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Nietzsche Contra the Atheists

An Analysis of the Popular Reception of Nietzsche's Atheism in English-Speaking Countries

By Stephen Peter Cheung

Submitted for Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Theology and Religion

Durham University
2021

Abstract

This analysis of the English-speaking popular reception of Nietzsche from 1895 to the present will follow Nietzsche in bringing history and philosophy together. I will argue that Nietzsche's philosophy provides explanatory power for understanding the reception of his atheism and that his reception history in turn sheds light on the meaning of his atheism. Chapter One explores how Nietzsche employs form and style to establish the event of God's death as the chasm of understanding that lies between himself and other atheists. Chapter Two considers the defining features and concerns of Nietzsche's atheism – nihilism, Dionysianism, asceticism, naturalism, eternal recurrence and the übermensch – in the context of Nietzsche's soteriological project. Against this backdrop, the remaining chapters will explore the reception of Nietzsche's atheism that has not been conveyed to a popular audience through the details of his philosophy but rather through the themes and categories that naturally arose between the established poles of debate of the broader culture of the time. Chapters 3–5 demonstrate how Nietzsche's popular reception has been shaped through debates over Nietzsche's alleged madness, nationalism, social Darwinism, decadence, warmongering and nazism, while chapter 6 explores why most authors attempting to popularise atheism today either make little mention of Nietzsche or conspicuously do not mention him at all. The question throughout this account of Nietzsche's reception is not simply 'How has Nietzsche been received?' but rather 'What would Nietzsche make of his own popular reception?' A Nietzschean evaluation of his own reception history is made feasible by Nietzsche himself who not only predicts that he and the majority of atheists who read him will remain at a vast distance from each other, but having measured the distance that lies between them, he also takes the trouble to explain why that distance exists.

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List of Abbreviations

Nietzsche's works (unless otherwise stated all quotations from Nietzsche's works are from the following translations):

AC *The Anti-Christ* [1895], trans. R. J. Hollingdale in *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ* (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

BGE *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, [1886], trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

BT *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings* [1872: The Birth of Tragedy], ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

D *Daybreak: Thoughts On the Prejudices of Morality,* ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

EH Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, [1888], in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo,* ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

GS *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and An Appendix of Songs* [1882], trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

GM *On the Genealogy of Morals* [1887], in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo,* ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

HAH *Human, All Too Human* [1878 and 1879-1880], trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

PTAG *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* [1873], trans. Marianne Cowan (Washington DC: Reginary Publishing, 1962).

TI Twilight of the Idols [1889], trans. R. J. Hollingdale in Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

UM *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

WP *The Will to Power* [1901], ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968).

Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra, in The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books), pp. 103-439

Abbreviations of other works:

FNPB Julian Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

MHP R. J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy,* revised edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

NAP Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980)

NRS Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, *What Nietzsche Really Said* (New York: Schocken Books, 2000).

PPA Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1950).

PHH Corngold, Stanley, 2019. *Walter Kaufmann: Philosopher, Humanist, Heretic* (Woodstock, Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press).

Declaration

This work has been submitted to the University of Durham in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, and none of it has been previously submitted to the University of Durham or any other university for a degree.

Statement of Copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

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And finally my deepest gratitude goes to my wife. Julia, this work is yours as much as it is mine, for not only have you made this work possible, but you have made this time, as you do with the rest of our life together – a light and joyful endeavour.

St. John's College, Durham,
Michaelmas 2022.

Dedication

For Julia,

when I'm with you

eternal recurrence

seems like the *most splendid proposition*.

Introduction

'Almost two millennia and not a single new God!' Nietzsche complains in *The Anti-Christ* as he berates his own people for their singular lack of 'talent for religion'.[1] A curious sentiment for an atheist perhaps. But for Nietzsche, the gods are the guardians and projections of a culture's values, whether they be the 'decrepit', 'decaying' and 'decadent' values which 'have their sanction' in the 'pitiable God of Christian monotono-theism', or the life-affirming, natural and noble values of the Greek gods – those valorised, heroised, elevated versions of ourselves.

There is a reason why the 'strong races' – even after two thousand years – have not as yet 'repudiated the Christian God'. Nietzsche perceives that values, invested as they are in the gods, are not something that can be picked up and put down, tried on for size and then set aside at will; rather, when values are taken up, they are 'taken up' into all our 'instincts'. Thus, when Nietzsche talks about values, he is talking about something deeply rooted in, and so tightly intertwined with, the shape that humanity takes, so as to make the two virtually indistinguishable from each other. For Nietzsche then, to create new gods is to create new values, and to create new values, is to create a new humanity.

What happens then when the God who usurped all other gods dies?

Nietzsche experiences the death of God as an apocalyptic event – 'the greatest recent event',[2] he calls it, 'a monstrous event, the like of which has never been seen on earth before'[3], and 'an unparalleled event which breaks the history of humanity in two'.[4] Nevertheless, Nietzsche is fully aware that the vast majority of atheists do not experience the death of God as an event, let alone an apocalyptic one. This vast discrepancy is a direct consequence of a theological misunderstanding: When Nietzsche says 'God' he is not talking about a divine mechanic, an intelligent designer or a missing demiurge; rather, he exhibits a profoundly metaphysical conception of God as the ground of all being and the ground of the intelligibility of all things. God, on Nietzsche's understanding, thus sums up all our metaphysical commitments and values, and defines the very shape of our humanity.

It is because they are talking about two categorically different things that Nietzsche experiences God's death as an apocalypse on the one hand while other atheists can shrug their shoulders in 'ho-hum' fashion and carry on as if nothing has happened on the other,

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[1] *AC*, para.19, pp.140-141.
[2] *GS*, Book Five, para.343, p.279.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *EH*, 'Why I Am a Destiny', para.8, p.333.

imagining that their highest values, such as the 'human being' or 'progress' remain intact. For Nietzsche then, the crisis of a Godless universe is a crisis of values, and a crisis of values is a crisis of humanity, which sets the urgent task for Nietzsche's philosophy – to prepare the way for the kind of people capable of inventing new values.

All of this will be explored at length in chapters one and two where we will consider the unique shape of Nietzsche's atheism which – I will argue in a sustained way throughout this work – creates a chasm of understanding and purpose between Nietzsche and other atheists. In chapter three, we shall turn our attention to the historical task, beginning with a consideration of what it might mean to write the history of Nietzsche's *popular reception*. After which, the rest of this work will follow a chronological as well as thematised progression roughly plotted around the particular time periods during which (fairly or unfairly) various labels first attached themselves to Nietzsche or became an emphasis in his popular reception. Thus, the following chapter headings: Chapter One: Nietzsche the Atheist (Part I); Chapter Two: Nietzsche the Atheist (Part II); Chapter Three: Nietzsche the Nationalist and Social-Darwinist (1895-1913); Chapter Four: Nietzsche the Warmonger (the War and Interwar Years); Chapter Five: Nietzsche the Nazi (Post WWII Reception); and Chapter Six: The Missing Nietzsche (Contemporary Reception).

But a historical account of Nietzsche's popular reception is only one, subsidiary aim of my thesis. Setting the historical stage and describing the cast of characters that fueled certain ideas about Nietzsche in different historical stages of popular imagination is intended to serve the larger, overarching purpose of this work which I will describe briefly now.

As the title of this work indicates, I am interested in both Nietzsche's philosophy and the history of his reception and I want to provide a convincing account of each, yet not as a detached observer but by being attentive from the start to what he has to say concerning the nature of history and philosophy themselves. As we shall see in a moment, the aforementioned relationship that Nietzsche perceives between gods, values and humanity stands behind his understanding of history and philosophy and determines what he does with them.

In the first place, Nietzsche is not interested in the sense of history that elevates the past so as to devalue both the present and the future, either by depositing the only worthwhile values in a lost golden age, or by idealistically discerning through the mists of time a common origin that confers value on humanity, binding humans together and propelling them toward a shared fate. Yet, Nietzsche is equally uninterested in the modern sense of history as a value-free, neutral 'science', what he characterises as 'ant-like labour' aimed at gathering

mountains of objective historical facts. As far as Nietzsche is concerned, this modern antidote is beset with the same issues as the golden ages, gods and fates it seeks to replace, in that 'history become pure, sovereign science would be for mankind a sort of conclusion of life and a settling of accounts with it'.[5] For Nietzsche, the trouble with all these modes of historical consciousness is that they leave values, and therefore the shape of humanity, well alone.

But while Nietzsche thinks it is possible to 'study history to the extent that life becomes stunted and degenerate' and diagnoses his generation as suffering from a 'consumptive historical fever', by the same token he is equally critical of philosophers precisely because they lack historical awareness and imagine themselves to be engaged in an ahistorical project: 'As is the hallowed custom with philosophers, the thinking of all of them is *by nature* unhistorical'.[6] Nietzsche thinks that philosophers involved in constructing static, abstract and therefore dehistoricised philosophical systems that attempt to describe an equally static, abstract and dehistoricised reality are in fact ignoring their own history and the historically conditioned nature of their own work. Moreover, they are in denial about philosophy's secret purpose, which is to justify and codify those values already in place chosen at another time, by another people and for another reason.

From this perspective, history and philosophy stand as two Herculean pillars barring the way with the warning *non plus ultra*.[7] We might rightly ask: 'Who can invent values under such conditions?' To which we might hear Nietzsche asking in reply, 'Must we ourselves not become gods to appear worthy of it?'[8]

But how does one become a god? Transcending the boundaries of our humanity begins for Nietzsche by crossing the boundaries between academic disciplines, itself considered a transgressive act and frowned upon, as we shall see, by the academy which Nietzsche was bound to leave eventually. By collapsing history and philosophy into each other, Nietzsche intended history to supply philosophy with a new consciousness and historical purpose: under the aegis of philosophy, exchanging 'the minutiae of particular matters for the great considerations of philosophy',[9] Nietzsche wants to put history to work for 'life and action' and the 'benefit of a time to come',[10] so that fused together philosophy

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[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', [1873-1874], in *UM*, para.1, p.67.
[6] *GM*, Second Essay, para.2, p.25.
[7] *Non plus ultra*: nothing further beyond or you shall not pass.
[8] *GS*, para.125, p.181.
[9] KGW 1.4 57 (30)
[10] 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', Foreword, p.60.

and history can attain a new existential relevance as they become an evaluating, reevaluating, value-making project.

Of course, I could proceed with a straightforward account of the various ways Nietzsche has been received at a popular level over the last 120 years or so, but in the light of what we have just said, it would be ironic to do so here. Instead, I want to follow Nietzsche in bringing history and philosophy together. The meaning of Nietzsche's philosophy provides explanatory power for understanding why his atheism has been received the way it has been received and his reception history in turn sheds light on the meaning of his atheism. That is to say, while historical contexts and characters are helpful when it comes to giving an account of Nietzsche's reception, at least as far as they go, they gain a new depth and dimension once eyed through the lens of Nietzsche's *philosophical* concerns. And just as Nietzsche's philosophy provides another level of explanation for Nietzsche's own reception history, seen the other way around, his reception provides a set of clarifying case studies for various aspects of his philosophy.

However, the back-and-forth between intellectual history and philosophy serves as the dynamo that generates the greater overarching aim of this work wherein I shall endeavour to follow Nietzsche in blurring the distinction between philosophy and intellectual history in order to bring to the fore the *evaluative nature* of Nietzsche's philosophy – something that he offered not so much to be evaluated but to evaluate or rather reevaluate his readers. In other words, I am not simply interested in noting the various ways Nietzsche has been received by a popular audience and thereby attempt to offer the most detailed possible account of his reception. Instead of merely asking 'How has Nietzsche been received?' I also want to ask what I think is the more interesting question: 'What would Nietzsche make of his own popular reception?' I am attempting, in other words, a Nietzschean evaluation of his own reception history. I will argue that this evaluation is made feasible by Nietzsche himself who not only predicts that he and the majority of atheists who read him will remain at a vast distance from each other, but having measured the distance that lies between them, he also takes the trouble to explain why that distance exists in the first place. In this way, I hope to let Nietzsche's forward-facing philosophical concerns intent on valuation generate not only the content but the genre in which the following work is delivered.

Chapter One

Nietzsche the Atheist (Part I)

We are all atheists about most of the gods that humanity has ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further.[11]

Richard Dawkins

What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun?[12]

Friedrich Nietzsche

1.0 Conflict

The title of this thesis, 'Nietzsche Contra the Atheists', appears to suggest that Nietzsche was not an atheist. However, the work that follows presumes that Nietzsche was in fact an atheist but that the drama of Nietzsche's atheism, as with all good dramas, revolves around a conflict. The subtitle, 'An Analysis of the Popular Reception of Nietzsche's Atheism', makes clear that the central question of this thesis is how this conflict relates to the popular reception of Nietzsche's atheism.

A proper understanding of this conflict provides the essential backdrop for understanding both the various features of Nietzsche's atheism and how he has been received at a popular level. Because the conflict concerned escalates and becomes more involved as the story unfolds, it is worth offering a cursory introduction to the nature of the conflict by way of a prelude.

The antagonists in this conflict are identified in the title, 'Nietzsche Contra the Atheists'. But whatever could this mean? Nietzsche holds an iconic status in popular culture as the atheistic philosopher who announces God's death and who by virtue of his own towering intellect provides part of a legitimating narrative for atheism in the public square. The idea that Nietzsche had some sort of adversarial relationship with atheists seems counterintuitive. In what sense could Nietzsche the atheist be against atheists? The nature of

[11] Richard Dawkins, *The Root of All Evil?* dir. by Russel Barnes, UK Channel 4, 9 January 2006. See also Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), p.77.
[12] *GS*, para.125, p.181.

the conflict becomes more opaque when we discover that the two sides are pitted against each other specifically over their respective denials of God's existence. In other words, they are embattled over the very definition of what it means to be an atheist. But what kind of room for divergence is there over denying the existence of God? Either God exists, or he or she does not.

But herein lies the problem. Nietzschean commentator Stephen Mulhall, in his essay 'The Genealogy of Humanity',[13] points out that people tend to think of atheism as a straightforward denial of the existence of one particular entity in the universe, so that if there were an inventory of every single item that exists in the universe, God would be merely one item among many possible items that did not make the atheist's list. A cursory review of some of the most widely read atheists writing about atheism today could supply several striking examples of the kind of thing Mulhall is talking about. For example, the chemist and New Atheist Peter Atkins is illustrative of this broadly held understanding of atheism. Enumerating the gods in the universe, he explains:

> Well it's fairly straightforward: there isn't one. And there's no evidence for one, no reason to believe that there is one, and so I don't believe that there is one. And I think that it is rather foolish that people do think that there is one.[14]

For Atkins, belief or unbelief in God is a matter of simple addition or subtraction of a supernatural unit of one. In a similar fashion, atheist Richard Dawkins counts up the gods and concludes, 'We are all atheists about most of the gods that humanity has ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further'.[15]

Atheism of this variety not only takes stock by tallying up each item but each item is also assigned an equal value, so that on a theological footing there is a conceptual equality between the Christian God, Zeus, Pharaoh and Marduk. As Bertrand Russell says, 'the Christian God may exist; so may the gods of Olympus, or of ancient Egypt, or of Babylon'.[16] However, Russell's assumption is that the presence or absence of these gods holds roughly the same significance. For this reason, Dawkins, as a populariser of atheism expressed in these terms, can equate his own denial of God's existence with his denial of Father Christmas or the Tooth Fairy.[17] And it is by thinking about atheism as the denial of one item among

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[13] Stephen Mulhall, 'Genealogy of Humanity', *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 66 (2004), 49-74 (pp.53-54).
[14] *The Trouble with Atheism,* presented by Rod Liddle, UK Channel 4, 18 December 2006.
[15] *The Root of All Evil?* See also *The God Delusion*, p.77.
[16] Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), p.50.
[17] Richard Dawkins, quoted in *Third Way*, 'So They Say,' Vol. 26, No. 5, June 2003, p.5.

many possible items, all of which are assigned the same value, that atheist Samuel Harris can wonder why we require the special term atheism in the first place, because after all, 'We do not have words for people who doubt that Elvis is still alive'.[18]

When atheism is conceived of as a fairly obvious decision between seemingly straightforward binary oppositions of 'existence and non-existence' or 'presence and absence' of one more item in the inventory of the universe, it is difficult to imagine how a serious dispute might emerge between atheists over this issue. But it is precisely atheism articulated as it usually is in these terms that Nietzsche wanted to dispute. For example, it is this kind of atheism that Nietzsche contests in his famous parable of the madman.

In the parable, the madman rushes into the marketplace seeking God but he is dismayed by the atheists there who respond with mocking laughter; the atheists suggest that God is missing because he has got lost or perhaps because he has gone on a voyage or he is hiding because he is shy.[19] Like Dawkins, the atheists in the marketplace are speaking about God as if he were a missing person, whose presence or absence, like that of Father Christmas or the Tooth Fairy, or in Harris' case, Elvis, makes little or no difference to the everyday lives of the villagers. The madman responds by casting God's absence in a much darker light – God is not merely missing; he says, 'God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him'.[20] The villagers' amusement turns to astonished bewilderment as the madman implicates them in a bloody murder. 'Who can wash this blood from us?' he asks, as if in Shakespearean torment, implying that God's death at their hands, like Duncan's murder by Macbeth, is going to haunt them in ways not yet imagined. In Nietzsche's view, only the theologically uninformed can talk about God's death as if it were an abstract mathematical problem without violent repercussions, and atheism expressed in this way simply reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of who this Judeo-Christian God character is and how he has functioned in culture. Nietzsche's madman attempts to explain that belief or unbelief is not a matter of simple addition or subtraction of an entity, but that God has been the architecture of the human universe itself. God is the framework within which we live our lives and the set of coordinates within which we orient ourselves.[21] Consequently, a fully realised atheism will precipitate a massive cultural crisis, and it is in recognising this cultural or perhaps human crisis that Nietzsche recognises the shape of God not as a demiurge but the ground of all

[18] Samuel Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), p.51.
[19] *GS,* para.125, p.181.
[20] *Ibid*.
[21] 'Genealogy', pp.53-54.

being. This is why the madman equates God's murder at our hands to drinking up the sea, wiping away the horizon and unchaining the earth from its sun.[22]

It is not without irony that Nietzsche's famous pronouncement, 'God is dead',[23] in fact coined by Hegel,[24] has often been circulated for its shock value and originality, when Nietzsche uses this phrase very specifically – not only in this parable but also in every other occurrence[25] – to make the opposite point: 'atheism' is common currency. Everyone is saying that 'God is dead', 'we don't believe' or 'there is no God'. This is precisely why Nietzsche's Zarathustra is astonished by his meeting with the reclusive saint, 'Could it be possible? This old saint in the forest has not yet heard anything of this, that *God is dead!*'[26] This is clearly old news, but to Nietzsche's consternation, people have not taken atheism seriously and have carried on as if nothing had happened. Nietzsche's (or the madman's) confrontation with the village atheists in the parable continues outside it as he observes elsewhere that everyone may know that God is dead but '*everyone none the less remains unchanged*'.[27] The madman's voice echoes in Nietzsche's astonishment at the all-too-often immutable nature of atheists in the face of the death of the once immutable God; Nietzsche pronounces God's death once more, and he wonders if people know '*what* this event really means – and how much must collapse now that this faith has been undermined because it was propped up by it, grown into it; for example, the whole of our European morality'.[28] It is precisely this combination of consensus without controversy concerning the death of God that Nietzsche wants to disrupt, demonstrating not only that the death of God is far more serious than people have acknowledged, because it brings earth-shattering consequences, but also, by the same token, getting rid of God is far more difficult than people have realised. It is going to take a lot more than simply denying God's existence or even a collection of compelling arguments against the possibility of God to get rid of him. This is why when Nietzsche employs the phrase 'God is dead' for the first time, he states, 'we still have to vanquish his shadow, too'.[29] With this in

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[22] For a discussion about the metaphysical God versus the God of the New Atheists see David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God*, (London: Yale University Press, 2013).
[23] *GS*, para.125, p.181.
[24] Hegel first talks about the death of God in connection with Christ's crucifixion in his *Phenomenology of Spirit. Cf Phenomenology of Spirit* [1807], trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), para. 752, p.455.
[25] Compare *GS*, para.125, p. 181, with para.108, p.167 and para.343, p.279. See also Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, [1883], in *The Portable Nietzsche,* ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), First Part, 'Zarathustra's Prologue', para.2, p.124.
[26] *Z*, para.2, p.124.
[27] *AC*, para.38, p.162.
[28] *GS*, para.343, p.279.
[29] *GS,* para.108, p.167.

view, the madman asks, 'Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?'[30]

Without a trace of dim perception in his hearers, the madman, like a prophet without honour in his own home, pronounces his judgement on the slow-to-understand villagers, throwing his lantern to the ground, declaring, 'I have come too early […] my time is not yet'. From the madman's vantage point then, this chasm is too vast to bridge by simply reaching for a slightly clearer lexicon. (In the end, we discover that the gulf that has opened up between the madman and the atheists is not only conceptual but also temporal.) The madman stands in their future, and unable to reach the atheists across the chasm of time, he says, 'The light of the stars requires time. […] This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars'.[31]

1.1. Counterclaim

In light of this parable, it would seem that simply identifying Nietzsche as an atheist does not reveal very much and merely locates him on a rather crude philosophical map.

It is only against the backdrop of the conflict, painted in the parable in broad brushstrokes, that we can hope to plot Nietzsche's atheism with any precision – not least of all because Nietzsche wanted to dramatise the death of God for his readers, and this conflict serves Nietzsche's purpose precisely by creating the tension without which there would be no drama. And while most scholars may have seen the possibility of interpreting Nietzsche's atheism with reference to this conflict as one of the leitmotifs of his work,[32]the tension is never sustained long enough to allow them to demonstrate how deep the conflict goes, to show how frequently it appears and to attempt to make each instance of the conflict explicit for their readers. Thus, the conflict has neither been thematised and made central to an exposition of Nietzsche's atheism, nor has it been employed in any systematic and extended way as a means of understanding the gap between Nietzsche's atheism and its popular reception.

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[30] *GS,* para.125, p.181.
[31] *GS*, para.125, p.182.
[32] See for example: Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.122; Jörg Salaquadra, 'Nietzsche and the Judeo-Christian Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.90-118 (p.102); Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, *What Nietzsche Really Said* (New York: Schocken Books, 2000), p.86.

Given the vast number of ways that Nietzsche has been appropriated by diverse and often divergent interests, and in the light of Nietzsche's desire to draw others into what he experienced as the apocalyptic 'event' of God's death, the rather peripheral treatment this conflict receives becomes all the more striking. Why might this be? Barring any psychological reasons for the time being, what other explanations might there be?[33]

In response to the claim that Nietzsche's atheism revolves around his conflict with other atheists, there are at least two possible counterclaims that I can think of which could potentially set aside my present concerns.

First, perhaps the conflict does not occupy such a prominent place in Nietzsche's own perspective, at least not in the way that I have been claiming here. While elements of the conflict are obviously there, Nietzsche did not assign any great importance to it and so any exposition of Nietzsche's atheism should treat this conflict as he did, namely as the secondary or tertiary issue that it is.

A second option would be to acknowledge that the conflict not only existed but loomed large in Nietzsche's perspective; however, Nietzsche himself was mistaken about the significance of this conflict, either because the conflict does not exist in reality or because any conflict that did exist was greatly exaggerated in his own mind.

