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Nietzsche on Honor and Empathy

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NIETZSCHE ON HONOR AND EMPATHY

by

AKSHAY GANESH

Under the Direction of Jessica Berry, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Moral philosophers like Martha Nussbaum, Philippa Foot, and Michael Weber argue for what I call the “Neo-Stoic Reading” of Nietzsche, which includes two claims: first, Nietzsche allegedly recommends the relentless pursuit of self-interest at the expense of other persons; second, he denies empathy any major role in the ethical life. I will argue that the Neo-Stoic view misses an important unifying theme in Nietzsche’s ethics and his criticism of morality—his investment in the value of *honor*—and that Nietzsche’s ethical recommendations involving empathy and even altruism can be better understood by situating them within an historical tradition of honor-based ethics.

INDEX WORDS: Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosophy, Ethics, Honor, Empathy,

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1 INTRODUCTION

Many moral philosophers invested in compassion-centric morality use Nietzsche as a convenient foil for their arguments, where the convenience at issue is achieved by misreading, grossly simplifying or hyperbolizing him. One of the more common caricatures of Nietzsche takes him to hold what I call the Neo-Stoic View.¹ I will argue that the Neo-Stoic Reading misses an important unifying theme in Nietzsche's ethics and his criticism of morality--his investment in the value of *honor*--and that Nietzsche's ethical recommendations involving empathy and even altruism can be better understood by situating them within an historical tradition of honor-based ethics

The structure of my paper is as follows: I start by arguing for my claim that three prominent modern moral philosophers—Martha Nussbaum, Michael Weber, and Philippa Foot—advance the Neo-Stoic Reading of Nietzsche in order to frame the rest of my inquiry. Second, I provide an introductory account of honor. Drawing upon a broad consensus in contemporary social science and moral philosophy, I define honor as a status consisting of an entitlement to respect within a social hierarchy, where respect is understood as an attitude that acknowledges the excellence of the honored and includes particular forms of ethical activity expressing this acknowledgment.²

Third, I will argue for Nietzsche's consistent preoccupation with honor. Taking seriously his historical interests, I consider Nietzsche's influence from past societies, focusing on his discussion of non-egalitarian orders and competitive rituals in his early 1870s works *The Greek State* and *Homer's Contest*. I also confirm his commitment to honor in his later unpublished and published works, and argue that he has a specific notion of honor as animated by what he calls "reverence." I close my section on honor by arguing that Nietzsche is interested in it for two reasons: first, honor codes

¹ I do not use the term "Neo-Stoic" because this view is an accurate representation of Stoic views, which obviously come in many types, but rather because advocates of reading Nietzsche this way commonly connect the views to Stoicism, as we will see.

² As I will elucidate in a later section, the "respect" at issue is not the Kantian sort commonly discussed in moral philosophy.

allow potentially-destructive psychological tendencies to be sublimated towards beneficial ends, and second, that the order of rank codified in honor systems can be conducive to the development of what Nietzsche values as human excellence.

Fourth, I address what Nietzsche's interest in honor means for his ethics. I argue that in contrast to the first component of the Neo-Stoic Reading, Nietzsche's exemplars do not act only in self-interest without regard for others, since, being invested in honor, they take both the order of rank and equal reciprocity seriously. In contrast to the second component of the view, empathy plays an important role in his ethics in spite of his critical attitude to altruism. Finally, I offer some closing remarks about the portrait of Nietzsche philosophers should engage with, and what this portrait can offer modern moral philosophy.

2 THE NEO-STOIC READING

As I have noted, one of the more common caricatures of Nietzsche takes him to hold what I call the Neo-Stoic View.³ Broadly, this view has two interrelated components: first, Nietzsche allegedly recommends the relentless pursuit of self-interest at the expense of other persons, and second, he denies empathy any major importance in the ethical life. I will show how this view of Nietzsche appears in the work of Nussbaum, Weber, and Foot and then explain its consequences for their understanding of Nietzsche.

Martha Nussbaum claims that Nietzsche aims to "bring about a revival of Stoic values" in opposition to the "morality of pity," where her use of the latter term corresponds to what I will call "sympathy," or the empathetic concern with another's suffering.⁴ She offers a specific portrait of the Stoic that Nietzsche supposedly values: "What should we think about a human being who insists on

³ I do not use the term "Neo-Stoic" because this view is an accurate representation of Stoic views, which obviously come in many types, but rather because advocates of reading Nietzsche this way commonly connect the views to Stoicism, as we will see.

⁴ Nussbaum 140. See also Nussbaum 160.

caring deeply for nothing that he himself does not control... who cultivates the hardness of self-command as a bulwark against all the reversals that life can bring? We could say, with Nietzsche, that this is a strong person.”⁵ On this view, Nietzsche allegedly values a self-enclosed attitude to the world that precludes altruistic engagements out of an aversion to the risk of suffering. He recommends the cultivation of hardness, which Nussbaum equates with an “extirpation of the passions,” particularly other-directed and sympathetic feelings.⁶ Though Nussbaum thinks this hardness entails not just privileging one’s own interests over others, but ignoring others’ interests completely, she does not stop there—she casts Nietzsche’s exemplars as fearful, ascetic hermits who take the value of “money, status, friendships, family, marriage, and material comforts of all kinds” to be “on the whole and for the most part, not valueless... but actually *bad*,” preferring “solitude, material hardship, obscurity, [and] friendlessness.”⁷

In contrast to Nietzsche’s alleged position, Nussbaum suggests that “There is a strength in the willingness to form attachments that can go wrong and cause deep pain, in the willingness to invest oneself in the world in a way that opens one’s whole life up to the changes of the world, for good and for bad. There is, in short, a strength in the willingness to be porous rather than totally hard...”⁸ By ‘porousness’, Nussbaum means both the acceptance of affects, including the altruistic ones, rather than their extirpation, but also the active exercise of those affects in the face of risk. While she does not elaborate, we can surmise that she calls this attitude ‘strength’ insofar as it exhibits a willingness to both accept suffering and survive it, in contrast to Nietzsche’s alleged weakness, which is marked by a fear of suffering and inability to withstand it.

⁵ Nussbaum 160

⁶ Nussbaum 154.

⁷ Nussbaum 153

⁸ Nussbaum 160. A careful reader of Nietzsche will find Nussbaum’s description of strength ironic since it appears to share much with what Nietzsche himself values. Dealing with all her charges is beyond the scope of this paper, since I focus specifically on empathy and altruism. See Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* for an in-depth account of Nietzschean strength.

