

# Does Rarity Confer Value? - Nietzsche on the Exceptional Individual<sup>1</sup>

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Forthcoming in the *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*

## Introduction

One feature of the individuals Nietzsche considers paradigms of greatness is that they are, in some capacity, rare [*selten*]; an exception [*Ausnahme*] to the majority.<sup>2</sup> It would be difficult to over-exaggerate the frequency of this association in the texts. From as early as the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche repeatedly contrasts the "rarest and most valuable exemplars" (*UM*, III, 6) with the pejorative "herd" [*Heerde*]; the "common" [*gemein*]; the "mediocre" [*mittelmässig*]; and the "rabble" [*Pöbel*].<sup>3</sup> This contrast becomes more explicit in Nietzsche's mature period, where, for example, he writes plainly that "what can be common has ever but little value", but that "great things are for the great...and, in sum, rare things for the rare" (*BGE*, 43), and similarly: "Great and fine things can never

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the participants of the NANS inaugural conference, particularly comments from Peter Groff, John Richardson, Paul Katsafanas, Richard Schacht, and Andrew Huddleston. I also extend my thanks to Severin Schroeder, Max De Gaynesford, and Jonathan Dancy, all of whom read early drafts.

<sup>2</sup> I consider 'greatness' [*grossen*] a *broad* term which encompasses many other *technical* epithets Nietzsche uses to describe such persons: 'free spirit'; 'noble'; 'hero'; 'higher type'. I discuss some of these shortly.

<sup>3</sup> Works by Nietzsche are cited by section using the following translations (though occasionally modified for literalness):

*The Antichrist*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, (Penguin, 1968).  
*Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, (Penguin, 1990).  
*Daybreak*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, (Cambridge University Press, 1992).  
*On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, (Vintage, 1989).  
*The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann, (Vintage, 1974).  
*Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, (Cambridge University Press, 1986).  
*Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (de Gruyter, 1967).  
*Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, (Penguin, 1968).  
*Untimely Meditations*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, (Cambridge University Press, 1997).  
*The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, (Vintage, 1968).

For the German and *Nachlass* passages I rely on the *KSA*, and passages are cited by year, notebook number, note number. I use the English translation for the corresponding reference from *The Will to Power*.

be common property: *pulchrum est paucorum hominum* [beauty is for the few]" (*TI*, 'What the Germans Lack', 5).

Having the property of rarity will involve these individuals maintaining either or both of the following two facets: (a) instantiating distinctive features or distinctive combinations of features; or (b) instantiating particular features to a relatively high degree. A plausible thought is that things which are or become rare may sometimes increase in value in virtue of this feature. Typical examples would be a collectable stamp, a record, or a vintage car or other commodity. However, it is unclear whether Nietzsche values these exceptional individuals (at least partly) in virtue of their rarity, or whether rarity is merely a consequence or indicator of (a) and/or (b). In this paper, I will address this ambiguity. My aim is explorative: I intend to investigate how Nietzsche may make use of the concept of rarity value in his wider ethical project—an issue which has received remarkably little attention in the secondary literature. Additionally, I hope that this discussion may contribute to independent contemporary debates in the theory of value.

This paper has four sections. In section one I introduce a now common distinction between intrinsic value and extrinsic value, and explore various species of the latter, with particular attention to rarity. After defending rarity value as a genuine form of extrinsic value, in section two I consider whether there are grounds for interpreting Nietzsche as engaging with the concept, and if so, in which ways. I offer two possible goods Nietzsche may at least partly condition rarity value upon: (i) social dissent; (ii) exceptional achievement. In section three I raise a potential interpretive concern for this view: the relativity problem. I then critique the motivation behind the problem, and attempt to dissolve it by considering Nietzsche's understanding of the relation between 'higher' and 'lower' individuals. In the final section I examine how the view that rarity matters for its own sake can help explicate Nietzsche's critique of morality, and in particular, his claims about equality.

# 1. Rarity Value as a Species of Extrinsic Value

Discussions of Nietzsche's positive ethical project often only focus explicitly upon the distinction between means and ends.<sup>4</sup> However, focusing *only* upon these two types of value would be to overlook a variety of others which may be useful in interpreting important Nietzschean themes. A sensitivity to debates within contemporary value theory may provide ammunition for such a project. Here I shall focus upon one possible form of value: rarity value. Before defining rarity value, it is first necessary to specify where it falls within the conceptual terrain.

One influential theory of value stems from G.E. Moore. Moore recognised only two forms of value: intrinsic value and instrumental value (that which is a means to something of intrinsic value). Moore's account of the former has two features:

(1) intrinsic value solely depends upon the intrinsic properties of its bearers.<sup>5</sup>

(2) intrinsic value is essential, in that it cannot be affected by changes in context; its value must be the same wherever it appears, as long as its bearer's intrinsic properties remain constant.<sup>6</sup>

An example of an intrinsic (or 'non-relational') property would be the property of being square. This is a property which something possess in-itself, absent of any conditions or contexts. An example of an extrinsic (or 'relational') property would be the property of being feared; the thing possessing the property relies on something outside itself to derive it from (in this case, the attitudes of others). As point (1) of Moore's characterisation naturally suggests, *X* has intrinsic value when *X*'s value is derived from its intrinsic nature. Correspondingly, *X* has extrinsic value when its value derives from its extrinsic properties.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, (Routledge, 2002), pp. 127-136.

<sup>5</sup> G. E. Moore, "The Conception of Intrinsic Value," in Thomas Baldwin, ed., *Principia Ethica*, (Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 286.

<sup>6</sup> Moore, (1993), p. 286-287.

In an influential paper, Christine Korsgaard brings attention to the inadequacy of the traditional contrast between intrinsic value and instrumental value.<sup>7</sup> Korsgaard claims that it fails to make two crucial distinctions in value, resulting in a conflation of concepts. She suggests that the term 'intrinsic value' is used appropriately only when it refers to the value something has on account of its intrinsic or non-relational properties (its converse being extrinsic value), and 'final value' should be used to refer to what is valued 'for its own sake' or 'as an end' (its converse being instrumental value).

Part of what motivates this distinction is the following question: are all things valued 'for their own sake' or 'as an end' intrinsic? Those who deny this include John O'Neil,<sup>8</sup> Shelly Kagan,<sup>9</sup> Ben Bradley,<sup>10</sup> Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen,<sup>11</sup> and Jonathan Dancy,<sup>12</sup> all of whom defend the following claim:

(C) Some things are valued for their own sake wholly, or at least in part, in virtue of their extrinsic properties.

