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Leveling vs. Levelness: On Nietzsche's Teaching, Inclusive Excellence, and Democratic Outcomes

Michael O. Begun¹

Abstract

In this essay, I follow the work of Jonas and Yacek in Nietzsche's Philosophy of Education by contrasting a process of leveling in morality and education with an approach to levelness in teaching and learning as these relate to the educational philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. While Nietzsche would oppose the former due to its implied uniform standardization, I argue, with reference to the work of educational psychologist John B. Biggs, that his philosophy of education could sustain an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning. While I hold that Nietzsche's reflections on his own teaching practice evidence clear sympathy for such an approach, I consider two potential objections against its ascription to Nietzsche. In response to the deeper, second objection, which considers whether an outcomes-based approach to education entails some form of uniform standardization akin to that implied by the leveling process, I propose that a democratic reading of Nietzsche's perfectionism together with the model of inclusive excellence proposed by Williams et al. may provide a more fitting standard. I conclude by reflecting on the potential democratic outcomes, as noted by Gurin et al., of developing a Nietzschean approach to teaching and learning based on such a standard of inclusive excellence.

Keywords: Pedagogy; philosophy of education; learning outcomes; inclusive excellence; perfectionism; democratic outcomes

"A teacher is supposed to have the task of making himself accessible to every intelligence."

Friedrich Nietzsche (KSA 13 24[1] 620)

Introduction: Nietzsche *Against* Leveling in Education

In *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Education*, Jonas and Yacek argue that "we should read Nietzsche for democratic inspiration," with one of the main reasons given for this being that "he is simply one of the most insightful observers and critics of the (post)modern world that we come across in the Western canon" (11). One feature of this world with regards to which Jonas and Yacek see Nietzsche as especially prescient concerns his diagnosis of what they call "modern moral degradation," or the way that "modernity has a profound leveling effect on the moral imagination" (11). However, while Jonas and Yacek, drawing on *Schopenhauer as Educator*, relate this so-called "leveling" detected by Nietzsche to our collective "difficulty articulating an account of the good life in terms other than... economic well-being or political service" (10), Nietzsche himself appears to conceive of a process of leveling more closely related to a specific educational approach, which he rejects for reasons beyond its supposedly deleterious effect on our moral vision. Following Jonas and Yacek, it is thus crucial to understand both this leveling process and its related

¹ Michael O. Begun, University of Portsmouth. E-mail: mh1bgn@gmail.com

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educational approach to derive whatever democratic inspiration possible from Nietzsche's genuine insights.

Notably, Nietzsche appears throughout his own academic career to consistently relate a process of leveling closely to a standardized educational practice that he staunchly opposes. Thus, in 1868 while still a doctoral candidate nearing the end of his university studies, Nietzsche writes in a letter to Erwin Rohde about their respective postdoctoral plans concerning the Prussian state licensing exam (*Staatsexamen*), a standardized test that they would have been required to take, for instance, to become qualified for a governmental civil service career as a teacher or school headmaster. Referring to the exam as “this mechanism of an outdated, all-leveling (*alles nivellirenden*) governmental edict,” Nietzsche accordingly rejects it on both of their behalf, for he sees it as entailing no less than the “abuse of our memory, of our productive forces, of our very own drive to develop” (KGB I 2 276). The main problem that Nietzsche appears to have with the *Staatsexamen* is, contrary to what Yacek and Jonas propose, not exclusively about its supposedly degrading moral orientation insofar as it is indeed aimed toward economic well-being through political service. Instead, Nietzsche's concern has more to do with its implicit educational *standardization*, i.e. the way that it requires all individuals who prepare for the exam to conform their intellectual capacities - their memory, their productivity, and even their personal development - to a general “all-leveling” mechanism based upon a uniform standard.²

