

REVIEW

Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ISBN: 978-0-521-79380-3

Christa Davis Acampora and Keith Ansell Pearson, *Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2011), ISBN: 978-0-8264-7364-6

These two books differ in many respects. Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick's *The Soul of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil* treats Nietzsche as an eccentric contemporary anglophone philosopher. The authors see themselves on the winning side of a contest of interpretations between readers of a "truth-friendly Nietzsche" (2) and their opponents, the "postmodernists" (1). Now that this battle has been won, the friends of truth are left with the task of expounding Nietzsche's philosophical positions and aligning them with their appearances in the texts. Nietzsche's *prima facie* commitments lie with some form of "empiricism and naturalism" (89); in fact, his position would be very "close to positivism" (71) were it not for his reflections on mind and value that turn out to redeem, for him, "the normative aspirations of traditional philosophy" (9). The challenge that the authors set themselves, then, is explaining two sets of deviations: how Nietzsche could have written so very badly given his interest in advancing philosophical positions, and why Nietzsche would have departed from positivism. The book restricts itself primarily to what is called "BGE One" (10)—the Preface and first part of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which is "more like a philosophical treatise" (10)—and it consists largely in the exegetical labors required to show that, despite exoteric appearances, the work esoterically presents coherent and sustained argumentation. The payoff of all this is not merely the exegetical work, however, but a non-naturalist conception of the "soul" in terms of a power psychology.

Clark and Dudrick's guiding interpretive thread is Nietzsche's identification of a "magnificent tension of the spirit" (26) in the Preface of *Beyond Good and Evil*. A tension, they reason, requires two opposing forces. By "spirit" they understand Nietzsche to mean "'conscious thought,' especially of the philosophical variety" (11; cf. 28), so the forces in question should be philosophical in nature, or at least contribute to an explanation of the emergence of philosophical beliefs. They find the two opposing forces, then, in the will to truth and in what they call "the will to value" (30) or alternately "the 'value drive,' the drive to see the world in terms of one's values or ideals" (47; cf. 37, 67, 131). The two forces produce, by way of a complicated dialectic, the new conception of the soul. Enhancement of the will to truth, on one hand, leads to the overcoming of dogmatism on the other. Such a one-sided will to truth pro-

duces a crude naturalism that is not in fact true; however, the preservation of truth requires buttressing the will to value. In particular, mind and a range of related phenomena only become visible from “a perspective that embodies value commitment” (131). This allows for a renovated naturalism that not only satisfies the will to value but “actually serves the will to truth” (131). In this way the two essential aims of Nietzsche’s philosophy are rendered compatible and the “magnificent tension” is dissipated, thereby “relaxing the tension of the bow that constitutes contemporary philosophy” (30).

There is much more in this rich and densely-argued book, but here I wish to offer three sets of criticisms. One concerns the “magnificent tension of the spirit.” For Clark and Dudrick, this tension concerns competing philosophical claims that need to be resolved. Nietzsche, however, typically casts such a tension in terms of world-historical distress and desire. “Spirit,” Zarathustra says, is the “life that cuts into life”; Nietzsche typically treats “spirit” as self-modifying subjectivity that takes up its own most basic ends, rather than philosophical ideas, for reconsideration. The tension in the Preface of *Beyond Good and Evil*, then, is that of a “bow” that allows humanity to “shoot for the most distant goals.” The book as a whole discusses a number of tensions immanent in European modernity, and these leave us with a variety of candidates for the opposed elements of a magnificent tension: immense productive capacities and the helplessness of individual agency, the ambitiousness and pessimism of modern institutions, new forms of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, formal liberty and new techniques of surveillance and domination, open possibilities of desire and the lack of worthwhile pursuits, attention to inner cultivation and instrumentalization of the body, historicized and ahistorical views of human identity, the production of intensely reflective and thoroughly shallow discourses, and so on. Overall I see Nietzsche’s central concern as what we are culturally and corporeally, and how this relates to our self-image and our possibilities for the future. One of the stranger things about this book, by contrast, is the authors’ conviction that Nietzsche is *always*, esoterically if not exoterically, meeting them on their own terms and taking up particular philosophical positions.

