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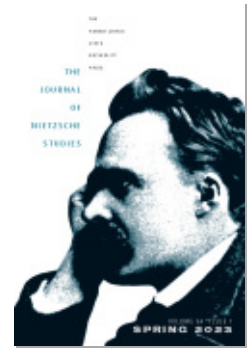
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## Against Focusing on the Internal Conditions of Nietzschean Greatness

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# Against Focusing on the Internal Conditions of Nietzschean Greatness

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*Abstract:* After reconstructing three arguments for Nietzsche's descriptive analysis of the self as complex, this article clarifies some of greatness's psychological conditions. It then offers three arguments for why we should not focus on these internal conditions when seeking to verify or to achieve greatness. First, Nietzsche's descriptive analysis of the self renders introspection too coarse-grained and error-prone to verify the subtle type of unity required for greatness. Second, Nietzsche associates introspective appraisal of one's psyche with a moral project that weakens and represses the drives, such that inquiry into whether greatness's internal conditions are satisfied typically speaks against their realization. Finally, the actions characteristic of Nietzsche's great individuals prohibit introspective preoccupation with oneself. These arguments suggest that we should attend to outwardly directed accomplishments, rather than psychology, when appraising the greatness of others and seeking to become great ourselves.

*Keywords:* self, drives, self-consciousness, introspection, greatness

While Nietzsche describes the self as composed of competing drives and affects, he considers unification of these drives and affects a valuable accomplishment.<sup>1</sup> The incongruity between these positions prompts scholars to ask whether Nietzsche's descriptive analysis of the self enables the emergence of his normative ideal.<sup>2</sup> I'd like to ask a different question about the relation between these accounts: In light of Nietzsche's descriptive analysis of the self, what constitutes reliable evidence for the realization of his normative notion of self-unification?

To sharpen this question, I focus on Nietzsche's most overtly normative notion, that of greatness. Much attention has been devoted to specifying the

psychological or “internal” conditions of greatness, including and especially the condition of self-unification.<sup>3</sup> Brian Leiter suggests that such internal characteristics are “plainly sufficient” for greatness.<sup>4</sup> But Patrick Hassan contends that “there are two relevant features of greatness to consider: what a great agent *is*, or their internal conditions (i.e., ‘character’); and what a great agent *does*, or their external conditions (i.e., achievements).”<sup>5</sup> As an exegetical matter, Hassan is surely right that Nietzschean greatness requires a particular psychological condition and laudable accomplishments of some kind.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, and in opposition to Nietzsche’s and scholars’ suggestions to the contrary, I will argue that, as a practical matter of verifying and pursuing greatness, we should *only* focus on greatness’s external conditions.

After reconstructing three arguments for Nietzsche’s descriptive analysis of the self as complex, I clarify some of the psychological conditions of greatness. I then offer three arguments for why we should not focus on these internal conditions when seeking to verify or to achieve greatness. First, Nietzsche’s descriptive analysis of the self renders introspection too coarse-grained and error-prone to verify the subtle type of unity required for greatness. Second, Nietzsche associates introspective appraisal of one’s psyche with a moral project that weakens and represses the drives, such that inquiry into whether greatness’s internal conditions are satisfied typically speaks against their realization. Finally, the characteristic actions undertaken by Nietzsche’s great individuals prohibit introspective preoccupation with oneself. These arguments suggest that we should attend to outwardly directed accomplishments, rather than psychology, when appraising the greatness of others and seeking to become great ourselves.

### Nietzsche’s Descriptive Account of the Self as Complex

Nietzsche unequivocally denies that the self is a simple unity. A well-known passage from *BGE* urges us to “declare war” on “*atomism of the soul* [. . .] the belief that the soul is something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, that it is a monad” (*BGE* 12).<sup>7</sup> Rather than completely abandon the notion of the soul though, Nietzsche entertains “new versions and sophistications of the soul hypothesis,” including the soul as a “subject-multiplicity” and “a society constructed out of drives and affects” (*BGE* 12).<sup>8</sup> This passage is no outlier. Nietzsche consistently analyzes the self as complex (*HH* 82; *AOM* 17;

*D* 109, 115, 119; *GS* 1, 11, 333, 335; *Z I* “Despisers”; *BGE* 6, 9, 17, 19–20, 187, 200; *GM* I:13, III:9, 12; *A* 39; *TI* “Reason” 5, “Errors” 3). As this claim is at odds with our tendency to understand ourselves as unities, Nietzsche must explain why we overlook the self’s complexity.<sup>9</sup> He offers at least three arguments on this score.<sup>10</sup>

### *Three Arguments Against the Self’s Unity*

One argument Nietzsche offers against the unified self concerns “the seduction of words” (*BGE* 16; see also *D* 115–16; *BGE* 16, 20–21; *GM* I:13; *TI* “Reason” 5, “Errors” 3).<sup>11</sup> According to this argument, belief in the self’s unity is a baseless assumption produced by imbuing grammatical conventions with metaphysical weight. Nietzsche raises a version of this point against Descartes’s *cogito*. Faced with the “immediate certainty” of the proposition “I think,” he asks: “What gives me the right to speak about an I, and, for that matter, about an I as a cause, and, finally, about an I as the cause of thoughts?” (*BGE* 16). These questions about the metaphysical presuppositions lurking behind the first-person pronoun are not resolved by replacing the “I” with some impersonal unity. Nietzsche goes on: “It thinks: but to say the ‘it’ is just that famous old ‘I’ [. . .] there is already too much packed into the ‘it thinks’: even the ‘it’ contains an *interpretation* of the process, and does not belong to the process itself. People are following grammatical habits here” (*BGE* 17). In *GM* Nietzsche strengthens this argument by suggesting that language’s tendency to posit a unified self distinct from activity is explanatorily inept. “A quantum of power is [. . .] nothing other than this very driving, willing, effecting, and only through the seduction of language [. . .] which understands and misunderstands all effecting as conditioned by an effecting something, by a ‘subject,’ can it appear otherwise. For just as common people separate the lightning from its flash and take the latter as a *doing*, as an effect of a subject called lightning, so popular morality also separates strength from the expressions of strength as if there were behind the strong an indifferent substratum that is free to express strength—or not to. But there is no such substratum; [. . .] ‘the doer’ is simply fabricated into the doing—the doing is everything” (*GM* I:13). Indo-Germanic languages’ requirement that distinct subjects accompany verbs encourages us to understand agents as ontologically distinct from actions. However, just as it is grammatically correct but metaphysically misleading to say “lightning

strikes” (for the lightning *is* the striking), it is misleading to say “the subject acts.” Both phrases imply an explanatorily otiose substratum behind activity, whereas activity is primitive. On this argument, the self’s apparent unity is a duplicitous product of language.