Toward the end of his academic career as teacher and professor, Nietzsche reflects similarly on this leveling process in a section from *The Wanderer and His Shadow*. In this section, titled “There are no educators” (*Es gibt keine Erzieher*),³ Nietzsche claims that “the education of the young (*die Jugend-Erziehung*) by others is either an experiment carried out on someone who is still unknown, still unknowable, or a principled leveling whose purpose is to make this new human being, whoever they may be, set to conform to the ruling habits and customs” (WS § 267, in KSA 2 667-668.). While it would be possible to contend, as Jonas and Yacek do, that the “ruling habits and customs” of our (post)modernity to which this education conforms are based on an unreflective devotion - as Nietzsche reflects in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, “to the state, to money-making, to sociability, to science” (Jonas and Yacek 11) - Nietzsche would again appear to have a more specific process in mind than just this when he writes here in opposition to an educational approach based on

² Nietzsche becomes even clearer regarding what this uniform standardization is based on a decade later where he writes in *Human, All Too Human* about how “the entire youth... are brought up to a certain graded educational standard (*abgestufte Bildungshöhe*) that is useful to and purposeful for the state” (AOM §320, in KSA 2 507), going on to relate this directly to the use of “state exams” (*Staats-Priifungen*, 508), such as those required by the newly formed German state of its public school teachers.

³ This seemingly pessimistic, if not overtly cynical, titular claim about the lack of educators minimally does not for Nietzsche preclude the existence of better or worse teaching and teachers. In a related *Nachlass* note, Nietzsche similarly bemoans that “there is no longer anyone who is an educator (*es gibt keinen Erzieher mehr*); it is always only people who are themselves not educated that ply their trade under this name. – There are teachers (*Lehrer*), but no educators, pages (*Stallknechte*), but no knights” (KSA 8 19[61] 344). In context, WS § 267 also specifically concerns the perspective of the “thinker” (*Denker*) rather than that of the teacher; it thus poses the thesis that “One should speak as a thinker only of self-education (*Selbst-Erziehung*)” before offering a practical conclusion that the seemingly paradoxical task of educating *others* is something “unworthy of the thinker, the work of parents and teachers” (KSA 2 668).



“principled leveling (*grundsätzliche Nivellierung*).”⁴ For such a process relates more closely to the ruling habits and customs within education itself, including those implied by the uniform standardization of the *Staatsexamen*.

Nietzsche: For *Levelness* in Teaching

While Nietzsche is thus more clearly opposed to leveling in morality and education, he may appear nonetheless to favor what can be called levelness in teaching and learning. By ‘levelness’⁵ I refer primarily to the influential theory of constructive alignment proposed by the Australian educational psychologist John B. Biggs. Biggs initially proposed constructive alignment in the 1990s⁶ as a “form of outcomes-based teaching and learning” (Biggs et al. xxii), i.e. an approach that places primary focus not on what or how teachers teach, but rather on what students should do, and ultimately achieve, through their learning. As Biggs et al. put it, constructive alignment “starts with clearly stating, not what the teacher is going to teach, but what the outcome of that teaching is intended to be, expressed as the intended learning outcome (ILO). The ILO is a statement of what the learner is expected to be able to do and to what standard...” (xxii). As an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning, Biggs’ theory of constructive alignment relates to a concept of levelness in at least three important senses, i.e. in terms of teaching, learning, and curriculum.⁷

