

## Book Review

Keith Ansell-Pearson and Rebecca Bamford: *Nietzsche's "Dawn": Philosophy, Ethics, and the Passion of Knowledge*. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2021. Pp. xii, 270.)

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Keith Ansell-Pearson and Rebecca Bamford's *Nietzsche's "Dawn"* provides a valuable contribution to the scholarship on Nietzsche, a careful consideration of a relatively neglected work, and an invitation to revisit questions about Nietzsche's ethical and political aims. As the first book-length treatment of Nietzsche's *Dawn*, it promises to garner attention for that work and increase scholarly consideration of the free spirit period, as have recent book-length treatments of that period by Ruth Abbey (*Nietzsche's "Human All Too Human"* [Edinburgh University Press, 2020]), Matthew Meyer (*Nietzsche's Free Spirit Works* [Cambridge University Press, 2019]), and Paul Franco (*Nietzsche's Enlightenment* [University of Chicago Press, 2011]). By showing that *Dawn* is organized to advance a sustained argument, it further advances the possibility of treating this work, and the free spirit writings more generally, in a systematic way, subject to sustained critical analysis, rather than as a mere collection of aphorisms or a preliminary sketch of views developed in Nietzsche's more "mature" work. It also contributes to a view of the middle period as more complex than one in which Nietzsche simply adopted a scientific or positivistic approach to knowledge. By foregrounding the passion for knowledge and its cultivation, the authors show the inseparability of ethical considerations from matters of epistemology.

Ansell-Pearson and Bamford's book offers a clear analysis of important themes in Nietzsche's *Dawn*, including morality, subjectivity, identity, care of the self, politics, and futurity, and it does so in thematic chapters rather than a linear analysis of *Dawn's* text. This approach allows the book to speak to the variety of scholarly approaches to Nietzsche, attending at once to the form of his writing and to the reconstruction of his key arguments. While providing a sustained analysis of *Dawn*, it situates the work within Nietzsche's free spirit period, offering commentary on the movement from *Human, All Too Human* to *Dawn* and from *Dawn* to *The Gay Science*, bringing the book into conversation with other treatments of the free spirit period. It is organized around the argument that Nietzsche's *Dawn* engages in a sustained campaign against conventional morality, one that is necessary to make philosophical inquiry possible. One of the chief merits of the book is its attention to experimentalism as a bridge between Nietzsche's call for a scientific approach to knowing and his continued attention to other approaches

to the world that attend to the affects and passions, including especially the passion for knowledge.

As the book argues that *Dawn* undertakes a coherent strategic mission in its campaign against morality, it highlights the experimentalism Nietzsche deploys in service to this aim, including shifting perspectives that allow experimental thoughts. It maintains that Nietzsche suggests and promotes experiments in knowing in service to scientific advancement, and experiments in living that are part of an effort at new approaches to ethics. Ansell-Pearson and Bamford demonstrate the connection between this experimentalism and skepticism about conventional morality. The theme of experimentation presents Nietzsche's project in *Dawn* as one of administering therapy in small doses rather than the grand projects associated with his later writings and his claims about great politics. By showing new modes of life and challenges to conventional morality as directed toward experimentation, the book offers a response to those who would link Nietzsche's political project with grand modes of philosophic command. For Ansell-Pearson and Bamford, the challenge to conventional morality yields a new ethic of care of the self, one predicated on Nietzsche's drive psychology and oriented toward cultivating human possibilities through experimentation.

By contrast with those who see Nietzsche's project primarily through the lens of a great politics of philosophical legislation, the book highlights the reform of our ethical orientation, the therapeutic, and the personal. Nonetheless, the book frames Nietzsche's work in *Dawn* as oriented by a "campaign against conventional morality" that might be thought of as a fundamentally political project. In direct consideration of the political, the book highlights the therapeutic rather than grand legislative projects, befitting the approach of *Dawn*. It looks to futurity as a way of opening new human possibilities. In line with the analysis of scholars like Lawrence Hatab and Christa Davis Acampora, the authors reject those interpretations that place the sovereign individual as the culmination of Nietzsche's approach to agency, in favor a view that highlights his drive psychology and points toward futurity in an open-ended manner. This analysis could be understood to separate Nietzsche's political aims from a politics of domination while nonetheless pursuing strategic paths toward a new human future.

The chapter that explicitly treats politics, "*Dawn* and the Political," addresses themes such as the role of capital, immigration, colonization, and political therapy. While responding to the problematic character of some of the colonizing logic of *Dawn*, the authors convincingly address the literature on this question and demonstrate that it does not undermine Nietzsche's broader arguments or his campaign against morality. Ansell-Pearson and Bamford ultimately conclude that the political themes in *Dawn* serve a form of political therapy and are part of his larger campaign against morality. This argument subordinates the conspicuously political themes to Nietzsche's larger project of ethical reform.

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This subordination opens the door to a quibble with the approach the book takes to Nietzsche's political thought, a matter of special importance to readers of this journal. We might see the campaign against morality that is at the core of Ansell-Pearson and Bamford's argument as part of Nietzsche's political vision. Reading the campaign as fundamentally political would open the possibility of connecting the aims of *Dawn* with the apparent promotion of philosophical legislation in his later works. Ansell-Pearson and Bamford's analysis provides a helpful voice in the discussion of Nietzsche's politics, and a more explicit connection between Nietzsche's campaign against morality and the scope of his political ambitions would have further enhanced the contribution of this valuable book. The book's argument invites engagement on questions of Nietzsche's broadest political aims as it offers a substantive challenge to some of the prominent interpretation of Nietzsche's "great politics."

The merits of book include its deep engagement with a singular text, thoughtful responses to controversies in Nietzsche scholarship, attention to the free spirit period, and its invitation to rethinking the political significance of Nietzsche's thought. It is a welcome contribution to Nietzsche studies. Students and scholars of Nietzsche will be well served by the guidance it provides to *Dawn*, for which it provides an invaluable companion. Nietzsche scholarship will be shaped by the careful analysis of its broad range of themes.

–Paul E. Kirkland  
Carthage College, USA