Either one of these counterclaims might mean that it is possible to give a clear account of Nietzsche's atheism and his popular reception without reference to the conflict that the title of this thesis suggests and which I have attempted to sketch, albeit very roughly here. How might we discover which of these claims is best substantiated? Delaying a detailed exposition of Nietzsche's atheism for the moment, how else might we proceed?

1.2 Nietzsche's Form and Style

Before closely examining the contents of Nietzsche's atheism, it will be helpful to consider some ways in which Nietzsche's form and style might inform a decision on this issue. Unlike much mainstream English discursive philosophy in which style is often understood as a mere adornment of the philosophical writing, Nietzsche is amongst those for whom the rhetoric of the utterance is intrinsic to the substance of the philosophy itself. This has meant that Nietzsche's form and style have themselves been a source of significant

[33] In the following chapters it will become clear that for Nietzsche what readers are capable of seeing or indeed choose to see in his work and how his work is consequently emphasised will be determined in no small part by the psychological needs of the herd.

dispute and plenty of ink has been spilled in the ensuing argument. This means that before I can move forward in any justified way with my own suggestions for how Nietzsche's form and style can help to adjudicate this dispute, I must first give consideration to the different directions in which they have been pulled.

1.2.1 General Observations

Here are some general observations about Nietzsche's style from several influential Nietzschean scholars. Walter Kaufmann says that Nietzsche's 'love of language' allowed him to come up with catchy 'slogans and epigrams' or 'striking coinage' to express new themes.[34] Arthur Danto describes Nietzsche as applying words in new ways; he would broaden the usage of a phrase and then 'force it back into the context from which it was originally taken. The context is then charged with an overload of conceptual energy […]'.[35] He also says that Nietzsche was 'given to self-dramatization' and 'liked to speak of himself as philosophizing with a hammer'.[36] Richard Schacht warns that the reader will be 'confronted with heatedly polemical or highly metaphorical rhetoric'.[37]

What is the reader supposed to do with Nietzsche's metaphors and aphorisms written in such dramatic, often passionate, and colorful rhetorical style? The landscape has been dominated by two main and sharply divergent responses to this question that have emerged from opposite ends of the philosophical scene, spanning three decades of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Many interlocutors have emerged from within this debate who would be worth some detailed consideration: Danto, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Michael Foucault, Erich Heller and Sarah Kofman,[38] to name but a few. Instead of a comprehensive review of all the literature available on this particular issue which lies outside the purview of this study, I will make do here with one or two apposite examples from influential representatives, calling attention to some of the more prominent features of the debate. With a more general

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[34] *The Portable Nietzsche,* ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), p.15.
[35] *NAP*, p.12.
[36] *Ibid*.
[37] Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.1.
[38] Arthur Danto, *NAP*; Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles,* trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); Erich Heller, *The Importance of Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, trans. Duncan Large (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

background in place, I will then outline what I find useful from each, before returning to our original question about how Nietzsche's form and style might influence our perception of the supposed breach between Nietzsche and the atheists.

1.2.2 The Analytic Nietzsche

At one, perhaps more analytic end of the philosophical spectrum, Nietzsche's style is perceived largely as a hindrance to meaning, that he wanted to say something but could not find a clear and coherent way of saying it. Therefore, it is up to the philosopher to distill Nietzsche's pure philosophy from the overly passionate language, clouded metaphors and random collections of aphorisms in which it is delivered. The reader is tasked with filtering out Nietzsche's highly charged metaphorical language to reveal the purity of Nietzsche's conceptual logic; the skillful philosopher can then supply the relatively uncontaminated analytical language that Nietzsche lacked and draw the hitherto missing clear, clean lines between Nietzschean concepts. This is precisely what *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays,* edited by the analytically trained Robert Solomon, promises to do: 'These essays strip away Nietzsche's flamboyant style […] and reveal him as a philosopher'.[39] To risk another metaphor – and under these conditions apparently the risk is considerable – Nietzsche is lost in the labyrinth of his own language, groping into the dark for an exit, and it is up to the philosopher to offer Nietzsche Ariadne's thread that will help him find his way out. For the reader who thinks that I am exaggerating the paternalistic nature of this response to Nietzsche's style, consider Danto's description of the situation:

> If one takes the trouble to eke his philosophy out […] then Nietzsche emerges almost as a systematic as well as an original and analytical thinker. […] In recent years, philosophers have been preoccupied with logical and linguistic researches, pure and applied, and I have not hesitated to reconstruct Nietzsche's arguments in these terms […] I believe it is exceedingly useful to see his analyses in terms

[39] *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Robert Solomon (New York: Anchor Press, 1973), back cover. Solomon's views on this issue evolved, so that a later Solomon who understood Nietzsche's language as a mode of his philosophy may not have been as comfortable with the description as it appeared on the back of this 1973 publication in the same way that his former self had been. For instance, in 2001, Solomon highlights the issue again as he admits that 'to accept metaphor, mythologizing, conscientious ambiguity, and "analogical thinking" as legitimate modes of philosophizing [...] makes analytically trained philosophers such as myself more than a bit uncomfortable'. However, now working under a larger philosophical tent, Solomon retorts, 'But as some of my ruder students would say, "just get used to it"'. *Cf* Robert Solomon, '"What Is Philosophy?" The Status of World Philosophy in the Profession', *Philosophy East and West*, 51 (Jan 2001), 100-104 (p.103).

> of logical features which he was unable to make explicit, but toward which he was unmistakably groping. His language would have been less colorful had he known what he was trying to say.[40]

For Danto, Nietzsche is almost a systematic thinker, and if we work hard enough at reconstructing his arguments in terms other than his own, then we might succeed in turning him into one. Danto goes on to say, 'Nietzsche cannot be regarded as having been an influence upon the analytic movement […] Rather it is for the movement to reclaim him as a predecessor'.[41] But is a Nietzsche divested of his own style still Nietzsche? Can we first reconstruct Nietzsche in the way that is suggested here and afterward still legitimately claim to be reclaiming Nietzsche as a predecessor? Unsurprisingly, it is on these grounds that this claim to ancestry is disputed by others who claim a legitimate and more direct line of philosophical descent for themselves.

1.2.3 The French Nietzsche

This rival claim comes from the French post-structuralists that had begun to respond to Nietzsche in the same era. Their claim to be Nietzsche's legitimate heirs has several things in its favour, not least of all because rather than trying to translate Nietzsche into a supposedly neutral philosophical language, they allow Nietzsche to speak in his native tongue as it were. And unlike Danto's Nietzsche, whose style is the consequence of not knowing what he wanted to say, the French Nietzsche's style is the result of a deliberate decision made for calculated effect.

In addition to this, French interpreters do not attempt to reorganise Nietzsche into a tidy philosophical system. Rather than trying to find the bits of Nietzsche that accord with their own predetermined logical systems and then attempting to tie it all together with someone else's language, they appear to let Nietzsche's style and form have its way.[42]

The upshot of all this, is that post-structuralists might be able to claim – perhaps more credibly than their analytic counterparts – that the framework within which Nietzsche is subsequently read is itself a faithful continuation of Nietzsche's philosophical project of dismantling Western metaphysics. A good example of an interpreter who combines all the

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[40] *NAP*, pp.13-14.
[41] *NAP*, p.14.
[42] See, for example, Jacques Derrida, *Spurs*; Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*; Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*.

above traits is Sarah Kofman, once a student of Jacques Derrida and author of *Nietzsche et la metaphore.* Kofman says:

> Nietzsche inaugurates a type of philosophy which deliberately uses metaphors, at the risk of being confused with poetry. Such a confusion would not be regrettable in Nietzsche's eyes: for the opposition between philosophy and poetry derives from metaphysical thinking […][43]

For Kofman, Nietzsche's metaphorical style and form are not unnecessarily colourful rhetoric, superfluous to his actual philosophy, but are Nietzsche's strategic way of uncovering the unstable, incomplete, always contingent nature of language and interpretation which had hitherto been hidden by proper philosophical style. Kofman says that philosophy had previously 'repressed metaphor' by confining metaphor to poetry, but it could only do this by forgetting the essentially metaphorical nature of all concepts.[44] Kofman's thesis is that Nietzsche was not in search of a pure conceptual language to wrap around fixed eternal truths. Instead, he puts metaphor to work in order to convey one of the major themes in his philosophy, that is, the continual flux of becoming.[45]

In terms of letting Nietzsche's form and style speak for themselves, this all sounds rather promising, but we will need to venture a little further into this territory in order to fully appreciate the fortunes of Nietzsche's rhetoric, supposedly now outside the borders of metaphysics. I will not attempt to draw a detailed map of this vast terrain here, but an aerial view will allow us to see where French interpreters have landed – or not as the case may be – with regard to Nietzsche's form and style.

Nietzsche saw that Western metaphysics has been locked into the language of binary oppositions: good/evil, presence/absence, truth/error, being/becoming, etc. These binary oppositions are further entrenched by always playing off one against the other, in such a way that one emerges favoured over the other, good is privileged over evil, presence over absence, and so on. Put more precisely, Western metaphysics has been ordered around a series of *hierarchical* oppositions.

An important feature of Nietzsche's work is the way in which he calls into question the conceptual sufficiency of this order and attempts to dismantle the hierarchy itself in order to move 'beyond good and evil' and other such oppositions.[46] This is a significant strand

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[43] *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, p.17.
[44] *Ibid.*, pp.17, 42-43.
[45] *Ibid.*, pp.133-34.
[46] *BGE*.

connecting Nietzsche to the French philosophical scene. Derrida was not just an interpreter of Nietzsche but a Nietzschean in the sense that he appropriated various Nietzschean concepts for his own philosophical project. Picking up where Nietzsche left off, Derrida says, 'The age of the sign is turned toward the word and face of God',[47] but working with Nietzsche's assumption that God is dead, Derrida begins his deconstructive enterprise. Derrida's first move is to reverse the binary opposition, to show how absence might be privileged over presence or writing over speech. But Derrida does not want to settle for a straightforward reversal of the oppositional hierarchy. Instead, introducing various deconstructive approaches (the *pharmakon, trace and différance*) Derrida achieves his *double writing*, pushing meaning beyond the capacity of any set of signifiers, no matter what their hierarchical arrangement. By destabilising the binary oppositions in which signs once found their definition, signs are no longer reservoirs of meaning but empty marks or hollow sounds. Meaning therefore is always unstable and indeterminate, like looking up words in the dictionary, only to discover more words which require definition, and so meaning is infinitely deferred.[48]

What then of Nietzsche's aphorisms and metaphors? The French Nietzsche of Derrida – and that of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault – uses aphorisms and metaphors in order to deliberately resist attempts at fixed, final interpretation.[49] As Derrida puts it: 'If Nietzsche had indeed meant to say something, might it not be just that limit to the will to mean'.[50] And, 'it is always possible that it means nothing at all or that it has no decidable meaning, grafted here and there, beyond any contextual body or finite code'.[51] Derrida is here denying the possibility of a precise language that transcends context; therefore, as Nietzsche's texts drift from context to context, meaning remains inherently unstable. Thus, the French Nietzsche along with his metaphors and aphorisms are subsumed into a study of the instability of language. As R.H. Roberts puts it, 'in this way the aphorism is deconstructed into the 'philosophy of difference'.[52]

What this means for Nietzsche's form and style is that they cannot lead us to the essential Nietzsche; this is not because his form and style are not precise enough, as Danto

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[47] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.13.
[48] Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp.1-27.
[49] See for example: Giles Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 1-6, and Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', pp.139-64.
[50] *Spurs,* p.133.
[51] *Spurs,* p.131.
[52] R. H. Roberts, 'Nietzsche and the Cultural Resonance of the "Death of God"', *History of European Ideas*, 11 (1989), 1025-35 (p.1031).

would have it, but because of the instability of *all* language, there is no essential Nietzsche to be had. As Derrida says, 'There is no totality to Nietzsche's text, not even a fragmentary or aphoristic one'.[53]

1.2.4 Another Approach

With this general background in place, we can now ask what is useful from each perspective before returning to our original question concerning the conflict between Nietzsche and the atheists. By useful I mean whatever could help us appreciate Nietzsche's style and rhetoric in a way that would allow them to inform our perspective of the apparent conflict. However, it emerges that both Danto and Derrida arrive at the same place. Ironically, both of them leave Nietzsche without a voice. In one scenario, we find Nietzsche is stripped of his own language and has another language imposed upon him; in the other, Nietzsche is allowed to keep his language, but when he gets up to speak, he finds he has nothing left to say. To follow either path would be to abandon any notion that Nietzsche's form and style could help us adjudicate any of the hermeneutical decisions ahead of us, let alone disclose anything like a centre to Nietzsche's philosophy.

What can be done? Although on the one hand Danto sees Nietzsche's form and style as a hindrance to meaning, I remain sympathetic to Danto in as far as he continues to read for an essential Nietzsche. On the other hand, while French interpreters have seen Nietzsche's form and style as signalling a deficit of meaning, I do not want to imagine my own attempts to read a unity in Nietzsche's texts to be the result of a series of neutral, unconditioned observations made in some imaginary neutral language. Commenting on Derrida's Nietzsche, Roberts cautions the reader to be wary of making a collection of Nietzschean citations that might produce a series of apparent connections created by the 'selective impulses of the commentator'.[54] This is a salutary thought for anyone attempting to unify Nietzsche's work, all the more so as this warning comes from a systematic theologian.

Taking all this into consideration, I am going to take up a mediating position that neither sees Nietzsche's form and style as a barrier to meaning nor sees them as ultimately devoid of meaning. If Kofman's work on metaphor is correct and Nietzsche's form and style are a deliberate and strategic way of promoting one of the major themes of his philosophy – that of the flux of becoming – perhaps Nietzsche deliberately used form and style to

[53] *Spurs,* p.135.
[54] 'Nietzsche and the Cultural Resonance of the "Death of God"', p.1025.

strategically promote other major philosophical themes as well. Jill Marsden also connects Nietzsche's form and style with the substance of his philosophy; she observes that 'there is a tendency for commentators to focus on the "substance" of his texts rather than on the materiality of their form', seeing Nietzsche's aphorisms as 'entertaining but incidental "interludes"'.[55] Marsden argues instead that aphorisms are Nietzsche's way of challenging 'stylistic values at the level of the text' that serve to prop up fixed metaphysical doctrine 'at the level of ideas'.[56] Assuming that Nietzsche was capable of using form and style to challenge more than one idea at a time, Giles Fraser argues similarly:

> Style of language therefore gives one an important clue as to the nature of what it is that interests a particular thinker. […] The idea of re-potting Nietzsche into philosophically acceptable 'style' fails to recognize that such a style is intrinsically linked to what it is that Nietzsche believes himself to be doing. The problem with 're-potting' is that it changes the assumptions loaded within the text and thus threatens to wholly misrepresent Nietzsche's priorities.[57]

Fraser works on the assumption that Nietzsche had priorities and rather than Nietzsche's language getting in the way of those priorities or becoming Nietzsche's only solipsistic priority, Nietzsche's language is a signpost pointing toward them. And at times, as Kofman and Marsden have argued, it is the vehicle through which some of those priorities are realised.

It is not necessary then for Nietzsche's form and style to send the reader on a wild goose chase after pure unmediated concepts which can then be expressed in a neutral philosophical language. This would miss one of Nietzsche's priorities, that is, to convey that all concepts are metaphorical because all concepts are expressed through language and all language is metaphorical by nature.[58]

But despite the post-structuralists, this was not Nietzsche's only priority; he had others, and it is by taking seriously Nietzsche's form and style in all their heated polemical and highly metaphorical nature that we can discover what those priorities were.

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[55] Jill Marsden, 'Nietzsche and the Art of the Aphorism', in *A Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. Keith Ansell Pearson (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), pp.22-37 (p.22).
[56] 'Nietzsche and the Art of the Aphorism', p.22
[57] Giles Fraser, *Redeeming Nietzsche: On the Piety of Unbelief* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.26.
[58] For example: Friedrich Nietzsche, [1873], 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense', in *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp.44-47.

1.3 How Nietzsche's Form and Style Inform

Let us return to the original question concerning the conflict between Nietzsche and the atheists. Given that Nietzsche's form and style are an intrinsic part of his philosophy pointing to and in some sense embodying his philosophy, how might they help the reader decide whether or not the supposed chasm between Nietzsche and the atheists is the necessary backdrop for understanding Nietzsche's atheism? In what ways can Nietzsche's form and style disclose the kind of significance this chasm held for Nietzsche himself?

1.3.1 Parable

Let us return for a moment to the parable of the madman. The parable is packed with metaphorical chasms: the chasm between sanity and insanity, between life and death, between the heavens and the earth, between humans and gods, between kings and usurpers, between one epoch and another. All of these metaphors are used to point to yet another metaphor, the metaphorical chasm between the madman and the atheists, between those who understand what the death of God means and those who do not.

However, prior to the metaphorical contents of this parable is the parabolic form itself in which the metaphors are presented. Jörg Salaquarda refers to this parable as 'Nietzsche's famous *fable* of "the madman"'.[59] Solomon and Higgens, in their book *What Nietzsche Really Said,* refer to it more broadly as a 'story'.[60] Schacht refers to this parable in even more general terms, simply identifying it as a 'well known section of his work […] bearing the heading the madman'.[61] However, 'section', 'story' and 'fable' are unhelpfully imprecise terms that once again fail to take seriously Nietzsche's form and style, treating them as the incidental setting for Nietzsche's point but not making the point itself. Kaufmann is more precise when he says that 'Nietzsche invented a parable',[62] and this designation matters precisely because not all stories are the same.

There is plenty of evidence within the pages of *The Gay Science* itself that indicates that Nietzsche intended to write parable. First, Nietzsche appears to follow the biblical convention that places parables in the mouths of the prophets. The original version of *The*

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[59] Jörg Salaquadra, 'Nietzsche and the Judeo-Christian Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. by Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.90-118 (p.102). (Italics mine).
[60] *NRS*, p.96.
[61] *Nietzsche,* p.119.
[62] *PPA*, p.96.

Gay Science closes with what would eventually become, in slightly altered form, the opening passage of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, in which Nietzsche's famous prophetic figure appears for the first time speaking in parables. Elsewhere, but again without having to venture beyond the literary setting of *The Gay Science*, when Nietzsche wants to address the tortured nature of the prophetic type, he does so, once more, through parable:

> *Prophetic Human Beings*. – You have no feeling for the fact that prophetic human beings are afflicted with a great deal of suffering; you merely suppose that they have been granted a beautiful 'gift,' and you would even like to have it yourself. But I shall express myself in parable.[63]

Furthermore, prophet and parable are both associated in biblical studies with the apocalyptic genre. Prophets have apocalyptic visions, the kind that afflict them with great suffering about which – as we have just noted – Nietzsche seems to speak from firsthand experience. And while not all parables contain the violent and cataclysmic imagery readily associated with the genre, the fact that the madman announces a violent apocalyptic event in the language of blood and death and darkness – is yet another indication that parable is precisely the type of story Nietzsche intended to write.

And, as Nietzsche treats parable, prophet and apocalypse together, it will hardly go unnoticed that in so doing, Nietzsche is also suggesting his own prophetic credentials. What could be more fitting then, than that the madman, Nietzche's prophetic alter ego, should appear in dramatic confrontation, precisely within the story form, associated in the Bible and reflected in Nietzsche's work, with the archetypal prophet?

Thus, Nietzsche does not write just any story as if any old story will do; he writes a parable, and Nietzsche's decision to address this particular issue in and through parable is, for reasons which will become clear in a moment, a telling move that not only assumes that a chasm already exists but by virtue of being a parable brings that chasm to consciousness. In other words, Nietzsche employs parable, not because he lacked a more appropriate philosophical language to describe the conflict at hand, or because he did not know what he wanted to say about it, but because he wanted to reinforce this particular conflict as a major theme in his philosophy and deemed parable the most appropriate way of doing so. I am reflecting on Nietzsche's work in light of New Testament scholarship where N. T. Wright has argued that 'parables are not a second order activity talking about what is happening at one

[63] *GS*, para.316, p.251.

remove. They are part of the primary activity itself'.[64] Or in Ben Meyer's terms, we might say that parables are not just 'thematic' but 'performative'.[65] From this perspective, it looks as though Nietzsche strategically uses the parabolic form not only to describe conflict, but as we shall see, for its uncanny ability to enact and help to create the conflict it describes.

To further explore why parable is oriented toward conflict, it will be helpful to follow the New Testament scholar John Dominic Crossan in contrasting the parable story form with another type of story, namely myth. Once more, overlaying Nietzsche's parable with insights from New Testament studies concerning how these different types of story work and how they relate to each other will help to make clear what Nietzsche is doing and how he is doing it. The study of myth has proven to be a rich and fertile field which could potentially inform our understanding of Nietzsche's use of parable in any number of ways but which lie beyond the scope of this present work.[66] For our purposes, however, we can quickly focus the conversation by paying attention to Nietzsche's own understanding of how myth functions. Well ahead of his time, Nietzsche saw that myth was not simply the artefact of a pre-scientific age but rather the necessary condition for culture which continues, albeit anaemically and in diluted form, in the modern age. Starting with Nietzsche's reflections on myth, I will then reinforce his view with the influential anthropological work of Claude Lévi-Strauss.

1.3.2 Myth

Nietzsche describes '*myth*, as the contracted image of the world'.[67] 'Only a horizon surrounded by myths' he says, 'encloses and unifies a cultural movement'.[68] Nietzsche is arguing that myth provides cultural cohesion – it is a unifying force, a contract that binds people together under the roof of what he describes as a shared 'mythical home'.[69] Paradoxically, however, Nietzsche thinks myth accomplishes its unifying work most effectively when it goes unnoticed, operating as the hidden yet guiding inner voice of a people: 'The images of myth must be the unnoticed but omnipresent, daemonic guardians under whose tutelage the young soul grows up and by whose signs the grown man interprets

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[64] N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), p.176.
[65] Ben Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, *Princeton Theological Monograph Series* (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2002), p.162.
[66] For a helpfully concise summary, evaluation and attempt at synthesis of the various psychological, sociological and anthropological ways that myth has been studied, see
Percy S. Cohen, 'Theories of Myth', *Man*, 4 (1969), 337-353.
[67] *BT*, para. 23, pp.108-111.
[68] *Ibid.*
[69] *Ibid.*

his life'.[70] In this way, myth might be thought of as the reflex of a people, exemplified most clearly by the Greeks who were 'compelled to connect everything they experienced, immediately and involuntarily, to their myths, indeed they could only understand their experiences through this connection'.[71]

In sharp contrast to a people bound to each other by myth stands 'modern culture', populated as it is by modern individuals who Nietzsche characterises in terms of 'abstract man' or 'mythless man' who without 'guidance from myth' is condemned to a state of 'aimless meandering', or 'a homeless roaming about' in a 'wilderness of thought, morals and action'.[72] This state of homelessness, Nietzsche contends, is a symptom of the 'critical historical spirit' which has left us with a 'pandemonium of myths […] thrown into a disorderly heap'.[73] It will not go unnoticed that it is precisely this cultural condition that Nietzsche is diagnosing in the parable of the madman where in a Godless universe the modern world is set adrift without the sun of myth to guide it. Myth is what holds a culture together, but with the 'tearing apart' of myth, Nietzsche argues we experience the tearing apart and 'degeneration' of culture.[74]

Levi-Strauss, like Nietzsche, also recognises the unifying power of myth. In 'The Structural Study of Myth', Levi-Strauss sees a myth's function in its ability to resolve or at least appear to resolve a particular contradiction: 'mythical thought always works from an awareness of oppositions towards their progressive mediation'.[75] Take for example, a village that has determined that there is no God who undergirds human life with values. Let us suppose that the village now finds itself in conflict with its own determination to find a common life together through the values which had grown from their former theism. According to Strauss, 'the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming [this] contradiction'.[76] Perhaps in the village I am imagining, the villagers replace God with the scientific method, and values with scientific progress. The myth accomplishes a successful mediation if the villagers can see in the new logical model the potential for reconciliation.[77] The protest that this does not actually resolve the contradiction of values in a Godless universe simply highlights another function of myth: regardless of

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[70] *Ibid.*
[71] *Ibid.*
[72] *Ibid.*
[73] *Ibid.*
[74] *Ibid.*
[75] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', *The Journal of American Folklore*, 68 (October to December 1955), 428-44 (p.440).
[76] *Ibid.,* 428-44 (p.443).
[77] *Ibid.,* 428-44 (pp.440-44).

whether or not the reconciliation actually works, myth enforces the idea that reconciliation might be possible. In this case, the villagers might hope that the scientific method is progressing toward a grand universal theory of everything which will justify precisely those values in which they have hitherto shared a common life. Thus, myth suspends the need for immediate reconciliation by creating the hope of reconciliation apprehended through the imagination.