⁴ While such principled leveling would seem in a sense to be democratic, or at least conducive to certain democratic aims of *political* equality, Nietzsche appears clearly opposed to the kind of *cultural* leveling that it entails. Thus, in a section from *Human, All Too Human* titled “Differently Oriented Envy and Complacency” (HH 1 480), which is dedicated to a political critique of what Nietzsche calls “both opposing parties, the socialist and the national,” he ultimately seeks to justify, against the socialist party, the existence of a “better, externally more advantageously positioned social class” not by virtue of any uniform standard, but rather by “their proper task, the creation of the highest cultural goods.” For what seems to assure this creation are those whose mindset Nietzsche likewise juxtaposes to the essentially conformist and unthinking national party, who “hate and envy those superior individuals that develop of their own accord (*die hervorragenden, aus sich wachsenden Einzelnen*) and that do not gladly present themselves in rank and file for the purpose of a mass effect (*Massenwirkung*).” It is for this reason that Nietzsche admits that the socialist party, opposed as it is to the existence of “higher classes of society,” would be right to “seek a levelling (*zu nivellieren suchen*) outwardly between themselves and these classes, since they are indeed already levelled together with them (*schon mit einander nivelliert*) inwardly, in heart and mind,” though only on the condition that “the spirit of mass effect be made the spirit of the higher classes.” However, Nietzsche clearly opposes this “spirit of mass effect” in favor of a higher class of individuals who develop of their own accord to fulfill the proper task of creating the highest cultural goods. For this reason, Nietzsche concludes his critique with an invocation that “higher human beings” continue to perform the “feats of higher culture”: “thereby all that lives confirms your right, and the order of a society on whose pinnacle you stand, will be safe from every evil glance and blow” (KSA 2, 314). Notably, Nietzsche also appears to oppose this “higher culture (*höhere Kultur*)” to culture in general particularly in terms of the latter’s contribution to the leveling process. Thus, in a *Nachlass* note from around the time that he was working on *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche can write without apparent contradiction both that “the approximately uniform development (*einartige Entwicklung*) of reason and feeling is the aim of culture (as a basis for understanding, of reciprocal helping and support)” as well as that “a great loss occurred with this leveling culture”; since Nietzsche associates this levelling culture (*nivellierende Kultur*) with “such organized world powers as the Roman Empire, Christendom and above all else science and scholarship (*vor allem Wissenschaft*),” he can accordingly conclude consistently that “‘History’ is the recounting of the means, of the routing and trafficking, that lead to this uniformity (*zur Einartigerwerden*)” (KSA 8 32[24] 563-564).

⁵ I borrow the terminology of ‘levelness’ in reference to Biggs’ theory of constructive alignment from Dr. Andy Clegg and Maria Hutchinson at the University of Portsmouth. The interpretation of the concept behind the term proposed here, however, is original.

⁶ See especially Biggs, John. “Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment.” *Higher Education*, vol. 32, no. 3, Oct. 1996, pp. 347–364, <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00138871>.

⁷ In the first of these, Biggs et al. specify “three levels of thinking about teaching” (16), differentiated by their focus on, at Level 1, “what the student is” (28), at Level 2, “what the teacher does” (29), and finally, at Level 3, “what the student does” (30). As Biggs summarizes these: “The first two are ‘blame’ models, the first blaming the learner, the second, the teacher.

While there are places in his writing where Nietzsche appears to reflect on levelness in all three senses,⁸ it is clearest that he thinks about levelness specifically in his approach to teaching. Such clearest indications are especially apparent in an early draft for *Ecce Homo* from Nietzsche's *Nachlass*. In the relevant *Ecce Homo* passage (EH "Wise" §4), Nietzsche relates, as a specific instance of the way that others have been generally well-disposed toward him throughout his life, a reflection on his own teaching practice. In the *Nachlass* draft for this section, Nietzsche relates this reflection on teaching practice even more closely to his philosophy of education. Here, he elaborates:

Essentially, I belong to those unintentional educators, who neither need nor possess principles for educating. The singular fact that I had no occasion to mete out a punishment during the seven years in which I taught Greek to the final-year class of the Basel *Pädagogium* and that, as I later came to witness, the laziest students were still studious with me, attests to this to a certain degree. (KSA 13 24[1] 619.)