The foregoing quotation from *GM* alludes to a second argument against the unified self by suggesting that the linguistic postulate of a substantial self is reinforced by “popular morality.”<sup>12</sup> This understanding of the self purchases several moral claims, including a form of egalitarianism (for while all actions are realized differently, all substrata are equal), an understanding of the soul as immortal (for that which is indivisible cannot be destroyed), and a specific notion of responsibility (as the distinction between agents and actions creates space for a libertarian notion of freedom). While these conceptual connections do not prove that morality’s understanding of the self is *false*, *GM* broadly aims to show how morality could have developed to satisfy the contingent, psycho-physiological and sociohistorical interests of particular individuals. By explaining morality’s emergence as an unseemly pursuit of power, rather than truth, genealogy undermines our confidence in morality’s presuppositions. Nietzsche advances such a debunking argument against the unified self, writing: “small wonder if the suppressed, hidden glowing affects of revenge and hate exploit this belief and basically even uphold no other belief more ardently than this one” (*GM* I:13). The self’s apparent unity is thus also explained by morality, which distorts our self-understanding to satisfy “affects of revenge and hate.”<sup>13</sup>

Although Nietzsche maintains that the drives comprising individuals are in competition, such that “each drive craves mastery” over the others (*BGE* 6), he also contends that these struggles are typically unconscious and that consciousness retroactively identifies with whatever drive emerges from these contests as victorious. In another well-known passage, Nietzsche reviews six methods for combating a drive before concluding: “in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of *another drive* which is a *rival* of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us. [. . .] While ‘we’ believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, at bottom it is one drive *which is complaining about another*” (*D* 109; see also *D* 115). Sometimes such struggles do not result in the dominance of a single drive but in “a kind of justice and contract” among several. Here too, Nietzsche concludes: “since only the ultimate reconciliation scenes and final accounts of this long process rise to consciousness, we suppose that *intelligere*

must be something conciliatory [. . .] something opposed to the instincts, when in fact *it is only a certain behavior of the drives toward one another*” (GS 333).<sup>14</sup> He offers similar explanations of reflective deliberation (AOM 26; D 129) and willing (D 116; BGE 19), where individuals only register the outcomes of complex, unconscious processes. On this third argument, consciousness’s identification with dominant drives *ex post facto* explains the self’s apparent unity.

### *Historicizing Nietzsche's Arguments*

Notwithstanding their cumulative force, one may doubt whether these arguments overwhelm the unified character of first-person experience. In a Kantian spirit, one might consider the unity of self-consciousness a transcendental condition necessary for experience to be coherent.<sup>15</sup> If this is right, the claim that the self is complex must be mistaken, lest the unified character of experience be inexplicable.

To see how Nietzsche might respond to this challenge, we can consider his hypothesis that “*consciousness in general has developed only under the pressure of the need to communicate*” (GS 354). Human ancestors faced challenges that they could not meet alone. Survival necessitated cooperation. But cooperation requires the ability to communicate one’s needs and thus *consciousness* of one’s needs. Nietzsche accordingly infers that “consciousness is the result of a terrible ‘must’ which has ruled over man for a long time: as the most endangered animal, he *needed* help and protection [. . .] he had to express his neediness and be able to make himself understood—and to do so, he first needed ‘consciousness’” (GS 354).<sup>16</sup> On this account, self-consciousness is a product, rather than a condition, of experience—to wit, a product of experiences of vulnerability. This underwrites Nietzsche’s claim that those who view consciousness as “the unity of the organism” indulge in “a ridiculous overestimation and misapprehension of consciousness.” If consciousness is “the latest development of the organic, and hence its most unfinished feature” (GS 11), consciousness’s image of the self is not necessarily reliable.

Nietzsche’s explanation of self-consciousness’s emergence lends considerable support to his arguments against the unified self. If “the development of language and the development of consciousness [. . .] go hand

in hand,” then consciousness should adopt language’s positing of the self as a substratum (GS 354). This bolsters Nietzsche’s argument about the seduction of words. It also strengthens his argument about morality, albeit less directly. To enable communication, words must designate common experiences. Social demands therefore shape language. But if language and consciousness are ineluctably bound together, then social demands also shape consciousness.<sup>17</sup> As Nietzsche puts it: consciousness “was necessary, was useful, only between persons [. . .] and developed only in proportion to that usefulness” (GS 354). Insofar as such social demands are expressed in moral norms that regulate individuals’ behavior, it is unsurprising that morality shapes consciousness’s image of the self. Finally, this explanation of self-consciousness buttresses Nietzsche’s argument about retroactive identification. If self-consciousness develops to track pressing, unmet needs so that they might be communicated, then self-consciousness’s fitness-enhancing function requires neglecting non-pressing and uncommon needs. Hence self-consciousness does not track each of the drives (*D* 115–16, 119, 129; *GS* 333, 354, 357; *BGE* 3, 19, 32, 34; *A* 39). In fact, Nietzsche’s account of the development of self-consciousness does not merely strengthen each of his arguments against the unified self in *isolation*. By suggesting that language, social demands, and consciousness are developmentally entangled, his account of self-consciousness also makes his arguments *mutually reinforcing*, allowing each to fortify the others.<sup>18</sup>

It merits emphasizing that the mind, for Nietzsche, is not a *tabula rasa*. He maintains that “through immense periods of time, the intellect produced nothing but errors; some of them turned out to be useful and species-preserving,” with the result that “such erroneous articles of faith [. . .] were passed on by inheritance further and further, and finally became part of the basic endowment of the species” (GS 110). By Nietzsche’s lights, belief in the unified self is one such useful error: it enables communication, promotes social accountability, and simplifies experience. But utility is not veracity.<sup>19</sup> Nietzsche can accordingly explain the forcefulness of the belief that the self is unified by appealing to the way its usefulness led it to become embedded in humans’ cognitive architecture—and without considering this belief true. His account of self-consciousness *historicizes* his arguments against the unified self, so that their mutually reinforcing, distortive effects shape humans’ self-understanding over millennia.

## Nietzsche's Normative Account of the Self as Unified: Greatness's Internal Conditions

Despite describing the self as composed of competing drives, Nietzsche considers self-unification a normative achievement. This is arguably evident from his repeated praise of self-mastery.<sup>20</sup> Psychic unity also figures in Nietzsche's notion of health. He diagnoses those whose "body and soul lack a center of balance" as victims of a "sickly constitution" (*BGE* 208) and describes states in which "anarchy threatens the instincts" as forms of "corruption" (*BGE* 258) and "degeneration" (*TI* "Skirmishes" 41). Conversely, he describes healthy individuals as exhibiting psychic unity.<sup>21</sup> But rather than focusing on Nietzsche's concepts of self-mastery and health, I'd like to examine his most overtly normative notion—that of greatness.<sup>22</sup> In particular, I will ask after the *internal* conditions of greatness, postponing discussion of greatness's outward expression and setting aside the question of *how* greatness is achieved altogether.<sup>23</sup>

Nietzsche's notes from 1884 specify some internal conditions of greatness:

The human being, in contrast with the animal, has bred to greatness in himself a plentitude of *opposing* drives and impulses: by way of this synthesis he is master of the earth. Moralities are the expression of locally restricted *orders of rank* in this multiple world of drives: so that the human being does not perish from their *contradictions*. Thus one drive as master, its opposing drive weakened, refined, as impulse that yields the *stimulus* for the activity of the chief drive. The highest human being would have the greatest multiplicity of drives, and also in the relatively greatest strength that can still be endured. Indeed: where the plant human being shows itself as strong, one finds instincts driving powerfully *against* one another (e.g., Shakespeare), but bound together. (*KSA* 11:27[59])<sup>24</sup>

This passage provides three criteria for greatness.<sup>25</sup> The first concerns the number of drives in an individual. The second, the drives' relative strength. These criteria preclude individuals with a *few* strong drives, or a large number of *weak* drives, from achieving greatness. But whereas Nietzsche values



a maximal number of maximally strong drives—great individuals have “the greatest multiplicity of drives [. . .] in the relatively greatest strength that can still be endured”—the third criterion, which concerns drives’ tension and unity, is more complicated. Nietzsche’s negative evaluation of psychic anarchy prohibits valuing maximal tension: the drives must be “bound together” in a “synthesis” under “one drive as master.” But neither can unity be maximal: greatness requires “instincts driving powerfully *against* one another.” How might Nietzsche’s emphasis on tension be squared with his emphasis on unity?