These philosophers defend (C) at least partly because they are prepared to acknowledge more forms of extrinsic value than just the instrumental. If extrinsic value is the value something has in virtue of its relational properties, then we must ask: what *sort* of relation must obtain between a certain thing, *X*, and another, *Y*, if *X* is to be said to be good derivatively of *Y*? The means-end relation has indeed

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<sup>7</sup> Christine Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness" in *Philosophical Review*, 92, (1983).

<sup>8</sup> John O'Neil, "The Varieties of Intrinsic Value" in *The Monist*, (1992), p. 124.

<sup>9</sup> Shelly Kagan, "The Limits of Well-being", in *The Good Life and the Human Good*, eds. Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller, Jr., and Jeffrey Paul, (Cambridge University Press, 1992): p. 184; "Rethinking Intrinsic Value" in *The Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 2, No. 4, (1998).

<sup>10</sup> Ben Bradley, "Extrinsic Value" in *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 91, No. 2, (1998).

<sup>11</sup> Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen and Wlodek Rabinowicz, "A Distinction in Value: Intrinsic and For Its Own Sake" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 100 (1), (1999): pp. 33-49.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Dancy, "Are There Organic Unities?", *Ethics*, Vol. 113, No. 3, (2003), pp. 629-650.

attracted the most attention from moral philosophers. Nevertheless, there are grounds for acknowledging a number of non-instrumental relational properties.<sup>13</sup>

Here I wish to consider in detail just one possible form of extrinsic value: that which gains value in virtue of its rarity. There are many kinds of things which at one time existed in abundance, but, for one reason or another, have now significantly decreased in number: 1956 Cadillac Eldorados; minted Roman coins from Nero's rule; Black Rhinos. There are also many kinds of things which *emerge* as distinctive in some respect: the latest piece of technology; exceptional athletes; an innovative novel; a collector item. All are rare in a sense (perhaps even unique), and there is an intuition that each of them might be more valuable in virtue of this property.

Rarity is clearly a relational property: it depends upon the limited existence or non-existence of other things of the same kind. So if rarity value is a legitimate concept, then it is a form of extrinsic value that is not (obviously) instrumental. A vast number of cases aim to demonstrate the value rarity can have. Dancy gives the example of a book which can become more valuable when the only other copy in existence is burned.<sup>14</sup> The value that is increased, Dancy argues, is neither intrinsic nor instrumental. This is because, firstly, the value is dependent on the fact that that it is now the only book of its kind to exist, which is quite clearly a relational property. Secondly, the value added is not necessarily a means to anything.

Monroe Beardsley discusses the case of a rare stamp.<sup>15</sup> Many people collect and sell stamps, with some of the rarest stamps fetching vast sums of money. For example, the British Guiana One Cent Magenta is one of nine in the world, and was auctioned for £6.4 million. This sum would likely be less if there were hundreds of thousands of the stamp in existence. Here, the British Guiana is

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<sup>13</sup> For example, 'symbolic value': See Rae Langton, "Objective and Unconditional Value" in *Philosophical Review*, 116 (2), 2007, p. 163; cf. Bradley, (1998), p. 118; 'sentimental value': Guy Fletcher, "Sentimental Value" in *The Journal of Value Enquiry*, 43, (2009).

<sup>14</sup> Dancy, (2003), p. 633.

<sup>15</sup> Monroe Beardsley, "Intrinsic Value", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 26, (1965), p. 1.

made more valuable not because of its instrumental properties—it is in fact useless for posting these days—but because of its rarity.<sup>16</sup>

One might raise the following objection at this point: rarity is not itself of value in these kinds of examples, rather so-called rarity value can be explained away in terms of other valuable features which are present. For instance, something rare might derive its associated value from the fact that possession of it is indicative of the owner's wealth or position of rank in society. Consider an analogous case familiar from anthropology: in antiquity, across many societies, purple dye was difficult to come by due to the laborious and expensive process of extraction. Purple robes and garments were therefore rare, and for this reason the colour was usually only associated with royalty, and later on the clergy (i.e. those that could afford it). In this case, the value of the particular garment may not be in its rarity *per se*, but rather its signifying the possessors wealth and power.

However, there are two reasons to resist this objection insofar as it is an attempt to account for all cases of rarity value. Firstly, it is contingently true that something rare will function in this way. It may 'explain away' some cases, but it is doubtful it will account for all cases. One reason is that I have so far focused on objects and their properties. But rarity can also be a property of places, states of affairs, events, or pieces of music/literature, and as we shall see for Nietzsche: persons. With this in mind, the story given above will be limited as an objection to rarity value conceptually. Secondly, objects may possess numerous forms of value simultaneously, with their total value *all things considered* comprising of many components. Just as an elaborately decorated sword may have (a) *sentimental* value from having been passed down in the family; (b) *symbolic* value as a representation of high social status; (c) *instrumental* value in virtue of its usefulness for cutting things; (d) *rarity* value in virtue of it being one of the few remaining swords from its era, the stamp or book *may* not be valuable *only* because they are rare.

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<sup>16</sup> Kagan considers a rare classic car: its instrumental value may be lacking, yet it might be tremendously valuable on account of its rarity. See Kagan (1992), p. 184. O'Neil has argued that a natural habitat or wilderness can be valuable for its own sake purely in virtue of the fact that it has not been visited by human beings. See O'Neil, (1992), p. 124.

A more general objection to the concept of rarity value may arise from reflecting on specific examples where rarity *doesn't* seem to make a difference in our positive evaluation of something. For instance, while we may agree that rarity is a good-making property in *some* classes of things (e.g. stamps), we are less confident it is when we consider cases of uniquely sadistic or efficient serial killers, or spectacularly poor achievers. As we shall see, it is unlikely that Nietzsche would find it a valuable feature of a person that they constantly fail to achieve their goals in virtue of being uniquely incompetent or weak. By drawing attention to such cases, an objector may hope to show that it is not rarity *per se* that is a good-making property, but rather some other property which only is often also accompanied by the property of being rare.

There are two responses to this objection; each reveal some complicated axiological structures. The first would be to construe rarity as a basic ground, the second would be to construe rarity as a modifier. A basic ground is that in virtue of which something has value; it generates value, or is its 'source'. By contrast, a modifier is that which affects the weight of that thing's value. That is to say, instead of generating value, they modify *how* valuable something we already care about might be. Even though basic grounds or 'source facts' do not determine something's value all things considered (for what they ground can be modified), they are sufficient for generating value. Modifiers, on the other hand, only make a difference to something independently valuable; they *enhance* or *intensify* that thing's value.