Nietzsche further explains a "small bit of wisdom from this practice" in terms that seem to correspond to what Biggs' theory of constructive alignment would indicate as a teaching approach at Level 2. As Biggs et al. explain, while Level 1 is based on a "blame-the-student... theory of teaching" (29) in which differences between students regarding success at achieving ILOs are attributed to "the differences between students," e.g. in terms of innate talent or effort given, Level 2 is "also a 'deficit' model, the blame this time being placed on the teacher" (28), i.e. in terms of their better or worse teaching methods. Nietzsche appears to be thinking as a Level 2 teacher when he reflects on the following "strategy" (*Kunstgriff*) from his own teaching practice:

...In any case where a pupil remained insufficient in repeating that which I had demonstrated the previous hour, I consistently took the blame (*die Schuld*) for that upon myself, - for example, I would say that everyone had the right to ask for elaboration of something that I may have expressed too curtly, or to request a

The third model integrates learning and teaching, seeing effective teaching as encouraging students to use the learning activities most likely to achieve the outcomes intended" (16). Second, Biggs et al. further specify "levels of understanding" (83) based on the SOLO taxonomy of learning outcomes that Biggs developed in his earlier work (cf. Biggs, John B., and Kevin F. Collis. *Evaluating the Quality of Learning: The SOLO Taxonomy*. Academic Press, 1982.) and its relation to learning outcomes. This SOLO Taxonomy, which consists of five distinct levels (the prestructural, the unistructural, the multistructural, the relational and the extended abstract) is itself based on both "quantitative" and "qualitative" changes in the "the emerging structural complexity of learning outcomes as learning processes" (86). Third and finally, Biggs et al. consider learning outcomes themselves in terms of their curricular "alignment at three levels" (380), i.e. as "graduate outcomes" (111), as "intended learning outcomes at the program level" (114), and as "intended learning outcomes at the unit level" (116). Whereas the first concerns what Biggs et al. refer to as learning outcomes at the "institutional level, as a statement of what the graduates of the university are supposed to do" (111), the latter two refer to the learning outcomes presupposed of students who have completed a particular degree (at what they call the "program level") and those presupposed of students who have completed a particular course or module within a degree (at what they call the "unit level").

⁸ For instance, in his letter to Basel's Education Ministry from June 24, 1875, several of Nietzsche's proposals for "Greek Instruction at the *Pädagogium*" also demonstrate an outcomes-based approach, with an eye toward levelness in terms of both understanding and curricular alignment. Consider here especially Nietzsche's initial proposal to expand the three years of Greek instruction with the "addition of a highest class, an honors class (*Selecta*)" in terms of this instruction's "natural aim" (*natürliches Ziel*), which for Nietzsche entails being able to "instill in the pupils a deep appreciation (*Neigung*) for Hellenic life and not least of all to leave them with the ability to read classic Greek authors easily." In this proposal, Nietzsche notably attends both to the level of understanding or "learning levelness" that pupils are to attain in their Greek instruction for it to have "achieved its aim" as well as to a sense of "curricular levelness" in that such instruction is ultimately to prepare students for their "transition to university" (KGB II 5 460).



repetition of something that I may have put incomprehensibly. A teacher is supposed to have the task of making himself accessible to *every* intelligence... (KSA 13 24[1] 619-620)⁹

However, in context, the way that Nietzsche initially describes himself as an “unintentional educator” (*unfreiwilliger Erzieher*), who has neither need for nor possession of “principles for educating” (*Prinzipien zur Erziehung*), would further seem to suggest an outcomes-based approach to teaching at Level 3. As Biggs et al. stipulate, “[t]he focus at Level 3 is on what the student does and how well the intended outcome is achieved” (31). Unlike at Level 2, where the “teacher’s role is to explain concepts and principles, as well as to present information,” teaching at Level 3 is instead focused on student-centered questions, which include: “are [students] engaging in those activities most likely to lead to the intended outcomes? If not, what sort of teaching/learning context would best help them? How can we know that they have achieved the intended outcomes satisfactorily?” (33). That Nietzsche taught with such questions in mind becomes even more apparent in the remainder of the draft following the section cited above.