Other proponents of the Neo-Stoic reading are less extreme. Michael Weber goes so far as to criticize Nussbaum, arguing that the criticisms she draws from Nietzsche are “misconstrued insofar as she renders them Stoic.”⁹ Combined with his concession that “[t]o be fair, there are surely traces of Stoicism to be found in Nietzsche,”¹⁰ Weber’s angle appears, at first glance, to inspire hope for a significantly more nuanced reading. As it turns out, however, his criticism of Nussbaum is largely confined to the claim that “Nietzsche’s complaints do not presuppose the Stoic conception of the good,” and leaves unchallenged the two basic components of the Neo-Stoic view as Nussbaum interprets them.¹¹ Indeed, Weber wholeheartedly endorses the two components; on the subject of Nietzsche’s criticism of sympathy, he claims that “Nietzsche himself seems to hold strongly that pity is necessarily a vice.”¹² He elaborates by taking Nietzsche to argue that “either having or receiving compassion cripples one,” and that “compassion and pity inspire nothing beyond providing consolation – ‘hugging the hurt part,’ in Plato’s words, and ‘weeping and wailing’ together like children.”¹³ Instead, we should “quit crying and set ourselves to ‘putting the disaster right.’ This is the familiar ‘When the going gets tough, the tough get going!’”¹⁴ Weber’s version of Nietzsche’s claim might be charitably read as restricted to sympathetic emotions; if so, this reading leaves room for Nietzsche to think that it is alright to be sympathetic, in the sense of invested in the welfare of others, in at least some cases, bucking the first component of the Neo-Stoic view. Weber closes off the possibility for such nuance by drawing a parallel with Ayn Rand, and bluntly stating that “[b]oth Nietzsche and Rand... claim that selflessness is a vice and selfishness a virtue.”¹⁵ In

⁹ Weber 488

¹⁰ Weber 507

¹¹ Weber 505

¹² Weber 507

¹³ Weber 508

¹⁴ Weber 508

¹⁵ Weber 503. Curiously, the only support Weber offers for this claim is section two of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which says that selfishness “might have” a “higher” value than selfless altruism, not that the latter has negative value.

addition to avoiding empathy, then, Nietzsche's exemplars are people who would avoid altruistic behavior and exclusively pursue their own interests.

Philippa Foot presents yet another instance of the Neo-Stoic reading in her own engagement with what she calls Nietzsche's "immoralism." Like Nussbaum and Weber, Foot claims that "Nietzsche preaches hardness and self-mastery," but unlike the others, she recognizes that "the passions are not to be weakened or extirpated."¹⁶ However, Foot still attributes to Nietzsche an extreme view, claiming that the passions are only to be "used in the creation of the self."¹⁷ She associates the creation of the self with constructing and pursuing a notion of the good, arguing that a notion of the good is "something that an individual had to determine for himself, creating his own values rather than paying heed to anyone else."¹⁸ In other words, Nietzsche still advocates only a closed-off self-concern, at least when it comes to value-creation.¹⁹ But what if the individual chooses values that include uses for empathy and sympathy? Foot makes clear there is no room for this possibility in her Nietzsche, framing the rest of her inquiry as follows: "clearly what is in question is whether pity is a disposition that *should* be cultivated or rather avoided in human life; that is, whether someone is to be seen as a good person in so far as he or she feels compassion for others, or rather the reverse as Nietzsche suggests."²⁰ Leaving aside that terms like "good person" seem antithetical to the very purpose of Nietzsche's evaluative vocabulary, it is clear that Foot's Nietzsche has a rather simple view, involving a straightforward inverse correlation between how compassionate a person is and their value as an ethical exemplar. With the question framed as she does, her answer is not surprising: she advocates the "humanness of sympathy," concluding that "[t]hinking of the ordinary

¹⁶ Foot 149

¹⁷ Foot 150.

¹⁸ Foot 110

¹⁹ It might be objected that Nietzsche could involve others' passions in his own self-creation, thereby leaving room for something like empathy, but Foot does not seem to consider this possibility.

²⁰ Foot 108

unpretentious men and women who seem to find special happiness in working for the relief of suffering, one must surely find Nietzsche's dismissive views on compassion rather silly.”²¹

Here I have laid out the components of the Neo-Stoic reading and shown how they inform a common caricature of Nietzsche. First, these commentators grossly simplify Nietzsche's views on sympathy and altruistic behavior. I will not spend much time rectifying this problem in what follows, except where it is relevant to the next two problems here, which are more relevant to my aims in this paper. Secondly, in addition to muddling the distinction between empathetic and sympathetic concern with another and empathic and sympathetic feelings, all three authors seem to conflate sympathy and empathy more generally.²² These first two issues lead to a third problem—the authors I have discussed all take their readings of Nietzsche's views on sympathy to exhaust his views on empathy. In what follows, I aim to complicate the Neo-Stoic reading considerably, and in doing so, to offer some clarity on these three associated problems in the context of Nietzsche scholarship. In order to do so, I will take a detour into another undertreated area in Nietzsche scholarship: his investment in honor.

3 THE CONCEPT OF HONOR

Before addressing Nietzsche's views on honor, it is worth elaborating on honor itself. Drawing on a broad consensus across not only moral philosophy, but in history, anthropology, and sociology, honor can be understood as a status, attaching to persons, characterized by what Kwame Appiah has called “an entitlement to respect.”²³ Respect (and *Respekt* in German) come from the Latin *respicere*, which means “to look back at” or “to look again,” and even as we use the term now,

²¹ Foot 107

²² This conflation is common across the philosophical and psychological literature on empathy and sympathy, in part because the muddy etymological history of the terms and in part because the phenomena at issue remain relatively opaque to researchers.

²³ Appiah 30. See also Olsthoorn 7, Stewart 12, Darwall 24, Williams 80, Bowman 2, and Miller 18 for further examples of the consensus definition of honor as a right to respect connected to hierarchy, contempt, shame, and pride.

respect does refer to a kind of apprehension.²⁴ Roughly, respect is an attitude that a subject, the respecer, takes towards some object. This attitude marks a relationship wherein the subject responds to some feature of the object in a way that acknowledges some significant value. Broadly construed, the attitude of respect as a mode of valuing can include both feelings generated by the apprehension of the deserving object and actions that the object's value can compel us to perform as a sign of our acknowledgment.

Centrally, honor operates as a distinction of *rank* in a social hierarchy and is bestowed by judgments about the extent of one's adherence or proximity to the ideals of a community, whether in terms of who one is or how one acts. To exemplify those ideals is to embody excellence, not simply as a matter of having this or that attribute, but in a way that grounds one's general social worth; as William Ian Miller puts it, to assess honor is to "tak[e] the full measure of a man or a woman."²⁵ As a comprehensive value, honor guides how members of society comport themselves with regard to others; honor is the basis for being listened to, for others having second thoughts before causing you or those associated with you harm, and for what compensation is appropriate if any harm is suffered.

Honor can be divided into both external and internal components. The brand of respect bound up with honor is primarily, though not exclusively public and second-personal. It is bestowed upon me externally, by others in my community, and my value or rank is explicitly relational, being defined in contrast to those others through the varied public interactions that make up social life. The two second-personal attitudes most often bound up with external honor are the aforementioned respect, on one hand, and contempt directed towards those marked by dishonor. The internal component of honor consists in how one assesses one's own status as well as how one

²⁴ Nietzsche is of course aware of this etymology. He uses terms like "value-establishing glance" and other suggestive visual metaphors to describe the rank-defining judgments of the nobles in the first treatise of the *Genealogy*, for example.