My second set of criticisms concerns the will to truth and the will to value. It is not clear whether Clark and Dudrick treat these as naturalistic *explananta* or as metaphilosophical commitments. In any event, this treatment seems to miss a basic point about the will to truth. For Nietzsche, it is mysterious both how an intense interest in truth for its own sake could have arisen, and how it could have been incorporated in creatures like us; responding to these mysteries requires addressing the questionable value of the will to truth. For Clark and Dudrick, these kinds of issues disappear or emerge only as the question of whether the will to truth is right. This makes for a curiously indirect approach for addressing everything but the value of truth. Clark and Dudrick treat the two wills roughly as ways of looking at the world—in particular, the soul—but wish to use them for establishing claims about how the world is. But correctness of deployment does not ensure truth, so one might wonder what is the point of discussing these wills rather than directly discussing the soul. This is especially puzzling because the will to truth is not articulated in terms of more specific wills—it is a single will to represent the world as it is, which is for some reason opposed to dogmatism, rather than a diversity of implanted drives to represent in various ways.

The deeper problem, however, is with a contrast with a “will to value.” For Nietzsche, the very emergence of a will to truth was something questionable, but there cannot be any parallel question with the will to value. There is no mystery about living creatures having preferences or evaluating things. There might be a mystery about them wanting to see their “image reflected in the world” so that “the world is seen as it *ought* to be” (131), but the mystery would be how a will to value entails that and how that in turns contributes to a new conception of the soul. If the authors’ point is simply that speaking of souls requires occupying a normative stance, then this point can be made without appealing to a generalized will. Ultimately the identification of the two wills seems to be a backdoor passage to accepting a positivist split between truth and value and then taking it away when it turns out that “to understand a claim *as a claim* ... is to see it from a perspective constituted by values” (124).

My third set of criticisms concerns the way in which the will to value makes room for the conception of mind. The authors read Nietzsche as a particular sort of naturalist, one for whom scientific explanation is privileged. Nietzsche, that is, deems mechanistic explanation superior in any domain in which such explanation is available. The authors’ polemical claim is then that this does not exclude other kinds of explanation being suitable for and indeed required for the domain of the psychological. Nietzsche thinks that “one should prefer ... the *sort of explanation* offered by natural science to any alternative explanation of the *same* phenomenon” (130), but (unnatural) psychology is precisely where the only available explanations require appeals to ethical value and sense-making activities. The problem with this is that it is hard to see how the appeal to sameness and difference could defeat the default privilege given to natural science. Assuming for the moment that the psyche is inscribed in the body—that mind and value are natural phenomena—then from the scientific perspective *any* psychological phenomenon is the “same” as something that science explains. Consider a belief or an action. Either these are susceptible to explanation in scientific terms—say, brain states or bodily movements—and the unnatural psychological explanation can be discarded. Or they are not the same as any natural phenomena, presumably because they are identified differently. But then it becomes hard to see how scientific explanation would ever compete with anything: one can always identify phenomena non-scientifically. Either way, sameness does not help explain the legitimacy of psychological explanation because applying such a criterion depends on how one already thinks about the psychological in its relation to the physical.