One way an individual might exhibit psychic unity while maintaining opposition among the drives is if a mastering drive *represses* its competitors. On this model, unity is an effect of a drive’s dominance and opposition describes a dominating drive’s relation to its subordinates. Nietzsche’s diagnosis of Socrates suggests that this kind of unity falls short of greatness, however. He claims that Socrates suffers from a decadent condition in which the drives threaten anarchy, but also that Socrates manages to “master” himself by allowing “*reason* to act as a tyrant” (*TI* “Socrates” 1–4, 9, 10). Nietzsche considers this approach effective but desperate: “The most glaring daylight, rationality at any cost, a cold, bright, cautious, conscious life without instinct, opposed to instinct, was itself just a sickness. [. . .] To *have* to fight the instincts—that is the formula for decadence” (*TI* “Socrates” 11). This rebuke of the need to *fight* the instincts suggests that greatness is not characterized by a dominating drive repressing its competitors.

Another way an individual could exhibit psychic unity is if a dominating drive *incorporates* its subordinates, so that these serve the dominant drive’s aim. To provide a simplistic example, an intellectual drive could *repress* a sex drive, producing a life of celibate scholarship, or it could *integrate* a sex drive, selecting romantic partners for their intellectual traits. The latter sort of unity does not continually fight subordinate drives.<sup>26</sup> When Nietzsche claims that “only this should be called *greatness*: the ability to be just as multiple as whole, just as wide as full” (*BGE* 212; see also *GS* 290), we should take his emphasis on wholeness to indicate a positive evaluation of integrated unity, which permits a multiplicity of drives without descending into psychic anarchy or requiring repression.<sup>27</sup> Nietzsche takes Goethe to exemplify such a condition: “He took as much as he could on himself, to himself, in himself. What he wanted was *totality*; he fought against the separation of reason, sensibility, feeling, will. [. . .] He disciplined himself to wholeness.

[. . .] Goethe conceived of a strong, highly educated, self-respecting human being, skilled in all things physical and able to keep himself in check, who could dare to allow himself the entire expanse and wealth of naturalness” (*TI* “Skirmishes” 49; see also *TI* “Skirmishes” 44, 50–51; *EH* “Clever” 10). After underscoring “wholeness” as an integral part of greatness, Nietzsche suggests that the value of wholeness turns, in part, on how much “the entire expanse and wealth of naturalness” is incorporated. Hence, he affirms Goethe’s ability to take “as much as he could” not just *on* but “in” himself while avoiding the compartmentalization of reason, sensibility, and so forth, and while remaining “able to keep himself in check.”

Still, complete integration of the drives would infringe on Nietzsche’s claim that in great individuals “one finds instincts driving powerfully *against* one another” (*KSA* 11:27[59]). In contrast with the weak and unhealthy individual, whose “most basic desire is for an end to the war that he *is*,” Nietzsche’s great individual experiences psychic conflict as “one *more* stimulus and goad to life,” such that “proficiency and finesse in waging war with himself [. . .] are inherited and cultivated along with his most powerful and irreconcilable drives” (*BGE* 200; see also *HH* 276; *D* 263; *TI* “Morality” 3, “Skirmishes” 44).<sup>28</sup> Can this emphasis on cultivating tension among the drives be reconciled with Nietzsche’s call for psychic unity *and* his repudiation of repression? Yes. Nietzsche’s emphasis on unity can be interpreted as describing the relation of dominating drives to their subordinates, such that dominant drives incorporate, rather than repress, as many subordinate drives as possible. His emphasis on tension, by contrast, can be taken to describe not the relation of a dominating drive to its subordinates, but relations among the subordinate drives alone, so that tension among subordinate drives is cultivated and incorporated, offering an impetus for pursuing a dominating drive’s aim.<sup>29</sup>

If this means of reconciling Nietzsche’s emphasis on cultivating tension among the drives with his emphasis on psychic unity avoids his repudiation of repression, it also makes the psychological profile of great individuals fairly delicate. Greatness requires more than (1) a maximal number of (2) maximally strong drives. It also requires (3) unity among conflicting drives. Yet, as the case of Socrates illustrates, not just any unity among conflicting elements will do. Rather, greatness requires a unity in which (3a) a dominant drive incorporates its subordinates while (3b) cultivating conflict among subordinate drives that (3c) can also be incorporated.

## Against Appraising Greatness's Internal Conditions

Several explanations of how one might achieve psychic unity without presupposing the already unified self that Nietzsche repudiates are on offer.<sup>30</sup> Rather than endorsing a specific account of how this occurs, I will grant that Nietzsche's normative ideal can be achieved without violating his descriptive account of the self. Still, a question remains as to what constitutes reliable evidence of greatness's realization. I will argue that introspective appraisals of one's drives cannot provide such evidence and, in fact, typically provide evidence *against* greatness's realization. If the arguments that follow succeed, they provide reason to resist the trend of focusing on greatness's internal conditions and to focus on its external conditions instead.

### *Introspective Evidence of Greatness's Internal Conditions Is Unreliable*

Assume someone considers herself an exemplar of Nietzschean greatness and supports this belief only with introspective data. Under Nietzsche's descriptive analysis of the self, is the belief justified? No. For Nietzsche, introspection's fitness-enhancing function requires systematically neglecting the majority of drives constituting an individual. He is skeptical whether this opacity can be overcome.

*We are none of us that which we appear to be in accordance with the states for which alone we have consciousness and words. [. . .] Those cruder outburst of which alone we are aware make us *mis-understand* ourselves, we draw a conclusion on the basis of data in which the exceptions outweigh the rule, we misread ourselves in this apparently most intelligible of handwriting on the nature of our self. (D 115)*

However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of *drives* that constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another, and above all the laws of their *nutriment* remain wholly unknown to him. (D 119)

These passages cast serious doubt on introspection's ability to track the drives and their relations. "However far [we] may go in self-knowledge," the "number and strength," as well as the "play and counterplay," of our *cruder* drives "remain wholly unknown" to us. If introspection cannot individuate and analyze the drives in even a coarse-grained fashion, it cannot reliably appraise their (1) number and (2) strength.