²⁵ Miller Preface, x.

assesses others' judgments of one's status. The two first-personal, self-directed feelings most closely bound up with the internal component of honor are pride and perhaps more integrally, shame at failures to live up to particular ideals of honor and the contempt brought upon oneself as a result.²⁶

To violate an ideal in an honor society is dishonorable, and lowers one's status. In the latter case, one can and is encouraged to restore one's honor, if possible, through some retributive act of equal value. Honor cultures often include forms of agonistic competition that regulate the distribution of respect even in cases not defined by some initial violation. Since honor is a limited commodity, honor cultures tend to incentivize behavior, often in the form of challenges to others, meant to strengthen one's reputation.²⁷

As a value, honor is most often contrasted with dignity. As a brief introduction, though we will expand on the term later, we can understand dignity as an inviolable and equal right to respect that each of us possesses.²⁸ Unlike honor, dignity is not regarded as socially-constituted, but as innate. An act of contempt from another, for example, might lower one's social standing, but never one's dignity, which would remain untouched.

3.1 NIETZSCHE ON HONOR

Having established a basic sense of what I mean by honor, I will now establish Nietzsche's relationship to this value. Nietzsche frames his own historical inquiry as a philologist as a project with distinctively normative ambitions: "I cannot imagine what would be the meaning of classical philology in our own age, if it is not to be untimely—that is, to act against the age, and by so doing, to have an effect on the age, and, let us hope, to the benefit of a future age" (HL, Preface). He

²⁶ Appiah 16-17.

²⁷ While the economic language in my description might seem metaphorical, honor societies have historically measured and distributed honor and punishment in painstakingly precise and startlingly economic terms. Nietzsche himself places a psychological tendency to compare and evaluate at the heart of his account of the primitive creditor-debtor relationship in his *Genealogy*, and elsewhere, too as I will discuss later.

²⁸ For one example, see Darwall 11.

complains that modern Christian morality and what he sees as its correlate in liberal democratic politics have “robbed us of the harvest of the culture of the ancient world” and the ‘pre-modern’ cultures associated with Islam (A 60).²⁹ The value of honor is the primary bounty of this lost harvest: “Whom then does Christianity negate? What does it call “world”?... that one resists, that one sees to one's honor; that one seeks one's advantage; that one is proud” (A 38). He states this claim again later in the same work: “Nowadays no one has courage any more for special rights, for the right of dominion, for feelings of honorable pride in himself and his equals—for the *pathos* of *distance*” (A 43).³⁰ And again, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche claims, “Powerful men are the ones who *understand* how to honor; that is their art, their realm of invention” (BGE 260).

Nietzsche does not simply refer to ancient honor in the abstract, but makes constant reference to historical evidence that concerns aristocratic honor cultures, for example GM I:11’s famous litany: “Roman, Arab, Germanic, Japanese nobility, Homeric heroes, Scandinavian Vikings,” who are evoked in the middle of a description of “noble, powerful” types who have been declared evil by the “morality of *ressentiment*” established by the Judeo-Christian tradition. Nietzsche describes the nobility of these cultures as characterized by rank-defining and rank-expressing rituals: “*inter pares*,” at least, they are “strictly restrained by custom, respect, usage, gratitude.”³¹

In addition to being inspired by ancient concepts in the development of his own ideas, Nietzsche also cites ancient figures as exemplars of his own normative ideals. For example, in *Beyond Good and Evil* 260, when Nietzsche describes what he calls one of the two basic types of human and

²⁹ I will use the following standard abbreviations for my parenthetical citations of Nietzsche’s works: *A* = *The Antichrist*, *BGE* = *Beyond Good and Evil*, *D* = *Daybreak*, *GM* = *On the Genealogy of Morality*, *GSt* = *The Greek State*, *HC* = *Homer’s Contest*, *HH* = *Human, All Too Human*, *NF* = *Unpublished Notebooks and Correspondences*, *TI* = *Twilight of the Idols*, *WS* = *The Wanderer and His Shadow*.

³⁰ The idea of the pathos of distance, a sense of difference in rank upon which I will later elaborate, is a major theme in Nietzsche’s work. See BGE 257, GM I:2, GM III:14, A 43, A 57, and TI, Skirmishes 37 for Nietzsche’s other mentions of the term.

³¹ Nietzsche’s specific point in the passage is that the cultures he lists represent the most extreme form of this nobility, insofar as they often behave in violent, terrifying ways to those unlike them, conquering and dominating masses of people. He writes from a complicated and ambivalent standpoint, presenting the age of these nobilities as “magnificent, but equally horrific and violent” (GM I:11).

of morality, the “noble man” of “master morality,” who “honors the powerful man in himself,” he uses as an example a “proud Viking” from “an old Scandinavian saga.” In 1888, after hearing of the success of Georg Brandes’s lectures on his philosophy in Copenhagen, Nietzsche wrote in a letter to Brandes that his popularity in Denmark made sense, since the Icelandic Sagas were the “richest source material” for “my theory of master morality” (KGB 111.5 1041), citing the heroes of the sagas as exemplars of that theory.

Nietzsche’s most common sources of inspiration from the premodern era are classical Greek and Roman cultures, on one hand, and those of pre-Christian Scandinavia, on the other. Nietzsche wrote, as is well known, several early works on Greek culture: *The Homeric Contest*, *The Greek State*, and his first full-length book *The Birth of Tragedy*, among others. The first two contain some evidence for his interest in Homeric honor. In the *Greek State*, he points out that in contrast to “we moderns,” who believe in the “dignity of man,” or that each person has an inviolable and equal value, the Greeks enforced distinctions of value between human beings by institutionalizing slavery (GSt). Further, he claims that we must accept a “cruel sounding truth,” that at least some kind of rank order is “of the essence of Culture” (GSt). In *Homer’s Contest*, Nietzsche discusses a paradigm case of institutionalized honor: the agonistic competitions of Homeric Greece. He argues that the outcomes of institutionalized competitions in Greek society defined the reputation, and so the welfare, of individuals and towns; honor was part of an ethos of “great personalit[ies],” “enormously brilliant deed[s]” and the “fellow-citizens’ judgment” that pervaded life: “the youth thought of the welfare of his native town when he vied with others in running, throwing or singing; it was her glory that he wanted to increase with his own; it was to his town's gods that he dedicated the wreaths which the umpires as a mark of honor set upon his head” (HC).³²

³² Cf. D 38, “...there was nothing offensive in attributing to the gods something of envy: which is comprehensible under a condition of things the soul of which was contest; contest, however, was evaluated and determined as good.”