There is nevertheless an interesting implication to this view. Values enter into nature as necessary for the kinds of explanations that allow psychological phenomena to come into view, so values have an explanatory priority, at the least, to subjectivity. Indeed, the result of Clark and Dudrick’s argument is generally interesting: to understand the soul is not to locate a separate ontological order or reduce it to a physical one, but to locate a regulative order constituted by a multiplicity of directional forces and perspectives. What readers of this journal might find perplexing is how little this “power psychology” (139) links itself to substantive practices (or to Foucault, who goes unmentioned), choosing instead to direct its argumentative and exegetical firepower to rescuing Nietzsche from positivism. If such a rescue does not preoccupy you, the metanormative claims will seem perplexing and the exegetical moves will seem unconvincing. But if you see Nietzsche as an advocate of naturalism and empiricism

and wish to maintain a picture of Nietzsche's thought, at least in *Beyond Good and Evil*, as a coherent whole, then this is as sophisticated and rigorous a work as one will find.

Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil: A Reader's Guide

Christa Davis Acampora and Keith Ansell Pearson's *Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil: A Reader's Guide* is an introductory work, and thus differs both in what it aims to cover and how it does so. By necessity it stays closer to the surface of the text; it seems designed to be read alongside Nietzsche's work. It cannot offer lengthy or particularly intricate argumentation; it provides a great deal of textual and historical context that might be superfluous for a specialist; and of course it covers the whole book, and not just "BGE One." For all this, contrasting it with Clark and Dudrick's book is helpful in bringing out what sort of philosophical agenda it carries out. The genius of this book is that it manages to be philosophically deep and contextually rich even while fulfilling the most basic explanatory tasks—this is a splendid introduction. Contrasting it with Clark and Dudrick's book will neglect some of what makes it interesting, but will also serve to highlight some of the polemical content that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The most striking difference between the two books, of course, is that Acampora and Ansell Pearson discuss a range of topics that fall outside the scope of Clark and Dudrick's book: morality, foremost, but also nihilism, nationalism, self-overcoming, democracy, modernity, decadence, culture, the affirmation of life, suffering, religion, greatness, and many others. Some of these discussions are unusually innovative for an introductory work: those about free spirits, tragic art, taste, agonism, future philosophy, and eternal recurrence stand out in this regard. Regardless of the areas of overlap and non-overlap, however, we can see the two books as in competition with each other. Because Acampora and Ansell-Pearson see *Beyond Good and Evil* as having "a definite organization and complex structure which can be grasped by looking at it as a whole" (9), we can look to all these discussions, and not merely their analysis of the very beginning of the book, as the potential basis for a comparison.

There are then three very broad, interrelated differences in approach between the two books. One main difference is that Acampora and Ansell Pearson attribute to Nietzsche an approach that might be called—although it is not by them—*existential* rather than theoretical. That is, Nietzsche conceives his project not in terms of discovering facts about the world or explaining events, but in terms of establishing the appropriate orientation to one's life. At its most basic, this involves assigning philosophy "the task of creating values" (19). More generally, this involves treating various elements of the human endeavor as expressive rather than taking them on their own terms. Moralities, for example, can be treated as embodiments of someone's "heart's desires" (17) rather than examined for their particular prescriptions. Theoretical enterprises themselves can be treated in the same way. Thus, "in assessing others' philosophical projects, Nietzsche looks for how their views are indicative of a judgment concerning the value of life ..." (29).

This leaves the production of knowledge, whether philosophical or scientific, as still important, but not in the same way as it would be from an approach that was centered on securing truths. Acampora and Ansell Pearson invoke Nietzsche's claim that "psychology shall once again be the queen of the sciences" (9); this suggests that, rather than treating psychology

as a non-natural deviation from the sciences, Nietzsche thinks of it as higher-order reflection on how knowledge is pursued. Such reflection sets the pursuits of knowledge in the appropriate relation to practices of self-understanding rather than trying to maximize the results: "Nietzsche's goal is to *open up* questioning, to start rather than complete an inquiry" (191; cf. 29, 56). Human self-understanding, furthermore, is responsible to its own activity, rather than to an independent order. As Acampora and Ansell Pearson put it, "Life" is "for Nietzsche the primary category in his 'bio-ethics' and 'bio-politics,' as opposed to nature" (152).