Nor can introspection reliably verify (3) unity among the drives. On Nietzsche's descriptive account, the species-enhancing but generally erroneous image of the self as unified is passed down intergenerationally to become part of our all-too-human cognitive architecture. As consciousness develops to misrepresent the self as unified by default, introspective evidence of unity is *prima facie* unreliable. Each of Nietzsche's arguments against the belief in the unified self suggests how introspective appraisals of unity can yield false positives: psychic unity might be erroneously inferred from narrative unity; morality might urge us to conflate an impulse motivating a specific action with a dominant drive to justify attributions of guilt, or to recast some drive as foreign to justify attributions of innocence; and retroactive identification with dominating drives might lead us to mistake the unity of a single drive for unity in our psychic economy as a whole. These suggestions are admittedly vague. But according to Nietzsche, *something* like them is mutually reinforced over vast periods of history. The developmental and historical character of his descriptive analysis of the self aims to explain how misattributions of psychic unity become the *rule* rather than the exception. This makes introspective evidence of psychic unity unreliable.<sup>31</sup>

Things get worse if we recall that greatness requires a fairly delicate type of unity. False positives also undermine the reliability of introspective evidence of (3a) a dominant drive incorporating its subordinates. While Nietzsche considers Socrates a case of tyrannical self-mastery, Socrates would surely describe his nutritive and appetitive drives as incorporated to promote his rational appreciation of the Forms. If Socrates's soul is tyrannical, he is unaware of this.<sup>32</sup> Strain between conditions (3a) and (3b), that one cultivates tension among subordinate drives, also impairs introspective evidence of (3a)'s satisfaction. It is not clear that introspection, on Nietzsche's account, can dependably distinguish the tension that characterizes a tyrannical drive's repression of its subordinates from potentially productive tension among subordinate drives alone. Considering (3b) in its own right, Nietzsche emphasizes that the "play and counterplay" among our *cruder*

drives “remain wholly unknown” (*D* 119). Indeed, he repeatedly suggests that *only* dominant drives rise to self-consciousness.<sup>33</sup> If subordinate drives are introspectively inaccessible, they cannot be phenomenologically individuated, much less appraised for whether they are in tension. This also impairs introspective evidence that (3c) tension among subordinate drives is incorporated to stimulate a dominant drive.

To underscore the point, suppose that our assumed individual *really is* great. Her belief that she exhibits the internal conditions of greatness would be *true* and yet the justification offered by introspection would be merely apparent. Nietzsche’s arguments for his descriptive analysis of the self severely deflate the power and accuracy of introspection, such that it cannot reliably track greatness’s subtle, internal conditions.

*Introspection Speaks Against the Realization of Greatness’s  
Internal Conditions*

A tendency to introspectively appraise one’s drives also speaks against the realization of Nietzsche’s normative aims.<sup>34</sup> A middle work asserts: “Active, successful natures act, not according to the dictum ‘know thyself,’ but as if there hovered before them the commandment: *will* a self and thou shalt *become* a self” (*AOM* 366). Similarly, one of Nietzsche’s last publications cautions: “Becoming what you are presupposes that you do not have the slightest idea *what* you are. [. . .] *nosce te ipsum* [know thyself] is the recipe for decline, then forgetting yourself, *misunderstanding* yourself, belittling, narrowing yourself, making yourself mediocre. [. . .] The whole surface of consciousness [. . .] has to be kept free from all of the great imperatives” (*EH* “Clever” 9). These warnings against rendering self-knowledge as a “commandment” and “imperative” are unsurprising. After all, Nietzsche diagnoses the most famous adherent to the dictum “know thyself”—Socrates—with repressing his drives under the tyranny of reason. But Socrates’s example, however instructive, is too extreme to license the claim that introspectively appraising one’s drives *generally* speaks against greatness’s realization. Another, more common form of the command to know oneself introspectively must be uncovered and shown to undermine greatness’s internal conditions.

*BGE* offers a compact genealogy of how a demand for introspective knowledge becomes widespread. Nietzsche posits a “*pre-moral* period,” when “an action’s value [. . .] was derived from its consequences” and

“the imperative ‘know thyself!’ was still unknown” (*BGE* 32). This yields to “aristocratic values and the belief in ‘origin’” as conferring value, which in turn enables “a disastrous new superstition, a distinctive narrowness of interpretation,” on which “the origin of the action was interpreted in the most determinate and narrow sense possible, as origin out of an *intention*” (*BGE* 32).<sup>35</sup> With this, “know thyself” becomes a moral command to introspectively appraise actions’ underlying motivations.

Well-known passages from *GM* elaborate on this transition from aristocratic values (now called master morality) to morality in the narrow sense (now slave morality). Appeal to the domain of intentions allows the weak to hold the strong accountable for their actions (*GM* I:13) and to recharacterize weaknesses as virtues: “powerlessness” becomes “kindness”; “subjection” becomes “obedience”; “cowardice” becomes “patience”; and so on (*GM* I:14). These values produce a “hopelessly mediocre and uninspiring being” by prohibiting individuals from expressing their strongest drives (*GM* I:11). But the drives repressed under slave morality do not simply disappear. Nietzsche maintains that “all instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn themselves inwards*” and that “the entire inner world [. . .] has spread and unfolded [. . .] to the same extent that man’s outward discharging [of drives] has been *obstructed*” (*GM* II:16). He is particularly interested in slave morality’s obstruction of aggressive drives, which target *other drives* upon becoming internalized, thereby producing a form of self-inflicted cruelty called “bad conscience” (*GM* II:16). This striking recharacterization of self-consciousness helps explain why Nietzsche holds that “growing consciousness is a danger” and even “a sickness” (*GS* 354; see also *GS* 357). Far from signaling healthy self-control, a tendency to introspectively appraise the drives is proportionate to the drives’ repression and subsequent internalization, which intensifies psychic conflict.

Psychic conflict is not categorically regrettable, for Nietzsche. Bad conscience, for example, makes humans “interesting” (*GM* II:14; see also *GM* II:19) and can be redirected toward life-affirmation (*GM* II:24). But Nietzsche esteems certain *responses* to psychic conflict over others. How might someone in the throes of slave morality and the ascetic ideal respond to psychic conflict? According to Nietzsche, the notions of “guilt” and “sin” will lead him to target an increasing number of drives under bad conscience and to blame *himself* for the resulting psychological strife, creating a feedback loop of self-flagellation (*GM* III:20). This tormented condition

might incite a desire for “an end to the war that he *is*” (BGE 200). And self-consciousness can help pursue this desire. Nietzsche’s claim that “the development of consciousness [. . . is] an exertion that is sapping an unnecessarily large amount of strength away from the organism” (A 14; see also GS 354, 357) suggests that conscious reflection is taxing: it drains individuals’ strength and diverts energy away from drives’ outward discharge. Should weakening the drives under self-consciousness fail to make psychic conflict tolerable, an ascetic adherent to slave morality might try *eradicating* specific drives.<sup>36</sup> “The same methods—castration, eradication—are instinctively chosen by people whose wills are too weak and degenerate to exercise any restraint in the struggle against a desire,” Nietzsche writes. “They need a *gap* between themselves and the passion” (TI “Morality” 2).<sup>37</sup> This gap, which Nietzsche compares to the abbey where Trappist monks cloister themselves from the outside world, is provided by introspection, which redirects energy away from the drives, weakening them so they might be excised. On this approach to psychic tension, self-conscious appraisal of one’s psyche is associated with (~2) weakening, (~3a) repressing, and even (~1) castrating the drives (~3b, ~3c) to eradicate their tension.<sup>38</sup>

This is not to suggest that introspection, or morality’s use of it, has *no* value. Nietzsche admits that subjecting oneself to “the ‘tyranny of such arbitrary laws’” is an “indispensable means of disciplining [. . .] the spirit” toward “*obedience* in one direction for a long time” (BGE 188; see also GMII:1–2; EH “Clever” 9). Morality trains individuals to control their drives. And while realizing greatness requires overcoming morality (BGE 212; GM P:6), morality’s use of self-consciousness prepares individuals to weaken their drives and their tension *temporarily* so they might be “spiritualized,” rather than eradicated (TI “Morality” 1, 3).<sup>39</sup> For those who overcome morality, self-consciousness’s weakening of the drives can facilitate (3a) the incorporation of (1) a maximal number of drives and (3c) their tension, which can then (1, 3b) be strengthened to further stimulate a dominant drive.