While the aforementioned references to clear cases of historical honor culture do give us good reason to think Nietzsche's ideas about inegalitarianism and excellence bear their inspiration, they do not tell us much about what Nietzsche thinks about honor itself or why he might be invested in its return. First, let us ask what Nietzsche makes of honor itself. He dedicates a fragment in his *Nachlass* to the question "what is honor?" (NF 1875,9[1]). He answers that the term has several uses: on one hand, it might refer to "the same thing as right," which he clarifies as "a negative concept," in the sense of a status one has that might be "open to injury." On the other hand, he says the term honor can also refer to an act of "distinguishing approval," "recognition of special merits," or "approval that our doing and being finds in others." But elsewhere, Nietzsche says that "to strive for honor means 'to make oneself superior and wish that that also be publicly evident'" (HH 170, cf. HH 94). In contrast to honor, as we might expect, is dishonor, which Nietzsche calls "disapproval and contempt of our being and doing" (NF-1875,9[1]), noting that in cases of dishonor as well, "an essential point is whether he sees his honor injured in the eyes of others" (WS 33).

3.2 RESPECT AS REVERENCE

I have already defined honor as an entitlement to respect, and respect as an attitude a subject takes towards some object, but the term "respect" warrants further analysis, for reasons that will become clearer later. For now, it is worth noting that there are competing views on what constitutes respect. Stephen Darwall, for example, characterizes what he calls "honor respect," the sort of respect at issue in honor codes, as an attitude of mere deference; not only is normative conduct based on honor respect deferential, but this deference is the only kind of recognition agents engage in in an honor society: "it's deference all the way down."³³ He repeatedly claims that the relationship of deference is analogous to a monarch's relation to his or her subjects:

³³ Darwall 35

One respects honor by deference... The king's subjects defer to his wishes, and even if they may be imprisoned if they do not, this need not be thought of as their being held accountable for noncompliance. Deferring to the king's standing to issue orders is not the same thing as acknowledging any legitimate authority he might claim to do so. (In an order of honor, it's deference all the way down, including when the king orders those who violate his orders to undergo certain sanctions.)³⁴

Importantly, deference, as Darwall describes it, is a thoroughly passive attitude, consisting of a reaction to high status that requires no engagement, but rather a kind of yielding or giving way to the wishes or acts of one recognized as possessing the relevant status. This yielding requires no particular affective response to its object. In contrast to Darwall, I will argue that Nietzsche conceives of honor as animated by a notion of respect as reverence.

Nietzsche rarely uses the term “respect” (either *Achtung* or *Respekt*) in his writings. But he often uses the term “honor” (*Ehren*) as a verb. However, there is another term he uses on occasion that he ties closely to the notion of honor; in several key places across *BGE*, especially the section entitled “What is Noble?,” he makes reference to what he calls “reverence” (*Ehrfurcht*) (BGE 260). It is worth noting that the term *Ehrfurcht* itself contains *Ehr*, which immediately connects it to the idea of honor—a literal rendering of the term would be ‘honor-fear’. And since Nietzsche is a philologist, it is further worth mentioning that the *Ehr* in *Ehrfurcht* and the term *Ehre* descend from the older, proto-Germanic *aiǰō*, which can be variously translated as fear, honor, or reverence. In other words, the concepts of honor, reverence, and respect share a long etymological and conceptual history.³⁵ But there are more specific reasons to think Nietzsche accords reverence a central place in his conception of honor. In the *Antichrist*, soon after noting that Christianity “negates” “that one sees to one's honor” (A38), he claims that Christianity has devalued “feelings of reverence and distance between man and man,” and just a few sentences later, he paraphrases those two concepts when he notes that the modern person lacks the courage for “feelings of honorable pride in himself and his equals—for the *pathos* of *distance*” (A 43). In the particularly rich BGE 260, he uses them as

³⁴ Darwall 35, cf. 17

³⁵ It is unclear if Nietzsche himself was aware of this etymology, though it is certainly plausible given his philological interests.

synonyms several times. First, he proclaims that “the noble man *honors*... the man who has power over himself... who takes delight in dealing with himself severely and toughly and *respects*, above all, severity and toughness.” He refers to a “reverence for age” and, just one sentence later to “respect for age.” And when explaining the slave’s attitude to master morality, he explains that the slave mistrusts everything “which is honored in it...here [in slave morality,] respect is given to pity, diligence, humility, and friendliness.” It is abundantly clear, then, that honor, respect, and reverence all refer to a single family of concepts when Nietzsche deploys them in the context of discussions about the order of rank.

To get some sense of what reverence consists in, we can consult BGE 263, a long passage within the section titled “What is Noble?” dedicated entirely to the concept. I quote it at length:

There is an *instinct for rank* which, more than anything, is already an indication of a *high* rank. There is a *delight* in the nuances of respect which permits us to surmise a noble origin and habits. The refinement, good, and loftiness of a soul are put to a dangerous test when something goes past in front of it which is of the first rank.... The man whose task and practice is to investigate souls will use precisely this art in a number of different forms in order to establish the ultimate value of a soul, the unalterable innate order of rank to which it belongs: he will put it to the test for its *instinct of reverence*...there is an involuntary falling silent, a hesitation in the eye, an end to all gestures, things which express that a soul *feels* close to something most worthy of reverence.... By contrast, perhaps nothing makes the so-called educated people, those who have faith in "modern ideas," so nauseating as their lack of shame, the comfortable impudence in their eyes and hands, with which they touch, lick, and grope everything, and it is possible that these days among a people, one still finds in the common folk, particularly among the peasants, more *relative* nobility of taste and tactful reverence than among the newspaper-reading *demi-monde* of the spirit, among the educated.

At first glance, this passage appears to support a reading of Nietzschean respect as deference.

Nietzsche’s description of how one falls silent, hesitates, ceases gestures, when “some precious object from a locked shrine, some book with marks of a great destiny is carried by” seems consistent with mere yielding, as does his praise, elsewhere in the passage, of the sense that people “are not permitted to touch everything, that there are sacred experiences before which they have to pull off their shoes and which they must keep their dirty hands off.” But recalling Darwall’s account, respect as deference is not about any affective response. BGE 263 tells a different story.

Nietzsche thinks that, before anyone can properly express reverence, one must have an instinct for rank, to be able genuinely to discern the noble from the base. This is connected to his

argument about the conditions of excellence. But he goes further in this passage, suggesting that there is an instinct of rank, a capacity truly to apprehend differences between different types and qualities, but also to take enjoyment in the practices of respect towards objects of significance.

Nietzsche then sets out the capacity for reverence proper. His description makes it clear that the acts of falling silent, etc., are not performed *merely* out of a socially-acquired belief in the value of the object of reverence. Rather, as Paul Woodruff puts it, “reverence is a matter of *feeling*”, and involves an interplay between feelings like admiration and awe, evoking the etymological connections we have noted earlier.³⁶ Nietzsche’s description of the phenomenology of reverence as a “sacred experience” is consistent with Woodruff’s claim, calling to mind a rich variety of affective responses. Further, Nietzsche describes the acts that express the feelings as “involuntary,” suggesting that they are largely functions of the feelings and not deliberate acts based on one’s conscious awareness of formal social custom, the way one responds after receiving an order from one’s social superior.