In this remainder, Nietzsche thus proceeds from considering his approach to teaching younger secondary school pupils (*Schüler*) at the Basel *Pädagogium* to reflecting on his approach to examining doctoral candidates (*Promovenden*) at the University of Basel.¹⁰ Nietzsche’s commitment to a Level 3 approach to teaching accordingly becomes most apparent in the following, where he reflects:

...the examination of doctoral students (*Promovenden*) gave me no occasion to learn any sort of techniques (*Künste*) or methods: what I instinctively possessed was not only the most humane thing for such cases, - for I only felt completely at ease during these examinations once I had brought the candidates onto a good channel for smooth sailing. Everyone has in such cases as much spirit – or as little – as the venerable examiner does.... When I really paid attention, it always seemed to me that it was essentially the examiners who were being *tested*. (KSA 13 24[1] 620 §4)

In terms of Nietzsche’s teaching approach, the last sentence in this section is particularly telling. For Nietzsche would hold that examiners of doctoral candidates are not being “*tested*” (*geprüft*) on their knowledge and delivery of teaching techniques or methods, but rather on how well they can help students achieve intended learning outcomes, e.g. by bringing them into a “good channel for smooth sailing” (*gutes Fahrwasser*) and by gifting them “spirit” (*Geist*) so that they are best able to fully demonstrate their own advanced knowledge. As the former corresponds to Level 2 teaching and the latter to Level 3

⁹ Julian Young’s translation of the last sentence, “*Ein Lehrer habe die Aufgabe, sich jeder Intelligenz zugänglich zu machen...*” on which Jonas and Yacek notably rely in their Nietzsche’s *Philosophy of Education*, as “A teacher has the obligation of making himself accessible to every level of intelligence” (Jonas and Yacek, 2) seems faulty insofar as it presupposes that Nietzsche here is both considering for himself and affirming to his young pupils the existence of distinct *levels* of intelligence. However, as Nietzsche does not use any word for “level” here and, though Young omits this detail, emphasizes the word *every*, Young’s translation seems implausible. For Nietzsche’s claim seems to be about the teacher’s obligation toward *every student*, regardless of intellectual differences, rather than the teacher’s need to adapt *every method* to suit intellectual differences among these students.

¹⁰ Given the significant differences in ILOs between secondary school pupils and doctoral students, Nietzsche’s range of reflection also suggests his attention to levelness in the other two senses introduced above, i.e. levelness in terms of learning and curriculum.

teaching, Nietzsche's reflection here on his teaching practice therefore evinces a commitment to Level 3 teaching.

Two Objections

Although Nietzsche seems to reflect on something like levelness in relation to his own teaching practice, it is nonetheless worth considering a potential critique of attributing an approach to teaching based on levelness to him. This critique concerns two potential objections based in Nietzsche's own philosophy of education. Both objections concern whether Nietzsche could accept distinct presuppositions of an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning, in which this sense of levelness has its context.

The first potential objection relates to the presupposition, as Biggs et al. put it, that the primary focus of teaching and learning for an outcomes-based approach is "not what the teacher is going to teach, but what the outcome of that teaching is intended to be" (xxii). Given Nietzsche's basic concern, discussed already in the introduction, that education typically involves teaching someone who is "still unknown, still unknowable," there emerges a serious question as to whether Nietzsche himself could subscribe to a teaching approach that subsumes what and how teachers should teach entirely under a given set of ILOs. For if an outcomes-based approach to teaching focuses primarily on what students are supposed to be able to do, there is a concern about whether teachers can consistently succeed with such an approach if, as Nietzsche suggests, these students' individual abilities and prospects, which would need to include their relevant abilities and prospects for attaining any given ILO, happen to be ultimately unknowable.

The second, and perhaps much deeper, potential objection concerns whether an outcomes-based approach, and particularly its reliance on objective standards, also would make it susceptible to the same educational leveling based on uniform standardization that Nietzsche opposes. Recall that the ILOs according to an outcomes-based approach indicate both "what the learner is expected to be able to do and to what standard" (Biggs et al. 2022 16). Accordingly, at least under the assumption that this standard should apply equally to assess all learners, it would seem difficult for such an approach to avoid the very "principled leveling whose purpose is to make this new human being, whoever they may be, set to conform to the ruling habits and customs," which, as already reviewed in the introduction, Nietzsche fundamentally rejects.