Viewing rarity as a modifier is an attractive view because it neatly avoids the problem of why rarity only seems to make a difference to some classes of things and not others: it is precisely because while rarity does make a positive difference, it merely intensifies the value of something *already* considered good.<sup>17</sup> However, an alternative move is to consider rarity to be valuable as a basic ground, yet only when it is conditioned upon (or 'enabled' by) another good. This also avoids the above problem, but by denying that rarity is unconditionally valuable. Something is unconditionally good, in this

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<sup>17</sup> This view is defended by Ralf Bader, "Conditions, Modifiers, and Holism" in Errol Lord and Barry Maguire (eds.), *Weighing Reasons*, (Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 40-41.

context, if it is good in any and all circumstances; it is good *no matter what*.<sup>18</sup> By contrast, something is conditionally good if it is good only in certain circumstances.

As Kant had already pointed out, something being conditionally valuable is compatible with it being finally valuable, and they often go together. Kant's own example is that happiness is good-making in so far as it is not sadistic happiness: it is not a better state of affairs when the torturer is happy rather than miserable; it is in fact *even worse*. On Kant's view, the only unconditional good—or "good without qualification"—is the 'good will': doing what is morally right *because* it is morally right.<sup>19</sup> Acts motivated by the desire for happiness are not praiseworthy; the goodness of happiness is conditional upon acting from a good will. But importantly, this does not mean that happiness *derives* its goodness from the good will. Rather, happiness is good in virtue of how it itself is on condition of being had by someone who has a good will. In other words, the source of happiness' goodness resides within itself, even though the condition of its goodness is extrinsic.

From the mere fact that there are conditions under which rarity makes an object or state of affairs good, it does not follow that rarity itself cannot act as a basic ground for goodness. As I shall argue in the next section, this conditionality claim is exactly the kind of claim one should expect from Nietzsche given his criticisms of unconditional value.

We have seen that in exploiting the distinction between intrinsic vs. extrinsic value and final value vs. instrumental value, we uncover complex axiological structures that may expand our understanding of the reasons we take certain things to be good. With these conceptual tools, there is opportunity to explore in more detail a number of substantive claims that Nietzsche makes in his project of revaluation. Nietzsche, of course, does not engage explicitly in this type of theory, and he should not be thought of as a precursor to the likes of Moore, for example. However, I shall argue he may implicitly engage with the one concept I have focused on here. I shall now address the reasons to endorse such an interpretation.

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<sup>18</sup> As discussed above, this is part of Moore's view of intrinsic value.

<sup>19</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (eds.) Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann, (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 9.



## 2. Nietzsche on the Value of Rarity

Nietzsche's claims concerning rarity pervade his texts, and occur in almost uniformly positive evaluations. While I have so far centred upon rarity value with respect to commodities, objects, places, or states of affairs, Nietzsche is distinctive in so far as his attention is focused upon rarity within the social domain: rarity of *persons*. For example, similar claims of the "rarest and most valuable exemplars" (*UM*, III, 6) persist into Nietzsche's mature period. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche claims that in contrast to the "surplus of failures, of the sick, the degenerate, the fragile" and so on, the "successful cases, among men too, are always the exception" (*BGE*, 62).

To emphasise the nature of great individuals as extraordinary, Nietzsche often describes them as a product of luck. For instance, he depicts them as "rare cases of powerfulness in soul and body, the strokes of luck among humans" (*GM*, III, 14). He takes the higher type to be a "*lucky hit*" [*Glücksfälle*]; that across history, these individuals are "chance occurrences of great success" (*A*, 4; cf. *BGE*, 62, 274). Nietzsche's reasoning in support of these claims is perhaps most explicit in passages from the *Nachlass*, in which he claims that the conditions for the higher type to emerge are "delicate and fragile [*zart und zerbrechlich*]", for "an abundance of very difficult and rare things has been bred and preserved together" (*KSA*, 1885, 39[7] / *WP*, 996). Because "the higher type represents an incomparably greater complexity", Nietzsche claims that their "disintegration is also incomparably more likely" (*KSA*, 1888, 14[133] / *WP*, 684).<sup>20</sup>

However, it is ambiguous whether Nietzsche values exceptional individuals (at least partly) *in virtue of* their rarity, or whether rarity is merely a consequence or *indicator* of the presence of other valuable features. In other words, does Nietzsche consider rarity to simply track valuable properties in great individuals, or is rarity itself constitutive of great individuals?

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<sup>20</sup> While Nietzsche's target in these passages is Darwin's theory of evolution (in as far as it is interpreted as a kind of 'progress'), in the final section of this paper I consider herd morality as another means by which the complexity needed for higher types is diminished. I am grateful to Peter Groff for raising this point about fragility.

The textual evidence does not provide us with an obvious answer to this question. One might suggest that the sheer volume of references to rarity in association with greatness counts in favour of the latter view. However, I think that a stronger response may be offered by explicating the subtleties of Nietzsche's claims surrounding great individuals and their social context. I intend to explore the plausibility of this strategy here; a project which is partly reconstructive.

Remarkably little has been written about this issue in the secondary literature. Recently, Sabina Lovibond has claimed that Nietzsche considers "rarity as a mark of aesthetic value".<sup>21</sup> But little is said about why and in what way this is the case.<sup>22</sup> Ivan Soll explicitly acknowledges the issue, and, in a footnote, is sympathetic towards the view that rarity itself makes a value difference to certain states of affairs. He claims that:

[Nietzsche] sometimes seriously considers the idea that what is common in the sense of being widespread is for that reason alone less valuable than things that are rare, that rarity in itself not only is prized by us, but deserves to be. Nietzsche argues that what is common in the sense of common place may often be, and deserve to be, for that reason, considered the opposite of what is noble, exceptional, and valuable. To the extent that Nietzsche is developing a non-moral criterion of valuation based on the notion of nobleness, he often tends to treat what is common, even in the sense of widespread, as lacking value. Or at least he argues that rarity has been and still is prized for its own sake. He points out that there has been an equation of what is rare with that is valuable or noble, and even sometimes seems to condone this equation.<sup>23</sup>

Soll continues that Nietzsche's views about the value of rarity...

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<sup>21</sup> Sabina Lovibond, "Nietzsche on Distance, Beauty and Truth" in Came (ed.), *Nietzsche on Art and Life*, (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 212.

<sup>22</sup> I return to this point and provide a possible explanation in Section 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ivan Soll, "The Self Versus Society" in Julian Young (ed.), *Individual and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy*, (Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 167.