In another essay, 'Structuralism and Myth', Levi-Strauss elaborates on the power of this albeit ephemeral hope characteristic of myth through an exploration of how music takes on mythical structure: 'Music brings to completion, in a relatively short space of time, something that life itself does not always manage to achieve […] simulating in abbreviated form that bliss of total fulfilment'.[78] Similarly Nietzsche has already ascribed 'to music the power to give birth to myth' describing the 'myth-creating force of music' as something to be 'felt keenly as a unique example of something universal and true which gazes out into infinity'.[79]

Crossan offers this helpful clarification:

> Here is myth at its most basic functional purpose. […] It is much more important to believe in the possibility of solution than ever to find one in actuality. The gain or advantage of myth, and its basic function, is to establish that possibility itself. [80]

If myth reconciles or at least offers the hope of reconciliation, Crossan suggests that parable stands as myth's binary opposite, not simply by undoing the imagined reconciliation but more unsettlingly, making reconciliation impossible under the familiar arrangements of a given myth. George Shillington discusses this feature of parable in terms of 'provocation', arguing that 'the parable invites the audience to step inside an alternate world from where they stand in the received world'.[81] In other words, instead of retracing the myth's familiar path to reconciliation, parable posits a new world that denies the reconciliation offered by the mythical world as it is. Wright contends that the new opposition is created through a 'subversive retelling' of a familiar story.[82] In the case of the parable of the madman, the parable itself follows this progression, whereby the villagers are able to laugh precisely

[78] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Structuralism and Myth', *The Kenyon Review*, 3 (Spring 1981), 64-88 (p.74).
[79] *BT*, para.17, pp.82-83.
[80] John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Sonoma, California: Polebridge Press, 1988), p.37.
[81] George Shillington, 'Engaging with the Parables', in *Jesus and His Parables: Interpreting the Parables of Jesus Today*, ed. George Shillington (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), pp.1-20 (p.18).
[82] *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p.130.

because at first they think the madman is retelling the familiar story of their own atheism, albeit a little too earnestly. But it is only when the madman starts to explain God's absence that the familiar story seems to have taken a wrong turn. In light of the analysis of New Testament parables, it appears that if someone wanted to destabilise a founding myth, parable is precisely the type of story one would tell. Therefore, Nietzsche must leave the madman and villagers in their unreconciled state, precisely because if his story attempted to bridge the newly created chasm, it would no longer be parable but myth. Any reconciliation that happens must happen outside the parable depending on the readers or hearers' response. As Wright observes, '[parables] invite people into the new world that is being created and warn of dire consequences if the invitation is refused'.[83]

Well in advance of embarking on a detailed exposition of Nietzsche's atheism or even a close examination of the metaphorical contents of this parable, Nietzsche is pushing his readers toward the edge of a vast chasm: anyone who thinks that this was a relatively minor gap from Nietzsche's perspective simply does not understand how parable works. But this misunderstanding draws out a second curious feature of the parabolic form that Nietzsche's parable also exhibits: Nietzsche's parable predicts that when he confronts his readers with the reality of God's death, they will not understand him, and in the telling of the parable, Nietzsche creates the situation he describes.

1.4 Where To Begin

I have been staking my ground with the claim that Nietzsche's atheism revolves around his conflict with other atheists. However, we have been aware this whole time of two possible counterclaims that might encroach upon this idea: that the conflict does not occupy such a prominent place in Nietzsche's own perspective, or that Nietzsche himself was in fact mistaken about the size and significance of this conflict. Before confronting such objections with a detailed examination of Nietzsche's atheism, I have tried first of all to outflank them with the idea that if we take Nietzsche's form and style seriously – in particular Nietzsche's use of parable – such a position will become unsustainable. The success or failure of this manoeuvre notwithstanding, it is now time to traverse the vast range of intersecting ideas that comprise Nietzsche's philosophy. Given the breadth of thinking that Nietzsche's philosophy represents, there are any number of paths from which we could begin our ascent and various

[83] *Ibid*.

places we could summit, all of which would provide their own unique panorama of Nietzsche's atheism. Where should we begin?

1.5 What Is Missing

If the immense and variegated *content* of Nietzsche's atheism does not suggest an obvious starting point, perhaps we could begin instead by noticing what is *missing*. 'For Nietzsche', Schacht says, 'it would be difficult to overestimate the importance (both practical and philosophical) of the question of whether or not there is a God'; and he claims Nietzsche wanted to 'establish' belief in God as a 'philosophically unconscionable' supposition – one that 'requires to be repudiated'.[84] Despite this, Bernard Reginster is able to make the surprising assertion that 'although it is one of the views most closely associated with his philosophy, Nietzsche says singularly little about the death of God'.[85] In light of Schacht's reading, and given my own claim that the whole of Nietzsche's philosophy can be broadly understood as a dramatisation of God's death, Reginster's view needs nuancing.

If I understand Reginster correctly, his point is that Nietzsche does not do hand-to-hand combat with the classical arguments for God. Nietzsche does not, for instance, offer a systematic refutation of the ontological argument or a formal philosophical rebuttal of the cosmological argument, and there is no blow-by-blow takedown of the teleological or moral arguments, at least not in the way one might expect. Nevertheless, he does not leave the death of God as an inexplicable and unexplained event, but as we shall discover, for various reasons he is working to a different strategy which I will describe at the end of this chapter. For now, however, we can agree that on the face of things, Nietzsche's atheism does not read like a collection of arguments directly repudiating God's existence, and the absence of such formal arguments has naturally prompted several interesting explanations in Nietzschean scholarship. And it is here – with a brief survey of these explanations for what is apparently missing – that I want to begin noting the salient features of Nietzsche's atheism.

One way to explain the missing arguments against God's existence is that Nietzsche was simply assuming, as a premise, the growing disbelief of nineteenth-century Western society. Although Kaufmann does not endorse this position himself, he acknowledges that Nietzsche 'may appear to accept as an absolute presupposition the claim that there is no God

[84] *Nietzsche,* p.120.

[85] Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.39.

[...] a questionable assumption he failed to doubt'. Therefore, he felt no compulsion to bolster his atheism with a set of convincing arguments.[86] In a similar vein, Reginster comments:

> He does not feel the need to say much about it, apparently, because it is less a new doctrine he introduces than an event he takes to be already widely acknowledged. Thus, he assumes that his readers, and his interlocutors, are well acquainted with what he describes as "the greatest recent event".[87]

Alternatively, Fraser argues that Nietzsche was not particularly interested in the philosophical question of God's existence in the first place. He does not deny that Nietzsche was an atheist but is contesting the notion that Nietzsche promoted atheism as a philosophical position. For Fraser, Nietzsche was not interested in shoring up atheism as an invulnerable philosophical idea as much as he was interested in atheism's myriad consequences. Therefore, the idea that God does not exist was not an unquestioned premise but a premise which simply did not register as a major philosophical concern for Nietzsche.

Both explanations will no doubt raise some eyebrows; the idea that either Nietzsche forgot to question his own atheism or that Nietzsche was not interested in the question of God's existence seems a stretch of the imagination – and yet, if true, either one of these theories might reasonably explain the obvious lacuna in Nietzsche's work. Therefore, barring incredulity for the moment, it will be worth presenting the summary evidence for each theory before making an evaluative judgement.

1.5.1 Unquestioned Premise

Kaufmann says that at times Nietzsche appears to accept that there is no God as an absolute presupposition.[88] The case for this might be made as follows: Nietzsche writes about the rapidly vanishing belief in God with a sense of finality, or in other words, God's death is not a possibility but his ineluctable fate. From Nietzsche's perspective, the church already lies in ruins as the 'city of destruction'[89] and nothing can stop 'the irresistible decline of faith in the Christian God'.[90] 'Faith has been undermined '.[91] There are 'no eternally

[86] *PPA*, p.100.
[87] *Affirmation,* p.39-40.
[88] *PPA*, p.100.
[89] *GS*, para.358, p.310.
[90] *GM*, Second Essay, para.20, p.90.
[91] *GS*, para.343, p.279.

enduring substances'.[92] God is not dying but 'God is dead [...] we have killed him'.[93] And Nietzsche does not so much argue but simply asserts a set of contemporary cultural assumptions when he says:

> Our age *knows*.... What was formerly merely morbid has today become indecent – it is indecent to be a Christian today. [...] We no longer endure it when a priest so much as utters the word 'truth'. Even with the most modest claim to integrity one *must* know today that a theologian, a priest, a pope does not merely err in every sentence he speaks, he *lies* – [...] The priest knows as well as anyone that there is no longer any 'God' [...] *All* the concepts of the Church are recognized for what they are: the most malicious false-coinage there is [...][94]

Also noteworthy are Nietzsche's own observations concerning the ground of his atheism. Nietzsche says his atheism is a matter of 'instinct'[95] which would seem to preclude the need for supplemental arguments[96], an idea we find further support for when he says, 'What is now decisive against Christianity is our taste, no longer our reasons.'[97] Taken together, these observations seem to provide ample evidence that Nietzsche failed to question atheism as a premise. But how might we dispute the evidence?

Kaufmann points out that when Nietzsche describes himself as an atheist by instinct, in the same passage, Nietzsche also says 'God is a gross answer, an indelicacy against us thinkers – at bottom merely a gross prohibition for us: you shall not think!'[98] For Kaufmann, this context frames Nietzsche's atheistic instinct as a determination to question all commitments and not an attempt to replace a theistic magisterium with another atheistic one. Kaufmann's thought becomes more persuasive when set in the context of the vast and dramatic consequences Nietzsche predicts for humanity in the face of God's death. These consequences are alluded to in very broad terms in the parable of the madman considered earlier, and although it still remains to be seen precisely what these consequences might be, it is clear that from Nietzsche's perspective, the consequences of God's death are of a catastrophic nature and Nietzsche's contemporaries are oblivious to these catastrophic

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[92] *GS*, para.109, p.168.
[93] *GS*, para.125, p.181.
[94] *AC,* para.38, pp.161-62.
[95] *EC*, 'Why I Am So Clever', para.1, p.236.
[96] Nietzsche's reference to atheism as an 'instinct' may be a retort to Hegel's understanding of faith as 'instinctive'. See for example: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol 2: Determinate Religion*, ed. by Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), para.421 and 422, p.537.
[97] *GS*, para.132, p.186.
[98] *EH*, 'Why I Am So Clever', para.1, pp.236-37.

consequences. Therefore, the claim that atheism was Nietzsche's unquestioned premise misses one of the central claims that Nietzsche was making for himself: Nietzsche was in a better position than most to question the atheistic premise, precisely because unlike his contemporaries, whose anaemic conception of God allowed them to glibly accept God's non-existence, Nietzsche had reflected on what atheism would actually mean. By the same token, Nietzsche also knew that the majority of humanity would shrink back from atheism if they shared his own appreciation for the atheistic claim. It is not so much that Nietzsche failed to question an atheistic premise, but he questioned his contemporaries' commitment to a premise – the consequences to which they had not yet (because they were not capable) given any serious thought. There is more to be said in this regard, but I will hold back the rest of the argument until we have considered the second theory mentioned above.

1.5.2 Philosophy vs Soteriology

If Nietzsche's disbelief was not a premise he failed to question, then perhaps Fraser's suggestion is right that the basic premise of atheism held very little philosophical interest for Nietzsche. In other words, Nietzsche's missing metaphysical arguments against God might be explained as a lack of interest in this particular philosophical question and not as failure to question atheism as a philosophical premise.

Recognising that atheism is not monolithic but rather an umbrella term under which various ways of looking at the world are collected, Fraser seeks to contextualise Nietzsche's atheism by specifically situating him in the flow of Lutheran theology, which he summarises as follows: 'The theological revolution begun by Luther has, at its core, an attempt to found theology upon soteriology. With Luther, theology is reinvented as soteriology […] theology is about human salvation'.[99] Fraser observes that Nietzsche was brought up in a strict Lutheran home, and he argues that it is from Luther that Nietzsche inherited the framework within which he thinks the question of God. This Lutheran framework naturally steers Nietzsche's atheism away from mere abstract philosophical puzzling and turns it toward the soteriological question: in the absence of a saviour how can humanity be saved? Precisely what humanity needs to be saved from is a question we will consider below, but for now, it is worth noting Fraser's point when applied to the missing contents of Nietzsche's atheism; it is only because

[99] *Redeeming Nietzsche,* pp.33-34.

Nietzsche's atheism is read as an abstract philosophical claim that readers are left to wonder at the lack of philosophical argument.

Fraser's attempt to reorient the question of God in Nietzsche's atheism away from philosophy toward soteriology is compelling, not least because Nietzsche's atheism reads less like an atlas containing precise philosophical coordinates than an attempt to set sail into a cultural and social storm (in hitherto unchartered waters). The ominous question advanced in the parable of the madman 'What happens to humanity now?' undoubtedly sets Nietzsche's atheism within a soteriological horizon wherein Nietzsche is concerned with humanity's collective future in light of God's death. I will expand on the soteriological nature of Nietzsche's thought in a moment and I will return to this theme again in chapter four to provide some further definition to the meaning of salvation held by Nietzsche. But for those who have missed the sense of urgency with which Nietzsche observes humanity's plight without God, Fraser provides helpful ballast and it is worth noting that this is not uniquely Fraser's perspective. Schacht also acknowledges that Nietzsche was concerned with the psychological, cultural and social consequences of God's death and shares Fraser's suspicion of those who would turn Nietzsche's atheism into mere philosophical abstraction.[100]

Schacht acknowledges that Nietzsche was obviously very much concerned 'with the problem of what is to be made of the kind of morality and scale of values associated with belief in the existence of such a God'.[101] In Nietzsche's own words:

> – What sets *us* apart is not that we recognize no God, either in history or in nature or behind nature – but that we find that which has been reverenced as God not 'godlike' but pitiable, absurd, harmful, not merely an error but a *crime against life*.[102]

But Schacht differs from Fraser in that in his view, none of this diminishes the importance of the question of God's existence for Nietzsche. It is not clear why Fraser thinks a soteriological reading of Nietzsche is incompatible with an interest in the philosophical question of God's existence. While it is certainly not helpful to reduce Nietzsche's atheism to an abstract philosophical question, insofar as the answer to such a question might determine what counts as salvation, it remains an important one for Nietzsche to answer. It is conceivable that, within a certain atheistic soteriology connected to a particular scale of values, the importance of the question of God's existence remains undiminished, because

[100] *Nietzsche,* pp.119-21.
[101] *Nietzsche,* p.120.
[102] *AC*, para.47, pp.174-75.

depending on how Nietzsche defines salvation and what he envisages for humanity, it might be argued that God's absence becomes an important and necessary requirement in order for humanity to be saved.[103] Or, in Schacht's terms, 'taking the position he [Nietzsche] does with respect to this morality and the scale of values presupposes that one is prepared to answer the question, in the negative'.[104]

1.5.3 Strategy, Philosophy and Legacy

Drawing these strands of argument together, various prominent features of Nietzsche's atheism can be noted. I have argued with Kaufmann that Nietzsche's atheism was not an unquestioned premise. And while I generally agree with Fraser's characterisation of Nietzsche's atheism as a soteriological pursuit, I am persuaded with Schacht that even within a soteriological framework, the philosophical question of God's existence remains of great concern to Nietzsche. However, if this is the case, then Nietzsche's 'missing arguments' remain a puzzling feature of Nietzsche's atheism. What should the reader make of the sense of inevitability with which Nietzsche writes about the decline of faith, and the numerous unqualified assertions he makes concerning God's death?

Biographically, we know that Nietzsche's initial break with Christianity was aided by historical criticism brought to bear upon the Bible[105] and there is no reason to think that Nietzsche had not found other compelling reasons for disbelief along the way, to a few of which he makes at least a passing reference: 'science makes *equal to God*',[106] philologists destroy the Bible,[107] Luther demolishes the church[108] and Darwin defeats Aristotle.[109] Perhaps the obvious answer is that Nietzsche simply assumed the arguments were plentiful and were already compelling and they were in fact so familiar to his audience that they needed no rehearsal.

This is helpful as far as it goes but there are good reasons to believe that Nietzsche was in fact being far more strategic than this, both at a philosophical level and in terms of the kind of influence he hoped to have – the two obviously being connected. I will argue that by

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[103] This will become clearer when we consider what Nietzsche meant by Nihilism below. *Cf Affirmation*, pp.44-49.
[104] *Nietzsche*, p.120.
[105] *MHP*, p. 20.
[106] *AC*, para.48. p.176.
[107] *GS*, para.358, p.311.
[108] *Ibid*.
[109] See for example *AC*, para. 14, p. 136. Or *WP*, para.69. pp.44-46.

omitting such arguments Nietzsche was not only assuming that his readers were familiar with a set of arguments against God but he was also protecting a philosophical position while at the same time protecting his own legacy.

In *Daybreak* Nietzsche says, 'When in former times one had refuted the 'proofs of the existence of God' put forward, there always remained the doubt whether better proofs might not be adduced than those just refuted: in those days atheists did not know how to make a clean sweep'.[110] Nietzsche was clearly aware of the contingent nature of every proof against God and this gave him clairvoyance enough to see that the stock of arguments prized by his generation might well be devalued by the next. I am arguing somewhat paradoxically that Nietzsche omitted these arguments not only because he was aware that there were plenty of compelling arguments with which his readers were already familiar but because these arguments in the final analysis, were not compelling enough.

Consider this in terms of Nietzsche's legacy. Nietzsche's long-term ambition for his work, aside from any specific philosophical goals, was that the work itself would endure. This might seem unremarkable as every author wants longevity. However, most writers instinctively seek to be understood by their contemporaries whereas Nietzsche was always aware that his meditations were 'untimely' and he describes his philosophy as 'a prelude to the philosophy of the future'. So, Nietzsche consistently envisioned himself speaking to or on behalf of a future generation and anticipated that he will most likely be incomprehensible to his own age. This was more than a mere hunch given the limited circulation of Nietzsche's books in his lifetime.

So while Nietzsche could have provided a set of philosophical arguments against the possibility of God's existence, he would have run the risk of turning his work into a relic of a bygone age. By omitting currently compelling and fashionable arguments, Nietzsche was strategically protecting his own legacy which in light of his soteriological goal was absolutely vital; how else could Nietzsche be humanity's saviour and guide?[111]

It was strategic at a philosophical level too. As with arguments against God's existence, arguments for God might be overturned at various times with similar ease leading to agnosticism. But in this ambiguity, Nietzsche notices a space, and in that space, Nietzsche thinks God can reappear:

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[110] *D*, Book 1, para.95, p.54.
[111] We shall return to Nietzsche's soteriological concerns in chapter two.

> Does one still seriously believe (as theologians imagined for a while) that Kant's *victory* over the dogmatic concepts of theology ("God," "soul," "freedom," "immortality,") damaged that ideal? – it being no concern of ours for the present whether Kant ever had any intention of doing such a thing.[112]

In fact, when Nietzsche considers the intent behind Kant's skepticism, he finds several layers of irony:

> *Kant's joke.* – Kant wanted to prove, in a way that would dumbfound the common man, that the common man was right: that was the secret joke of his soul. He wrote against the scholars in support of popular prejudice, but for scholars and not for the people.[113]

Which is why Nietzsche contends:

> German philosophy is at bottom – a *cunning* theology […] A secret path to the old ideal stood revealed, the concept 'real world,' the concept of morality as the *essence* of the world (– these two most vicious errors in existence!) were once more, thanks to a crafty-sly scepticism, if not demonstrable yet no longer *refutable*…. Reason, the *right* of reason does not extend so far…. [...] Kant's success is merely a theologian's success.[114]

And again: '"There is no knowledge: *consequently* – there is a God": what a new *elegantia syllogismi!* What a *triumph* for the ascetic ideal!–'.[115]

Therefore, instead of offering shelter for belief with potentially refutable proofs against God or attempting to overturn the current standard arguments for God, Nietzsche offers a plausible story of how belief arose. Nietzsche says:

> In former times, one sought to prove that there is no God – today one indicates how the belief that there is a God could *arise* and how this belief acquired its weight and importance: a counter–proof that there is no God thereby becomes superfluous.[116]

For Nietzsche then, belief and unbelief are not simply abstract, static philosophical claims which we have been persuaded into – or out of – by compelling rational argument; rather, they are historically conditioned claims, their fortunes rising and falling on the tide of changing circumstances. As rational arguments are added afterward and have little to do with

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[112] *GM*, Third Essay, para.25, p.156.
[113] *GS*, para.193, pp.205-06.
[114] *AC*, para.10, p.133.
[115] *GM*, para.25, p.156.
[116] *D*, Book 1, para.95, p.54.

how we arrive at personal or cultural convictions in the first place, Nietzsche is more interested in providing the historical dimension for all our metaphysical speculations. Therefore, to repeat my earlier claim, the death of God is not an inexplicable and unexplained event in Nietzsche's philosophy; rather, he is implementing, throughout, his own historicised approach to the problem which I will outline briefly here.