Response to the First Objection: Nietzsche's Goal in Teaching

To the first objection, Nietzsche's consistent support for what may be termed an outcomes-based approach to ethics would also appear to support an outcomes-based approach to teaching. In terms of the former, consider how Nietzsche proposes "a yes, a no, a straight line, a goal" both in a concluding aphorism from *Twilight of the Idols* (TI "Maxims" §44) with an individual scope as a "formula for my happiness" (KSA 6 66) and in the *Antichrist* (A §1) with a wider, social scope as a "formula of our happiness" (KSA 6 169). Assuming reasonably that outcomes can be considered adequately in terms of the attainment of some "goal" (*Ziel*), this aphorism appearing in two of Nietzsche's final works seems to indicate an outcomes-based approach to ethics insofar as he in both relates the attainment of a goal directly to the basic ethical concept of "happiness" (*Glück*). Furthermore, another aphorism from *Beyond Good and Evil*, which Nietzsche had been



incubating for at least several years prior,¹¹ even more specifically indicates an outcomes-based approach to teaching. Here, Nietzsche writes that “Whoever is fundamentally a teacher takes all things seriously only in relation to his students, - including himself” (BGE §63, in KSA 5 85). This aphorism’s suggestion that teachers should be focused less on the knowledge and methods that they use to teach and more on whether these are truly facilitating their students’ learning calls to mind especially the key distinction Biggs introduces between Level 2 teaching, which is focused on “what the teacher does,” and Level 3 teaching, which is concerned first and foremost with “what the student does.” Based on these two aphorisms, it thus seems possible to address the first potential objection that Nietzsche could not subscribe to an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning. At least insofar as one is “fundamentally a teacher,” such an approach would appear to have Nietzsche’s support.

Response to the Second Objection: Nietzsche and Inclusive Excellence

To the second objection, a plausible “democratic reading” of Nietzsche’s perfectionism may support an outcomes-based approach to teaching based on a standard of inclusive excellence. Following Cavell, Jonas and Yacek recently argue that Nietzsche “advances a *perfectionist* worldview. That is, Nietzsche’s appeals to the reader to become powerful self-overcomers are informed by a concrete conception of what a flourishing individual life looks like, and his texts call us to embrace those ideals” (10). However, following an influential interpretation by Rawls,¹² to which some more recent perfectionist readings of Nietzsche also adhere,¹³ Jonas and Yacek note a common concern that Nietzsche’s supposed “radical elitism” implies that such perfectionism is intended by him as an ethical ideal exclusively for the few rather than more inclusively for the many. In opposition to this radically elitist reading of Nietzsche, Jonas and Yacek note that several more recent interpreters, including themselves, have challenged what they call this “standard view” of Nietzsche’s supposed radical elitism in favor of more “democratic readings” of Nietzsche’s perfectionism. Such readings are democratic for Jonas and Yacek specifically as philosophers of education insofar as they place (educational) “value on the achievement of all individuals, no matter their talent level” (102). This opposes the radical elitist, who values only the achievement of the few most elite members of society.

Such democratic readings, moreover, seem at least consistent with a philosophical commitment to what American educational leaders Damon A. Williams, Joseph B. Berger, and Shederick A. McClendon have defined as an educational standard of inclusive excellence. In their paper “Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Postsecondary Institutions,” Williams et al. define inclusive excellence in terms of four

¹¹ For the aphorism appears nearly verbatim (KSA 10 3[1] 71 §150.) already in a collection Nietzsche assembled around 1882 that includes at least two other aphorisms about the nature of the teacher that are also consistent with an outcomes-based approach to teaching: “Our deficiencies are our best teachers; but one is always ungrateful to the best teachers” (KSA 10 3[1] 57 §35) and the more oft-quoted “One repays a teacher badly when one always remains ‘the pupil’” (KSA 10 3[1] 105 §430).