Nietzsche’s reverence is also distinguished from mere deference by its inclusion of a sense of identification with its object. Nietzsche’s use of reverence for the Bible, that book of “profundity and ultimate significance,” as an example of the attitude elsewhere in the same passage gestures at this point; its followers don’t merely yield to it in the sense of standing back, eyes averted. Nietzsche’s description of “hesitation in the eye” is merely that—hesitation. This hesitation does not prevent people from approaching the Bible. Rather, followers feel drawn to the book, to be in its presence, and actively desire to engage with it. This kind of affinity is a far cry from coldly following the order of a distant monarch, and further, is not merely a kind of passive deference. Further, if the higher type’s attitude towards itself can be characterized as self-reverence, then the mere deference model makes even less sense. How can one merely yield to oneself?

³⁶ Woodruff 117

The aforementioned aspects of reverence allow us to make sense of Nietzsche's claim that the "noble soul has reverence for itself" (BGE 287) and his claim that the higher type

moves among those who are equal and of equal standing with the same certainty of shame and sophisticated reverence that it has in its interaction with itself—following an inborn celestial mechanic of which all stars have a good sense. It is one more part of its egoism, this subtlety and self-restraint in interaction with its equals—every star is such an egoist—it holds itself in reverence of them and in those rights that it delegates to them.... (BGE 265)

Were reverence mere yielding, it would make no sense for higher types to show "sophisticated" reverence in their dealings with each other. Equals do not just yield to each other—rather, they identify with and engage with one another, paying close attention to reciprocity. Nietzsche notes that the higher type actively "delegates" rights to its equals, which suggests a more complicated and active role for each individual than mere deference to the wishes of another. Nietzsche also claims that this delegation of rights is "one more part of its egoism," rather than a simple devaluation of oneself. Here, one might be tempted to object that, being one more part of its egoism, the higher type's honor practices are consistent with the Neo-Stoic reading's first component: the ruthless valuation of one's interests at the expense of the interests of others. There are two reasons to reject this reading. First, to claim that the higher type's other-directed reverence is an extension of its self-reverence does not entail that the higher type is pursuing its interests at the expense of the interests of the other in any instance of reverence, nor that it always does so. Second, Nietzsche "claims in the same passage that the higher type "has no doubt that the exchange of respect and rights, as the essential quality of all interactions, also belongs to the natural condition of things," identifying the source of the higher type's belief in the necessity of honoring others like itself in a belief about the independent value of reciprocity, rather than mere self-interest (BGE 265). I take Nietzsche's point about egoism here to mean simply that the exemplar does not delegate rights to another out of a sense of its lower status, but because it recognizes in another the same sort of excellence it reveres in itself.

Returning to the difference between deference and reverence, the alternative explanation of Nietzsche's reverence I propose unites Nietzsche's various uses of the term: reverence as an attitude involves more than yielding--one identifies with traits in oneself or in another that one truly values, and one wants actively to engage with them, cultivating them and cherishing them. If one defers, it is in virtue of one's acknowledging the value of actual or potential excellence, and pursuing or helping another pursue it, in opposition to mundane and merely hedonistic or narrowly prudential interests.

3.3 WHY DOES NIETZSCHE VALUE HONOR?

Why might Nietzsche think it's important "that one sees to one's honor" (A 38) or "understands how to honor" (BGE 260)? Honor is tied to deep and wide-reaching psychological tendencies we have—namely, pride in ourselves, our tendencies to compare ourselves with others and to want to surpass them, and our desire for praise—that modern notions of dignity suppress, either denying the existence of these tendencies, or devaluing them, endorsing their extirpation.³⁷ In GM II:8, he remarks that the relationship between creditor and debtor, "the most primitive relationship among persons there is," coincided with "the first time person stepped up against person... a person measured himself by another person," and that "no degree of civilization however low has yet been discovered in which something of this relationship was not already noticeable." He continues: "gauging values, thinking out equivalents... this preoccupied man's very first thinking to such an extent that it is in a certain sense thinking itself" (GM II:8). In addition to this tendency to compare, Nietzsche also posits an instinct to stand out, to strive for distinction, and in no mild terms: "The striving for distinction keeps a constant eye on the next man... [it] is the striving for domination over the next man, though it be a very indirect domination and only felt or

³⁷ See TI, Skirmishes 48 for a short discussion of how the "doctrine of equality" "make[s] equal what is unequal."

even dreamed. There is a long scale of degrees of this secretly desired domination, and a complete catalogue of them would be almost the same thing as a history of culture..." (D 113). But he does not think we simply want to stand out and achieve distinction—our rank must be acknowledged by others. Nietzsche calls recognition, praise (and its opposite, contempt) "the greatest moral powers in common life.... The idea of the opinion that others entertain of us exercises the greatest power over our attitude" (NF-1875,9[1]).³⁸ In perhaps his most forceful statement uniting all of the aforementioned psychological tendencies under the banner of honor, Nietzsche claims, "One uproots the essence of the human being when one makes the concept of honor suspicious to him (NF-1875,9[1]).

Even if we devalue our instinct for honor, it is not immediately clear why doing so might be a bad thing. Nietzsche deploys some general criticisms of the idea of instinct-suppression (A 6, EH IV:7) and instincts (such as cruelty or *ressentiment*) that connect with our negative tendencies towards others, in particular, claiming that they turn inwards and harm us instead if denied an external outlet (GM II:18), but in the case of honor, specifically, there are two reasons worth noting.

First, Nietzsche takes at least some kind of "scale of rank ordering and differences in worth between man and man" (BGE 257) to be necessary if we are to conceive of 'excellence' at all: "the *order of rank*, simply formulates the supreme law of life itself; the separation of the... types is necessary to the maintenance of society, and to the evolution of higher types, and the highest types-- the *inequality* of rights is essential to the existence of any rights at all" (A 57). This is an argument about the conditions for excellence. If we accept that excellence of any kind exists, we also necessarily, if sometimes implicitly, commit ourselves to the existence of the lower and mediocre,

³⁸ Nietzsche's interest in our instinct to dominate others or strive for distinction is not an endorsement of any and all particular forms this striving might take. There are individuals with no potential for the kinds of excellence he values whose drive for distinction might lead them to perform all sorts of disagreeable acts.

and so a kind of rank-ordering. Devaluing or denying our tendency to measure and make distinctions of quality risks making us lose our interest in the very idea of excellence.