Nietzsche describes the sort of person who, upon discovering something new and unsettling for the first time, would rather question the reliability of his own senses than accept this new disquieting truth:

> He runs away from the striking thing, as if he had been intimidated, and tries to remove it from his mind as fast as he can. For his inner canon says: 'I do not want to see anything that contradicts the prevalent opinion. Am *I* called to discover new truths? There are too many old ones, as it is.'[117]

'Faith', Nietzsche says, 'means not *wanting* to know the truth',[118] and readers are inclined to imagine the rattled 'believer' shrinking from their own discovery. At any rate, we might have expected the faithful to hurriedly close the book of knowledge and return it to the shelf, were it not, Nietzsche contends, for the inestimable value placed upon truth by the 'Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine'.[119] And the unintended consequence of this deification of truth is that instead of turning away, the faithful find themselves compelled to look and listen again, more carefully

> The question whether *truth* is needed must not only have been affirmed in advance, but affirmed to such a degree that the principle, the faith, the conviction finds expression: '*Nothing* is needed *more* than truth, and in relation to it everything else has only second-rate value.'[120]

Nietzsche observes how the Christian pursuit of 'truth at any price' evolves and eventually becomes invested in the scientific endeavour. Enthralled by truth discovered and expressed in scientific terms, the 'youthful madness in the love of truth'[121] continues to seduce western culture down the primrose path, until, somewhere along the way, Nietzsche notices the path doubles back – the 'will to truth' turns upon itself so to speak – and the God of truth is finally declared a falsehood. The irony, as Nietzsche spells it out, is that Christanity

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[117] *GS*, para.25, p.100.
[118] *AC*, para. 52, p.182.
[119] *GS*, para.344, p. 280.
[120] *GS*, para.344, p.281.
[121] *GS*, Preface for the second edition, para.4, p.38.

meets its demise under the scrutiny of its own highest value; Christianity's God dies under what he refers to as the 'tyranny of truth and science'.[122]

> The most fateful act of two thousand years of discipline for truth that in the end forbids itself the *lie* of faith in God…You see *what* it was that really triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood ever more rigorously, the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price.[123]

In his essay 'Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks', Nietzsche bemoans the fact that for modern people 'even the most personal is sublimated back into an abstraction'.[124] He admires instead ancient Greece where conversely 'the greatest abstraction kept running back into a person'.[125] It is fitting then, that Nietzsche's account of the elevation of truth, transmuted into science, resulting in God's death and manifesting in a prevailing cultural atheism, is not a series of abstractions but reflects something of Nietzsche's personal history. It is in other words, a part autobiographical account of his own journey toward atheism.

Nietzsche's childhood piety peaked in a moment of religious ecstasy which he experienced immediately following his confirmation in 1861. But such intense religious feeling is not sustainable over the long haul and was not enough in this case, to stave off his growing doubts created by the rationalistic approach in Karl Von Hase's *Life of Jesus* – a book he made the mistake of recommending to his mother and sister and which became the subject of a family quarrel when he was home from Pforta for the Easter holidays. These doubts, sown by philological study, grew deeper and found further legitimacy in David Friedrich Strauss' *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined for The German People*, which Nietzsche read in his first year at Bonn. Employing and pioneering the methods of textual criticism, Strauss was attempting to extract the historical Jesus from the layers of Christian myth that had grown up over time. The work is a paradigmatic example of the 'will to truth' in the form of nineteenth-century German historical science turned upon the Christian scriptures, precisely the sort of scientific approach to truth that Nietzsche contends led to the death of God in the broader culture, and which closer to home, had already led to Nietzsche's personal decision to abandon Christian theism and take the first step toward atheism.

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[122] *GS*, para.20, p.92.
[123] *GS*, para.357, p.307.
[124] *PTAG*, para.3, p. 41.
[125] *Ibid.*

But the 'will to truth' takes various forms, including the twentieth- and twenty first-century positivism and scientism that often underpin modern atheism. With some iteration of this in mind, Nietzsche recognises where this intransigent pursuit of truth is going. It will not end, as one might have expected, with Christianity's ruin, but will go on – remorselessly we might say – to ruin all those who 'take their fire from the same flame'. The journey toward atheism, as it turns out, is a longer, more arduous journey than people have generally expected.

1.6 Conclusion

In the discussion about the missing contents of Nietzsche's atheism in this chapter, we have in fact dwelt a little longer over the question of Nietzsche's form and style, which I have argued are neither superfluous to Nietzsche's intended meaning nor do they indicate the absence of any essential meaning in Nietzsche's texts. In fact, Nietzsche's use of the parabolic form serves to point his readers to a chasm that lies between himself and other atheists precisely because they do not agree over the *meaning* of God's death. Peering into this chasm, we notice that Nietzsche's atheism does not find its shape around a series of compelling arguments against God's existence, not because Nietzsche forgot to question the cultural premise of his own atheism, nor because he was uninterested in the philosophical question of God's existence, but rather the missing arguments are a strategic move on Nietzsche's part by which he simultaneously protects his philosophical position as an atheist and secures for himself an enduring future legacy.

Giving consideration to all of this, the reader will have begun to appreciate some of the distinguishing features of Nietzsche's atheism that set him at odds with other atheists. These features have emerged through an account of Nietzsche's form and style and by noticing what is missing. I now want to return to one of the positive claims about Nietzsche's atheism that has already surfaced in this process, namely Nietzsche's soteriological goals.

Chapter Two

Nietzsche the Atheist (Part II)

2.1 Nihilism

In this chapter, we will continue to explore the distinguishing features of Nietzsche's atheism, seen against the backdrop of the chasm of understanding that we have been watching open up between Nietzsche and other atheists. Let us begin by reviewing what has been said so far about Fraser's soteriological reading of Nietzsche's atheism. While I disagree with Fraser that a soteriological emphasis diminishes the importance of the metaphysical question of God for Nietzsche, I believe Fraser is accurate in his portrayal of Nietzsche's atheism as being fundamentally aimed toward a soteriological goal. However, we still need to answer the important corollary question which I put aside earlier: what exactly does humanity need to be saved from?

The answer to this question in a single word is nihilism. Entire volumes have been dedicated to this theme in Nietzsche's work and so what I offer here as part of a chapter can only be a sketch of the issues which are argued at a more granular level elsewhere.[126] However, I will aim to provide enough detail to convey the sense of how nihilism has been interpreted in Nietzschean scholarship and how I think the concept functioned within Nietzsche's philosophy.

I have already stated my belief that Nietzsche wanted to save humanity from nihilism, but inevitably this view is not without its detractors who argue for the antithetical position, that Nietzsche was in fact a philosopher of nihilism and plainly identifies himself as such. Danto quotes Nietzsche as saying 'I have hitherto been a thorough-going nihilist',[127] an admission that should immediately take the steam out of any argument to the contrary. However, Schacht counters this with the idea that for Nietzsche, nihilism was not 'the end of the line',[128] explaining that it was merely a transitional stage in a journey from one place to

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[126] See for example: *Nietzsche and the Rhetoric of Nihilism: Essays on Interpretation, Language and Politics,* ed. Tom Darby, Béla Egyed and Ben Jones (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989); *Nietzsche, Nihilism and the Philosophy of the Future,* ed. Jeffrey Metzger (London, Bloomsbury Publishing: 2009); Paolo Stellino, *Nietzsche and Dostoevsky: On The Verge of Nihilism* (Lisbon: Peter Lang AG, 2015); Paul Van Tongeren, *Friedrich Nietzsche and European Nihilism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018).
[127] *WP*, para.25, p.18.
[128] Richard Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche: Reflections Timely and Untimely* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p.39.

another, and he offers Nietzsche's description of the philosopher who has 'lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself'.[129] But before I have the opportunity to arrange this as evidence for my position, Reginster points out the context where Nietzsche explains that such a philosopher is 'the first perfect nihilist of Europe'.[130] Clearly, worries about Nietzsche's alleged nihilism are not easily dispelled.

Whether Nietzsche was a nihilist or a saviour from nihilism, anyone attempting to adjudicate between these positions will soon discover that part of the problem is that there is no single clear definition of what Nietzsche himself meant by nihilism.

One response to this might be to try to pin him down as it were by affixing a straightforward and precise meaning to the word itself. Recall Danto's complaints earlier about the lack of coherence in Nietzsche's work. In the same vein, he says that Nietzsche had a 'singular lack of architectonic talent' and his literary productions are 'improvisations on marginal philosophical themes, abrupt impromptus'.[131] If, as we suggested earlier, Danto wants to organise Nietzsche's thoughts for him, then he must first provide the precise language needed for the task. The risk incurred in doing this, however, is that it might require bypassing the layered and multiple meanings that nihilism may have had for Nietzsche. Perhaps it is Danto's analytic impulse that allows him to reduce nihilism to a single meaning and so declare Nietzsche straightforwardly as a philosopher of nihilism. It is not that Danto is unaware of other types of nihilism that exist outside of Nietzsche's philosophy. He knows that there are other modes of thought that go by the same name; in fact, he starts his analysis of Nietzsche's nihilism by comparing it to Russian nihilism and other weaker forms. He concludes that Nietzsche was 'more negativistic' than his nihilist contemporaries and furthermore points to Nietzsche's own understanding that he was advocating for the 'extremest form of nihilism'; Danto also thinks that Nietzsche made unbridled claims for this extreme form of nihilism.[132]

But all of this only helps us to plot Nietzsche's place in intellectual history and does not come to grips with the conceptual use of nihilism within Nietzsche's own work. It is worth asking again, what would happen if we allowed Nietzsche to speak on his own terms? And following this line of thought, I will sketch a version of Reginster's approach to this question from which quite a different and more interesting picture emerges. He maintains that nihilism has a spectrum of meaning within Nietzsche's own work and functions as a relative

[129] *WP,* Preface, para.3, p.3.
[130] *Ibid.* / *Affirmation*, p.52.
[131] *NAP*, pp.22-23.
[132] *NAP*, pp.30-33.

term (the meaning of nihilism then shifts from context to context), so that depending on how Nietzsche is using the word at any given moment, the posture Nietzsche himself takes toward it will also be altered. Functionally then, Nietzsche's use of nihilism does not bear a messy inconsistency in need of a single meaning imposed from outside, but he uses it in several different ways which are entirely consistent with their various contexts. Additionally, the fact that Nietzsche has multiple senses of nihilism is consistent with his commitment to philosophy as an experience as opposed to cold, detached ideas. Nietzsche is aware that where you stand will determine what you experience as nihilism.

I will expand on these perspectives below but an abridged version might look something like this. In some places Nietzsche thinks God is a nihilistic concept; and because he is an atheist, he is clearly not a nihilist. And yet in other places, Nietzsche sees that the death of God precipitates a crisis of nihilism; and so when Nietzsche heralds the death of God, he is in that moment a herald of nihilism. On yet another occasion, Nietzsche thinks that God's death can only bring nihilism if we are invested in the particular scale of values underwritten by God; and yet if Nietzsche were to reevaluate those values, would he remain a nihilist?

Orienting this discussion toward the overarching concerns of this chapter, it will be helpful to point out here that against the backdrop of Nietzsche's nihilistic concerns, the conflict between Nietzsche and the atheists appears in stark relief. Once more, for Nietzsche the death of God is not a speculative abstract proposition but an event, and he wants to dramatise the death of God for atheists who fail to experience it in this way. And essential to Nietzsche's dramatisation is an understanding of the nihilistic consequences of God's death. Therefore – keeping in view the distance that lies between Nietzsche and the atheists – we might ask what it would take for an atheist to begin to recognise the nihilistic crisis that Nietzsche is pointing toward.

Presumably, the atheist would first need to come to terms with the idea that their own values have in fact been rooted in a set of unspoken metaphysical commitments and that these metaphysical commitments have been gathered together and found their ultimate justification with God. Only then – at the first pining for lost and now unattainable values – can Nietzsche's claim that God was after all a nihilistic concept, be any sort of consolation for the atheist, and the reevaluation of values appear as a meaningful response.

Following the sequence I have just suggested, the following sections will assume Nietzsche's perspective on the death of God as the harbinger of nihilism. This was not a perspective that he arrived at all at once. Abandoning his theistic 'mythical homeland',

Nietzsche had initially taken metaphysical shelter in Arthur Schopenhauer's work *The World as Will and Representation*, where Nietzsche found he could retain at least some of his native metaphysical language. Schopenhauer believed himself to have transcended Kant's mere appearances to reveal things-in-themselves and the ultimate ground of their being. But this would prove to be only a brief and temporary stop on Nietzsche's way to atheism, and he would eventually forsake the household gods altogether. We will observe why from Nietzsche's perspective the unity and continuity of the self, the language of appearances, things-in-themselves and the concept of being, form a metaphysical canopy which must be torn away if we are to experience the event of God's death in the way that Nietzsche describes it, that is to say, as if the sea had been emptied out, as if the sky had fallen in and as if the earth had been set adrift from the sun.

2.1.1 Ego[133]

When Nietzsche says that there are no facts, he is not simply highlighting the subjectivity of human knowledge (an epistemological claim of this sort is neither radical nor necessarily nihilistic). Rather, he is making an ontological claim. Epistemological subjectivity is not the pressing issue for Nietzsche because even assuming the necessity of the subject (the ontological 'I') is to assume too much. Nietzsche says that the subject is one of the oldest and firmest of all beliefs and yet the subject is not a given but has been 'added and invented and projected'.[134]

The death of God means that the idea of the soul, the unifying principle of the self, the ego, what Nietzsche calls the 'oldest realism',[135] has no anchor. There is no ego as such but only a multiplicity of drives and impulses. Thus, the mythical 'I', 'a formulation of our grammatical custom', is a fractured entity in a constant state of flux.[136] The subject Nietzsche describes is a continual fleeting and transitory state. Instead of the subject's providing a well-grounded identity, a foundational starting point as Descartes had hoped from which to draw the circle that encompasses reality ('I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I*

[133] I follow here the helpful progression of headings supplied by Schacht in his chapter on 'Metaphysical Errors': 'The Soul', 'Things', and 'A True World of "Being"', pp.118-169.
[134] *WP,* para.481, p.267.
[135] *WP*, para.487, p.269.
[136] *WP*, para.484, p.268.

exist, is necessarily true'),[137] the subject only represents instability. In other words: it is 'the subject as multiplicity.'[138]

2.1.2 Thing

According to Nietzsche, the thinker is but an illusion created by grammatical custom, the 'I'. The idea of a Cartesian thinker behind Cartesian thought is revealed as the *a priori* belief in substance, i.e., the thing that thinks is 'substance'. Nevertheless, according to Nietzsche, the concept of substance is dependent all along upon the concept of the subject, which is untenable.[139]

> –our belief in the "ego" as a substance, as the sole reality from which we ascribe reality to things in general? The oldest "realism" at last comes to light: at the same time that the entire religious history of mankind is recognized as the history of the soul superstition.[140]

Nietzsche's critique of this 'realism' makes a fundamental paradigm shift: 'One would like to know what things-in-themselves are; but behold, there are no things-in-themselves!'[141] There are no facts, but not because everything is subjective; as has already been noted, there is no subject to begin with. There are no facts because facts are dependent upon the unity and continuity of the self for their existence; when such unity and continuity do not exist, so too the facts do not exist.

2.1.3 Being

Nietzsche looks beyond Kant's thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*) and the subject to the 'true world' that supposedly lies beyond. Nietzsche claims that the world we are, the 'apparent world', is the only world, and that 'the 'real' world has only been *lyingly added*'.[142] Nietzsche imagines a scenario where the 'true world' could have been a useful invention of philosophy to make the world 'manageable and calculable', but instead this 'true world'

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[137] René Descartes, *Meditations On First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies* [1641], trans. by John Cottingham, second edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.17.
[138] *WP*, para.490, p.270.
[139] *WP*, para.485, pp.268-69.
[140] *WP*, para.487, p.269.
[141] *WP*, para.555, p.301.
[142] *TI*, '"Reason" in Philosophy', para.2. p.46.

became one to which the apparent world does not correspond. The means to improve the world were mistaken by philosophers to be a measurement of values, and to Nietzsche's distress, 'moral categories' were introduced, i.e., truth and deception. In this way, the whole philosophical enterprise became locked into the quest for an answer to the question 'what is truth?' and Nietzsche decries this as 'the greatest error that has ever been committed, the essential fatality of error on earth'.[143] And so with a note of urgency, he calls for the abolition of the 'true world' because it is an enemy of 'the world we are'.[144]

Nietzsche uses the terms 'real' and 'apparent' ambiguously. As Schacht points out, he uses both these terms in two ways that would appear to cancel each other out. In the first way, he uses the term 'real' to refer to what philosophers have called the 'real world' or 'true reality' (true reality meaning a possible world of being as it actually is, i.e. a hypothetical concept referring to true being existing apart from human conceptual schemes). In antithesis to 'real', when 'real' is used in this way, he uses the term 'appearance' or 'apparent' to refer to conceptual schemes which are '*merely* apparent' in relation to true being. In the second way, Nietzsche uses the same words to describe the opposite situation of what has just been described. In reverse, the 'real world' is the conceptual scheme and in fact the only world that exists, and the 'apparent world' refers to the postulated world of true being that is not real at all.[145] In this way, he proposes that we have 'mendaciously invented an ideal world. The "true world" and the "apparent world" – that means: the mendaciously invented world and reality'.[146]

It becomes more complex when Nietzsche considers the relationship between the two, between the 'real' and 'apparent'. In some places, it seems as though Nietzsche wants to eliminate the categories altogether. At the end of *Twilight of the Idols*, he enquires about what remains after the real world has been eliminated; 'the apparent one perhaps?' he asks. He answers his own question by saying 'But no! *with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!*'[147]

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[143] *WP*, para.584, p.315.
[144] *WP*, para.583, p.314.
[145] *Nietzsche*, pp.156-157.
[146] *EH*, Preface, para.2, p.218.
[147] *TI*, 'How the "Real World" at Last Became a Myth', para.6, p.51.

2.1.4 Preludes and Prologues

We can understand this point more fully by considering Nietzsche's reflections on the form and style of Greek Tragedy. We noted earlier that Nietzsche consistently enisioned himself speaking to or on behalf of a future generation, and that he described his work *Beyond Good And Evil* in the book's own subtitle as a *Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. This subtitle obviously pronounces Nietzsche's relationship to the philosophy he envisaged would succeed him and at the same time characterises his posture toward his own work at any given moment. I am arguing, in other words, that Nietzsche always perceived his present philosophy in terms of a prelude, that is to say, in anticipation of something else, consciously setting the scene and preparing the way for what was to come in much the same way that a prelude functions in a play. The prelude of a play serves to draw the audience into the world of the impending drama by setting up questions, creating mysteries and heightening tensions, all seeking their own resolutions. The prelude then invites the audience to experience the questions, mysteries and tensions simultaneously as the play unfolds.

Compare Nietzsche's conception of his own work as a prelude to future philosophy with his own analysis of Euripides's 'prologue' to Greek tragedy. The Greek playwright Euripides invented the prologue as a device in the development of the Greek tragic tradition in order to help lost audiences orient themselves in the story. The prologue in Euripides's drama familiarises the audience with the play's characters and outlines the sequence of events including major plot twists in advance. Narrated from the perspective of an omniscient – often divine and therefore to be trusted – narrator, the possibilities for both actors and audience are set and determined from the beginning. The audience, as Nietzsche vividly depicts it, is now brought 'onto the stage'[148] and already possesses all the answers that the ensuing play goes in search of. Therefore, the play holds no 'epic suspense'; it does not 'tease people' and 'make them uncertain about what will happen now or later'.[149] Nietzsche calls it *'*a capricious and inexcusable renunciation of the effect of suspense*'*, pointing out that 'everyone knows what is going to happen, so who will want to wait and see it actually happen?'[150] The end result is that the possibilities of the play and the spectator's experience have both been neutralised, leaving the play and the spectator detached and isolated from each other. Instead of preventing the audience's getting lost and keeping the audience

[148] *BT*, para.11, p.55.
[149] *BT,* para.12, p.62.
[150] *Ibid*.

engaged with the play itself, the irony as Nietzsche sees it is that Euripides's map by way of a prologue already loses his audience before the play gets going.[151]

2.1.5 The True World and the World of Appearance

This glance at prelude and prologue is enough to give us an appreciation for the kind of distinction Nietzsche is making.[152] That Nietzsche reads his own work as a prelude and not as some sort of Euripidean prologue is a significant distinction that provides a helpful backdrop for considering Nietzsche's approach to the 'real' and 'apparent' and the relationship he perceives between these two (possible) worlds.

As we have already noted, by means of the prologue, the audience already possesses knowledge of the 'true form' of the play with which the unfolding action must now align itself; subsequently, the audience's experience of the play is measured by the expectations created by the prologue. Similarly, Nietzsche perceives Western philosophy as having measured human experience against a posited true world of being and that philosophers have attempted to take us behind the world of transient appearances to this real world. But Nietzsche does not imagine that he can bypass appearance by 'bringing the spectator onto the stage' of a posited real world of being measuring out as Euripides did in his prologues 'every single element – language, characters, dramatic construction' with a 'bold application of reason'.[153] However, as we noted earlier, if we abolish the 'prologue' that is the 'real' world, '*we have also abolished the apparent one!*'[154] It will become clear in a moment that this is not a straightforward elimination of these categories, but a reconfiguration of the relationship between the two in a way that recognises the dynamic relationship between the 'apparent' and 'real' analogous to that generated between 'audience' and 'play.'

To Nietzsche, the 'apparent' and 'real' are intimately related but not because there is some sort of match between mind and world. It is true that Nietzsche laments the world falling into two and wants to put the world as it were, back together, but not in the tradition of

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[151] In defense of Euripides, it might be argued that insofar as his plays open up something about the nature of human beings, they are intrinsically tragic and therefore the weight of the tragedy does not turn on the audience being kept in the dark concerning what happens next. It might be argued further that the tragic element is actually enhanced by the prologue, *because* the audience are given that privileged perspective of the gods from where they can see the tragedy looming over the horizon, precisely the perspective denied to the characters in the play who remain blissfully unaware of their own fate.

[152] As yet, I have not found the contrast I am making here between Nietzsche's conceptions of prelude with prologue in the literature.

[153] *BT*, para.12, p.62.

[154] *TI*, 'How the Real World at Last Became a Myth', para.6. p.51.

Western metaphysics that seeks to align disparate realities. Appearance is not merely about the correspondence or the lack thereof between our transient phenomenological experience and the 'true world' because for Nietzsche, the 'true world' is 'essentially a world of relationships'[155]. And just as the 'true life' of a play is not bound to a prologue but transcends the stage when the audience is immersed in the 'suffering and activity of the main characters [...] shar[ing] breathlessly in their fears and sufferings',[156] so too the transient fluid experience of '"appearance" itself belongs to reality: 'it is a form of its being'.[157] There is no magic land of being freed from all relationships; instead, Nietzsche regards reality itself as comprising 'dynamic quanta, in a relation of tension to all other dynamic quanta'.[158] In this way, 'everything is bound to and conditioned by everything else'.[159] As Nietzsche says:

> A thing would be defined once all creatures had asked, 'what is that?' and had answered their question. Supposing one single creature, with its own relationships and perspectives for all things, were missing, then the thing would not yet be 'defined.'[160]

In other words, 'We possess the concept of "being," "thing," only as a relational concept–'.[161] In this way, the world's course and reality consist of these infinite relationships and processes of action and reaction of every particular toward the whole or, to carry the analogy further, every spectator toward the play. Consequently the world does not simply appear to be in constant flux on the surface of things, but it is in flux without a deeper constant beneath the changing stream of appearance produced from infinite perspectives. This is why anyone attempting to leap over the flow of 'appearance' to the banks of 'pure' reality will not land on solid ground. Nietzsche baptises this infinite and indefinable flux with the name Dionysus.

2.2 Dionysus

What can we say about the role the indefinable Dionysus plays in Nietzsche's atheism? And if, as we have been arguing, Nietzsche's atheism is a sort of soteriological

[155] *WP*, para.568, p.306.
[156] *BT*, para.12, p.63.
[157] *WP*, para.568, p.306.
[158] *WP*, para.635, p.339.
[159] *WP*, para.584, p.316.
[160] *WP*, para.556, pp.301-02.
[161] *WP*, para.583, p.313.

project aimed at rescuing humanity from post-theistic nihilism, how does this Dionysian arrangement of appearance and reality inform Nietzsche's various conceptions of nihilism and consequently his soteriology?