Unfortunately, Nietzsche’s skepticism about consciousness’s ability to track the drives deprives individuals of the control group needed to determine whether their particular use of introspection works toward or away from greatness. It is doubtful whether temporarily weakening a drive to facilitate its incorporation is phenomenologically distinguishable from tyrannical repression, or whether successful incorporation is phenomenologically distinguishable from castration. But Nietzsche considers greatness

rare and considers slave morality common (*BGE* 202; *GM* I:12). Presumably, then, *most* uses of introspection serve slave morality's aims.<sup>40</sup>

For the sake of argument though, assume someone overcomes morality and uses self-consciousness only to pursue incorporation. At the apex of this lengthy process, "power over oneself" will have "sunk into [her] lowest depth and become instinct" (*GM* II:2). Upon incorporating the drives and their tension, this individual no longer needs self-conscious reflection to weaken them. She can forget herself and act instinctively.<sup>41</sup> Hence, even when introspection works toward greatness, a tendency to introspectively appraise one's drives provides evidence that one is not *yet* great but continues to struggle toward incorporation.<sup>42</sup>

*Introspection Speaks Against the Realization of an External Condition of Greatness*

While I have so far discussed greatness's internal conditions, greatness presumably also requires *accomplishments* of some kind. Absent this, individuals without goals, with trivial goals, or who continually fail to achieve laudable goals, would be great. This external condition raises questions about what makes a goal great, or accomplished, among others.<sup>43</sup> Rather than get into these weeds, I will focus on a feature of deeds that *Nietzsche* considers great—viz., that they preclude introspective preoccupation with oneself.

Nietzsche considers the drive to self-preservation a derivative and corrupt expression of power. He writes: "To wish to preserve oneself is a sign of distress, of a limitation of the truly basic life-instinct, which aims at *the expansion of power* and in so doing often enough risks and sacrifices self-preservation" (*GS* 349; see also *Z* II "Self-Overcoming"; *BGE* 13). Little wonder, then, that Nietzsche's great individuals pursue power's expansion to the point of overwhelming self-preservation.<sup>44</sup> A middle work describes "great spirits" in these terms: "their most productive moments, their flights upwards [. . .] seem to be disproportionate to their constitution as a whole and somehow to exceed their strength. [. . .] So long as genius dwells within us, we are courageous, as if mad, indeed, and are heedless of life" (*D* 538; see also *D* 14). A similar description appears in one of Nietzsche's last works. "Genius—in works, in deeds—is necessarily wasteful and extravagant: Its greatness is in *giving itself away*," he writes. "The instinct for self-preservation gets disconnected, as it were; the overwhelming pressure



of the out-flowing forces does not allow for any sort of oversight or caution” (*TI* “Skirmishes” 44). These characterizations of great undertakings as overwhelming caution, oversight, and self-preservation, to the point of verging on madness, suggest that when individuals attempt great deeds, they are not concerned with themselves—introspectively or otherwise.

This description of great deeds may conjure images of thrill-seekers free-climbing El Capitan or surfing gigantic waves, but great undertakings are not limited to daring physical feats. Nietzsche acknowledges great scientific works, and advances Shakespeare and Goethe as candidates for greatness.<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere, he distinguishes “the real philosopher,” who “constantly puts *himself* at risk,” from the scholar, who “lets himself go without letting himself really *flow* out,” and insists that only the former can aspire to “genius” (*BGE* 205, 206). In addition to authorizing great intellectual works, this contrast suggests that great deeds incline toward a maximal abandonment of preoccupation with oneself.

Overcoming self-consciousness amidst great undertakings does not require that great individuals live *unconsciously*. Self-consciousness can prepare one for great tasks, which may require consciousness of their goal, without great deeds requiring introspective preoccupation with *oneself*. Nor must this external condition be understood as an “all-or-nothing” affair. The condition permits of degree, both in a short-term sense of the degree to which someone acts toward some laudable end without introspective self-concern and in a long-term sense of how often such actions are accomplished throughout a life. Nevertheless, introspection trades off with the external condition in the short and long term. While one engages in self-reflection, the condition is unmet. The more one engages in self-reflection over time, the less often it is satisfied.<sup>46</sup>

While Nietzsche takes greatness to require a kind of psychic unity, he denies that introspection can verify this condition, associates introspective appraisal of one’s psyche with a moral project that undermines it, and characterizes great actions as not inwardly directed. Together, these views suggests that psychic unity should not be pursued *directly* but is instead a *byproduct* of outwardly directed actions. This suspicion is confirmed when Nietzsche describes a case where “the whole surface of consciousness” has been “kept free from all the great imperatives” (*EH* “Clever” 9). “In the meantime, the organizing, governing ‘idea’ keeps growing deep inside,—it starts commanding, it slowly leads *back* from out of the side roads and wrong turns, it gets the *individual* qualities and virtues ready, since at some point these

will prove indispensable as a means to the whole,—one by one, it develops all the *servile* faculties before giving any clue as to the domineering task, the ‘goal,’ the ‘purpose,’ the ‘meaning’” (*EH* “Clever” 9). This passage suggests that the process of organizing oneself into a “whole” occurs beneath self-conscious reflection. Nietzsche describes his own greatness this way: “I had absolutely no idea what was growing inside of me,” which resulted from “the lengthy, secret work and artistry of my instinct” (*EH* “Clever” 9; see also *D* 115). Unification of self is thus less a deliberate, self-reflexive endeavor than a result of outwardly directed actions that unconsciously organize the drives.<sup>47</sup>

### Conclusion

In recent years, high-quality scholarship on the internal conditions of Nietzsche’s normative account of the self, and on psychic unity in particular, has proliferated. In one sense, this attention is well-deserved: Nietzsche stresses the psychological conditions of his normative ideal and these must be reconciled with his descriptive account of the self as typically disunified. But in another, practical sense, this attention is misplaced. Nietzsche’s arguments for his descriptive analysis of the self yield a picture on which self-consciousness is too coarse-grained and error-prone to detect reliably whether the subtle, psychic conditions of greatness obtain. Nietzsche also associates self-conscious reflection with a moral project that weakens and represses the drives, such that appraising one’s drives typically speaks against greatness’s realization. Lastly, the actions that characterize Nietzsche’s great individuals preclude introspective preoccupation with oneself. For these reasons, I conclude that focusing on greatness’s internal conditions is misguided.

This conclusion might seem at odds with other features of Nietzsche’s thought. Whence his confidence that Caesar, Shakespeare, and Goethe exhibit greatness’s internal conditions? By what right can Nietzsche declare, “When I measure myself by what I *can* do [. . .] I have better claims to the word ‘great’ than any other mortal” (*EH* “Clever” 10)? What of Nietzsche’s esteem for those who wring difficult truths from themselves (*A* 50) and his attempts to remedy the way “we are unknown to ourselves, we knowers” (*GM* P:1)?