Second, Nietzsche thinks striving for honor, and its attendant psychological constituents, are conducive to ‘growth’ or progress towards the kinds of excellence he values. In addition to sublimating or channeling our tendencies to “horrible savagery, hatred, and pleasure in destruction” in the expression of talent at, say, some athletic performance (HC), the kinds of first-person feelings we discussed as part of the consensus view of honor, pride in oneself and shame at one’s failings actively spur us on to achieve excellence. He describes pride and concern with oneself as “profoundly necessary for growth” (EH IV:7), and claims that the kind of rank-ordering judgments that define an ethos of honor are intimately bound up with the desire for excellence:

Without the *pathos of distance*, the sort which grows out of the deeply rooted difference between the social classes, out of the constant gazing outward and downward of the ruling caste on the subjects and work implements, and out of their equally sustained practice of obedience and command, holding down and holding at a distance, that other more mysterious pathos would have no chance of growing at all, that longing for an ever new widening of distances inside the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more distant, more expansive, more comprehensive states, in short, simply the enhancement in the type "man".... (BGE 257)

An ethos of dignity or equal respect for persons, on Nietzsche’s account, weakens the prospects for human enhancement, not by actually removing our instincts to compare ourselves to others, strive for distinction and their associated pride, since they are too powerful to simply disappear (D 48), but by causing potential higher types to disvalue them, believing instead in dignity as equality and in its inherent value (GM, Preface: 6, cf. TI VII: 2). Nascent higher types, then, would grow to despise the very tendencies that would facilitate their own growth and excellence, rather than cultivating and refining them.

Nietzsche is thus deeply invested in honor for a number of reasons that are closely tied to longstanding and central concerns in his oeuvre. Having established this, we can now turn to its implications for the Neo-Stoic Reading of his ethics.

4 AGAINST THE NEO-STOIC READING

Our prior discussion of Nietzschean honor has already made significant progress towards complicating the Neo-Stoic view of Nietzsche held by Foot, Nussbaum, and Weber. The elaborate social world of sophisticated reverence Nietzsche describes should seem, *prima facie*, incompatible with the kind of closed attitude to the world presented in their readings and further, Nietzsche should seem much more complicated already than the simple foil for compassion-centric morality he appears as through the authors we have discussed. I will now make explicit the portrait of Nietzsche's ethics I have in mind by discussing each component of the view in turn.

4.1 NIETZSCHEAN EXEMPLARS AND SELF-INTEREST

The first component of the Neo-Stoic view is the claim that Nietzsche recommends the pursuit of self-interest at all costs, including any expense incurred by another. But I will establish that Nietzsche's exemplars, being bound by honor, are constrained by ethical norms in their actions, particularly towards other exemplary individuals.

While we have mentioned that systems of honor are oriented around ideals or exemplars that serve as standards of value for judgments of rank, thus far our discussion of Nietzsche's investment in honor has been restricted to its formal elements. Despite the overlap in their formal structures, honor cultures of the kinds that have influenced Nietzsche enshrined a diverse array of ideals for which people were to strive—it does not seem, for example, that Homeric ideals and Viking ideals were the same. Who are Nietzsche's exemplars?

Nietzsche has more than one type of human excellence in mind. In HH 509, he characterizes “civilized circumstances” as those in which “everyone feels himself to be superior to everyone else in at least one thing,” and in GS 78, he claims that artists can help us see “the hero

concealed in everyday characters.” However, it does seem that Nietzsche thinks there are some kinds of excellence that count as more valuable than others, which he reserves for those he sometimes calls the ‘noble’ or ‘higher type’ of human. Sometimes, he describes these higher types as seekers of solitude (BGE 26, 212), at others, as people who pursue grand artistic projects (he often mentions figures like Goethe and Beethoven as higher types) (TI IX:49, D: 201, GS: 55, BGE: 287). At still other times, he describes as exemplary a certain resilience (EH I:2) and affirmative attitude to life (BGE 56). It does not seem that having *all* these qualities is necessary to qualify as a higher type, since he often describes them in isolation, and rarely mentions more than one or two together.³⁹

There is one trait that does seem to accompany each of the other features Nietzsche sometimes associates with higher types: “It is not his actions which establish his claim.... It is not the works, but the belief which is here decisive and determines the order of rank... it is some fundamental certainty which a noble soul has about itself.... –The noble soul has reverence for itself—” (BGE 287). He also refers to the higher type as “a man who says: "I like that, I take it for my own, and mean to guard and protect it from every one"; a man who can conduct a case, carry out a resolution, remain true to an opinion...” (BGE 293). For Nietzsche, then, the concept of the higher type has more to do with the formal feature of self-respect, which I take to conform to the kind of reverence I have discussed earlier, than with any other particular preferences or characteristics.

Still more important, for our purposes, is that valuing honor seems to be characteristic of the higher type in general, as a direct extension of their self-respect:

the noble soul acknowledges—under circumstances that initially make it hesitate—that there are those of equal standing; as soon as it is clear on the question of rank, it moves among those who are equal and of equal standing with the same certainty of shame [*Scham*] and sophisticated reverence [*Ehrfurcht*] that it has in its interaction with itself—following an inborn celestial mechanic of which all stars have a good sense. It is one more part of its egoism, this subtlety and self-restraint in interaction with its equals—every star is such an egoist—it holds itself in reverence of them and in those rights that it delegates to them, it does not doubt that the exchange of honors and rights as the essence of all interaction

³⁹ See Leiter 92 for an in-depth discussion of this point.

is part of the natural state of things. The noble soul gives as it takes, out of the passionate and sensitive instinct for repayment, which lies deep within it. (BGE 265)⁴⁰

The higher type, faced with someone eventually judged to be of equal rank, hesitates at first.

Hesitating at the prospect of an equal implies a concern with status. But once equality of rank is established, Nietzsche claims that the higher type retains a sense of “shame,” and “reverence” in its engagements with its peers. What is more, the higher type is certain that “the exchange of honors and rights” is the “essence of all interaction” and “the natural state of things.” In other words, they respect the order of rank and associate it with very particular normative consequences. Nietzsche’s ethical exemplars thus do not place self-interest above all else. Even if they do value their interests more than the interests of the lower-ranked, they do so not out of mere selfishness, but because they value the order of rank, and see rank as being closely tied to substantive normative commitments.

4.2 NIETZSCHE AND EMPATHY

Having established that Nietzsche’s investment in honor and reverence is incompatible with the first component of the Neo-Stoic reading, we can turn to the second component of the view and ask what our discussion of honor says about Nietzsche’s interests in empathy. It is worth noting right at the outset that he rejects what he takes to be the Stoic rejection of feeling in no uncertain terms: “is our life really painful and burdensome enough for us to exchange it with advantage for a Stoical mode of living, and Stoical petrification? We do not feel sufficiently miserable to have to feel ill in the Stoical fashion” (GS 326). Nietzsche is crystal clear that he thinks the Stoic extirpation of affects is really a “petrification,” and identifies it with an illness. Furthermore, he claims that the valorization of Stoicism is a result of overestimating the amount of suffering in life, such that on balance, the illness of Stoic petrification would not be preferable to the suffering caused by the

⁴⁰ Here, again, we find the economic language Nietzsche uses in describing our psychological tendency to compare and contrast ourselves with others.

exercise of our capacities for feeling. But this rejection does not yield much specific insight into Nietzsche's views on empathy, for which we must look elsewhere.