...actually mirror our own views about these matters. We too tend to think that the value of particular occurrences or given quantities of any commodity (i.e., anything that serves our purposes and is useful to us), such as a kilo of platinum or copper, increases as the commodity becomes scarcer.<sup>24</sup>

There are a number of separable points Soll makes. Of interest here is the claim that Nietzsche endorses the view that the fact something is common or widespread is *for this very reason* vulgar or disvaluable. Soll's claim is perhaps most strongly suggested in passages from Nietzsche's later period: that "what can be common has ever but little value" (*BGE*, 43), and that "Great and fine things can never be common property: *pulchrum est paucorum hominum* [beauty is for the few]" (*TI*, 'What the Germans Lack', 5).

Passage 55 from *The Gay Science* also lends itself to this interpretation. Here, Nietzsche asks what "makes a person 'noble'?", and, after rejecting three conventional explanations, conceives of nobility in terms of:

...a rare and singular standard and almost a madness: the feeling of heat in things that feel cold to everybody else; the discovery of values for which no scales have been invented yet; offering sacrifices on altars that are dedicated to an unknown god... (*GS*, 55)

Nietzsche continues that "it has been the rare in man" that "has made a person noble" (*GS*, 55). I agree with Soll that this is a plausible interpretation of such passages, but Soll leaves open the specific type(s) of rarity that Nietzsche is interested in. This question is worth exploring.

There is a distinction to be made between at least three possible interpretations of the claim that rarity confers value:

(1) Rarity is sufficient for *X*'s value.

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<sup>24</sup> Soll, (2014), p. 167.

(2) Rarity always counts in favour of *X*'s value.

(3) Rarity sometimes counts in favour of *X*'s value.

Claim (1) is particularly strong, and, as I shall shortly argue, implausible both in itself and as a reading of Nietzsche. Claim (2) regards rarity as being *pro tanto* valuable. That is, rarity always confers value, but is just one value among many possible others, and so all things considered something rare may not be very valuable. This is still a controversial claim, but considerably weaker than claim (1). Claim (3) is weaker still, and holds that there must be some constraints on context with regard to rarity's value. I propose that this is the most plausible interpretation of Nietzsche claims regarding the rarity of great individuals.

It might be objected that (3) is *too* weak to support the interpretation under consideration. In the previous section I raised a general objection to the notion of rarity value: that there are many specific examples where rarity does *not* seem to make a difference in our positive evaluation of that thing. For instance, while there may be an intuition that rarity is a good-making property in the case of some classes of things, we are less inclined to say that rarity acts in this way when we consider cases of especially sadistic or efficient serial killers.

This objection can be translated into examples of two sorts which reflect Nietzschean concerns. One example would be a case in which a person is exceptionally incapable, or peculiar in their inability to achieve anything. That Nietzsche would find such a person valuable in virtue of this feature is unlikely. A second and more substantive type of case that Nietzsche himself addresses is the character and deeds of Paul the Apostle in. Nietzsche's interest in Paul stems from his interpretation of him, and not Jesus, as the creator of Christianity. In *The Antichrist*, Paul is described as a "hate-obsessed false coiner" and "dysangelist" (*A*, 42) like no other. He is exceptional in at least two profoundly negative ways. Firstly, Nietzsche argues that he instantiates vices—e.g. resentment—to a distinctively high degree. For instance, it is claimed that "on the heels of those glad tidings [Jesus] came the *worst of all*: those of Paul" (*A*, 42), and that "Paul was the greatest of all apostles of revenge (*A*, 45). Secondly,

given the historical success of Christian values, and the further claim that they are in some way inimical to the production of human greatness, Nietzsche holds Paul responsible for his *exceptionally* detrimental effect on human history and culture.

By drawing attention to such cases, an objector may hope to show that it is not rarity *per se* that is valuable, but rather some other property of a thing which often also happens to exceptional. If there are cases of rarity which make no difference, or make a negative difference, to something's value (e.g. low achievers, or Paul-like figures), then Nietzsche does not consider rarity value to be a genuine concept, or so the objection would go.

My response above to this type of objection was that rarity can be construed as either a modifier (i.e. it *intensifies* the value of something already considered valuable for independent reasons), or as itself finally valuable as a basic ground, yet conditioned upon other goods. While rarity is perhaps best thought of as a modifier in our everyday evaluations of commodities, I contend that in so far as Nietzsche is—as Soll claimed—“developing a non-moral criterion of valuation based on the notion of nobleness”, he is best interpreted as taking rarity to be a basic ground of the value greatness has. In what follows, I consider the implications of such a view.

As I argued above, final value and conditionality are compatible and often go together. The fact that the goodness of rarity is conditioned upon other the presence of other goods does not undermine its value. On the exegetical point, the conditional value of rarity is exactly the type of evaluative claim one would expect Nietzsche to endorse. The reason for this is that Nietzsche consistently expresses suspicion of 'essential' or 'unconditional' value; the value of *X* being unconditional, in this context, where it does not depend on the context in which *X* occurs: it is valuable *no matter what*.

Nietzsche expresses his rejection of this view—“the worst of tastes, the taste for the unconditional” (*BGE*, 31)—explicitly throughout *Beyond Good and Evil*. In a telling passage, he claims that:

It might even be possible that *what* constitutes the value of those good and honoured things resides precisely in their being artfully related, knotted and crocheted to these wicked, apparently antithetical things, perhaps even in their being essentially identical with them (*BGE*, 2; cf. *GS*, 290)

The positive value of certain states of affairs or objects is suggested by Nietzsche to be constituted by their relation to "*apparently* antithetical" other states of affairs or objects. Here, Nietzsche is claiming that the bad is only 'apparently' bad in that when something—*X*—stands in relation with certain other things, *X* can gain value and hence, no longer be negative. He then suggests that supposed 'bad' things are perhaps "essentially identical" with 'good' things, further distancing his theory of value from the Moorean conception in which intrinsic value does not vary depending on circumstance.