¹² According to Rawls, Nietzsche holds that “mankind must continually strive to produce great individuals. We give value to our lives by working for the good of the highest specimen” (Rawls 325).

¹³ For instance, consider Hurka’s influential “Nietzsche: Perfectionist.” For a more recent critique of Hurka’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s perfectionism, see Rutherford’s “Nietzsche as perfectionist.”

main elements.¹⁴ While all four elements are essential to the standard that these authors propose, the first, “a focus on student intellectual and social development” and the second, “a purposeful development and utilization of organizational resources to enhance student learning,” are most relevant for discerning an appropriate academic and institutional standard for a Nietzschean outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning.¹⁵ What ultimately makes inclusive excellence a fitting standard for Nietzsche is that, rather than requiring a “principled leveling,” it instead permits flexibility to the diverse educational values of individual students. Such flexibility in turn allows for the achievement of individually optimal learning outcomes.

Conclusion: Nietzsche's Democratic Outcomes

Among these uniquely optimal outcomes based on a standard of inclusive excellence are not only the learning outcomes discussed by Biggs et al., but also a set of what can be generally termed broader democratic outcomes. Following Gurin et al., Williams et al. distinguish further in their inclusive excellence model between two sets of outcomes that are deemed important for student learning, when they delineate as follows as either “learning outcomes” or “democratic outcomes”:

Learning outcomes include active thinking skills, intellectual engagement and motivation, effective written and oral communication, and group problem-solving ability. Democratic outcomes include the ability to take the position of another person, racial and cultural understanding between and among groups, acceptance of conflict as a normal part of life, capacity to perceive differences and commonalities both within and between social groups, and interest in the wider social world and civic engagement (25).

Perhaps surprisingly against the background of his well-known suspicion toward democracy, Nietzsche's philosophy of education, particularly as it has been illuminated by Jonas and Yacek, would nonetheless seem to support many, if not all, of these intended democratic outcomes. For the ability to take the position of another person seems key to Nietzsche's perspectivist epistemology; racial and cultural understanding between and among groups is arguably needed for the flourishing of a higher global culture; the acceptance of conflict as a normal part of life is essential to his conception of a self- and other-empowering agonism¹⁶; the capacity to perceive differences and commonalities both within and between social groups is required for any critical revaluation of values; and, finally, an interest in the wider social world and civic engagement is indispensable to

¹⁴ These elements include: “1. A focus on student intellectual and social development... 2. A purposeful development and utilization of organizational resources to enhance student learning... 3. Attention to the cultural differences that students bring to the educational experience and that enhance the enterprise... [and] 4. A welcoming community that engages all of its diversity in the service of student and organizational learning” (Williams et al. vi).

¹⁵ Here, Williams et al. also note that these two elements respectively entail of inclusive excellence that “academically, it means offering the best possible course of study for the context in which the education is offered [implying] the provision of qualified instructors and sufficient resources—including other learners—as well as a sequence of study that is coherent and challenging, and one that comprehensively addresses the student learning goals of the particular institution” and that “organizationally, it means establishing an environment that challenges each student to achieve academically at high levels and each member of the campus to contribute to learning and knowledge development” (vi).

¹⁶ Jonas and Yacek define agonism helpfully as a “form of contest that Nietzsche believes elevates both competitor and opponent and motivates each towards further self-empowerment” (120).



Nietzsche's classically cosmopolitan, if not overtly cynical,¹⁷ educational vision. For while Nietzsche may indeed be critical of democracy as a philosopher and thinker, as a teacher and educator, he would appear rather more intent on pursuing such democratic outcomes for all students.

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¹⁷ My reading in this sense diverges from that of educational theorist Ansgar Allen, who ascribes to Nietzsche a classically cynical vision of education, and especially of its institutional aims (Allen 205).