First, we must establish just what empathy is. Philosophers and social scientists use 'empathy' to refer to a wide range of semi-distinct phenomena. One distinction we have already made is between empathy, the general capacity to represent to ourselves the mental states and processes of another, felt as if, it seems to us, from their perspective, and sympathy, the altruistic concern for another sometimes produced by and including empathy. While sympathy can take the form of concern divorced from all feeling, the sort of sympathy I will focus on in this paper includes the empathetic simulation of others' feelings.

Nietzsche makes this distinction in his work, through his general preference for *Mitleid* to refer to the suffering (*Leid*) caused by certain kinds of sympathy; generally, he uses *Mitgefühl* and *Mitempfindung* to designate empathy. For example, in HH 47, we find a clear statement of the distinction in a section entitled "*Hypochondria*": "There are people who become hypochondriacal through their sympathy [*Mitgefühl*] and concern for another person; the kind of sympathy [*Mitleid*] which results therefrom is nothing but a disease." Here, Nietzsche appears to use *Mitgefühl* to refer to a general capacity for empathy or fellow-feeling, free of particular connotations of value, while he refers to the pathological result, the compulsive sharing in and feeling *for* another's suffering, as *Mitleid*.⁴¹ It is clear, then, that Nietzsche wants to separate the question of how our general capacity for fellow-feeling operates from the question of its value.

Nietzsche's critique of *Mitleid* is familiar in the scholarship. His polemics range from criticisms of its motivations to immanent critiques of its effectiveness.⁴² Bernard Reginster helpfully unites Nietzsche's attacks on sympathy as criticisms not primarily of the capacity itself, but rather as

⁴¹ See also HH 33

⁴² Nussbaum lays out at least six of these criticisms in *Pity and Mercy*, 151-154.

concerns about its targets.⁴³ As we have seen, Nietzsche thinks that some “terrors, deprivations, impoverishments, midnights, adventures, risks and blunders are as necessary... as their opposites” for the production of excellence, and so he rejects empathy and sympathy only insofar as they are motivated by views that indiscriminately target suffering as “evil, hateful, worthy of annihilation, and as a defect of existence” (GS 338), ignoring its potential or actual value to the suffering agent. As Reginster puts it, “The compassion that seeks to eliminate all suffering indiscriminately is thus bound to undermine the prospects of greatness.”⁴⁴ I will not concern myself much with the critique of sympathy here, except where it provides relevant contrast with Nietzsche’s normative views. Instead, I will focus on some of the connections Nietzsche draws between empathy and honor.

Nietzsche most direct and sustained account of empathy can be found in D 142, a section by that very name [*Mitempfindung*]:

To understand another person, that is, *to imitate his feelings in ourselves*, we do indeed often go back to the *reason* for his feeling thus or thus and ask for example: *why* is he troubled? so as then for the same reason to become troubled ourselves; but it is much more usual to omit to do this and instead to produce the feeling in ourselves after the *effects* it exerts and displays on the other person by imitating with our own body the expression of his eyes, his voice, his walk, his bearing (or even their reflection in word, picture, music). Then a similar feeling arises in us in consequence of an ancient association between movement and sensation, which has been trained to move backwards or forwards in either direction. We have brought our skill in understanding the feelings of others to a high state of perfection and in the presence of another person we are always almost involuntarily practicing this skill: one should observe especially the play on the faces of women and how they quiver and glitter in continual imitation and reflection of what is felt to be going on around them... If we ask how we became so fluent in the imitation of the feelings of others the answer admits of no doubt: man, as the most timid of all creatures on account of his subtle and fragile nature, has in his *timidity* the instructor in that empathy, that quick understanding of the feelings of another (and of animals). Through long millennia he saw in everything strange and lively a danger: at the sight of it he at once imitated the expression of the features and the bearing and drew his conclusion as to the kind of evil intention behind these features and this bearing.

Nietzsche lays out here an account of empathy that includes both its developmental history and at least some of its physiological and psychological components. At least four features of this account merit mention. First, Nietzsche thinks humans began to exercise this capacity for empathy to preempt and understand danger from other humans and animals, and that the human capacity for empathy has much to do with our sheer vulnerability to such dangers. Nietzsche does not seem to

⁴³ Reginster 185

⁴⁴ Reginster 186

think that empathy is now primarily a matter of gauging danger—in the same passage, he associates empathy with the development of religious belief, the ability to appreciate music, writing, and painting, and other forms of pleasure. Secondly, empathy is largely a matter of training—whatever facility we are born with in this regard is augmented through repeated use. Thirdly, Nietzsche sees at least two approaches to representing another’s feelings. One is a matter of inferring the causes of another’s display of feeling, while the other is a matter of imitating the physical manifestation of that display. Fourth, Nietzsche observes that the exercise of empathy is sometimes voluntary, as when one strives to figure out what another is feeling, and at other times, more automatic. Importantly, this “almost involuntary” empathy seems to be a persistent background feature of our social lives on Nietzsche’s view, a point I will deepen in what follows.

Now that we have established some of the basics of Nietzsche’s account of empathy, we can ask the more specific question of how the deployment of our empathic capacities might be valuable to an ethos of honor. I will point here to only a few of the more significant connections between them.

Recall that Nietzsche thinks comparing ourselves with others, along with striving for distinction and the public recognition of that distinction are psychological tendencies that are channeled into the system of honor. He describes empathy as necessary for the gratification of these drives:

the empathy which this drive requires for its gratification is far from being harmless or sympathetic or kind. We want, rather, to perceive or divine how the next man outwardly or inwardly *suffers* from us, how he loses control over himself and surrenders to the impressions our hand or even merely the sight of us makes upon him; and even when he who strives after distinction makes and wants to make a joyful, elevating or cheering impression, he nonetheless enjoys this success not inasmuch as he has given joy to the next man or elevated or cheered him, but inasmuch as he has *impressed* himself on the soul of the other, changed its shape and ruled over it at his own sweet will. (D 113)

Our desire for rank requires not only that others exist so that we might compare ourselves to them, but that we can feel the effects of our action upon them. Empathy is part and parcel of the process by which we feel our own rank, through its expression as power, the success of our projects, insofar

as the effects our efforts have on others are reflected back into us. Empathy thus helps fuel those who strive for distinction by satisfying those drives that we can channel into our honor practices.

