

of development, not only humans as individuals—and that Nietzsche treats drive cultivation at social and species levels, not only at the individual level.<sup>5</sup>

Relatedly, Church treats the sovereign individual in *Genealogy of Morals* II.2 (236–37) as the “best illustration of freedom as self-determination in the exemplar” (237). This is not surprising given his strongly Kantian account of exemplarity (17–20). Yet this does not fit with Church’s reading of section 11 of “Richard Wagner,” where he acknowledges that for Nietzsche, (i) freedom is the key virtue of the exemplar, and (ii) freedom connects to the “transcendence of morality” that we find in Nietzsche’s later critique of morality as well as in his middle writings (229). As Lawrence Hatab shows, the sovereign individual’s characteristic of autonomy is the legacy of moralization, not freedom from moralization, and as Christa Davis Acampora points out, Nietzsche anticipates ongoing development for humanity and for individual human selves that reaches beyond the sovereign individual of *GM* II.2.<sup>6</sup> Church’s reading of “Richard Wagner” would be more internally consistent if he treated Nietzschean exemplars as less Kantian and more focused on human type development. This would also fit with Nietzsche’s thinking on the natural in the *Observations*. For Church, Nietzsche’s exemplary individuals merely serve to liberate humanity from nature (20). Yet Nietzsche claims that “only what is natural, not what is unnatural, can ever experience true satisfactions or deliverance” and that “what is natural desires to be transformed through love” (RW, 328), placing exemplarity within the scope of the natural, and foreshadowing his thinking on translating humanity back into nature in *Dawn* and *Beyond Good and Evil*.

## The Politics of the Exemplar

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Nietzsche’s project, it has often been said, is a *critical* one: he offers a profound critique of society, but no positive vision of what should come in its stead.

<sup>5</sup>See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, trans. Brittain Smith (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), §560. Cf. Rebecca Bamford, “Health and Self-Cultivation in *Dawn*,” in *Nietzsche’s Free Spirit Philosophy*, ed. Rebecca Bamford (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), 85–109.

<sup>6</sup>Lawrence Hatab, *A Nietzschean Defense of Democracy: An Experiment in Postmodern Politics* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995). Christa Davis Acampora, “On Sovereignty and Overhumanity: Why It Matters How We Read Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* II:2,” in *Critical Essays on the Classics: Nietzsche’s “On the Genealogy of Morals,”* ed. Christa Davis Acampora (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 147–62.

Church sets out to challenge this view in his excellent commentary, arguing that the figure of the exemplar allows us to move towards Nietzsche's ideal society, one in which the *Übermensch* might come into being. An exemplar is not someone to be copied; rather Church, through Kant, understands the figure as offering a model to be followed, and indeed establishing rules through which human excellence might be judged. Given that the *Übermensch* will revalue life, the use of the exemplar as the transitional figure towards Nietzsche's ideal allows Church to avoid the contradiction of positing future values that it is up to the *Übermensch* to create.

Alongside Kant, Church shows an impressive command of both the influence a number of prominent (Schopenhauer, Hegel, Rousseau) and less so (Lange, Spir) philosophers had on Nietzsche, along with more literary figures such as Goethe and Schiller, and he has a mastery of the secondary literature that extends to so-called "Continental" readings too (Derrida, Foucault, Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe). What ensues is a thoroughly pedagogical reading of Nietzsche's *Unfashionable Observations*—the book is part of the Edinburgh Critical Guides to Nietzsche series. This method of close reading is indebted to the Straussian school of interpretation, which the opening reference to Catherine Zuckert (1n1), who has written a number of studies of Strauss, makes clear. Such a reading gives interpretations of Nietzsche, notably on the relationship between politics and philosophy, a certain steer, to which we will return.

Church's in-depth and thorough commentary stimulates a number of thoughts, particularly relating to his chapter on "Schopenhauer as Educator," not just because of its centrality to understanding the figure of the exemplar, but also because it is especially pertinent to the question of politics. The first concerns the relationship between the *Observations* and Nietzsche's earlier writings and lectures on the Greeks in Basle, namely, the unpublished "Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks" and his lectures on the pre-Platonic philosophers. There Nietzsche explains that the early Greek philosophers (Thales, Heraclitus) up to and including Socrates—hence the unusual "pre-Platonic" name—were characterized by the unity of their thought ("all is fire," "all is water") and that their philosophy was in harmony with the city in which they lived: that politics and philosophy went hand in hand. This is why Socrates chose not to flee, accepting rather to drink the hemlock. Plato, on the other hand—and in response to Socrates's death—would "fight against his time," desiring to overthrow Athenian democracy and replace it with philosopher-kings, and his own philosophy was now "mixed" or "hybrid," that is, it integrated aspects of his predecessors' philosophies, notably Socrates's ethics and Parmenides's metaphysics. This suggests that one of Nietzsche's early aims was to try to reconnect philosophy and politics, which following Socrates's death had become antagonists. According to this view, cultural renewal requires a new harmonious relationship between philosophy and politics, and part of overcoming the legacy of Plato is overcoming the politics/philosophy divide.