The second main difference is that Acampora and Ansell Pearson attribute to Nietzsche an approach that might be called *pragmatic*. This is again my own term, and here what I mean is that philosophy is conceived as a kind of activity because activity—both as performing and as accomplishing—is treated as somehow prior to the various ways we might look at the world. So *Beyond Good and Evil* as a whole is treated as a "philosophical quest" (5) parallel with that of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Will to power, through the accounts of appropriation and interpretation that it makes possible, furnishes the conceptual background that "allows us to see that Nietzsche conceives his project ... specifically as a kind of action, a doing" (50). This aspect of the approach dovetails with its existential aspect: philosophy is concerned more with creating values, transforming orientations, or perhaps even with the "cultivation and breeding of human beings" (15) than with representation or explanation. The priority of the practical that Nietzsche espouses is not merely one of superior importance, however. The more basic priority of the practical is that one cannot even assess truth-claims as such except by examining the "activity of truth-seeking" (9). Particular claims are subordinate to the operative "conception of the practice of truth" (140), and thus resolving practical questions about how to go on is necessary to be able to conduct inquiry.

The third main difference in approach is nearly a corollary of the first two, and neatly lines up against Clark and Dudrick's reading. Acampora and Ansell Pearson, in their analysis of Part I of *Beyond Good and Evil*, claim that Nietzsche is interested in "the normativity of truth" (29). This represents, I think, a different range of concern from Clark and Dudrick's, even apart from the sides that each book takes. For Clark and Dudrick, one basic issue that Nietzsche faced was either affirming or denying truth, and consequent on the answer to that basic issue either identifying or debunking putative truths. For Acampora and Ansell Pearson, by contrast, the basic issue is how the norm of truth has authority in our epistemic practices and more generally, and thus how it relates to the "value of truth," how the "will to truth" relates to competing values and drives, "what in us wants truth" (31), what other normative commitments need to be in place in order to sustain the regulative authority of truth, and so on. In short, Nietzsche is less concerned with whether there is any such thing as truth than with what role it plays in our lives and how and why it does so. This leads to a different range of particular concerns. For one, Acampora and Ansell Pearson's Nietzsche is worried that an "unconditional" authority of truth leaves it problematically intertwined with other sites of authority: "our ways of thinking will remain in the grasp of morality and metaphysics" (86). Another concern is a "subtle appreciation of the different kinds of claims we might make" (66), especially as these relate to various non-scientific forms of thought such as interpretation and understanding.

Here I cannot hope to adjudicate between the differences in approach between the two books or speculate on whether they might somehow be integrated into a coherent picture. Instead, I suggest that considering a similarity might be instructive: it might offer some guidance on how the books might be useful for a re-approach to the primary text or for philosophical inquiry going forward. Both books offer what might be called *holism*. For Clark and Dudrick, to identify thought as such is not to locate it in a private, incorrigible realm, or to specify a merely causal influence; it is to locate it in a norm-governed space, responsible to rational demands. To think at all, then, requires recognizing a host of normative requirements and being able to situate any particular thought in relation to the other occupants of such a normative space. For Acampora and Ansell Pearson, too, thoughts are not isolatable bits of content, but connected to “drives” (37), “values” (44, 62), “affects” (114), and a whole host of regulative demands; there is no perspective-free content of pure thought. The difference in their reading is that there is no way, even in theory I take it, to isolate specifically epistemic norms, or the particular conditions that pertain to individual agency or thought. Everything from social, historical affiliations to biological imperatives and moral considerations contribute to the construction of subjectivity. I take this not to be the case for Clark and Dudrick—their holism does not extend so broadly. So if had to choose between the books, the choice might depend on whether one wanted a general account of the soul as such and how it is constructed out of a power psychology, or a wider-ranging investigation of everything that contributes to what Nietzsche called “the human soul and its limits” (77).

Robert Guay
Department of Philosophy
Binghamton University
Binghamton, NY
USA
rguay@binghamton.edu