As we have noted, it is not just a sense of the effects of our actions on others that return to us and augment our sense of power. Nietzsche also thinks we want explicit, public recognition of our distinction. Here, too, empathy plays an important role, as we have a “need for sympathetic affection” as part of our desire for “objective recognition” (NF-1875,9[1]). The public judgments of respect that constitute our status or rank feed a deeper desire to be recognized in the first place, but not simply as a matter of distant approval or formal acceptance of our value. Nietzsche thinks we want others to feel as with us, to agree that we warrant merit. This desire is consistent with Nietzsche’s conception of respect as reverence, particularly the affective dimension of the latter, or how the “soul *feels* close to something most worthy of reverence” (BGE 263).. It is not enough for someone to defer to us without the kind of deeper response that expresses the feeling he associates with reverence. A community bound by honor codes is thus not merely a collection of ranks and relationships defined by arbitrary judgments, but also bound together by feeling, transmitted by empathy.

Empathy also figures in Nietzsche’s explanation of the response of some party to an act of dishonor. In WS 33, Nietzsche describes the psychological possibilities in various kinds of scenarios wherein one party is injured by another, and claims that the injured party, from “the standpoint of wounded honor,” feels compelled to engage in some retributive act that would restore their status. Nietzsche makes clear the public nature of the harm in this particular hypothetical, and claims that just as it plays an important role for the injurer, empathy is an integral part of how the injured feels the rank-lowering contempt of their assailant and any spectators: “Accordingly, as he enters strongly or feebly into the soul of the doer and the spectator, his revenge will be more bitter or more tame. If he is entirely lacking in this sort of imagination, he will not think at all of revenge, as the

feeling of ‘honor’ is not present in him, and accordingly cannot be wounded” (WS 33). Nietzsche makes two claims here about the relationship between honor and empathy. First, as we have already said, without the ability to “enter” into the perspective of others, one cannot feel the full weight of either the pleasure of our assailants or the judgments of shame they and any other spectators level at us, and as such, one does not feel wounded in the sense of “dishonored.” I see no reason why, on Nietzsche’s view, feeling the full force of judgments of respect would not operate similarly. The second claim we can draw from this passage is that empathy is directly correlated with the intensity of our vengefulness in the case of injury. The more we feel the success, the pride, the pleasure of our attacker, the more we wish to restore our honor through retribution.

Empathy is also at the heart of our ability to honor in the sense Nietzsche values. If honor is characterized by a certain form of respect, and the specific form this respect takes is reverence, as I have argued it is, then empathy is central to the process by which one higher type comes to revere another. Recall Nietzsche’s description of how the higher type

moves among those who are equal and of equal standing with the same certainty of shame [*Scham*] and sophisticated reverence [*Ehrfurcht*] that it has in its interaction with itself. . . . It is one more part of its egoism, this subtlety and self-restraint in interaction with its equals—every star is such an egoist—it honors itself in them and in those rights that it delegates to them (BGE 265)

Now consider again Nietzsche’s description of what I have claimed is the higher type’s truly characteristic feature:

What reveals the noble human being, how do people recognize him, under this heavy, oppressive sky at the beginning of the rule of the rabble, which is making everything opaque and leaden? –It is not the actions which prove him—actions are always ambiguous, always inscrutable—; nor is it the "works." . . . It is not the works, but the belief which is here decisive and determines the order of rank . . . The noble soul has reverence for itself (BGE 287).

This passage establishes that actions and works—in other words, external signs—are insufficient to mark a person as a higher type. The only reliable or “decisive” indicator of someone’s rank is *internal*. In order to recognize an equal, Nietzsche’s exemplars must first, be aware of their own rank, which is their only yardstick for judging the rank of others, but also be capable of inferring the internal features of others. Though Nietzsche does not mention it by name, I submit that this process must

be empathic; there is no other capacity we have that would allow us to understand the inner life of another. We can find some support for this view by returning to Nietzsche's description of how the "soul *feels* close to something most worthy of reverence" (BGE 263). That feeling of affinity or process of identification is best explained as an empathic process.

We can go further still. If exercising empathy is conducive to the development of an honor system and individual honor in a number of ways, and an investment in honor saturates the life of the higher type, then on Nietzsche's account, it would be implausible to conceive of higher types who aren't skilled and sensitive empathizers whose capacities are not deadened by their elevation in rank, but rather are further refined. It is difficult to see how a nascent higher type who lacked the ability to feel intensely the impacts of their judgments, the judgments of others, or to discern another's rank would be able to develop themselves into the kinds of exemplars Nietzsche describes as length. Thus, it is appropriate to conclude that highly developed empathic capacities are part of what constitutes a higher type, rather than merely incidental features they might tend to possess.

There are still other connections between empathy and honor, but for the sake of brevity, I will restrict myself to the above. In any case, it should be clear by now that Nietzsche considers the two to be inextricably linked and in constant interaction.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The portrait of Nietzsche I have reconstructed here should reveal the stark insufficiency of the Neo-Stoic view. Nietzsche does not recommend the pursuit naked self-interest above all else—he is deeply invested in an ethos of honor that includes commitments to ethical concepts like reverence and reciprocity, and believes this ethos to be suited to creatures like us because of our psychological tendencies, but also closely linked to the achievement of human excellence. And in contrast to the

view that Nietzsche sees little value in empathy, I have demonstrated that not only does he think empathy saturates and fuels our social lives, but that it, too, plays an important role in human excellence, sometimes even in the form of sympathy. If Nietzsche criticizes empathy and praises its regulation, it is not because he finds empathy useless, but on the contrary, it is a fragile capacity, because it is too important to lose through overuse and exhaustion. Nietzsche thinks that a person who cannot regulate either their general sensitivity to others' judgments or their reactive attitudes to those same judgments will renounce the "playground of honor" (NF-1875,9[1]). In doing so, he claims, they will "become a hermit" and "constrain their empathetic affections to the smallest measure." In other words, while the deeply social nature of competitive honor and other components of social life might actually be conducive to the production and refinement empathy in general, a person who, from exhaustion, injury, or fear, gives up the social world of honor will end up giving up empathy, and all its rich potential, including its uses outside the context of honor.⁴⁵ The caricature of Nietzsche's exemplars offered by Nussbaum, in particular, is described precisely as a negative consequence of uncontrolled empathy by Nietzsche himself.

Finally, I want to raise the question of what Nietzsche, as I have portrayed him here, still has to offer moral philosophy, and offer a few suggestions in response. Thinkers like Hume and Smith, among others, are often praised for their nuanced and wide-ranging remarks on our empathic capacities. While I have begun to investigate Nietzsche's views on empathy, this area of his thought remains undertreated, and worth further investigation for the insights it can yield into this still-opaque phenomenon. Nietzsche's work on honor also has significant contributions to make in the recent debate not only about honor itself, but also about the much more common philosophical theme of dignity and equal respect. And finally, for moral philosophers invested in the ideas that

⁴⁵ Discussing all the rich uses of empathy in Nietzsche is outside the scope of this paper, but there is good evidence for thinking that it is conducive to the production of higher types even outside of the ambit of an honor ethos.

Nietzsche criticizes, it is best to confront him at his most subtle and formidable, which requires still more close reading. I hope to have at least gestured in the direction of each of these projects.

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