That Nietzsche would only find rarity to confer value under certain conditions should not invite surprise in light of these broader evaluative claims. But which goods would Nietzsche plausibly consider the value of rarity to be conditioned by? In the previous section I differentiated between rarity as a result of the decreasing in number of something, and rarity as the emergence of something new. Nietzsche is predominantly, if not exclusively, interested in latter. Although he does not make this explicit, there are at least two rare-making features that Nietzsche plausibly conditions rarity value upon: (1) cultural or social dissent; (2) exceptional achievement. I shall now consider each in turn.<sup>25</sup>

Increasingly from his middle period onwards, Nietzsche partly identifies great individuals with the concept of the 'free spirit' [*Freigeist*] (e.g. *HH*, Preface 7; *D*, 56; *GS*, 347; *BGE*, 44). Nietzsche emphasises that a significant feature, if not the *most* significant feature, of being a 'free spirit' involves a digression and deliberate aversion from an established tradition or social practice. In other words, a free spirit goes against the grain, challenges prevailing social attitudes, and "thinks otherwise than would be expected" (*HH*, 225). He has "hostility towards those influences, habits, laws, institutions" that surround him (*UM*, III, 6).

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<sup>25</sup> Why Nietzsche may consider *these* goods as conditioning goods is not something I will be able to adequately address here, given the purposes of this paper. Nor do I wish to claim that these are the *only* possible conditioning goods.

Nietzsche also consistently makes positive evaluative claims regarding dissent. For instance, he claims that "the ability to contradict, the attainment of a good conscience when one feels hostile to what is accustomed, traditional, and hallowed — that is still more excellent and constitutes what is really great, new, and amazing in our culture" (*GS*, 297). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he claims similarly that "today the concept of greatness entails being noble, wanting to be by oneself, being able to be different" (*BGE*, 212; cf. *D*, 297). Additionally, from a later note, Nietzsche again asks "What is noble?" and answers that "one knows how to make enemies everywhere...That one contradicts the great majority not through words but through deeds" (*KSA*, 1888, 15[115] / *WP*, 944).

It is important to clarify that just challenging the norms and values of contemporary society is not sufficient to count as the kind of 'free spirit' that Nietzsche praises; it also involves a particular attitude or motivation for such dissent. These individuals are driven by a desire for independence, and are experimental by nature. Moreover, they retain the courage and strength needed for such independence. Contrast this, for example, with the engineers of the slave revolt. While these persons rejected the norms of their oppressors and 'created new values', they did so out of *ressentiment*: the revolt was a purely reactive strategy of taking revenge upon their perceived oppressors and vindicating their own inadequacies. Instead of dissent through strength and curiosity, the early Christian is "a rebel in his *lowest* instincts against everything privileged" (*A*, 46: emphasis mine). Crucially, the slaves desired the same goods as the masters, but lacked the ability to achieve them. Genuine 'free spirits' on the other hand, do not desire the same goods as their contemporaries, but wish to create new values (which are of course typically experienced as "evil" by purveyors of the old, inherited, established values). Before addressing the implications of such a view for the concept of rarity value, I wish to offer a further possible conditioning good: significant achievement.

Nietzsche mentions a variety of people he considers paradigms of human greatness, including (but not limited to) Goethe (e.g. *TI*, 'Expeditions', 49; *GS*, 103), Beethoven (e.g. *UM*, III, 3; *HH*, 155; *BGE*, 245), and Cesare Borgia (e.g. *BGE*, 197; *TI*, 'Expeditions', 37). At least part of what is distinctive about these persons is that they are high achievers in their respective fields. In other words, it is

not the case that *just anyone* could have done what they have done; their feats are distinguishing precisely because few could overcome such challenges.

Consider the case of Achilles, a warrior that wins fame amongst the Greeks and Trojans alike in virtue of his distinctive skill; his prowess in battle is unmatched. Achilles' achievements are objectively difficult relative to the average human being, and in having overcome such great difficulty, we are appropriately impressed. This would not be the case if we were to observe an average person walk ten feet. The reason is because just about *everybody* can complete this task, given they fall within the same class of agent.<sup>26</sup> Hence, Nietzsche claims that "an easy prey is something contemptible for proud natures" (*GS*, 13). Similarly, Beethoven is exceptional in virtue of composing ground-breaking scores (and doing so with the added difficulty of impaired hearing). Da Vinci is exceptional in virtue of (among other things) painting beautiful works of art. This is so, because these scores and paintings involved overcoming tremendous difficulty (even though they may have not been *experienced* as difficult by their creators); these achievements are not something the average person could have done.

Significant achievement—striving to competently overcome difficult challenges—is a central good in Nietzsche's axiology. He writes plainly that "One would have to seek the highest type of free man where the greatest resistance is constantly being overcome" (*TI*, 'Expeditions', 38). If Nietzsche considers great achievements to be valuable, and at least part of what distinguishes great individuals is that they are high achievers, then it is plausible that achievement is one good that the value of rarity may be conditioned upon.

### 3. The Relativity Problem

The proposal that rarity is valuable for its own sake produces a potential interpretive complication that I shall call the 'relativity problem', which runs as follows. Goethe is a paradigm of greatness

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<sup>26</sup> For instance, walking ten feet may indeed be a tremendous achievement for different classes of agent, such as severely wounded persons, infants, and so forth. This is because such tasks *are* objectively difficult for them.



in Nietzsche's view. But it follows from the above view that if, for instance, there existed a world comprised of not one Goethe but one-hundred Goethes producing identical work, then each Goethe would be less valuable because of this, to the extent that each would not qualify as genuinely great. The reason being that Goethe's behaviour or achievements would, in this context, be common place.<sup>27</sup> This may be unacceptable, for the implication is that Nietzsche considered individuals to be great in one social context but possibly not in another. This proposed *reductio ad absurdum* can be stated formally as follows:

Premise 1. Rarity is an essentially relative concept.

Premise 2. A person, based on their behaviour or achievements, may be rare in one social context, yet not in another.

Premise 3. Rarity itself confers value, to the extent that it is constitutive of greatness.

Conclusion. A person may be considered great in one social context and not in another.

Let us consider a case, using one of the conditions outlined above, to demonstrate why this conclusion may be problematic. Firstly, if rarity is valuable in itself, then it seems that it is of no consequence for Nietzsche *which* particular prevailing social norms great individuals' dissent from. In some cases, however, this may appear to run contrary to Nietzsche's other axiological commitments. For instance, we might imagine a social context in which the prevailing norms are those Nietzsche would approve of (perhaps that of, or similar to, classical Athens). In such a context, would Nietzsche consider good the exceptions who pushed *these* social boundaries and endorsed contrary values (e.g. pity, equality)?