Dionysus spans the years between Nietzsche's earliest published book in 1872, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which Dionysus is first introduced and Nietzsche's pseudo autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, his last book written in 1888 – his final year of writing. My initial point in this regard is simply that from a literary view, Dionysus seems to form part of the story arc that connects the different chapters of Nietzsche's work, and if this is true, he likely plays a central role in Nietzsche's atheism and subsequent conflict with other atheists.

Of course, this attempt to bridge Nietzsche's works, like any other, is vulnerable to the problems Roberts warned of earlier regarding efforts to unify Nietzsche's philosophy, essentially that perceived unities (like Rorschach inkblots) only reveal what is tumbling around in the mind of would-be readers. Because we are now approaching what I believe lies at the heart of Nietzsche's atheism and gives definition to his soteriological project, it would seem foolhardy to press on here without some deliberation over Roberts's concerns. Rather than politely ignoring his cautionary advice and gingerly taking another step in the same direction, I want to see if we can proceed on a firmer footing. In our earlier ascent, we made an argument in broad terms for the legitimacy of finding unities in Nietzsche's work in general, and now as we descend into the details of Nietzsche's soteriology, I will try to make this case more specifically.

It may well be true that apparent connections I see in Nietzsche's work are the result of my own 'selective impulses' as Roberts would have it, but what if we were to turn instead to the selective impulses of Nietzsche himself, impulses expressed in biography and preface?

2.2.1 Apollonian Biographies and Prefaces

The first of these expressions of Nietzsche's selective impulses is that Nietzsche wrote biography. The very act of writing biography suggests that the ordering and unity of Nietzsche's life was important to him, and that he thought it should be done. Nietzsche had attempted to write biography as a fourteen-year-old student, and although a later Nietzsche no longer believed as he once did in the power of aesthetics to save humanity, this aesthetic impulse to create unities never left him, evidenced by the numerous attempts at biography at various stages of his life until his final attempt in *Ecce Homo.* The title *Ecce Homo* references

Pontius Pilate's words as he presented the 'Messiah' to the crowd, words employed pointedly and ironically by Nietzsche as the title of his autobiography as he sets the stage for a Messianic summation of himself to the world: 'Here is the man'. So, despite the fate of the subject in Nietzsche's atheism, which we have alluded to above, where there is no unity or continuity of the self, methodologically speaking, Nietzsche was committed to unifying his own life; and seeing in the knots of causation – in which there is no free will and therefore no responsibility – a destiny. Or perhaps, it would be more accurate to say, that it is *because* of the fate of the subject in Nietzsche's atheism that he is committed to unifying his own life, because for Nietzsche, the unity of the self is not a given but a potential for those who can order and rank the constellation of conflicting desires toward serving a chosen task or vocation.[162] Furthermore, it is the nature of both biography and the notion of destiny to gather up the past according to the selective impulses of the author. In Nietzsche's case, we are in the unusual position of possessing a biography that presents Nietzsche's life through his own past writings that he selected himself, presumably serving his own task of self-creation. And what do Nietzsche's selective impulses gather up from the strands of his life and work? Nietzsche declares it starkly in the preface to *Ecce Homo*: 'I am a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus'.[163]

That Nietzsche saw Dionysus as a deep root system connecting and creating continuity between his works – not always explicit but operating as subtext throughout – is also apparent in Nietzsche's retrospective prefaces which will be considered more closely in our conclusion. For now, I offer an example from the preface written for the new release of *The Birth of Tragedy* in which Nietzsche asserts the fundamental importance of knowing the Dionysian in order to know the Greeks. Given the priority Nietzsche gives to Dionysus in connection to his own identity as a disciple of Dionysus, we might apply his advice to our attempts to understand *him*: 'as long as we have no answer to the question 'What is Dionysiac? – the Greeks [and Nietzsche] will remain as utterly unknown and unimaginable as they have always been'.[164]

To be clear, I am not suggesting that either *Ecce Homo* or the retrospective prefaces should be read for an accurate, let alone any kind of comprehensive summary of Nietzsche's works. After all, Nietzsche wrote the aforementioned new preface for *The Birth of Tragedy* in Sils Maria, without a handy copy of the book itself with which to consult. But to reiterate, I

[162] For a helpful discussion concerning why Nietzsche's denial of free will does not necessarily preclude the possibility of self creation, see *FNPB*, pp.304-307.
[163] *EH*, Preface, para.2, p.217.
[164] *BT*, Preface, para.3, p.6.

am interested here in Nietzsche's own selective impulses, asking how did Nietzsche choose to connect his works, one to another? What did Nietzsche choose to see as he surveys his oeuvre and where did Nietzsche place his emphasis as he narrates his own legacy?

And in this respect, it should not be missed that the mere act of gathering up his past through biography and retrospective prefaces, already goes some way to providing answers to these questions, in as far as these acts are themselves an expression of the Apollonian art form that Nietzsche introduces together in dramatic tension with Dionysus in the *Birth of Tragedy*. The Apollonian artist, Nietzsche tells us, is not after the naked truth, raw data or brute facts, but rather adorns the world with form and beauty, makes myths, and creates heroes that make us believe that life is noble. Homer, not Socrates, elevates life, not simply by getting at the truth of things, but by offering us perfected and glorified versions of ourselves. And it is precisely this sort of life-ennobling and heroic view of himself and his own works that Nietzsche is offering in *Ecce Homo* and the new prefaces. They are meant as artistic representations of his own life, offered almost naively; he is not regretful but thankful that he could not consult *The Birth of Tragedy* nor *Human, All Too Human* when he wrote their new prefaces – and yet he is not altogether unaware of the tragic Dionysian end into which all beauty, myths and heroes must disappear.

But without Dionysus there is no dramatic tension for Apollo, and therefore no tragedy in the face of which life can be affirmed. The tension which the ancient Greeks possessed is missing in our modern, wholly individuated, rational age, a perpetual prologue in which the Dionysian spirit has been all but extinguished from memory.

It is true then, that Nietzsche's biography and prefaces are not precise, 'truthful' accounts. And that is the point, even as Nietzsche offers us an idealized Apollonian version of his own works, that he does so as a disciple of Dionysus.

2.2.2 Dionysian Feeling

Consistent with what has been said so far about the infinite and indefinable nature of the Dionysian spirit, Nietzsche's strategy is not to assign it a value or imagine its structure but to try instead to provoke a certain feeling. Nietzsche speaks unambiguously about this strategy in various places. Consider, for example, this fragment from 1876: 'The aim: that the

reader be swept up becoming so elastic that he finds himself standing on tiptoe [. . .] Free spirit, fairytale, and lust lift man up onto his toes'.[165]

With this goal in mind, Nietzsche likens the Dionysian experience to a state of intoxication.[166] And rather than stating facts about Dionysus – the god of wine – he calls on experience to 'stir', 'awaken', 'stimulate' and 'unleash' feelings of 'lust', 'lasciviousness' and 'intoxication' in order to immerse his readers in a reality that is both inexpressible and unknowable because it overwhelms both the sensible and the intelligible. Consequently, Dionysian reality cannot be encoded or canonised but only experienced, and it is in this intoxicating experience of a Dioynisian reality that Nietzsche finds life.

However, Nietzsche can only bring us up to the edge – if such an edge existed – of the boundless and endless flux of becoming, leaving to question what it might mean to fully participate in the Dionysian. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche originally conceived a Dionysian salvation in aesthetic and metaphysical terms, whereby he hoped that a revival or at least a re-imagined form of Greek tragedy that accesses the Dionysiac through music (in particular Wagner's music drama) could allow us to forget our individuation and experience an ecstatic mystical oneness, but at once (through the words and characters of Apollonian drama) could also pull us back from Dionysian chaos.[167] Nietzsche hoped that through this dynamic, Wagnerian tragedy could provide a new religious vision and founding myth that could reinvigorate German culture. Nevertheless, even as Nietzsche moved away from the influence of Schopenhauer and Wagner, the paradoxical nature of Dionysus remains throughout his work. In his philosophy of becoming, Dionysus continues as the symbol of the superabundance of life and infinite possibility, and yet at the same time, it is precisely this superabundance of life and infinite possibility that poses the threat of nihilism. Without God, nothing is ordered to anything, and like the dithyrambic disciples of Dionysus, we skirt near the edge of our own destruction if we cannot find a way to new life-affirming values.

In what follows, it will become clear why Nietzsche thinks atheists who stand at the end of Christianity, but as we have been arguing, have not yet stepped out of Christianity, are ill equipped to face this Dionysian reality.

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[165] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Posthumous Fragment, 1876, Gruppe 16, pp.33-34. <http://www.nietzschesource.org/eKGWB/index#eKGWB/NF-1876,16> [accessed February 28, 2021]. (Translation my own.)

[166] See *BT*, para.1, p.17; Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Dionysiac World View' [written in 1870, unpublished in Nietzsche's lifetime], in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings,* ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.117-38 (para.1, pp.122-23); The Dionysiac World View', para.1, p.120.

[167] What Nietzsche refers to in his new preface as an 'artiste's metaphysics' *Cf BT*, para.2, p.5.

2.3 The King, the Pawn and the Bishop

Consider first of all these two different postures toward life:

> What is amazing about the religiosity of the ancient Greeks is the enormous abundance of gratitude it exudes: it is a very noble type of man that confronts nature and life in *this* way. Later, when the rabble gained the upper hand in Greece, *fear* became rampant in religion, too – and the ground was prepared for Christianity.[168]

This tight aphorism sets up several major pieces of Nietzsche's genealogical approach: the noble man, the rabble, religion (Christianity or otherwise) and the implied priestly castes that accompany religion. What follows is a brief description of each piece and a consideration of the way in which Nietzsche arranges, as it were, his various kings, pawns and bishops.

First, there is the noble type who is recognised by his posture of gratitude toward life, not life as it could be but life as it is. Perhaps, most remarkably, this type is not a mere hypothetical but Nietzsche believed that the noble man actually existed in a more heroic age in ancient Greece. But this paradisal state was not to last, and the noble man was eclipsed by another type to whom Nietzsche refers as the rabble. The rabble does not exude an abundance of gratitude before life and nature as the ancient Greeks once did, but instead, the rabble, taking humanity with it, has shrunk from life and its own nature, choosing instead a state of decadence and decline:

> I consider life itself instinct for growth, for continuance, for accumulation of forces, for *power*: where the will to power is lacking there is decline. My assertion is that this will is *lacking* in all the supreme values of mankind – that values of decline, *nihilistic* values hold sway under the holiest of names.[169]

But what could have turned humanity against its own instincts? Why would a species deny its own life? And how could such an awkward and strained condition become the prevailing trait of the species? We must answer these questions at length, but the following terse description – framed as it is by our earlier discussion concerning being and appearance – will bring us quickly to Nietzsche's point: it is because humans have believed in a higher state of being by which the present state of appearance is measured, evaluated and made to

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[168] *BGE,* para.49, p.64.
[169] *AC*, para.6, pp.129-30.

conform, that humans have turned against life as it is in favour of how life *ought* to be. Nietzsche says: 'You still want to create the world before which you can kneel: that is your ultimate hope and intoxication'.[170] In this way, life is contorted to fit with and take on the shape of a posited but non-existent reality.

Nietzsche dubs this pathological denial of life the 'ascetic ideal', humanity's most distinguishing trait. Naturally, the ascetic ideal transcends cultures and spans epochs. In this regard, Nietzsche moves his bishop right across the board so to speak, and asks us to 'consider how regularly and universally the ascetic priest appears in almost every age; he belongs to no one race; he prospers everywhere; he emerges from every class of society'.[171] The priest appears everywhere as the embodied expression of humanity's devotion to this ancient ideal, wearing many cloaks and appearing 'under the holiest of names'. Nietzsche says that 'the ascetic ideal has meant so many things to man'[172] the many branches that human life has taken all stem from the same source.

Between these descriptions of the Dionysian and ascetic instinct, Nietzsche's soteriological task becomes clearer. Nietzsche must point to the various lives fashioned by the ascetic instinct, demonstrating the profound influence ascetics have had on shaping humanity and at the same time offering a clear alternative to the ascetic life, explaining what it would mean to participate instead in the Dionysian.

Additionally, this understanding of how Nietzsche intends to rescue humanity from nihilism, provides the vantage point from which to view the broader concern of this thesis. That is to say, Nietzsche's attempt to delineate the various forms of asceticism (which we shall consider momentarily) brings us to the heart of the conflict between Nietzsche and other atheists.

2.4 Reason, Knowledge, Science and Progress

Given the universality of the ascetic experience and what must be its innumerable cultural manifestations, where should we look first? Keeping in view *Nietzsche Contra the Atheists*, we will turn our attention to those examples of the ascetic ideal that shed light on the nature of this conflict.

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[170] *Z*, p.225.
[171] *GM*, Third Essay, para.11, p.117.
[172] *GM*, Third Essay, para.1, p.97.

Reason, knowledge, science and progress form a cluster of ideas that have often been leveraged by atheists in modern Western culture to edge God out, in a manner of speaking. But for Nietzsche, these ideas are themselves rooted in asceticism, and the problem as Nietzsche sees it is that asceticism – though not uniquely a Judeo-Christian trait – finds its pre-eminent justification in the Judeo-Christian God.

We will follow Nietzsche's train of thought here more carefully, but let us take a moment to appreciate the double irony as Nietzsche sees it. Christianity's pursuit of truth leads to its own undoing. But it is not just that the tools of truth are produced and gain prominence through metaphysics or theism which are then ironically turned against God or being; but in doing so, the tools themselves become blunt with use. Like the person who saws off the proverbial branch they are sitting on, support for atheism drops out. To summarise in advance, in Nietzsche's view, anti-metaphysicians who use these tools (reason, knowledge, science and progress) as weapons against God and yet at the same time insist on their 'truthfulness' are themselves actually making a metaphysical move, i.e., an attempt to impose a unity, continuity, purpose, standard or goal that does not really exist upon the flux of reality. And for this reason, he charges them with asceticism. They establish another world beyond our own by which our world is measured against and inevitably condemned; in this sense, they are life-negating and nihilistic, an enemy of 'the world *we are*'.[173] They function in similar ways to a detailed prologue at the beginning of a play; they are all failed attempts to capture reality or enter into life and they prevent others from doing so as well. Nietzsche's philosophical project might be understood as an attempt to tear out each of these 'prologues' of which the Judeo-Christian God is the ultimate justification and the ultimate version.

2.5 Naturalism

Nietzsche's nuanced conceptions of reason, knowledge, science and progress deserve a full-length discussion.[174] However, given our focus on the reception history of Nietzsche's atheism – specifically in the English-speaking world – I will confine our discussion here to the area of Nietzsche's understanding of *science* and then later in our final chapter we will consider Nietzsche's understanding of *progress*. It is worth making special reference here to

[173] *WP,* para.583, p.314.
[174] See for example: Rudiger Hermann Grimm, *Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge* (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1977); Nevio Cristante, 'Nietzsche's Historical Confrontation with Hegel: "The End of History"?' *H.Ü. İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 27 (2009), 305-325. Christian J. Emden, *Nietzsche's Naturalism: Philosophy and the Life Sciences in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

how Nietzsche conceived of science, not simply because Anglophonic atheism has tended to be spoken with a scientific accent as it were, but because a number of interpreters in a flurry of recent scholarship have been eager to translate Nietzsche's views of science into the language of philosophical naturalism, whereby 'philosophy models its methods on the empirical sciences or that it ought to draw upon the researches of the empirical sciences, or both'.[175] Christa Davis Acamporer notes that it is precisely this 'narrower conception of naturalism that is becoming increasingly popular among Nietzsche interpreters'.[176] And Christopher Janaway's more general claim is that 'most commentators on Nietzsche would agree that he is in a broad sense a naturalist in his mature philosophy'.[177] But this interest in Nietzsche's naturalism is a relatively recent development, only becoming a standard reading within the last decade. Brian Leiter points out that no one was making these sorts of claims when he presented Nietzsche as a naturalist just five years earlier. And Leiter believes quite credibly, that his *Nietzsche on Morality*, first published in 2002, helped to change the tide of scholarly opinion.[178] Without detailing the many involved arguments that have been advanced in this relatively short time span, I will try to offer my own abridged account of this relatively recent turn of events. First, I will start by situating the current argument in a broad historical perspective. Second, I will demonstrate the kind of challenge faced by any interpreter endeavoring to hold Nietzsche's descriptions of science and naturalism together. And third, I will round this section off by highlighting one or two issues pertinent to our current project that have emerged from the various attempts to connect Nietzsche's views of science with his naturalism.

2.5.1 Historical Context

Placing this discussion then in the history of Nietzsche interpretation, recent attention to Nietzsche's naturalism appears to be part of a wider effort on behalf of analytic philosophers to claim Nietzsche for themselves. Simon Robertson and David Owen draw attention to the fact that Nietzsche's influence on analytic philosophy 'may appear to be somewhat negligible'.[179] Nevertheless, despite the lack of prior influence, commentators are

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[175] Christa Davis Acampora, 'Naturalism and Nietzsche's Moral Psychology', in *A Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. Keith Ansell Pearson (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), pp.314-33 (p.315).
[176] 'Naturalism and Nietzsche's Moral Psychology', p.315.
[177] Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.34.
[178] Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 'Postscript: Nietzsche's Naturalism Revisited', p.244.
[179] Simon Robertson and David Owen, 'Influence on Analytic Philosophy', *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.185-206 (p.185).

seizing the moment – in which the once dominant continental readings appear to be receding – to fulfill Danto's earlier ambition, that is, 'to reclaim him [Nietzsche] as a predecessor'.[180] Several commentators have characterised their own interest, and that of others, in Nietzsche's naturalism in precisely this way. For example, speaking of Nietzsche as a naturalist, Schacht observes that this is 'a characterisation with which many – in the *analytically* minded part of the philosophical community, at any rate – have come to agree' (italics mine).[181] And it is by self-consciously pitting himself against the postmodern appropriation of Nietzsche that Leiter in a chapter titled 'Nietzsche, Naturalist or Postmodernist?' situates Nietzsche 'not in the company of […] Foucault and Derrida, but rather in the company of naturalists like Hume and Freud – that is, among, broadly speaking, *philosophers of human nature*'.[182] John Richardson in his book *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* wants to 'naturalise' Nietzsche's notions of 'drive' and 'instinct' and 'will to power' – what he calls Nietzsche's 'key explainers' – by means of a precise account of Nietzsche's biology. However, from the outset of Richardson's project, he acknowledges that this runs counter to Heidegger, 'who warns against reading Nietzsche's thinking as biologism'.[183] As Richardson would have it, Heidegger took an 'easy way out' of the conflict between ascetic and epistemic concerns.[184] Regardless of the accuracy of this assessment, the direction of Richardson's argument is intended to put distance between Nietzsche and his continental interpreters as he contends that 'Nietzsche's naturalistic approach to art sets him apart […] from Heidegger'.[185] And in Leiter's recent rejoinder to the numerous responses to his earlier work, he once more defines his own argument for Nietzsche's naturalism against the 'too many years of Heideggerian and Derridean misreadings' which have steered academic psychologists away from reading Nietzsche.[186]

2.5.2 Whose Naturalism?

Nietzsche's naturalism, then, appears to be a useful staging ground from which analytic philosophers can deliver a serious challenge to the once seemingly unassailable

[180] *NAP*, p.14.
[181] Richard Schacht, 'Nietzsche's Naturalism', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 43 (Autumn 2012), 185-212 (p.185).
[182] *On Morality*, p.2.
[183] John Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 11. footnote 2.
[184] *Ibid.,* pp.223-26. especially p.225.
[185] *Ibid.*, p.226.
[186] *On Morality*, p.595.

postmodern readings. But how to precisely define Nietzsche's naturalism presents a unique challenge of its own, not least of all because while Nietzsche is clearly happy, as we shall see in a moment, to present his own project in naturalistic terms, at the same time, he is unsparing in the way that he derides and ridicules other naturalists.

Leiter warns that, too often, superficial readings make too much of apparent contradictions in Nietzsche's works, and undoubtedly this is so; but my intention here is not to reveal some underlying contradictions, but to expose, as we did earlier, the inherent problems in reducing Nietzsche to fit our own tidy categories. I will try to demonstrate that attempts to resolve apparent tensions with Nietzsche's naturalism, as with other areas of Nietzsche's thought, can end up contorting Nietzsche in rather unnatural ways. So before treading too heavily here, only to find the ground give way beneath us, we would do well to stake out the naturalist grounds on which Nietzsche actually stood.

Significant tensions appear across several works in some of the following ways. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche pores over an ancient metaphorical text only to discover that certain words when applied to human experience like 'honesty', 'truth', 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' are merely 'flattering colour and repainting' over the original script. Beneath this layer of 'gold dust of unconscious human vanity', Nietzsche perceives, though 'scratched and daubed over', 'the eternal original text *homo natura'*; reading from this 'eternal text', Nietzsche wants to 'translate man back into nature'.[187] But what does Nietzsche have in mind here? Nietzsche chafes at the idea that the *natural sciences* can offer 'the truth' about the world, and as we have already noted in Nietzsche's view, science is tied to the ascetic instinct, relying on an 'overestimation of truth'.[188] Rather than privileging science with a God's-eye view, he describes how science can become a sort of 'tyranny'[189] and refers to it as 'a regulative fiction'[190], founded upon a 'metaphysical faith'.[191] When Nietzsche labels 'science as a prejudice', he sneers at the 'faith with which so many materialistic natural scientists rest content nowadays, [...] [as] a crudity and naivete, assuming it is not a mental illness, an idiocy'; he continues to say, 'a "scientific interpretation" of the world, as you understand it, might therefore still be one of the *most stupid* of all possible interpretations of the world'.[192]

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[187] *Beyond Good and Evil* but the quote is from a different translation. *Cf* Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* [1886], trans. Helen Zimmern (Overland Park: Digireads.com Publishing, 2019), para.230, pp.122-123. Kindle ebook.
[188] *GM*, Third Essay, para.25, p.153.
[189] *GS,* para.20, p.92.
[190] *GS*, para.344, p.280.
[191] *Ibid.*, p.283.
[192] *GS*, para.373, p.335.

Gathered up this way, it would be easy to conclude that Nietzsche thought science has no place in the naturalisation of man or what he calls the de-deification of nature, ideas that drive Nietzsche's soteriological endeavour. But this would be to ignore the many places where Nietzsche expresses his appreciation for the rootedness of science in *this* world. For Nietzsche, science is the 'wisdom of the world':[193]

> We possess scientific knowledge today to precisely the extent that we have decided to *accept* the evidence of the senses […] The rest is abortion and not-yet-science: which is to say metaphysics, theology, psychology, epistemology.[194]

Without a straight line then between Nietzsche's conceptions of science and naturalism, how should we understand the way Nietzsche conceived of the relationship between the two?[195]

I will use Leiter and Schacht as my works of reference in order to highlight a few of the hermeneutical strategies in play, bearing in mind that these are just two summary bookends of a much more involved conversation. I begin here with a few details of Leiter's own standard for naturalism and then consider how various aspects of Nietzsche's naturalism measure up.