These aspects of Nietzsche's thought can be countenanced, while retaining the conclusion that focusing on greatness's internal conditions is misguided, by making explicit a methodological assumption operative throughout Nietzsche's work: actions offer genuine insight into their agents' psyches.<sup>48</sup> This assumption readily explains Nietzsche's confidence that Caesar, Shakespeare, and Goethe exhibit greatness's internal conditions. Nietzsche lacks personal acquaintance with these individuals, much less introspective access to their psyches. But if actions shed light on their agent's psychological states, his conjectures about Caesar et al. are at least *less* speculative than they would be if introspective self-reporting were needed to appraise greatness. This assumption also explains why *EH* spends so much time assessing its author's *writings*. It is as though Nietzsche must appraise his productive output, as he began to do in the 1886–87 prefaces, to trace his psychological development.<sup>49</sup> *GM* also draws inferences about the psychologies of masters, slaves, and priests on the basis of their actions. In so doing, it helps us know ourselves *not* by prompting introspective reflection but by offering a quasi-historical account of the psychological tendencies we inherit. Nietzsche's skepticism about the accuracy of self-consciousness suggests that self-knowledge, including about whether one satisfies greatness's internal conditions, is best pursued under a third-personal appraisal of actions.

Questions remain about how greatness is realized and how great individuals conceive of their greatness.<sup>50</sup> Questions also remain about what makes an action great and how actions support inferences about their agent's psychology.<sup>51</sup> Still, two firm conclusions can be drawn from this discussion. First, Nietzsche's doubts about introspection's accuracy undercut the intuition that individuals are better positioned to appraise their own greatness than that of others. Both cases require attending to actions. Second, Nietzsche's association of self-conscious appraisal of one's drives with a moral project that detracts from greatness and his view that great undertakings preclude self-conscious reflection suggest that, as a practical matter, we do well to "get out of our heads" and get on with *acting* if we hope to become great.<sup>52</sup>

## NOTES

1. For treatments of Nietzsche's descriptive and normative accounts of the self that corroborate these claims, see: R. Lanier Anderson, "What Is a Nietzschean

Self?," in *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*, ed. Christopher Janaway and Simon Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 202–35; R. Lanier Anderson, "Nietzsche on Autonomy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 432–60; Sebastian Gardner, "Nietzsche, the Self, and the Disunity of Philosophical Reason," in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, ed. Ken Gemes and Simon May (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1–31; Ken Gemes, "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 (2009): 38–59; Ken Gemes, "Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual," in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, 33–49; Patrick Hassan, "Nietzsche on Human Greatness," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 51.2 (2017): 293–310; Christopher Janaway, "Autonomy, Affect, and the Self in Nietzsche's Project of Genealogy," in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, 33–50; Christopher Janaway, "Nietzsche on Morality, Drives, and Human Greatness," in *Nietzsche, Naturalism, and Normativity*, 183–201; Christopher Janaway, "Self and Style: *Life as Literature* Revisited," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 45.2 (2014): 103–17; Paul Katsafanas, *The Nietzschean Self: Moral Psychology, Agency, and the Unconscious* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015); Simon May, "Nihilism and the Free Self," in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, 89–106; Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Alexander Nehamas, "Nietzsche, Drives, Selves, and Leonard Bernstein: A Reply to Christopher Janaway and Robert Pippin," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 45.2 (2014): 131–46; Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Peter Poellner, "Nietzschean Freedom," in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, 151–80; Mattia Riccardi "A Tale of Two Selves," in *The Nietzschean Mind*, ed. Paul Katsafanas (New York: Routledge, 2018), 186–200; Donald Rutherford, "Nietzsche and the Self," in *The Nietzschean Mind*, 201–17; Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (New York: Routledge, 1983).

2. Gardner argues that the reductively naturalist bent of Nietzsche's descriptive analysis of the self precludes the unity required by his normative ideal, which carries "a buried transcendental dimension" ("Nietzsche, the Self, and the Disunity," 19). Responding to Gardner, Anderson ("What Is a Nietzschean Self?") argues that Nietzsche's descriptive analysis enables an emergent self that is neither reductively naturalist nor transcendental, whereas Katsafanas (*The Nietzschean Self*) argues that Nietzsche's account permits unity between an agent's reflective and unreflective aspects. Leiter (*Nietzsche on Morality*) and Riccardi ("A Tale of Two Selves") downplay Anderson's and Katsafanas's emphasis on reflection's causal efficacy and maintain that Nietzsche advances a thoroughly naturalist, nontranscendental form of unity.

3. See n. 1.

4. Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 93.

5. Hassan, "Nietzsche on Human Greatness," 294.

6. Nietzschean greatness likely also requires a particular relation to one's cultural context, for example by being "rare" or "exceptional" in some sense. See Patrick Hassan, "Does Rarity Confer Value? Nietzsche on the Exceptional Individual," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 48.2 (2017): 261–85; and Andrew Huddleston, *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). In what follows, I largely set aside such "extrinsic" or "holistic" conditions of greatness.

7. I use the following translations of Nietzsche's works: *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998); *The Gay Science*, trans. Josephine Nauckhoff and Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

8. Drives and affects can be glossed as dispositions toward some characteristic activity and the feeling of being under a drive's influence, respectively. A sex drive, for example, is disposed toward sexual activity and produces affects in association with such activity and its inhibition. While this analysis relies on Janaway's interpretation (Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 213–14), alternatives are on offer, including accounts by Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, 273–318; John Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 34–45; Anderson, "What Is a Nietzschean Self?," 216–23; Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 142–75; Katsafanas, *The Nietzschean Self*, 94–106; and Mattia Riccardi, "Virtuous Homunculi: Nietzsche on the Order of the Drives," *Inquiry* 61.1 (2017): 21–41. Janaway's analysis is compatible with many of the more technical accounts offered by others and suffices for this article, which does not seek to provide a new understanding of Nietzsche's notions of drives and affects but to analyze the relation between his descriptive and normative accounts of the self. In what follows, I typically refer to "drives" rather than "drives and affects" for brevity.

9. Who does this "we" denote? The most obvious candidate is inheritors of the Judeo-Christian tradition. But insofar as Nietzsche offers a linguistic argument against the unified self, his target audience may include Indo-Germanic language users generally. Then again, since he also advances an argument concerning self-consciousness, his target audience may be humanity as a whole. This wide reading is not totally implausible. Buddhism's treatment of the ego as a natural error needing correction, for example, suggests that belief in the unified self requires

neither Judeo-Christian values nor Indo-Germanic language use. Nonetheless, to give Nietzsche's arguments their full weight, I will assume his target audience is inheritors of Judeo-Christian values using Indo-Germanic languages.

10. The presentation that follows is not intended to imply anything about these arguments' logical or historical priority. In fact, we will see that Nietzsche considers the subsequent arguments intertwined.

11. Also see Riccardi, "A Tale of Two Selves," 188–89, and Rutherford, "Nietzsche and the Self," 202–3.

12. Also see Gemes, "Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual"; Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 172–73; and Nehamas, *Life as Literature*, 85–86.

13. Nietzsche offers similar arguments against morality's assumptions that motives are transparent to actors (*D* 116; *BGE* 32) and that individuals enjoy libertarian free will (*BGE* 21; *TI* "Errors" 7).