There are at least two points to be made in response. Firstly, Nietzsche is clearly sensitive to the fact that 'being able to be different' is a relational property, the content of which will vary depending upon contingent circumstances. He is explicit that a free spirit is "a relative concept", describing how one "thinks otherwise" than expected "based on his origin, environment, class, and position" (*HH*, 225). After all, to be *different* necessarily depends upon on what the rest of what is in question—soci-

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<sup>27</sup> This is a slight variation on a thought-experiment offered by Andrew Huddleston, *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture*, (Princeton: Doctoral Dissertation, 2012), p. 37. Although Huddleston postulates this thought for subtly different reasons, I discuss its implications for my purposes shortly.

eties, countries, species, and so forth—is like. Consequently, a free spirit can take different forms depending on the variation of such factors. For example, someone who challenges the prevailing values and norms of their social sphere in 14th century Japan will likely behave radically different to someone who does the same in Britain in the 1960's.

With this in mind, it is not merely digressing from supposedly *bad* substantive values which Nietzsche praises, but it is digressing *at all* which matters:

it is not part of the nature of the free spirit that his views are more correct, but rather that he has released himself from tradition, be it successfully or unsuccessfully (*HH*, 225)

This view persists into later work. He longs for "*new philosophers*" who are "strong and original [*ursprünglich*] enough to provide the stimuli for opposite valuations and to evaluate and invert 'eternal values'" (*BGE*, 203). Rather than replace one set of 'eternal values' for others, Nietzsche is here calling for those with the courage to "prepare for great enterprises and collective experiments" (*BGE*, 203), or as he puts it earlier: "the discovery of values for which no scales have been invented yet" (*GS*, 55). Further still, in *The Antichrist* Nietzsche claims that "A spirit that wants to do great things" is "*necessarily* a sceptic" (*A*, 54: emphasis mine).

While, on this view, Nietzsche would concede that individuals who are 'able to be different' might vary in nature, this does not entail that there are *no* constraints on which values and social norms such individuals reject. One reason is that endorsing some values—pity or equality, for example—may be *instrumentally* bad for the promotion of further excellence. It might be, for instance, that an individual who defiantly endorsed a norm favourable to a hedonistic conception of happiness—the "religion of comfortableness" (*GS*, 338) that Nietzsche often attacks—would undermine other constitutive features of great individuals.<sup>28</sup> As I shall argue in the next section, Nietzsche's critique of moral-

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<sup>28</sup> For a similar argument as to the instrumental disvalue of 'morality', see Leiter, (2002), pp. 121-136.

ity—and in particular: 'equality'—can be read as at least partly grounded in an attempt to preserve the value of rarity.

Although the counterarguments provided so far may stifle the initial force of the relativity problem, we might further weaken the intuition driving it by elucidating how Nietzsche understands the positive (and, as I shall argue, *necessary*) relationship between great individuals and their social context.

The potency of the relativity problem supposedly resides in the counter-intuitive conclusion that defenders of rarity value are forced to accept, or so the argument goes. This conclusion is that in a world of one-hundred Goethes, Nietzsche would consider each to be less valuable than in a society with one Goethe. By extension, the relativity problem also has implications for their *collective* value: that a world with one-hundred Goethes would be a *worse* world than one with just one Goethe.

However, this conclusion rests on a particular assumption that must be made explicit, and, in my view, challenged. This is the assumption that Nietzsche endorses a certain evaluative theory, namely: a form of consequentialism with three distinctive features. Firstly, it is *perfectionist* in nature: the good is identified with the promotion of certain excellences and abilities rather than an agent's happiness (broadly construed). Secondly, it has a '*maximax*' structure: these excellences are to be promoted as much as possible, prioritizing the most well-off (in this sense, the most talented or skilled). Thirdly, it is *agent-neutral*: all agents have reason to seek the perfection of the best.

This interpretation is found in the work of John Rawls, who, in *A Theory of Justice*, constructed his own position as antithetical to (his version of) Nietzsche's, which he describes as "directing society to arrange institutions and to define the duties and obligations of individuals so as to maximize the achievement of human excellence in art, science, and culture".<sup>29</sup> More recently, this interpretation has

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<sup>29</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, (Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 325.

been developed by Thomas Hurka.<sup>30</sup> Of particular relevance to the purposes of this paper are the perfectionist and maximising components of this interpretation. On this view, properties which make a person 'great'—of which Hurka claims to be the power that is increased through achievements which have both extent across persons and time, and unity amongst subordinate goals—are to be maximised, with resources to do so distributed among the most capable. The conclusion of the relativity problem is in tension with this claim about maximisation, because it holds that increasing perfection does not necessarily increase value.

However, there are strong reasons for rejecting this distinctive form of perfectionism as representative of Nietzsche's position. Andrew Huddleston has argued—rightly in my view—that although this framework of maximisation is intuitive in cases where the thing in question is *intrinsically* and *atomistically* valuable (i.e. its value is wholly dependent upon its intrinsic properties, and is explicable independently of any whole of which it is a part), it is not necessarily applicable where the thing in question is *extrinsically* and *holistically* valuable (i.e. its value is dependent on extrinsic properties, and is explicable only by reference to the whole of which it is a part).<sup>31</sup> To elucidate the distinction between atomistic and holistic value, let us consider two examples pertaining to each concept, and how maximisation may be (ir)relevant to them.

One might suppose that knowledge is valuable solely due to its nature, and retains this value regardless of its object. For example, it may be *better* we have knowledge of things even if they make us unhappy, or if they are relatively trivial. Granting this to be true for the sake of argument, it is plausible to claim that having more knowledge is thereby that much better. In other words, it is under these circumstances reasonable to maximise. This practice is less acceptable, though, in circumstances where something's value depends at least partly upon its *relations* to other things within a particular whole. Huddleston draws attention to aesthetic examples, for they are paradigmatically holistic:

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Hurka, "Nietzsche: Perfectionist" in Leiter and Sinhababu (eds.), *Nietzsche and Morality*, (Clarendon Press, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Huddleston, (2012), pp. 37-38.

The painting of the regal figure, swathed in ermine, gold, and silks, depicts something magnificent. But adding ten more of such figures does not thereby make the painting's subject matter ten times more magnificent. In contexts where such aesthetically charged values are at issue, the value that a part has typically depends on the relevant whole in which it is situated. In the context of another whole, that same part would not necessarily have the same value.<sup>32</sup>

In these types of cases, because the part derives its value from the whole, simply adding similar parts does not necessarily add value. Consequently, the mechanism of maximisation is not appropriate here as it may be in atomistic cases. Indeed, it is difficult to reconcile the maximax principle with extrinsic properties such as rarity. The value that something—*X*—has on account of its rarity is generated by its *relations* to other things, and not its intrinsic properties: its value necessarily depends upon the limited or non-existence of other *X*'s.