2.5.3 Leiter and Discontinuity

In an essay titled 'Nietzsche's Naturalism Revisited', Leiter responds to some of the questions raised about his earlier work. He begins by quoting a passage from Janaway who describes 'Nietzsche's naturalism in the broad sense', mentioning some key characteristics such as Nietzsche's opposition to metaphysics, the soul, free will, pure intellect and so on. However, Leiter thinks that Janaway is not so much presenting a 'broad sense' of naturalism, as much as he is making a 'Laundry List Naturalism'. And he asks, 'why are *these* a set of views a philosophical naturalist *ought* to hold?'[196]

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[193] *AC,* para.47, p.175.
[194] *TI,* 'Reason in Philosophy', para.3, p.46.
[195] Several commentators have attempted to draw these lines in different ways: Christa Davis Acampora, 'Naturalism and Nietzsche's Moral Psychology'; Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1990); Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness*; Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*; Peter Poellner, 'Nietzsche's Metaphysical Sketches: Causality and Will to Power', in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.675-700 (p.695); John Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*; Richard Schacht, 'Nietzsche's Naturalism'.
[196] *On Morality*, p.244.

Leiter has no fundamental disagreement with the contents of Janaway's 'laundry list' but he is interested in the possible justification for such a list and how it might be organised; and it is with this in mind that he rehearses his own tautology in which he makes distinctions between different types of naturalism.

First, Leiter makes the distinction between 'Substantive'- and 'Methodological-naturalists'. Nietzsche, he says, is not a substantive-naturalist except in the sense of repudiating supernaturalism, making the ontological claim that there are only natural things.[197] Leiter identifies Nietzsche instead as a methodological-naturalist who requires a continuity between philosophical inquiry and empirical inquiry in the sciences. Leiter then makes two further distinctions within Nietzsche's methodological naturalism. First, there is 'Speculative Methodological Naturalism', whereby speculative theories of human nature are informed by the sciences. Second, some methodological-naturalists demand a kind of *results* continuity with science,[198] and Leiter thinks Nietzsche exhibits this sort of naturalism too when he laughs at philosophers' attempts to supply rational grounds for morality and dismisses Kant's 'practical reason'. If humanity originates with nature, as Nietzsche insists, then his genealogical response to the grip that morality has on the human mind must be understood as 'an explanation that is continuous with both the results and methods of the sciences'.[199] Leiter draws this analogy:

> *Every* sensible scientific explanation of plants growing tomatoes will appeal to the genetic make-up of tomato plant seeds. If Nietzsche is right […] then the same will be true about the correct naturalistic account of moral beliefs and attitudes.[200]

2.5.4 Crackpot Metaphysics

But what happens when Nietzsche's methods are discontinuous with those of empirical scientific inquiry?[201] Leiter is not unaware of such moments of discontinuity, as for example when he refers to the 'crackpot metaphysics of the will to power'.[202] Peter Poellner shares Leiter's skepticism and thinks that 'Nietzsche's metaphysical ideas are no doubt

[197] Substantive naturalists go beyond merely repudiating supernaturalism by collapsing the distinction between values and facts. Values are facts which have physical explanations and can follow a reductive progression that moves from values to biology, from biology to chemistry, from chemistry to physics and from physics to maths.
[198] *On Morality* pp.2-9.
[199] *Ibid.,* p.9.
[200] *Ibid.*, p.257.
[201] *Beyond Selflessness*, p.39.
[202] *On Morality*, p.260.

outlandish'.[203] And Paul Loeb observes that 'the chief reason these scholars hope to interpret away Nietzsche's interest in the physics of eternal recurrence is that they themselves find it bizarre and unscientific'.[204]

Intent on keeping Nietzsche within the bounds of naturalism as Leiter understands it, he responds to Nietzsche's 'crackpot,' 'outlandish' and 'bizarre' metaphysics with an alternative hermeneutical strategy. He refers to Clark's 'hopeful' view that the 'crackpot metaphysics' is really just an ironic illustration of how philosophers make metaphysical claims without warrant but then present them as if they had uncovered reality through rational processes.[205] Likewise, wrestling with his own incredulity, Poellner also refers to Clark's suggestion that Nietzsche's 'outlandish' claims are 'performative illustrations of the futility of metaphysics' and that they function as a sort of 'pedagogical or rhetorical device'.[206]

But while this sort of 'charitable hermeneutic', as Loeb calls it, gives Nietzsche the benefit of the doubt, Poellner cannot help wondering if it would be more effective for Nietzsche to forgo these 'pseudo' claims to metaphysics altogether and simply point to the problems intrinsic to conventional metaphysical projects. Moreover, an ironic reading does not explain the surprising detail with which Nietzsche then attempts to work out these dubious metaphysical claims, nor does it explain why Nietzsche would do this detailed work in his private notebooks and therefore without 'any public pedagogical effect'. For these reasons, Clark's strategy leaves Poellner with a 'lingering hermeneutical dissatisfaction'.[207]

Similarly, Leiter is unable to shake his own lingering doubts and wonders if 'perhaps Nietzsche really did believe he had some deep insight into the correct metaphysics of nature'.[208] If this is the case, and the outlandish in Nietzsche cannot be read ironically, then Leiter suggests it should simply be dismissed as silly; in his own words, 'those of us reading him more than a century later should concentrate on his fruitful ideas, not on the silly ones'.[209]

But this suggestion leaves me with my own sense of hermeneutical dissatisfaction and recalling Leiter's jibe about Janaway's 'Laundry List Naturalism', by the same token, I want to ask if Leiter is not now making a 'laundry list *Nietzsche*'? This list depends in part on whose preferred doctrine of naturalism Nietzsche is being made to follow. But even this

[203] 'Nietzsche's Metaphysical Sketches: Causality and Will to Power', pp.675-700 (p.695).
[204] Paul S. Loeb, 'Eternal Recurrence', in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.645-71 (p.661).
[205] *On Morality*, p.259.
[206] 'Metaphysical Sketches', p.695.
[207] *Ibid.*, pp.695-96.
[208] *On Morality*, p.261.
[209] *Ibid.*, p.261.

appearance of logical consistency belies the arbitrary feelings of the commentator involved in deciding what counts as a 'crack pot,' 'outlandish,' 'bizarre,' 'unscientific' and 'silly' idea. As Loeb perceptively asks, 'how is eternal recurrence more peculiar than an inflationary universe, black holes and dark matter?'[210] And we might add the multiverse. The answer to Loeb's rhetorical question might simply be, 'Well, it just feels that way'. And it is precisely this blend of doctrinal and emotive decisions that produces the surprising list of disparaging adjectives – listed above – that we have been collecting in this relatively short traverse. But these are the sorts of 'selective impulses' with which Leiter and others make their collection of *acceptable* Nietzschean passages, in the hope that Nietzsche can emerge, *almost*, as an analytic thinker – to invoke Roberts and Danto together. Once again, I am not convinced that a Nietzsche divested of his own language and conceptual apparatus in order to bring him in line with some doctrine or other is recognisably Nietzsche. Leiter's Nietzsche becomes all the more difficult to identify when placed alongside Nietzsche's disavowal of 'all philosophical dogmatizing', which he says is the result of 'popular superstition', a 'seduction by grammar, or an audacious generalization of very narrow, very personal, very human, all too human facts'.[211] If analytic philosophers want to use Nietzsche's naturalism to rescue Nietzsche from the 'too many years of Heideggerian and Derridean misreadings', this is not, in my opinion, the best way to go about it. And it is in response to Leiter's attempts to cut Nietzsche down to size that Schacht offers this novel suggestion: Perhaps we should try to understand *Nietzsche's* naturalism and maybe we could try to do that first of all on Nietzsche's *own* terms.[212]

2.5.5 Causation

When Leiter is not crossing out passages and tearing out pages from Nietzsche's work, one still gets the sense that Nietzsche's naturalism is being forced like a square peg into a round hole. Take, for example, Leiter's handling of Nietzsche's approach to causation.

Leiter argues for the centrality of causal explanation for Nietzsche's naturalism,[213] claiming that Nietzsche's ideas are '*modeled* on science in the sense that they seek to reveal

[210] 'Eternal Recurrence', p.661.
[211] *BGE,* Preface, p.1.
[212] 'Nietzsche's Naturalism', p.191.
[213] *On Morality*, p.254.

the causal determinants of these phenomena, typically in various physiological and psychological facts about persons'.[214]

In response to this, Janaway broadens out the possible causal explanations from psychological and physiological to cultural causation as well:

> If Nietzsche's causal explanations of our moral values are naturalistic, they are so in a sense which includes within the 'natural' not merely the psychophysical constitution of the individual whose values are up for explanation, but also many complex cultural phenomena.[215]

Schacht agrees with this as far as it goes, recognising that Nietzsche situates human reality within complex emergent forms of life that include but at the same time go well beyond physiological and psychological explanation. But Schacht is not content to simply expand the varieties of causation to include historical, social and cultural contingencies, but he would prefer to drop the language of causation altogether from descriptions of Nietzsche's naturalism. Schacht argues that Nietzsche's naturalism is not always expressed in terms of causal explanation:

> Nietzsche's naturalism […] is by no means wedded to the view that everything […] can be adequately explained and fully comprehended in terms of natural-scientific or natural scientifically modeled concepts and processes – 'causality' first and foremost among them.[216]

Schacht is not suggesting that Nietzsche denies the power of causal explanations altogether, but he wants to take seriously Nietzsche's concerns about the inadequacy of such language. For example, Nietzsche says:

> Cause and effect: such a duality probably never exists; in truth we are confronted by a continuum out of which we isolate a couple of pieces, just as we perceive motion only as isolated points and then infer it without ever actually seeing it. […] An intellect that could see cause and effect as a continuum and a flux and not, as we do, in terms of an arbitrary division and dismemberment, would repudiate the concept of cause and effect and deny all conditionality.[217]

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[214] *On Morality*, p.6.
[215] *Beyond Selflessness*, pp.52-53.
[216] 'Nietzsche's Naturalism Reconsidered', p.195.
[217] *GS*, para.112, p.173.

Leiter addresses what he calls 'Nietzsche's alleged skepticism' by asserting that Nietzsche abandons such (Neo-Kantian) skepticism about causation in his mature works.[218] But with a cynical eye, one might ask if the line that separates Nietzsche's 'mature works' from his earlier works is not just being drawn conveniently in order to advance this non-skeptical reading. For instance, there is no uniform agreement among scholars over which side of the line *The Gay Science* (quoted above) should be placed.[219]

Nonetheless, what if we were to agree that *The Gay Science* itself cannot be counted among Nietzsche's mature works? Assuming that Nietzsche did not abandon every idea contained therein, how might we decide whether or not his skepticism about causation was carried over or abandoned? Obviously, we could just search for his skepticism in his later books, but in this case, we do not have to look that far. Once again, Nietzsche's retrospective prefaces help us to trace lines of continuity and discontinuity in the Nietzschean corpus as viewed by Nietzsche himself. The preface for the second edition of *The Gay Science* was written in 1886, precisely when Nietzsche wrote his mature works as Leiter following the scholarly convention refers to them. Consider the continuity between what Nietzsche refers to as 'bad taste' in the second edition preface and what he refers to as 'good taste' in the original 1882 publication:

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[218] *On Morality*, p.18.

[219] While *The Gay Science* is considered among Nietzsche's middle writings, this tells us little about the maturity of thought contained therein. Keith Ansell-Pearson and Schact both argue that a tremendous amount of misunderstanding could be avoided if Nietzsche's philosophy were to be read through the lens of *The Gay Science* and point out the centrality of the work reflected by the major themes of his philosophy which all appear here for the first time, including the death of God, nihilism, the will to power and eternal recurrence, (Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche's Search For Philosophy: On The Middle Writings* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p.114). Additionally, Nietzsche himself refers to *The Gay Science* as his 'most personal work', written as it was during the time of his tumultuous affair with Lou Salomé; in light of Nietzsche's desire to be personally involved in philosophical problems, this comment might be considered, at least by his own standards, a measure of the work's maturity. Perhaps more telling is the way in which Nietzsche *treated* this 1882 work; whereas several of his earlier works received a new retrospective preface, a new forward or were slightly expanded in places, *The Gay Science* is the only work which not only received a retrospective preface but also received an entirely new additional fifth chapter and appendix in the 1887 edition. It has been pointed out that the addition of a new chapter reflects that Nietzsche felt this work was incomplete, (For example, Scott Jenkins says, 'Nietzsche must have come to regard the first edition as incomplete'. (*Cf* Scott Jenkins, 'The Gay Science', in *The Nietzschean Mind, ed. Paul Katsafanas* (London: Routledge, 2018), Routledge handbooks online <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315146317-4>). But this rather misses a more significant issue: It is unusual for a writer to be able to return to a work he had supposedly finished and published five years earlier and pick up writing where he left off as it were. The work obviously contained a set of ideas that continued to live with him and represented a world that he continued to inhabit. This interesting continuity may well suggest that *The Gay Science*, rather than being incomplete, was in another sense, one of his more complete or mature works.

> No, this *bad taste*, this will to truth, to 'truth at any price,' this youthful madness in the love of truth, have lost their charm for us [...] Today we consider it a matter of decency not to wish to see everything naked or to be present at everything, or to understand and 'know' everything.[220] (Italics Mine)

> A 'world of truth' that can be mastered completely and forever with the aid of our square little reason. What? Do we really want to permit existence to be degraded for us like this – reduced to a mere exercise for a calculator and an indoor diversion for mathematicians? Above all, one should not wish to divest existence of its rich ambiguity: that is a dictate of *good taste* […][221] (Italics Mine)

Commenting on the latter *373*, Schacht notes:

> In this passage, Nietzsche has 'mechanistic'-materialistic scientific thinking specifically in mind; but his basic point applies to natural-scientific (and natural-scientifically modeled) thinking more generally.[222]

While Schacht is not trying to draw an iron curtain between science and naturalism, he is highlighting the fact that they are not seamlessly woven together in Nietzsche's thinking. Nietzsche does not think scientific causal thinking is capable of or even appropriate for engaging much of reality, and it is this sort of inappropriate extension of science that Nietzsche ridicules in the rest of the passage from *The Gay Science*:

> Assuming that one estimated the value of a piece of music according to how much of it could be counted, calculated, and expressed in formulas: how absurd would such a 'scientific' estimation of music be! What would one have comprehended, understood, grasped of it? Nothing, really nothing of what is 'music' in it![223]

But seemingly undaunted, Leiter asserts that 'Nietzsche's mature philosophy generally proposes a *naturalistic* explanation, i.e., an explanation that is continuous with both the results and methods of the sciences'.[224] And that 'the bulk of [Nietzsche's] philosophical activity is devoted to variations in this naturalistic project'.[225] Responding to this, Schacht

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[220] *GS*, Preface for the second edition, para.4, p.38.
[221] *GS*, para.373, pp.334-36.
[222] 'Nietzsche's Naturalism', p.198.
[223] *GS*, para.373, pp.335-36. For a further sense of Nietzsche's continuity of thought in this regard compare this passage from *GS* published in 1882 with a passage from *BT* published ten years earlier: 'It has been recognized for the first time that it is an arrogant delusion to believe that we can penetrate to the innermost essence of things by following a chain of causality'. *Cf. Birth of Tragedy*, para.18, p.87.
[224] *On Morality*, p.9.
[225] *Ibid.*, p.248.

describes Leiter's description as 'a paradigmatic case of construing Nietzsche's naturalism *scientistically'*.[226] Perhaps attempts to read Nietzsche *scientistically* should not be altogether surprising given our earlier observation that Anglophonic atheism has tended to take its perspective from science. The naturalistic view of the world narrowly modeled on scientific causation is after all – at least for some atheists – sacrosanct, and the invincible 'man' of science is a sort of messianic figure who persists quite stubbornly in both popular and scholarly imagination today. It is, however, ironic that of all people, Nietzsche – who laments the philosopher's being vanquished only to 'have been *brought back* under the hegemony of science'[227] – should be made to fit the mold himself. For this reason, Schacht proposes that we do not trim Nietzsche down to fit some other definition of naturalism, but we should add him instead to the list of possible naturalisms.[228]

I will end this section with Schacht's helpful summary description of Nietzsche's naturalism which appears to me to be a more fruitful direction in which to move:

> Philosophy for Nietzsche involves attempting and proposing accounts of various sorts […] they are sometimes modeled on natural-scientific modes of explanation, but this is by no means always or even for the most part the case; and they are rarely (if ever) based explicitly on appeals to results of research of the sorts pursued in natural-scientific disciplines. These accounts are often developed imaginatively and proposed merely hypothetically; and I take their basic function to be to show the plausibility of the guiding idea that all things human can be made sense of in this-worldly developmental terms, even though they may well be problematic as they stand.[229]

2.5.6 A Question About Values

With this abridged version of the contemporary debate, I have tried to show how recent scholarship has at times read Nietzsche's naturalism *scientistically* so that it appears as though there were a seamless continuity in Nietzsche's perspective between philosophy and scientific method and results. I have tried to demonstrate that this scientism is an inadequate view of Nietzsche's naturalism and that a full exegesis will have to take account of Nietzsche's deep appreciation of science while also giving serious thought to the limitations that Nietzsche sees in scientifically modeled descriptions of reality.

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[226] 'Nietzsche's Naturalism', p.188.
[227] *BGE*, para.204, p.123.
[228] 'Nietzsche's Naturalism', p.189.
[229] 'Nietzsche's Naturalism Reconsidered', p.194.

Scientific naturalism then is not the final destination but merely one venerated site along the way, and after a brief pause it is time to return to the main path and continue our pilgrimage toward a Nietzschean vision of salvation. Retracing our steps, we recall that Nietzsche wants to save humanity from nihilism and believes that this requires humanity to be translated back into nature; there are no super-mundane origins from which humans have come and no super-mundane standard or goal to which humans must be contorted or aimed. Nietzsche believes the ascetic life – life lived in reference to these imagined origins and goals – is a decaying form of life and inasmuch as he pulls out all such metaphysical supports and expects humanity to walk unaided, Nietzsche's salvation is naturalistic. But we have also been saying that Nietzsche's naturalism is not the sort of naturalism that is consistently modelled on scientific methods or bound by the consequences of scientific results; this is because the question at the heart of Nietzsche's naturalism is a question about values.

> And one calculates *time* from the *dies nefastus* on which this fatality arose – from the *first* day of Christianity! – *Why not rather from its last? – From today?* – Revaluation of all values![230]

According to Nietzsche, humanity, like time itself, has been calculated and measured out by distinctly Christian values. But with the death of God, these values – no longer pegged to any metaphysical gold standard – are rendered worthless along with the humans rooted in them. And the significant next point is that Nietzsche has no interest in propping up these values and therefore humanity by replacing God with science. To begin with, the complex of cultural, social and historical contingencies within which humanity is situated, means that life will always transcend any 'real' and 'scientific' standards there may be. And the rush to find physiological and psychological explanations in order to establish an alternative scientific standard seems more like retro-fitting a theory to our prior commitments, like 'the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct'.[231]

Thus, humanity, caught between the nihilisms of God and the death of God, finds itself on the horns of a dilemma. And if humanity has any chance of escape, Nietzsche must first find a way to generate new values but without resorting to the ascetic instinct. How does Nietzsche hope to accomplish this?

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[230] *AC*, para.62, p.199.
[231] F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1891), p.xiv.

2.6 The Music Box and The Demon's Hourglass

Nietzsche describes 'the total character of the world' as chaos devoid of any 'arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms', but censuring these attempts to shrink the world, in a surprising next move, Nietzsche actually encloses the vast and boundless chaos by inviting us to imagine that it was contained in an endless loop without an identifiable beginning or end, placing it all inside a representational music box where 'the whole musical box repeats eternally its tune'.[232] This is the first time that 'Eternal Recurrence', somewhat unannounced and as yet unnamed, appears conceptually and if not a little mysteriously in Nietzsche's work. The second, more explicit but equally mysterious appearance occurs in *The Gay Science*, paragraph 341, this time introduced as an idea whispered by a demon who invites us to imagine our lives contained inside an hourglass that is turned eternally:

> What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence […] The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!'[233]

Nietzsche conjures these vivid images to introduce in an emblematic way what he refers to elsewhere as 'the highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable'.[234] But what does it mean?

A review of the scholarship reveals widespread dispute almost from the beginning, regarding what kind of claim Nietzsche was making. Did Nietzsche view Eternal Recurrence as an ontological reality as Kaufmann claims or was it as Bernard Williams insists an 'entirely hypothetical question, a thought experiment?'[235] Did Nietzsche let Eternal Recurrence 'take the metaphysical stage' to 'render this truth more impressive' as Safranski suggests?[236] Or was Eternal Recurrence necessary precisely because Nietzsche needed to

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[232] *GS*, para.109, p.168.
[233] *GS*, para.341. p.273.
[234] *EH*, 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None', para.1, p.295.
[235] *GS*, but the translation here is from Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Introduction, pp.vii-xxii.
[236] *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography,* p.232.

generate values without an appeal to metaphysics, as Fraser argues?[237] These questions generate other related questions specifically about how seriously Nietzsche sought scientific evidence to establish Eternal Recurrence as a cosmological claim about time. Some commentators have made the exegetical argument that Nietzsche does not offer *any* evidence – at least not in his published writings – either because as Kaufmann says Nietzsche had a 'sense that his efforts were inadequate',[238] or simply because, as Fraser claims, 'cosmological question of time is quite beside the point'.[239] Arguing in the same direction as Fraser, Clark points out that the concept of Eternal Recurrence is often couched in language that can easily be interpreted metaphorically, such as Nietzsche's language about 'music boxes', 'demons', and 'hourglasses', and therefore it should not be taken as a literal cosmological claim.[240]

2.6.1 Loeb's Cosmological Reading

As far as exegetical arguments go, however, Loeb thinks this is an 'odd gloss', especially considering Nietzsche's own observations about the metaphorical nature of all language.[241] Loeb also notes that most scholarly discussion about eternal recurrence tends to circle tightly around the passages 109 and 341 in *The Gay Science*. The problem with using these passages this way is that Nietzsche only intended these short passages as an 'advertisement' of sorts for his magnum opus *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* which Loeb argues is Nietzsche's primary text on Eternal Recurrence and quite deliberately shaped around the theme. Loeb contends that if scholars were to make a 'careful study of Zarathustra and its literary aspects', they would discover that the themes of 'music', 'demons' and 'hourglasses' are picked up again but with an expanded emphasis on the cosmological dimension. Moreover, they would find that not only does Nietzsche make cosmological claims but he also offers 'mnemonic evidence' and 'cosmological proof'.[242] If Loeb is right in this regard, then his cosmological reading becomes still more plausible when we broaden out the interpretive context to include not just a broader canon of Nietzschean texts but also the cultural context in which Nietzsche was writing.[243] For example, Robin Small situates

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[237] *Redeeming Nietzsche*, p.115.
[238] *PPA*, p.327.
[239] *Redeeming Nietzsche*, p.109.
[240] *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, p.254.
[241] 'Eternal Recurrence,' p.656.
[242] *Ibid*., p.647.
[243] It is also worth noting the biographical details supplied by several friends of Nietzsche who describe Nietzsche's change in tone and demeanor when passing by the pyramidal stone where he discovered the idea of eternal recurrence. See, for example, *FNPB*, pp.318, 389.