Building on his earlier *Nietzsche's Culture of Humanity: Beyond Aristocracy and Democracy in the Early Period* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), Church makes an important contribution to our thinking about Nietzsche and politics in arguing that Nietzsche must be understood neither as a democrat nor an aristocrat, but rather as a meritocrat. The democratic reading is right in thinking that everyone can participate in culture, but it fails to see that cultural geniuses are in fact very rare, while the aristocratic reading is wrong to think that culture is necessarily linked to inequality. This meritocratic reading is highly novel and constitutes a key contribution to the debate. It has much to commend it, not least that Nietzsche does believe both that culture can come from everywhere and that—the reading of Nietzsche as the prophet of “heroic individualism” notwithstanding—culture and the individual are in reality mutually constitutive: after all, when Zarathustra is confronted with the “heaviest” thought of the eternal return, he must affirm not simply the return of the *Übermensch* but that of the “small man” too.<sup>1</sup> Both have a role to play: one in preserving the species, the other in helping it evolve. Without the first it would lose itself, without the second it would stagnate.

The question is whether Nietzsche believes that humankind is as malleable as Church claims, and indeed Church appears to concede the point in his discussion of education when he writes that “in all individuals, ‘everything’ in their character . . . already ‘strives toward a central point, a root force’” (145), which suggests that, on Nietzsche’s view, individuals are perhaps not as plastic as Church makes them out to be. Nietzsche’s motto, after all, is “Become who you are,”<sup>2</sup> not “Become anything you want,” which points towards the fact that there are limits to how much one might achieve in giving oneself “grand style.” This implies that although Nietzsche does believe that great culture can come from anywhere—the *noblesse d’esprit* is not reserved to a *noblesse de sang*—this does not mean that anyone can become a cultural genius: only some can. Nietzsche remains elitist to that degree at least.

Church submits that that which stands in the way of becoming a cultural genius is in fact self-imposed, in the Kantian sense of a “self-incurred” immaturity (184), and he proceeds to list what Nietzsche believes to stand in the way—the market, state, society, and scholarship—and how these might be overcome. But this gives the impression that the obstacles to high culture are solely external, and that everyone truly wants to participate in its creation. In his previous work Church argued that Nietzsche’s early political vision, as expressed in “The Greek State,” need not be interpreted as being as coercive

<sup>1</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. Adrian del Caro and Robert Pippin, trans. Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 176–77 (III 13, “The Convalescent,” §2).

<sup>2</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 152 (III 270).

as it is usually taken to be, but another way to think about this is in terms of the “last man” of the later works, who refuses to participate in the creation of high culture.<sup>3</sup> Rather than finding his dignity in being a means to high culture, the last man defends his own philistinism. So the question is: What is to be done with the last man? Must coercion again play a role in forcing him to accept the coming of the *Übermensch*? Is high culture therefore still invariably linked with political inequality?

Church recognizes how the relationship between the state and culture for Nietzsche evolves over time: for the ancients the state served as the handmaiden to culture, but with the modern *Kulturstaat*, culture is handmaiden to the state. Church acknowledges that in his later writings Nietzsche endeavored to conceive of a new, alternative way in which culture and politics might relate to one another, something I have tried to explore.<sup>4</sup> But this brings us back to Church’s understanding of Nietzsche’s view of the relation between politics and philosophy, namely, that there is an “insurmountable” opposition between them and that the philosopher “may have to cloak his true views of the state” (198). There is an echo here of Leo Strauss’s *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, and it is debatable whether this is what Nietzsche himself thought: he was very open about his critique of politics. Yet in “Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks” Nietzsche’s aim was to reunite philosophy and politics, whether or not that involves developing two distinct spheres within which the few and the many can live their lives. This raises the question of the exact status of the *Observations* in relation to the rest of Nietzsche’s corpus: Can it be considered his philosophy *in nuce*, or does Nietzsche substantively modify some of his earlier positions? If the latter, then attending to some of Nietzsche’s writings from the 1880s is necessary to see the entire picture.

Church’s concluding chapter illuminatingly traces how Nietzsche’s later works develop themes that appear in the *Observations*, such as unity, history, exemplarity, and self-tyranny, but the question remains whether we also need to read his later work, from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* onwards, to understand him fully. Either way, Church’s excellent commentary has raised that question in a new way, and forcefully places the *Observations* on the map of Nietzsche scholarship, giving them, in many ways, their academic *lettres de noblesse*. In doing so he has made his own work indispensable.

<sup>3</sup>Jeffrey Church, “Nietzsche’s Early Perfectionism: A Cultural Reading of ‘The Greek State,’” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 46, no. 2 (2015): 248–60.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Hugo Drochon, *Nietzsche’s Great Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).