It is significant that Nietzsche does draw attention to the aesthetic dimension of greatness. He identifies a close parallel between the qualities of power and "splendour" or "magnificence" [*Pracht*] that these individuals display (*GM*, 'Preface', 6); a concept with heavily aesthetic connotations. This practice is also prevalent earlier in *The Gay Science*, in which Nietzsche frequently praises attempts to apply aesthetic principles to typically ethical domains (e.g. *GS*, 78; 107; 290; 299; 301).<sup>33</sup> Even earlier in his work, Nietzsche makes a clear connection between rarity and value in aesthetic terms: he claims that the artist has the ability to show "man as he is, uniquely himself to every last movement of his muscles, more, that in being thus strictly consistent in uniqueness he is beautiful, and worth regarding" (*UM*, III, 1). He continues, that it is when "men seem like factory products" that they are "of no consequence and unworthy to be associated with" (*UM*, III, 1). It would not be surprising then, if Nietzsche considers the value that rarity contributes to greatness to function in a holistic way, typical of aesthetic cases.

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<sup>32</sup> Huddleston, (2012), p. 40.

<sup>33</sup> Discussion of the extent of Nietzsche's 'aestheticism' is vast. For one plausible account, see Daniel Came, "Nietzsche on the Aesthetics of Character and Virtue" in Came (ed.), *Nietzsche on Art and Life*, (Oxford University Press, 2014).

It is for this reason that maximising greatness makes little sense. As Huddleston points out, for there to even be greatness, there has to be a non-great majority; the concept is “inherently contrastive” in this way.<sup>34</sup> Nietzsche often claims that social hierarchies are instrumentally valuable in producing greatness (*BGE*, 257-258; *A*, 57; *GM*, I, 2). But if rarity itself confers value, hierarchies are also conceptually necessary for greatness. In Nietzsche's terminology, 'the herd' are the standard from which higher men can conceptually digress. Being exceptional in the normatively relevant sense is impossible without differences in worth [*Werthverschiedenheit*], and an order of rank [*Rangordnung*] among persons. Consequently, taking a 'great' individual—a Goethe or a Beethoven—out of their historical-social context and placing them in another, does not guarantee they would be of the same value. Similarly, on a collective level, simply adding one-hundred Goethes to the world would not *therefore* make that world one-hundred times better.<sup>35</sup> The conclusion of the ‘relativity problem’ then, is not as absurd as it may at first seem.

It is plausible that Nietzsche perhaps proposes maximisation in a *holistic* sense. In other words, that we should seek to maximise the value of the whole, generated by the *relations* of parts within it, rather than simply the parts in question. This move could incorporate the claim that one-hundred Goethe's would render each Goethe less valuable, thus accounting for the value of rarity as constitutive of greatness. While the textual evidence does not settle this matter definitively, it may be, as Hurka suggests, that the "general tenor" of Nietzsche's claims lend themselves to a principle of maximisation.<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche *may* advocate maximisation in this holistic sense. But it matters little for my purposes here. My interpretation concerns whether rarity matters in itself, and not about how much of it there should be.

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<sup>34</sup> Huddleston, (2012), p. 38.

<sup>35</sup> Huddleston's formulation of this response has the benefit of deflecting variations of the Goethe thought-experiment in which each Goethe is engaged in interestingly distinct forms of excellence. The view I propose could allow that a world of *this* kind may collectively be ‘better’, but would each Goethe be ‘great’? It seems that this would still depend on the presence of a non-great majority.

<sup>36</sup> Hurka, (2007), p. 18.

## 4. Expanding Nietzsche's Critique of Morality

Let us briefly recapitulate. I have so far attempted to do three things. Firstly, I defended rarity value as a genuine species of extrinsic value, and identified its place within the terrain of value concepts. I then considered the evidence for interpreting Nietzsche's claims about rarity of persons in this same conceptual sense, and offered two possible conditioning goods: social dissent and significant achievement. Thirdly, I raised a potential difficulty for this interpretation—'the relativity problem'—and argued that once dissected, this difficulty is merely apparent. This is chiefly because the underlying axiological assumptions that motivate the problem (i.e. atomistic maximisation) are difficult to reconcile with many of Nietzsche's claims. I now wish to consider how this interpretation might help to explicate Nietzsche's critique of morality.

Nietzsche is clear that the historical success of herd morality has been, and still is, detrimental to the cultivation of greatness. This major theme is frequently expressed explicitly in terms of an undermining of what is rare and noble, in favour of what is common. In *Beyond Good and Evil* he refers to the climate of 'equal rights' in Europe today as "a *common* war on all that is *rare*, strange, privileged, the higher man, the higher responsibility (*BGE*, 212; emphasis mine). He also claims that it has been those "not noble enough" to perceive the great difference in the order of rank [*Rangordnung*] among men that have "ruled over the destiny of Europe", and with devastating results: "a shrunken, almost ludicrous species, a herd animal, something full of good will, sickly and *mediocre* has been bred, the European of today...(*BGE*, 62; emphasis mine). In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche similarly claims that the "poison of the doctrine '*equal* rights for all'" has been the "chief weapon against *us*, against everything noble" (*A*, 43). Tracing the motivation for this doctrine of equality back to the *ressentiment* of early Christianity, Nietzsche claims that "The aristocratic outlook has been undermined most deeply by the lie of equality of souls", and that accordingly "Christianity is a revolt of everything that crawls along the ground directed against that which is *elevated*: the Gospel of the 'lowly' *makes* low..." (*A*,

43).<sup>37</sup> In a late notebook entry, Nietzsche makes this concern explicit: "The instinct of the herd considers the middle and the mean as the highest and most valuable" (*KSA*, 1887, 10[39] / *WP*, 280).<sup>38</sup>

As Brian Leiter has argued in more detail than I can provide here, Nietzsche's critique of morality has multiple components.<sup>39</sup> It includes a rejection of a number of *descriptive* claims (e.g. about the nature of free will and responsibility) as well as a number of *normative* claims. Nietzsche targets not *all* systems of ethical evaluation, rather a particular family of normative views—what Leiter calls 'morality in the pejorative sense'—which typically values altruism, pity/compassion, equality, peacefulness, as ends in-themselves.<sup>40</sup> His primary target is Christian morality, and what he considers to be its major secular manifestations: Kantianism, Utilitarianism, Schopenhauerian pessimism, and democracy. I shall refer to these views under the broad title of 'herd morality'. The aspect of Nietzsche's attack on herd morality most relevant to our current discussion of rarity value centres on his rejection of equality, of which his concern is with the equality of persons': (a) worth—denoted by status or regard; and (b) corresponding treatment.

