, Nietzsche sees them as elevating oneself above their objects. When properly directed at bad but changeable features of oneself, they can motivate self-improvement. Still, I don't see why Nietzsche often seems positive about these emotions. Alfano makes the point well: they make it hard for Zarathustra to affirm the eternal recurrence! Perhaps if one feels them with proper distance, one will be elevated. But other emotions can elevate without risk of dragging one down into the denial of life.

Alfano's cyborg implants detect the importance of laughter in Nietzsche's work and suggest that a sense of humor is a Nietzschean virtue. They also detect that "laughter" and "humor" connect much more closely with "courage" than they do with "contempt." Interesting! But Alfano largely disregards this information and spends most of the chapter connecting laughter and contempt in ways that seemed correct enough. Look there if you're interested in that.

Alfano is right that solitude has been unduly neglected in the literature. Nietzsche discusses solitude unusually often, especially in *Zarathustra*, and lived a solitary life. So understanding what solitude means to him may help us understand something pervasive about his greatest work and himself. Alfano treats solitude as virtuous in conferring distance from negative social influences on one's thinking and allowing fuller development of one's distinctive thoughts, including cultural criticism. It allows more distance from the disgusting and contemptible than disgust and contempt do, and therefore it seems to me a superior virtue to the pathos of distance, which Alfano treats as more closely connected to these emotions. Nietzsche himself didn't find permanent intellectual companions worth staying close to, and this is a helpful picture of what solitude might have meant to him.

A concluding chapter deals with conscience and integrity. Its treatments of good conscience, bad conscience, and intellectual conscience are reasonable and well supported with textual evidence. Alfano argues that "conscience unites the Nietzschean virtues" by changing us internally so that we come to have them (282). I don't see the unity here as especially deep, but it is an interesting psychological claim.

I conclude with an evaluation of Alfano's digital methodology: it's good! It focuses the book on topics in proportion to how much Nietzsche discusses them. The chapters on curiosity, solitude, and courage display the advantages of this balanced approach. Alfano rightly takes pride in how his methodology relegates over-discussed concepts like the will to power and the sovereign individual to a lesser role. These concepts are only discussed sporadically in the finished works, and scholarship on other topics does more for our understanding of Nietzsche. The book is weakest when Alfano departs from his methodology, especially when the act-directed view prevents him from giving a better account of evaluative concepts central to Nietzsche's philosophy. But these weaknesses only redound to the credit of the methodology, as its optimal implementation would avoid these problems. The benefits of Alfano's digital approach are clear. In view of his novel and impressively balanced contribution, we should welcome him and any of his fellow cyborgs to the community of Nietzsche scholars.

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Berryman, Sylvia. *Aristotle on the Sources of the Ethical Life*.  
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In *Aristotle on the Sources of the Ethical Life*, Sylvia Berryman argues that Aristotle is concerned with giving an account of the origin of value and with establishing ethical truths. However, he does not attempt to derive substantive ethical advice from a value-neutral study of nature. Hence, Aristotle's metaethics is neither naive nor naturalistic in the "Archimedean" sense articulated by Foot and Williams (Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* [London: Fontana, 1985], 28–29, 40–53; Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001]). Instead, argues Berryman, Aristotle's refreshing metaethical view locates