Nietzsche in his own historical moment, that is, in the second half of the nineteenth century during which 'cosmology was on the agenda for both natural science and philosophy'.[244] And so, Loeb contends that Nietzsche's cosmological claims were allied with the 'best contemporaneous science'.[245]

As fascinating as a detailed exposition of these claims would be, I am only trying to acknowledge the debate here and in which direction scholarship has tended to lean, hinting where I can at the kinds of arguments being advanced and perhaps expanding on one or two.

It appears that the majority of Nietzschean scholars dismiss the cosmological claim – whether on the basis of logic,[246] evidence or exegesis – and have tried instead to emphasize the existential force of Eternal Recurrence. That is to say, on hearing the demon's words, we are supposed to apply the question to ourselves: Could I affirm the totality of my life by being willing to relive every moment of it for eternity? However, a further problem is raised when we frame Eternal Recurrence as a sort of test or thought experiment designed to elicit a certain existential response. Because as we shall see, it is in the moment when we try to feel the *existential* force of this question that the force of the *cosmological* argument can also be felt. It is true that the cosmological reading is not a well-worn path by Nietzschean scholars, but I find the case Loeb makes for it compelling. We have already noted what he thinks should be happening exegetically and I shall try to summarise a further part of his argument here.

First of all, Loeb wonders what kind of existential force this question really has if it is not supported by cosmology? Nietzsche introduces Eternal Recurrence in *The Gay Science* section 341 with the title 'The Greatest Weight', but how are we meant to feel the weight of an idea that does not even carry the weight of a hypothetical 'supposing if' – because we have already evaluated and dismissed the possibility as absurd, outlandish and unscientific? As a weightless concept, could not we just as easily talk about *affirming life as it is from here on out* without the aid of Nietzsche's pseudo discovery? But, unaware of having emptied Eternal Recurrence of any existential force it might have otherwise had, some imagine that it was an existential crisis that led Nietzsche to make his 'discovery' in the first place. For example, according to Aaron Ridley, it is because Nietzsche was unable to embrace his own mortality that he invented Eternal Recurrence as a way of escaping death. Ridley then

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[244] Robin Small, 'Nietzsche and Cosmology', *A Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. Keith Ansell Pearson (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), pp.189-207 (p.191).
[245] 'Eternal Recurrence,' pp.661-62.
[246] Loeb addresses these objections: Paul S. Loeb, 'Identity and Eternal Recurrence', in *A Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. Keith Ansell Pearson (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), pp.171-88 (p.172).

invokes Nietzsche's concept of '*Amor Fati*' against Nietzsche himself, charging him with inconsistency. But the problem for this reading, as Loeb points out, is that *Amor Fati* has nothing to do with death but it is about embracing the fate of the same life lived for eternity. It was not the extinguishing of his life but the eternal return of his own life that Nietzsche shrank from. Nietzsche does not need to be caught out here; he freely admits that he failed to love his own fate and therefore failed at his own test. Loeb then turns the tables on interpreters like Ridley and Magnus and indeed Heidegger, by suggesting that it is a similar 'recurrence phobia' that drives their outright rejection of Eternal Recurrence. And furthermore, their aversion is reinforced by deeply held doctrinal commitments that atheists tend to have concerning the finality of death, informed of course by a naturalism continuous with the methods and results of science. Eternal Recurrence is deemed too unorthodox.

While the decision over Nietzsche's cosmological claim seems to determine the existential *efficacy* of eternal recurrence, it does not entirely change its intended overarching purpose; after all, with or without a cosmological underpinning, we can still consider the soteriological aims Nietzsche had in mind. In other words, Loeb's cosmological reading is not incompatible with Fraser's soteriological reading, and a combination of the two might provide a considerably more comprehensive understanding than if either were taken alone. With this in mind, we shall now consider a couple of Fraser's more striking observations about Eternal Recurrence.

2.6.2 Fraser's Soteriological Reading

Fraser starts with a consideration of Nietzsche's account of the self. This is a helpful place to start because regardless of whether or not Nietzsche really believed that the knots of causation would actually produce the same self eternally in a single occurrence or eternal recurrences of the same reality, the soul superstition, Nietzsche says, is the oldest superstition. Nietzsche is not imagining (if he was imagining) the transmigration of souls from one life to another. Without God, the soul or unified subject ceases to exist, the 'I' is a grammatical mistake. This is important because as Fraser notes, differing accounts of the self bring about differing accounts of what salvation consists of.[247] In Nietzsche's account of the self – whether in a single occurrence or eternal recurrences – identity does not reside in

[247] *Redeeming Nietzsche*, p.106.

something permanent shielded from the 'gratuity of change'.[248] Milan Kundera refers to this dispossession as 'the unbearable lightness of being'[249]:

> I am not myself because I possess some soul or spirit that abides over time, but rather I am what I have become, what I have come to be. And this coming-to-be is the central characteristic of who I am.[250]

Fraser then lucidly draws out the implications of the dislocated self for the soteriological task:

> Given that the 'subject' of redemption is inseparable from that person's past, in order that one be redeemed, redemption must, somehow, extend retrospectively to cover all that one has been – for what one has been constitutes what one is (again we see evidence of Nietzsche's desire to develop an alternative functional equivalent to Christian forgiveness).[251]

Therefore:

> What is required by Nietzsche is some way of generating gravity, of introducing judgment, without returning to divine judgment or divine weight. This is the purpose of the eternal recurrence. The thought of eternal recurrence sets out to become a moral centrifuge, a way for the self to generate its own gravity.[252]

This is the answer to our earlier question: how can Nietzsche generate values for humanity without resorting to the ascetic instinct? With the discovery of Eternal Recurrence, Nietzsche had found a way.

2.7 Übermensch

I find George Grant's restatement of the problem helpful:

> Therefore the question for our species is: can we reach a new height that takes into itself not only the ecstasy of a noble encounter with chaos, but also the results of the long history of rationalism? Neither

[248] *Ibid.*, p.127.
[249] Milan Kundura, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, trans. by Michael Henry Heim (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).
[250] *Redeeming Nietzsche*, p.108.
[251] *Ibid.*
[252] *Ibid*. p.115.

> the nihilists nor the last men deserve to be masters of the earth. […] The question is whether there can be men who transcend the alternatives of being nihilists or last men; who know that they are the creators of their own values, but bring forth from that creation in the face of chaos a joy in their willing that will make them deserving of being masters of the earth.[253]

Grant acknowledges the genuine crisis this represents for Nietzsche as there is nothing inevitable about its outcome. Salvation for Nietzsche is undecided because it depends on the emergence of an as yet elusive kind of person with the ability to rise above both the despair of the nihilist and the contentment of the last man. The *nihilist* is the atheist who despairs because he cannot conceive of values beyond and higher than the life-negating values, for which God had been the necessary condition. *The last man* is the unsuspecting atheist who though believing to have rid himself of God nevertheless buffers himself against the nihilism that God's death brings by clinging to the remnants of a Judeo-Christian rationalism 'in its last and decadent form'.[254] (Last and decadent because without God, such rationalism lacks any serious justification and is simply a utility for achieving trivial happiness.)[255]

It is against both types of atheists that Nietzsche says, 'I love the great despisers because they are the great reverers and arrows of longing for the other shore'.[256] Psychologically shielded from the void, Nietzsche says that the last man cannot despise himself and yet 'what is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an *overture* and a *going under*'.[257] The ability to even conceive of another shore let alone long for one depends once again on the perception of oneself as a prelude; or as a bridge or as an overture; or an arrow still in flight which has not yet hit its mark; or 'a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way'.[258] Nietzsche asks, 'And if you do not want to be destinies and inexorable ones, how can you triumph with me?'[259]

Those who want to be a destiny must welcome the eternal return of all things with glee. This is why Nietzsche says Eternal Recurrence is the 'greatest affirmation of life,' because 'how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?'[260]

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[253] George Grant, *Time as History*, ed. William Christian (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p.47.
[254] *Ibid*., p.45.
[255] *Ibid*.
[256] *Z,* First Part, 'Zarathustra's Prologue', para.4, p.127.
[257] *Ibid.*
[258] *Ibid.*, p.126.
[259] *Z,* Third Part, 'On Old and New Tablets', para.29, p.326.
[260] *GS*, para.341, pp.273-274.

Those who love their fate this way are the great individuals who will transcend the two different types of atheists, the hopeless nihilist and the oblivious last man – and become the Übermensch, the individual who transcends the herd along with all their values and all talk of good and evil.[261]

2.7.1 The Individual vs The Mob

We will end this chapter as we began chapter one, returning once more to the parable of the madman. We noted earlier that the parable is comprised of numerous metaphorical chasms that allow us to follow the line of Nietzsche's pointing finger to see the other metaphorical chasm that has opened up between himself and other atheists. This chasm is – at least from Nietzsche's perspective – comparable to the vast distance between night and day, between kings and usurpers, between sanity and insanity, etc.

However, the parable not only contains, but finds its own structure around one more chasm which I deliberately excluded from my earlier inventory as it holds a specific meaning within Nietzsche's own atheism, one that could only be viewed and appreciated from the vantage point we have gained with the rest of this chapter.

It can hardly go unnoticed that the madman stands alone, an individual apart from the crowd or better still, an individual over and against the crowd. The parable begins with the individual and the crowd standing in the same town square, but as the parable unfolds the distance between them expands until by the end of the parable they find themselves separated from each other by light years. And the sharp end of Nietzsche's point here is that in the crowd are many atheists. On a Nietzschean register then, we are not simply observing an argument between opposing viewpoints over a contentious issue, but in this conflict between Nietzsche and the atheists, a more compelling drama unfolds in which one type of *humanity* supersedes another. As Kaufmann puts it, 'Nietzsche's doctrine is dangerous insofar as he affirms that the difference between man and man is more significant than that between man and animal'.[262]

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[261] This would seem to be the appropriate place for a consideration of Nietzsche's concept of the will to power; therefore, some readers may be surprised that I am rounding off this discussion about Nietzsche's atheism without first addressing this issue. However, for reasons strategic to my overall thesis, which will become clearer as we proceed, I am going to wait until chapter four to consider this well known – not to mention controversial – area of Nietzsche's philosophy.

[262] *PPA,* p.176.

It is the priority of this distinction in Nietzsche's atheism that allows him to express with all sincerity, his deepest admiration for theists like Dostoevsky, Pascal and Jesus, on the one hand, and yet on the other find himself entirely at odds with atheists who vehemently deny God's existence.

For example, in various letters, Nietzsche lavishes praise on Dostoevsky while at the same time acknowledging his own profound disagreement with him: 'I prize his [Dostoevski's] work, on the other hand, as the most valuable psychological material known to me – I am grateful for him in a remarkable way, however much he goes against my deepest instincts'.[263] (As we noted earlier, Nietzsche is an 'atheist by instinct'.) And again, 'any Russian book – above all, Dostoevski (translated into French for heavens's sake not German!!) – I count among my greatest moments of pleasurable relief'.[264] And on yet another occasion, he declares Dostoevsky's work 'a stroke of psychological genius'.[265] He classes Pascal among 'the strongest and noblest souls'.[266] And concerning Christ, he says he was 'the noblest human being'[267] and Nietzsche was convinced that Jesus was one of the great spirits and that had Jesus lived long enough he would have come around to seeing things his way.[268]

Such accolades as they may be, they are entirely consistent with Nietzsche's atheism that does not reach for mere agreement on the status of God's non-existence but having killed God seeks to vanquish God's shadow. And the enormity of this task is that God's shadow will only be vanquished when one type of humanity is vanquished by another. Thus, Nietzsche's high praise for certain theists is not straightforwardly attributed to a fair-minded ability to see merit in his opponent's position, but rather poised as he is to vanquish their ideas, he nevertheless recognises a greatness and nobility in his opponents themselves. '"At least be my enemy! – thus speaks true reverence, which does not dare ask for friendship'.[269] In those moments, Nietzsche exemplifies the 'proud natures':

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[263] *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche,* ed. and trans. Christopher Middleton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1969), p.327.
[264] *Selected Letters,* p.317.
[265] *Ibid*, p.261.
[266] *WP*, para. 252. pp.145-46.
[267] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* [1878 and 1879-1880], trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Section 8, 'A Glance at the State', para.475, p.175. 'Edelsten' is correctly translated as 'noblest'. However, in his 1909 translation, Paul V. Cohn either ignores or is unaware of the central role that the concept of nobility as a *social class* plays in Nietzsche's work as a whole and the manner in which he was evoking social class in the context of the immediate discussion in para.475 concerning the social standing of Jews in Europe. Taking 'noble' instead to refer to an *admirable personal quality*, Cohn projects the personal quality he admires most onto Jesus and translates 'edelsten' as 'most loving', rendering it 'the most loving of men (Christ)'. This is an interesting moment in which Cohn's translation of 'Nietzsche' becomes an example of how the long shadow cast by the Christian God stretches out, as we shall see, across much of Nietzsche's reception.
[268] *Z*, First Part, para.'On Free Death', p.185.
[269] *Z*, First Part, para.'On The Friend', p.168.

> But they are doubly obliging toward their *peers* whom it would be honorable to fight if the occasion should ever arise. Spurred by the good feeling of *this* perspective, the members of the knightly caste became accustomed to treating each other with exquisite courtesy.[270]

That Nietzsche affords no such courtesy to the majority of atheists – in his day or ours – is not simply because they are on the wrong side of an argument but because they are on the wrong side of the abyss that separates one species from another. Nietzsche says: 'And so as to leave no doubt as to *what* I despise, *whom* I despise: it is the man of today, the man with whom I am fatefully contemporary'.[271] He goes on to describe the universal unbelief of his generation – a generation which '*knows* [...] it is indecent to be a Christian' and which '*must* know' that theologians and priests are liars ('everyone knows this').[272] Nietzsche despises his contemporaries because they are the 'last humans'; members of a 'decaying race', and like apes are to humans, these last humans are 'a laughing stock or a painful embarrassment' to the higher ascending types, to the *Übermensch*.[273]

It is remarkable then, that Nietzsche frequently emerges in the arena of popular culture as a champion of atheists.[274] Furthermore, having been crowned 'king of the idiots' by the very 'idiots' he despised, Nietzsche has been allowed to suffer this indignity without any serious protest on his behalf that one might have expected from over a century of Nietzschean scholarship. Nietzsche has been appropriated by the most unlikely candidates; is it unreasonable to expect numerous attempts at rapprochement or concerted efforts to rescue Nietzsche from the 'last men'? Enough at least to have worked its way to a popular audience? To underline the point I made in the opening of this chapter, while some scholars have seen the possibility of interpreting Nietzsche's atheism with reference to this conflict as one of the themes of his work, it has been treated rather peripherally and with little attentiveness to the connections between this conflict and the gap between Nietzsche's atheism and its popular reception.

On the rare occasion when the conflict emerges in popular presentations of Nietzsche, it is rather a matter of the exception proving the rule. We will close here with one such example.

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[270] *GS*, Book One, para.13, p.87.
[271] *AC*, para.38, p.161-162.
[272] *Ibid*.
[273] *Z*, 'Zarathustra's Prologue', para.3, p.124.
[274] Anecdotally speaking, I am yet to meet a non specialist who is not perplexed by the idea of 'Nietzsche contra the atheists', and whose initial response is almost always something along the lines of, 'But I thought Nietzsche was an atheist'.

Kathleen Higgins has collaborated with Robert Solomon on a popular presentation of Nietzsche titled *What Nietzsche Really Said*. Their example is particularly instructive as Solomon and Higgins are not the variety of analytic scholars with a declared aversion to Nietzschean rhetoric; they do not feel compelled to translate Nietzsche into a language other than his own. In fact, in a very helpful chapter on reading Nietzsche, the authors warn that 'Nietzsche's ideas cannot be distilled from the brilliant prose in which he expressed them without great loss'.[275] They explain: 'The difficulty of Nietzsche's works is not due to murky writing. His statements are highly polished, exemplars of exactitude and nuance'.[276] Additionally, they recognise that his style not only discloses 'content, but the whole experience of thought', and they point out that this is why Nietzsche likens his writing to music, because he wants his readers to experience along with him.[277] It is because Solomon and Higgins share this appreciation for Nietzsche's writing style and want their readers to 'experience' Nietzsche, that their approach is worth remarking on.

> Finally, Nietzsche's background makes sense of his conviction that the loss of faith in God is a calamitous cultural crisis. […] He experienced the loss of faith as a personal trauma. He was shocked that others seemed to throw off their religious backgrounds so casually, and he eventually concluded that many of his contemporaries had not really shed their religion but continued their old habits in disguised forms. Because he was convinced that the Christian worldview had harmful psychological effects, he endeavored to show how such damage continued to affect his contemporaries who maintained the habits of the old worldview, even though they no longer endorsed it.[278]

In this passage, Solomon and Higgins point to the conflict between Nietzsche and the atheists but immediately diminish the significance of the conflict by chalking it up to Nietzsche's upbringing. The reader can then think to themselves, "Well of course Nietzsche experienced the death of God as a traumatic event, but lucky for me I didn't grow up in a cloistered Lutheran village, so there is no need for all the melodrama". But not satisfied with this sort of psychological trivialisation and yet determined to shelter readers from an actual *experience* of Nietzsche's atheism, the authors re-describe the nature of the conflict from Nietzsche's perspective. Using their own vocabulary of 'exactitude and nuance', the sensitive Lutheran conscience of their rather prissy Nietzsche is 'shocked' by the casual atheism he observes. And Solomon and Higgins portray Nietzsche as a concerned fellow atheist invested

[275] *NRS*, pp.52-54.
[276] *Ibid*.
[277] *Ibid*.
[278] *NRS*, p.86.

in the psychological wellbeing of other atheists. Portrayed this way, it is easy to read about but never grasp, the size of the chasm between the individual and the crowd in Nietzsche's thinking. The reader would hardly suspect the ominous nature of Nietzsche's intent or the dimensions of Nietzsche's project which aims at nothing less than breaking the history of humanity in two.[279]

But Nietzsche is not simply shocked or concerned but contemptuous, and on occasion he expresses his contempt overtly. Of course, by now we can imagine the various hermeneutical maneuvers that one might enlist to explain why readers should not take those passages too seriously. Perhaps because they are only the product of Nietzsche's polemical and colourful style. Perhaps because we should be reading them ironically. Perhaps they were meant for a particular pedagogical effect. Or perhaps Nietzsche does not exhibit such moments in his mature works. Of course, if worse comes to worst, we might just say that Nietzsche is being outlandish and silly. But these passages are not so easily dismissed because they are encompassed by the rest of Nietzsche's atheistic endeavor that gains a certain clarity and definition when understood as an exposition of his contempt for atheists everywhere. This contempt that has been neglected, ignored, maybe even *repressed.* But Nietzsche's contempt for atheists – in his day and ours – is always simmering just beneath the surface and at times boils over, finding scornful and condescending expression:

> And how much naiveté – adorable, childlike, and boundlessly foolish naiveté is involved in the belief of the scholar, in his superiority, in the good conscience of his tolerance, in the unsuspecting, simple certainty with which his instinct treats the religious man as a lower and less valuable type, beyond, before and above which he himself has developed – he, the little arrogant dwarf and mob man.[280]

2.8 Conclusion

Parables, preludes, prefaces, prologues, myth and biography, are elements of literary form and style which Nietzsche employs not only to point toward but in some sense enact

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[279] *EH*, 'Why I Am a Destiny', para.8. p.333.

[280] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Helen Zimmern, para.58, p.54. Kaufmann translates 'verehrungswürdige' as 'venerable'. However, here, 'verehrungswürdige' is immediately followed by 'kindliche', that is, 'childlike'. Given that Nietzsche is deliberately mimicking the patronising condescension of the scholar toward the religious person, in order to turn that condescension back upon the scholar, I think Zimmern's rendering of 'verehrungswürdige' as 'adorable', paired with 'childlike', accomplishes Nietzsche's intent more clearly in English.

various features of his philosophy. For instance, Nietzsche uses the parabolic form to bring his readers up to the edge of a chasm that Nietzsche believes exists between himself and other atheists. The death of God is old news, but from Nietzsche's perspective, no one seems to understand what it means. While most atheists treat the question of God's existence as a matter of simple subtraction of a supernatural unit of one from the universe, Nietzsche understands God's death as an apocalyptic event, the end of the world as we know it.

Peering into the chasm of understanding that lies between Nietzsche and the atheists, we noticed that Nietzsche's atheism does not find its shape around a series of compelling arguments against God's existence. This was a strategic move on Nietzsche's part that ensured his atheism did not rise and fall on the crest of fashionable arguments. Nietzsche wanted to safeguard his legacy for the generation of people, who upon realising that without God they are no longer able to attain their highest values, will be plunged into a valueless existence and fall into nihilistic despair. Outpacing his descendants and arriving to meet them in their future, Nietzsche has already cast aside the idea that new values can simply be founded upon science. Nietzsche is a naturalist, but when naturalism is construed scientistically, he perceives another expression of the ascetic instinct seeking metaphysical shelter. Only those who are able to embrace the eternal return of their own lives and affirm life as some sort of Apollonian work of art in the face of Dionysian tragedy, only they will be able to found new values. But these are higher types who Nietzsche envisions would share his view of the 'village' atheists as embarrassing members of the herd.

Chapter Three

Nietzsche the Nationalist and Social Darwinist (1895-1913)

Kindred conciliation has been, and is, taking place between the interests of each citizen and the interests of citizens at large; tending ever towards a state in which the two become merged in one.[281]

Herbert Spencer

The proclamation of social elimination must therefore be one of the supreme features of every ethics which elevates as its ideal the goal that the theory of evolution has demonstrated.[282]

Alexander Tille

Christian presuppositions and interpretations still live on under the formulas 'nature,' 'progress,' 'perfectibility,' 'Darwinism'.[283]

Nietzsche

3.0 A Familiar Scene

The demise of a philosopher is not something that usually captures popular imagination. Most philosophers go quietly to their deaths drawing nominal scholarly interest and attracting little public attention. But Nietzsche's final break with reality in a town square in Turin has been narrated so often and so vividly, perhaps only Socrates's hemlock is now as famous amongst philosophical deaths as Nietzsche's madness.

Sketching the scene of his final collapse on 3 January 1889, we see Nietzsche leave his apartment and walk into the Piazza Carlo Alberto where he sees a driver beating a horse. Nietzsche runs into the square and, jumping into their midst, he throws himself around the horse's neck in a tearful and compassionate attempt to protect the animal. And here we might

[281] Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Ethics*, vol. 1 [1897], introduction by Tibor R. Machon (Indianapolis: LibertyClassics, 1978). Liberty Fund ebook, p.157.
[282] Alexander Tille, *Von Darwin bis Nietzsche: Ein Buch Entwicklungsethik* (Leipzig: Naumann, 1895), p.214.
[283] *WP,* para.243, pp.139-140.

say he ‘fell silent’ and looked at the crowd that had gathered to watch the commotion; and they, too, ‘were silent and stared at him in astonishment’. At last, Nietzsche ‘threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out’.[284]

This is a familiar scene, not simply because of the frequency with which the story has been told but rather because Nietzsche has been here before, in what is now the emblematic setting in the parable of the madman. The previous two chapters told the tale of Nietzsche’s atheism, starting in the parable’s market square where Nietzsche predicts that his own atheism will not be understood by other atheists. And it is here once again that we must begin narrating the *popular reception* of Nietzsche’s atheism in the English-speaking world. This is not only an aesthetic choice, although it has a poetic quality, and it is not merely evidence of my methodological commitments, which I obviously have, but it is rather as I have been arguing all along, a matter of intellectual history. And as I hope to make plain in the present chapter, this history supplies ample evidence of Nietzsche’s predictive powers by repeatedly locating Nietzsche on the far side of a vast and growing chasm between himself and other atheists.