We must firstly refine the conception of equality that Nietzsche targets, for there are a variety of distinct principles of equality which may not be subject to his critique. One principle—the *formal* equality principle—reflects the claim that 'like cases must be treated alike'. It holds that there must be consistent esteem/treatment of persons with regard to the respect in which they are equal. A second principle—the *proportional* equality principle—holds that esteem/treatment of persons is equal when they are esteemed/treated according to their due. This Aristotelian conception of equality can broadly be stated as the view that one should esteem/treat equals equally, and unequals unequally in proportion to their normatively relevant differences.<sup>41</sup> Both of these principles are compatible with strict hi-

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<sup>37</sup> Similar attacks on equality pervade Nietzsche's texts. See: *GS*, 377; *BGE*, 30, 44, 259; *TI*, 'Expeditions', 48; *WP*, 246, 957.

<sup>38</sup> Nietzsche also offers an ambitious historical-anthropological explanation for the prevalence of uniformity and "the development of mankind into the similar, ordinary, average, herd-like—into the *common!*" in terms of the evolution of language and communication (see *BGE*, 268).

<sup>39</sup> Leiter, (2002), p. 78.

<sup>40</sup> Leiter, (2002), p. 128.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (Penguin Classics, 2004), J.A.K. Thomson translation, 1130b-1132b.



erarchal or inegalitarian theories, for they leave open which properties are identified as normatively relevant.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Nietzsche explicitly adopts the latter view when he claims:

'Equality for equals, inequality for unequals' — *that* would be the true voice of justice: and, what follows from it, 'Never make equal what is unequal' (*TI*, 'Expeditions', 48)

A thicker principle of equality is *moral* equality: the view that persons do not differ in any normatively relevant sense, and should be valued and treated as such. Nietzsche *does* reject this claim. I will not have time here to give a comprehensive account of Nietzsche's reasons, but I wish to contrast two ways his critique may be read in light of the discussion of rarity value. Henceforth my attention to equality is specifically that of *moral* equality.

At the start of this paper I established two ways of interpreting Nietzsche's claims about rarity. The first was that rarity was merely *indicative* of individuals' possession of other great-making properties (e.g. being a high achiever). On this view, we can interpret Nietzsche's attack on equality as a type of 'levelling-down' objection: he rejects equality at least partly because it promotes a tendency to discourage the most capable from possessing such properties by way of rendering them as worse-off as everyone else. According to this reading, Nietzsche's concern is that only the properties which *make* a person rare have value, and those properties are in some way diminished where equality is taken to be "the *fundamental principle of society*" (*BGE*, 259).

The second way to interpret Nietzsche's claims about rarity—which I have focused upon in this paper and explored a defence of—was that it is itself *constitutive* of greatness. On this view, we can interpret a different and, in some ways, more deep-seated objection to equality in Nietzsche's claims: that it prohibits the very *possibility* of greatness at the outset by collapsing the notion of difference in worth among persons. Recall from the previous section that Nietzsche often praises aristocratic societies for their instrumental value, but that also on this interpretation, hierarchy is an enabling condition for greatness: there is no conception of 'higher' without there also being 'lower'. For Nietzsche,

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<sup>42</sup> Hence Aristotle endorses both the proportional equality principle and the practice of slavery.

the modern 'moral' worldview undermines a subtle yet interesting form of value in peculiarity, and in doing so (if we continue to use aesthetic terms) renders it—and the societies that adopt it—in some way dull or *boring* [*langweilig*] (*UM*, III, 1; *BGE*, 228). Here, it is not (solely) that the valuable properties which make a person rare tend to be diminished, but that the value of rarity itself is intrinsically at odds with the concept of equality.

Nietzsche does at times appear to acknowledge the disvalue of equality in these terms. Regarding the prevalence of democracy in Europe, he claims that:

...the democratic movement is not merely a form assumed by political organisation in decay, but also a form assumed by man in decay, that is to say in diminishment, in process of becoming mediocre and losing his value" (*BGE*, 203)

The close association of mediocrity and value-lowering [*Vermittelmässigung und Werth-Erniedrigung*] characteristic of democracy is repeated shortly afterward:

Whether that which now distinguishes the European be called 'civilization' or 'humanization' or 'progress'; whether one calls it simply, without implying any praise or blame, the *democratic* movement in Europe: behind all the moral and political foregrounds indicated by such formulas a great physiological process is taking place and gathering greater and ever greater impetus—the process of the becoming-similar of all Europeans (*BGE*, 242; cf. 268)

I suggest that Nietzsche is best read here as claiming that at least part of what is degrading about democratic equality is the precisely “the process of the becoming-similar” [*der Prozess einer Anähnlichung*]; the loss of value that rarity has for its own sake.<sup>43</sup>

These two critiques of equality are not mutually exclusive. My aim has been to simply present an under-explored avenue of attack that Nietzsche can be interpreted as making in light of the view that

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<sup>43</sup> Hollingdale translates *Anähnlichung* as 'assimilation'. While this also supports my interpretation, 'becoming-similar' makes the point more explicit.

rarity is constitutive of greatness. The significance of this particular critique of equality is modest in terms of Nietzsche's broader critique of morality, for as I have stated, it has many components. Nevertheless, it would show that Nietzsche makes use of greater axiological resources in his critique of morality than has often previously discussed, and this is exegetically significant.

## Conclusion

This paper has been explorative in nature: I have sought to show that (a) there is an ambiguity regarding what Nietzsche considers the role of rarity to be for the concept of greatness; and (b) although it has been mostly overlooked in the secondary literature, Nietzsche can plausibly be read as endorsing the view that rarity does itself confer value, at least with respect to persons, and under certain qualified conditions. The virtues of such an interpretation include a richer axiology than Nietzsche has perhaps been credited for. By elucidating the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value, we arm ourselves with a variety of conceptual tools otherwise limited by focusing on just means and ends. Furthermore, this interpretation makes a subtle but significant contribution to study of Nietzsche's critique of herd morality, namely: that it is not just that herd morality encourages a levelling down of excellence, but that it also results in a cultural mediocrity where either *nobody* can be great—or, more naively, *everyone* can be great—because the possibility of greatness, at least partly defined by being exceptional, is undermined. I have not addressed whether Nietzsche is more interested in promoting the flourishing of individuals or cultures, rather, I only claim that to the extent Nietzsche is concerned with the higher individual, they must be identified by reference to their cultural context.