14. Quotations like this suggest that Nietzsche understands "instincts" as loosely interchangeable with "drives" (see also *KSA* 11:27 [59]). I proceed in kind.

15. Gardner ("Nietzsche, the Self, and Disunity") raises this sort of objection against Nietzsche's descriptive account of the self.

16. *GS* 354's appeal to "consciousness" is controversial. Katsafanas (*The Nietzschean Self*) argues that it treats consciousness *in general*, whereas Riccardi (Mattia Riccardi, "Nietzsche's Pluralism about Consciousness," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24.1 [2016]: 132–54) argues that it analyzes *self-consciousness* specifically. This disagreement is subtended by another, with Katsafanas arguing that, for Nietzsche, conscious states must be conceptual and linguistically articulated, and Riccardi arguing that Nietzsche permits conscious states that are neither conceptual nor linguistic. In what follows, I use "self-consciousness" to refer to consciousness's representation of the self. Where I use "consciousness," I remain agnostic about whether such mental states must be conceptual or linguistically articulated. I do not think that this weakens my larger argument. My focus concerns self-consciousness, and Katsafanas and Riccardi agree that self-consciousness oversimplifies unconscious processes.

17. Concerning language's circumscription of introspection, see Mattia Riccardi, "Inner Opacity: Nietzsche on Introspection and Agency," *Inquiry* 58.3 (2015): 221–43.

18. For example, if pressed to explain why different languages posit a unified self, Nietzsche could stick within the linguistic domain, perhaps explaining the common postulate of a unified self in terms of the way languages relate concepts systematically (*BGE* 20). But he could also appeal to the way moral considerations (*BGE* 260; *GM* I:10–11) or common physiological needs (*BGE* 20) shape language. Similarly, if pressed to explain why morality assumes that the self is a substratum, Nietzsche could appeal to the way this belief licenses notions of egalitarianism and responsibility (*GM* I:13). But he could also appeal to the way that morality functions as an intersubjective "sign language" (*TI* "Improving" 1) that promotes particular modes of life (*TI* "Morality" 4; "Errors" 6; "Improving" 2–3, 5). Likewise, he could

defend his third argument by explaining why self-consciousness's identification with dominant drives is fitness-enhancing. But he could also appeal to the way linguistic categories (*D* 115; *TI* "Reason" 5) and moral conventions (*D* 116) encourage self-consciousness to simplify the myriad drives constituting individuals.

19. See *HH* 517; *GS* 110; *BGE* 2, 39; *GM* III:27; *EH* P:3.

20. See *SE* 1, 6; *GS* 290, 335; *BGE* 200, 224, 230; *GM* II:1–2; *EH* "Clever" 9; *KSA* 13:14 [157, 219].

21. See *GS* 290; *BGE* 200.

22. The claim that greatness requires *some kind* of unity is uncontroversial. Most scholars take this unity to be psychological. As Janaway has it: "the prevailing view is that 'unity of the self' is to be sought somewhere in Nietzsche's account of the psyche" ("Self and Style," 116). An outlier in this regard is Gabriel Zamosc ("Nietzschean Wholeness," in *The Nietzschean Mind*, 169–85), who argues that the unity Nietzsche champions requires harmonizing one's inner nature, which needn't be psychologically unified or healthy, with one's actions. As I cannot give Zamosc his due here, I merely note that I agree with Janaway, as does every scholar cited in n. 1.

23. What follows likely does not exhaust greatness's internal conditions, which also include *amor fati* (*EH* "Clever" 10) and nobility (*BGE* 212). Insofar as nobility turns on individuals' relations to their social contexts though, nobility might also be extrinsically determined. See n. 6.

24. Translation from Janaway, "Nietzsche on Morality, Drives, and Human Greatness," 186.

25. This passage admittedly treats the "highest," and not the "greatest," individual. But Nietzsche regularly uses "highest" and "great" in tandem (*HL* 6, 9; *SE* 5; *WS* 332; *D* 548; *GS* 288; *Z* II "Priests"; *BGE* 269, 273; *A* 4; *TI* "Skirmishes" 11). The passage's appeal to Shakespeare further suggests a concern with greatness, as Nietzsche considers Shakespeare "the greatest of poets" (*AOM* 162), "a wild genius" (*EH* "Clever" 3) among the ranks of Goethe (*EH* "Books: Z" 6). (Nietzsche also treats genius as loosely synonymous with greatness [*HH* 158, 163; *AOM* 407; *D* 497, 542; *Z* II "On Redemption"; *TI* "Skirmishes" 44].) For those who consider Nietzsche's *Nachlass* dubious, subsequent citations to his published work corroborate this passage's central claims.

26. This is not to suggest that incorporation *never* requires fighting subordinate drives. In most, non-ideal cases, a dominant drive presumably fights a subordinate before incorporating it—e.g., the sex drive is fought and *then* redirected to the intellectual drive's aims. But whereas (non-ideal) incorporation requires *temporarily* fighting subordinate drives, repression requires a protracted fight.

27. See *HH* 162, 228; *GS* 347. On Nietzsche's preference for incorporation over repression, see John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 33–34; Gemes, "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation"; Janaway, "Nietzsche on Morality Drives, and Human Greatness," 188–89; and Katsafanas, *The Nietzschean Self*, 176.

28. While *BGE* 200 does not explicitly mention greatness, it claims Caesar exemplifies the psychological type under consideration. As Nietzsche includes Caesar among “great individuals” (*EH* “Wise” 3) and calls him “the most magnificent type” (*TI* “Skirmishes” 38), I take *BGE* 200 to describe Nietzsche’s great individuals.

29. To provide another simplistic example, imagine an individual dominated by an intellectual drive with subordinate drives toward community and aggression. Rather than repressing the pro-social drive or aggressive drive, Nietzsche recommends harnessing their tension to promote intellectual pursuits, e.g., by charitably reconstructing interlocutors’ arguments before offering forceful objections.

30. See n. 2.

31. I doubt Leiter or Riccardi would dispute this, as they take consciousness to be epiphenomenal and insist that the causes of actions are introspectively inaccessible for Nietzsche. Anderson, by contrast, argues that the self-conscious subject who emerges from the drives is capable of “reflexive self-assessment” that can exert “regulating control over” the drives (“What Is a Nietzschean Self?,” 229, 231). But this not uncontroversial claim concerns the *causal efficacy* of self-consciousness, whereas the present argument concerns the *accuracy* of self-consciousness’s representation of the drives. If self-consciousness cannot accurately represent the drives, its reflective endorsement of their organization (efficacious or not) is unjustified. Katsafanas also emphasizes the role of reflective endorsement in achieving unity, which requires that an individual “approves of her action, and further knowledge of the action’s etiology would not undermine this approval” (*The Nietzschean Self*, 195). If we grant this counterfactual rendering of unity, the present argument demonstrates that *introspection* cannot provide the “further knowledge” required to determine its truth-value. Regardless of how unity is achieved, introspection cannot verify its realization.

32. For Socrates’s fierce criticism of the tyrannical soul, see Plato, “Republic,” in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), Book IX.

33. See *AOM* 26; *D* 109, 115–16, 129; *GS* 11, 333; *BGE* 19.

34. This section employs awkward locutions such as “speaks against,” “is associated with,” etc., to remain agnostic about whether Nietzsche considers consciousness causally efficacious. (Where consciousness seems to play a causal role, an underlying drive might perform the causal work.) This agnosticism makes this section’s argument ambiguous as to whether a tendency toward introspection causes, enables, or results from weakening and repressing the drives. Nonetheless, introspective self-assessment will provide putative evidence against greatness’s realization if introspection strongly correlates with psychic conditions that fall short of greatness. See also n. 31.

35. Supporting the previous section’s argument, *BGE* 32 also claims that “the intention is only a sign [. . .] that means too many things and consequently means almost nothing.” Supporting the next section’s argument, it further proposes that “the decisive value is conferred by what is specifically *unintentional* about an action.”



36. On Nietzsche's treatment of castration and elimination, see Richard Elliot, "The Role of Removal and Elimination in Nietzsche's Model of Self-Cultivation," *Inquiry* 63.1 (2020): 65–84.

37. Nietzsche's claim that "the highest and strongest drives erupt in passion" (*BGE* 202) suggests that passions are exceptionally strong drives (see also *D* 502; *BGE* 198).

38. This process will vary with how one interprets Nietzsche's view of consciousness. On Leiter's and Riccardi's readings, where self-reflection is an epiphenomenal expression of dominating drives, self-consciousness will express and identify with self-negating drives cultivated under slave morality (e.g., drives to mediocrity, internalized aggressive drives, etc.), which then repress and weaken other drives. The longer this struggle endures, the more it depletes individuals' energy. Anderson, by contrast, argues that "the self—qua the emergent structure encompassing *all* the co-recruitable attitudes—can suffer from a 'gap' between its own activity and that of some constituent(s)" ("What is a Nietzschean Self?," 227). If we grant Anderson's claim that this gap enables an efficacious "capacity for reflexive self-assessment" ("What Is a Nietzschean Self?," 229), the present argument suggests that reflexive self-assessment is effective because it *weakens* the drives. We will see that this weakening *can* help individuals integrate their drives, but when self-knowledge is made into a moral command, weakening the drives ceases to be a means toward integration and becomes an end in itself. On this score, Katsafanas's account fares better, as his counterfactual rendering of unity does not require that the "gap" of introspection is cultivated but only that *if* it were used, one would endorse the unconscious drives motivating actions.

39. Nietzsche attributes his own overcoming of moral "idealism" and "selflessness" to his sickness (*EH* "Clever" 2). This might seem to support Zamosc's contention that greatness does not require health. But it does not follow from sickness's *instrumental* value in helping Nietzsche overcome morality that one can *simultaneously* be great *and* sick. Also see *EH* "Wise" 2, where Nietzsche describes himself as "*basically healthy*."

40. While Nietzsche's early work attributes a healthy and productive use of introspection to Wagner (*RWB* 1), he later insists that this is really "the true glance of Zarathustra" (*EH* "Books" *BT* 4). I take this to express Nietzsche's growing conviction that productive uses of introspection are exceedingly uncommon.

41. Regarding forgetting, see *D* 263; *GM* II:1. Regarding instinctive action, see *GS* 361; *BGE* 206; *TI* "Skirmishes" 44; *EH* "Clever" 9–10.

42. Even if greatness does not require *total* integration of *all* subordinate drives, a tendency to self-consciously appraise the drives remains inversely proportionate to their integration. As one approximates greatness, self-conscious reflection on the drives diminishes.

43. These questions brush against greatness's extrinsic conditions. See n. 6.

44. Overwhelming power also figures in Nietzsche's notions of health (*GS* 382) and nobility (*BGE* 260).

45. See *HH* 162. For Shakespeare, see *AOM* 162; *EH* “Clever” 3, “Books” Z 6. For Goethe, *TI* “Skirmishes” 49–51; *EH* “Clever” 10.

46. Deeds of overflowing power are not identified easily. Nietzsche’s view of introspection makes it doubtful that agents can accurately appraise whether an action of “overflowing power” expresses a drive that incorporates, rather than tyrannizes, its subordinates. Furthermore, Nietzsche’s distinction between deeds that express nobility and those that express “a deep desire for nobility” (*BGE* 287) suggests deeds expressing greatness differ from those expressing a *desire* for greatness. We cannot rely on intuition when drawing this distinction. Zarathustra warns that the majority mistake an “inverse cripple” for “a great human being, a genius” (*Z II* “On Redemption”; see also *HH* 46; *TI* “Skirmishes” 50). Such considerations motivate my decision to focus on actions that *Nietzsche* considers great. For further discussion, see Hassan, “Nietzsche on Human Greatness.”

47. Nehamas also contends that “becoming who one is” must be “an *indirect goal*” on the grounds that becoming who one is requires becoming “importantly different” in ways that are “impossible to specify” (Alexander Nehamas, “Nietzsche, Intention, Action,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 26.2 [2018]: 688) and that intentions, and thus actions’ value, can only be appraised by considering an agent’s whole life (Nehamas, “Nietzsche, Intention, Action,” 290–94; see also Nehamas, “Nietzsche, Drives, Selves, and Leonard Bernstein,” 143). While Nehamas and I agree that unity cannot be pursued directly, our accounts differ in two respects. First, on my account, even if the process of becoming who one is *could* be specified in advance and intentions *were* determinate, Nietzsche’s view of self-consciousness would thwart direct pursuit of this goal. Second, Nehamas’s argument relies on a broadly aestheticist account of Nietzschean agency as a hermeneutic enterprise, which has been criticized for not appreciating the extent of Nietzsche’s naturalism (see Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*; Janaway, “Self and Style”; and Robert Pippin, “Self-Interpreting Selves: Comments on Alexander Nehamas’s *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 45.2 [2014]: 118–33). But if one endorses a reading of Nietzsche, say, as a hard-nosed naturalist who denies compatibilist free will, my arguments still suggest that greatness cannot be pursued directly.

48. In a strong form, this could amount to the claim that some actions—whether in virtue of their difficulty or their excellent execution, and so on—can *only* be accomplished by individuals of a certain psychic constitution. More modestly, actions might just ground inferences to the best explanation about their agents’ psychological conditions.

49. *EH* “Books” 1–3 infers the rarity of Nietzsche’s character from how easily his books are misinterpreted, and *EH* “Books” 4 commends Nietzsche’s writing style for expressing his inner states clearly. Still, to the extent that *EH* engages in self-conscious, introspective reflection, it may foreshadow Nietzsche’s collapse. *EH*’s declaration of Nietzsche’s own greatness recalls his earlier warning that “*belief in their own genius*” is the “most dangerous characteristic” that “assails great and semi-great men,” one which “is probably the drive to seek *relief* for weariness” (*D* 542).

50. Are great individuals merely “*strokes of luck*” (*GM* III:14)? Is one’s own greatness less a matter of knowledge than “faith” (*BGE* 287) or “belief” (*TI* “Skirmishes” 49)? Might great individuals be unconcerned with their greatness (*D* 542)?

51. If one reads Nietzsche as an incompatibilist and determinist, or as espousing an expressivist view of freedom, the connection between actions and agent’s psychology will be rather tight. A compatibilist reading of Nietzschean autonomy, by contrast, might require a looser connection between actions and psychology.

52. I thank Justin Remhof, Penelope Haulotte, Robert Miner, and two anonymous referees for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.