Take, for instance, the atheist Max Nordau’s *Degeneration,* first published in 1892 and translated into English in 1895. With seven new impressions in the first year of translation and a new edition released in 1898, it proved to be an immensely popular book in which Nordau dedicates an entire chapter to Nietzsche. This was the first Nietzschean commentary to be made available in English and in which Nietzsche was introduced in the following manner:

> From the first page to the last page of Nietzsche’s writings the careful reader seems to hear a madman, with flashing eyes, wild gestures, and foaming mouth, spouting forth deafening bombast; and through it all, now breaking into frenzied laughter, now sputtering expressions of filthy abuse and invective, now skipping about in a giddily agile dance, and now bursting upon the auditors with threatening mien and clenched fists.[285]

With this introduction, it is as though Nordau turned over the eternal hourglass of Nietzsche’s own existence. No sooner has Nietzsche’s sad departing figure disappeared from one end of the square than he reappears at the other, making his Anglophonic debut as he reprises his role as the madman once again. For Nordau, Nietzsche was not just a writer who

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[284] *GS*, para.125, p.182.
[285] Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, trans. from the second edn of 1895, popular edn. (London: William Heinemann, 1898).

went mad but rather a madman who wrote and Nietzsche's writings were evidence of his madness. Nordau, then, not only provided the first commentary translated into English but more significantly fulfilled Nietzsche's prediction that his own reception would be in the frame of this sort of unflattering portrait. This striking image of Nietzsche as madman has impressed itself upon the popular Anglo-imagination in such a way that as R. J. Hollingdale remarks anecdotally: '"most people," I was told recently, "regard Nietzsche as a very intelligent nutter." I don't doubt that this is true. I also don't doubt that "most people" have never read a line he wrote'.[286] This is undoubtedly true, forewarned perhaps in the manner that P. G. Wodehouse's much beloved character Jeeves forewarns Wooster with his usual sagacity: 'You would not enjoy Nietzsche sir, he is fundamentally unsound'.[287]

We will consider Nordau as a painter and progenitor of this persistent image in more detail below, but he was by no means alone, for in the crowd of English-speaking playwrights, poets, novelists, journalists, biographers and commentators, there were many atheists, who in the final analysis, found themselves at odds with Nietzsche's atheism. It is to this reception we now turn.

3.1 What Sort of History?

If we take a moment to browse the library of Nietzschean scholarship, we will discover that several versions of Nietzsche's reception history have already been written. Therefore, before proceeding with our own account of Nietzsche's reception, a brief perusal of these earlier entries might help us determine what sort of history we want to write here.

Around the library are various stacks of full-length works that ambitiously try to span the breadth of Nietzsche's life and philosophy; Arthur Danto, R. J. Hollingdale, Walter Kaufmann, Rudiger Safranski, Richard Schacht and Julian Young are amongst those intrepid authors who have all attempted such a feat with varying results,[288] not to mention Martin Heidegger and to some extent Gilles Deleuze whose interactions with Nietzsche have become

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[286] R. J. Hollingdale, 'The Hero as Outsider', in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, pp.71-88.
[287] P. G. Wodehouse, 'Jeeves Takes Charge', in *Selected Stories by P. G. Wodehouse* [1916] (New York: Modern Library, 1958), p.27.
[288] Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*; Arthur Danto, *NAP*; Eugene Fink, *Nietzsche's Philosophy* [1960], trans. Goetz Richter (London: Continuum, 2003); R. J. Hollingdale, *MHP;* Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, trans. C. F. Wallraff and F. J. Schmitz (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997); Walter Kaufmann, *PPA*; Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same* [1935], trans. J. Harvey Lomax (London: University of California Press, 1997); H. L. Mencken, *Friedrich Nietzsche* [1908] (London: Transaction Publishers, 1993); Rudiger Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography;* Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche;* Julian Young, *FNPB*.

philosophical events in themselves. By contrast, there are disproportionately few volumes on the relatively empty shelf of Nietzsche's English reception that attempt to span the historical breadth of his reception from 1895 to the present. Apart from the rare exception – like Ratner-Rosenhagen's meticulously detailed chronological history *American Nietzsche*[289] – most historical surveys have understandably limited the scope of their study not only to one particular place but a particular time, such as David Thatcher's equally detailed study on *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914.*[290] Others have narrowed the focus of their study further still by examining Nietzsche's influence upon a particular novelist, playwright or poet such as Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, George Bernard Shaw, and W.B. Yeats, to name but a few.[291] Yet attempts to measure the influence of one author upon another is fraught with difficulties. As Thatcher explains: to begin with, it is difficult to measure the scope and kind of influence one thinker has had upon another. And perhaps it is even harder at times to discern whether a vague resemblance is a result of a direct influence or simply a common source. Additionally, it is easy to miss the fact that hostility can mask 'a secret affinity'.[292]

3.1.1 Reputation, Legend and Icon

For these reasons, Thatcher opts instead to investigate Nietzsche's *reputation.* Reputation might be a helpful category in which to start thinking about popular engagement with Nietzsche's atheism, as is the term *legend* used by Hollingdale who gets at the problem of popular reception like this: 'They have encountered the legend, which is part of the cultural air we breathe and have formed an opinion on that, in the illusion they were forming an opinion of the man and his philosophy'.[293] Alongside Thatcher's *reputation* and Hollingdale's *legend*, I would like to add *icon* where icon is understood as a shorthand evoking the conventions of a larger narrative world. My purpose in collecting these terms here – without making sharp distinctions – is to raise some initial, broad questions which

[289] Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche: A History of An Icon and His Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
[290] David S. Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).
[291] See, for example, Otto Bohlmann, *Yeats And Nietzsche: An Exploration of Major Nietzschean Echoes in the Writings of William Butler Yeats* (London: Macmillan Press, 1982); *Joseph Conrad: The Later Moralist* (New York: Rodopi, 1974); Eugene Williamson, 'Thomas Hardy and Friedrich Nietzsche: The Reasons', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 15 (1978), 403-13; 'The "Breeding of Humanity": Nietzsche and Shaw's *Man and Superman*', *Shaw*, 39 (2019), 183-203.
[292] *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914,* p.13.
[293] '*The Hero as Outsider'*, p.88.

might help to angle us toward the study of popular reception, such as: how was Nietzsche's reputation made? How did he pass into legend? And what made Nietzsche so iconic?

Thatcher attempts to trace 'the growth of Nietzsche's reputation' by investigating the 'literary taste and hence the shaping of an audience', looking for 'a significant pattern in the way Nietzsche affected English literary and social conscience'.[294] However, if what we are after is Nietzsche's reputation at a popular level, then perhaps what Thatcher means by reputation is still a little 'highbrow'. Quite aside from the fact that some of the authors he considers barely had a popular reception themselves, I wonder if Thatcher's approach – at least for our purposes – would be akin to looking through the wrong end of a telescope. What I mean is this: how Nietzsche 'affected English literary and social conscience' provides one lens through which to view the making of Nietzsche's reputation, but we may see more if we turned the question around and asked how the 'English speaking literary and social conscience' – already in motion and with a life of its own – affected and formed Nietzsche's legendary and iconic reputation.

But this raises another type of problem. We have noted the various ways that other histories have found focus by examining Nietzsche's reception in a particular place and time or measuring his influence on a particular author, but if the study of Nietzsche's popular reception resists these limits by forcing us instead to look beyond his mediators toward the imagination of his audience, we may wonder if the terms *reputation, legend* and *icon* do not in fact open up an impossibly vast constellation of meanings for which it will be impossible to give an account. To describe the interpretive situation in Nietzsche's own terms: 'Is meaning not necessarily relative meaning and perspective?'[295] In this way, Nietzsche claims, nothing is defined until everyone has defined it for themselves.[296] Theoretically then, there could be as many meanings attached to Nietzsche's icon as there are people who have gazed upon it. Given the hermeneutical situation, and if we are not going to narrow the scope of our study by focusing on a single country, era or author, then it may seem as though we are embarking on an unwieldy and interminable task. How can we bring focus?

I want to start by asking what Nietzsche would think of his own popular reception and if Nietzsche himself does not offer a framework for assessing that reception. Of course, someone may respond to this by asking, 'Why should we take Nietzsche's views as guidance on the matter of his own reception?' My answer is simply that I am not only interested in

[294] *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914*, p.16.
[295] *WP*, para.590, p.323.
[296] *WP*, para.556, p.301.

noting the various ways Nietzsche has been received by a popular audience but I am attempting what I will argue is a Nietzschean evaluation of his own reception. I want to measure the distance that lies between Nietzsche and his audience, and then having measured that distance, I want to explain why that distance exists in the first place. To this end, I am convinced that Nietzsche provides the apparatus to do both and that this apparatus will very quickly bring focus to our study.

3.1.2 The Crowd, the Mob, the Rabble, the Herd

In the previous chapter, we examined the parable of the madman in which the madman is not understood by his audience. Any lingering doubts about Nietzsche's self-identification with the misunderstood madman can be momentarily set aside – if not resolved – by Nietzsche himself in his autobiographical work *Ecce Homo* where, speaking of his audience's inability to understand his books, he echoes the madman's refrain:

> Let me touch on the question of their being understood or *not* understood. I'll do it as casually as decency permits; for the time for this question certainly hasn't come yet. The time for me hasn't come yet: some are born posthumously […] it would contradict my character entirely if I expected ears and hands for my truths today: that today one doesn't hear me and doesn't accept my ideas is not only understandable, it even seems right to me.[297]

So, Nietzsche frames his reception in terms of misunderstanding. But this is of limited help when faced with the kaleidoscope of meaning he may hold for a popular audience; after all, Nietzsche could have been misunderstood in countless ways. But key to our reading of the parable in chapter one was that the madman is not misunderstood by an *individual* but by a *crowd.*

By placing his interpreters in a 'crowd', imagining his audience as 'mob men', his readers as 'members of the herd,' the possibility of infinite polyvalence is quickly closed. Nietzsche believed that for the vast majority of people, 'high and independent spirituality, the will to stand alone, even a powerful reason are experienced as dangers; everything that elevates an individual above the herd and intimidates the neighbor is henceforth called

[297] *EH*, 'Why I Write Such Good Books', para.1, p.259.

evil'.[298] And again, 'there are few individuals, and these are opposed by herd instincts and conscience'.[299]

If we apply Nietzsche's doctrine of the herd to his own reception, as Nietzsche himself does then what we should discover is that a person's thought about Nietzsche's atheism also belongs 'to his social or herd nature [...] insofar as this is required by social or herd utility'.[300] Nietzsche goes on to say:

> Consequently, given the best will in the world to understand ourselves as individually as possible, 'to know ourselves,' each of us will always succeed in becoming conscious only of what is not individual but 'average.' Our thoughts themselves are continually [...] translated back into the perspective of the herd.[301]

Under Nietzschean categories then, the growth of Nietzsche's legend and reputation, or the use of Nietzsche as icon at a popular level does not disclose the consciousness of an individual but rather the shared thoughts and conventions of the crowd to which the individual belongs. If Nietzsche is right, then the range of meaning his atheism has at a popular level will be constrained after all, but not by the 'facts' of Nietzsche's philosophy – as we might at first be tempted to think – but rather by the conventions of the herd that create the Nietzsche legend and make his reputation.

An analysis of popular reception then means an analysis of that herd instinct, and to recognise the way a person uses Nietzsche's icon and evaluates his work is to recognise 'expressions of the needs of a community and herd'.[302] Nietzsche predicts, therefore, that an analysis of the popular reception of his own atheism will be an examination of *the needs of the herd.*

3.1.3 The Death of God

Thus, Nietzsche not only predicts that his reception will be marked by misunderstanding but that this misunderstanding will be determined by the needs of the herd. But how have those needs been shaped?

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[298] *BGE*, para.201, pp.113-114.
[299] *GS,* para.149, p.196.
[300] *GS*, para.354, p.299.
[301] *Ibid*.
[302] *GS*, para.116, p.174.

Nietzsche comes to the aid of the aspiring writer of intellectual history once more as he points out that the needs of the herd have been shaped in a very particular way, finding their ultimate expression in an ascetic and more specifically theistic vision of life. And it makes little difference to Nietzsche if someone in the crowd denies this charge on the grounds that he or she is in fact an atheist, because as we argued in chapters one and two, when reinterpreted through Nietzsche's far more expansive atheism, the would-be atheist is exposed as one of Nietzsche's 'last men', a secularised Christian of sorts who has not yet comprehended the meaning of the death of God. Moreover, Nietzsche anticipates precisely this sort of protest from the village mob still operating under the '*one* great curse',[303] whose folk atheism allows them to superstitiously cling to an assortment of metaphysical commitments while pretending not to do so.

Consequently, even though Nietzsche's reception history has been written before, a new and certainly clearer picture of Nietzsche's reception history can be had by simply taking seriously the challenge Nietzsche issues in his parable: do we think the madman actually mad or do we think he possesses a clear-eyed sanity? I am trying to underline the argument once more that this interpretive approach to Nietzsche's reception history at least has the advantage of being authorised by Nietzsche himself, who places the death of God at the centre of his work as 'the greatest single event' around which the rest of his work revolves.

Comprehension of this event becomes Nietzsche's way of measuring an interpreter's closeness to or distance from himself. In other words, in the parable of the madman, Nietzsche essentially furnishes his readers with criteria for assessing his own subsequent reception, as he does again in another well-known 'God is dead' passage:

> The greatest recent event – that 'God is dead' [...] The event itself is far too great, too distant, too remote from the multitude's capacity for comprehension […] This long plenitude and sequence of breakdown, destruction, ruin, and cataclysm that is now impending – who could guess enough of it today to be compelled to play the teacher and advance proclaimer of this monstrous logic of terror, the prophet of gloom and an eclipse of the sun whose like has probably never yet occurred on earth?[304]

Nietzsche cannot seem to talk about the death of God without also mentioning the general population's inability to grasp what the event means. Given the 'cataclysmic' and 'monstrous' size of the event that Nietzsche believes 'eclipses' everything else, 'the like of which has probably never yet occurred on earth' and his belief that this event is beyond 'the

[303] *AC*, para.62, p.199.
[304] *GS*, para.343, p.279.

multitudes capacity for comprehension', a serious investigation of Nietzsche's reception history might surely ask, to what extent did these atheists – who were responsible for mediating Nietzsche's atheism to a popular audience – demonstrate an awareness of the conflict between Nietzsche and other atheists? I am arguing in other words that the way one reads his philosophy will determine how one writes his reception history.

With this in mind, the specific points of difference and contention between Nietzsche and other atheists detailed in the previous chapters will provide the set of analytical questions to explore this further: What did the interpreter understand to be lost in the death of God? And consequently, to what extent did the interpreter engage with the soteriological aims of Nietzsche's atheism? To what degree did Nietzsche's interpreters continue to rely upon the then popular arguments against God's existence in order to bolster their own atheism? In what manner did Nietzsche's interpreters continue to assert ascetic ideals and how far were they willing to go to reevaluate their values? Did his readers make a serious attempt to transcend the Christian narrative and how is Nietzsche consequently sanitised or demonised by both his advocates and enemies? And finally, it is worth noting once more the obvious lacuna these questions represent in current scholarship. For lurking somewhere in the background of this line of inquiry is the question we raised more politely at the beginning of the first chapter but which I will put more bluntly here at the beginning of the third: how is it possible that more than a century of Nietzschean scholarship has failed to produce any commentaries on his reception history where these are the explicit and controlling questions?

3.2 Denmark, France and England

We begin our observation of Nietzsche's popular reception by noting that Nietzsche belongs to that uncommon variety of philosopher who has actually had a popular reception. Perhaps even more unusual is the fact that Nietzsche was 'very much in the air' as it were in England even before the hapless Alexander Tille's much derided first translations of Nietzsche's works – *Thus Spake Zarathustra, The Case of Wagner,* which also included *Nietzsche Contra Wagner, Twilight of the Idols, and The Antichrist* – into English in 1896. Nietzsche's complete works were not translated until 1913; however, mediated as he was through his various interpreters, Nietzsche's reputation went ahead of him.[305]

[305] Stefan Manz, 'Translating Nietzsche, Mediating Literature: Alexander Tille and the Limits of Anglo German Intercultural Transfer', *Neophilologus*, 91 (2007)**,** 117-34 (p. 118). Or Patrick Bridgwater, *Nietzsche in*

Nevertheless, various commentators have pointed out that Nietzsche's reputation in the English-speaking world grew relatively slowly,[306] more slowly than for example in Denmark where Nietzsche was introduced in a lecture series about his philosophy, delivered by Georg Brande in 1888 at Copenhagen University.[307] Speaking about Brande's lectures, Nietzsche writes that he received 'a great ovation' and that Brande 'assures me that my name is now the topic in all intelligent circles in Copenhagen and is known throughout Scandinavia'.[308]

Similarly, Nietzsche enjoyed a warm reception in France where the first translations of his works appeared in 1898 and were systematically translated over the next ten years by Henri Albert.[309] By 1903, the works which had already been translated were in their fourth and even fifth editions and were so widely read and appropriated that 'as early as 1900 French writers were claiming him not as a German but as "French".' As the French author Andre Gide (1869-1951) – who was eulogized as 'France's greatest contemporary man of letters' – put it, 'I was waiting for Nietzsche before knowing who he was'.[310]

3.2.1 Madman, Nationalist and Darwinist

The comparatively slow and cautious manner with which the English-speaking world would open up to Nietzsche is not an unkind judgement made upon the past but the contemporary British comment on the process as it happened. For example, while in America Nietzsche did receive a number of obituaries, the relatively few, by comparison, that appeared in British papers suggested a limited British engagement with Nietzsche, and it is in one of these rare obituaries that we read: 'Nietzsche's works have been more talked about than read in these Islands […] Abroad, however, and in France, perhaps, even more than in his native country, Nietzsche has a number of admirers'.[311]

Anglosaxony: A Study of Nietzsche's Impact on English and American Literature (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972), p.11.

[306] See for example, M. E. Humble, 'Early British Interest in Nietzsche', *German Life and Letters*, 24 (1971), 327-35; 'Translating Nietzsche, Mediating Literature'; *American Nietzsche*; *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914*.

[307] *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914,* p.18.

[308] *Selected Letters,* p.297.

[309] Ali Nematollahy, 'Nietzsche in France 1890–1914', *The Philosophical Forum*, 40 (2009), 169-80 (p.173).

[310] 'Nietzsche in France 1890–1914', p.169.

[311] ''Death of Nietzsche', *London Evening Standard*, 27 August 1900. p.3. Unless otherwise indicated, all newspaper references are from the British Newspaper Archive <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>.

In stark contrast then to the relatively smooth and well-lit runway that Nietzsche enjoyed in Europe, it was precisely the absence of good English translations and the want of a champion like Georg Brande – substituted as he was by Nordau – that made for a difficult landing in the English-speaking world. While this is not the entire story, it is accurate as far as it goes, and as this account already enjoys broad consensus, we will begin our own approach from here.[312]

But in order to fully appreciate the shape of Nordau's attack and the influence this had on Nietzsche's subsequent reception, and in order to grasp the depth of the problem caused by the first, arguably poor translations of Nietzsche's works, we will need to pay close attention to the turbid and troubled era into which the first commentary and first translation actually arrived. For as it happened, Nietzsche did not appear on the horizon of the English-speaking world as a dark blot on an otherwise sunny cultural landscape. Rather, I will argue, the cold front of the *fin-de-siècle* which met the rising heat of British and German nationalism created a sort of cultural fog that rolled in as it were and made for Nietzsche's much more turbulent approach.

Observing Nietzsche's reception in these adverse conditions, we will notice that Nietzsche was taken by some atheists to be symptomatic of the *fin-de-siècle* angst, maybe even a cause, but at the same time he was taken by other atheists to be offering a sort of German nationalist and social Darwinian cure for the perceived cultural malaise. It is this blend of social Darwinism with German nationalism along with the spectre of Nietzsche's madness that have persisted in popular imagination. Therefore, we will spend part of this chapter exploring some of the ways that these labels – 'Madman', 'Nationalist', 'Social Darwinist' – attached themselves to Nietzsche's name in those early years of his English reception. But consistent with our overarching concerns, I will not only try to demonstrate that Nietzsche has been mislabelled, but that such mislabelling was once again the result of his interpreters' inability to comprehend or accept the consequences and implications of their own atheism. In other words, had those interpreters mediating Nietzsche to a general audience grasped what Nietzsche was saying about God's death in the first place, the widespread mischaracterisation of Nietzsche as a madman urging Germans to fulfil their evolutionary destiny may not have prevailed in the way that it did.

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[312] For example, the consensus over the effect of Max Nordau's introduction and Tille's first Translations is stated in various ways by M. E. Humble, 'Early British Interest in Nietzsche', p.271; Stefan Manz, 'Translating Nietzsche, Mediating Literature', Abstract, p.117; Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche*, p.58; Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914*, p.184; and Linda L. Maik, 'Nordau's Degeneration: The American Controversy', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (Oct-Dec 1989), 607-23 (pp.613-15).

3.2.2 Witch Hunt

I will start by piecing together the sort of picture one might get if we only had access to a collection of newspaper clippings perhaps only tangentially related to Nietzsche's first translations. Reading over the shoulder of a general audience in this way might give us a more immediate sense of the possibilities for popular opinion at that time. Popular opinion then, as now, was not usually the result of careful examination of precise and detailed maps, but formed sideways from impression and rumor, using roughly drawn maps that at times were only vaguely related to the terrain they claimed to cover and marked in various places with the timorous warning 'Here Be Dragons'. This may sound hopelessly elitist, but consider for a moment the 'pitchfork'- and 'torch'-carrying mob which went after Nietzsche's first translator Alexander Tille, in what could easily be characterised as a witch hunt; and as with all good witch hunts, this one was supposed to terminate with somebody being dunked into a body of water. To be sure, no one was actually carrying 'pitchforks' and 'torches', but the angry mob who pursued Tille and attempted to throw him into the river Kelvin was real enough as were its consequences; when the riot ended, so did Tille's career as lecturer in German at Glasgow University.

Below are a few excerpts from the original newspaper articles that covered this remarkable story. I have assembled them here as a way of stepping into the broader cultural context in which Nietzsche was first received, and I hope that the somewhat sensational nature of the event may expedite our grasp of the sorts of connections and associations that were not only possible but naturally and readily made in that context and at the popular level. It may also be illustrative of the fact that regardless of how tenuous such associations may be, once taken hold, they can powerfully influence popular reception in general. Moreover, this approach will not only give us an appreciation for the associations that were being made with Tille, but – for anyone paying attention at the time – with Nietzsche himself.

The story unfolded this way. An article critical of the British military in the Boer War was published in the German journal *Die Woche,* written by a lecturer at Glasgow University, Alexander Tille. The article portrayed the British army as an ill-equipped and unprepared ragtag group of aged men and inexperienced youth who were fighting a war, which from Tille's perspective, was not only placing an economic strain on Britain but signalled the beginning of the end of the British Empire. The article went on to characterise patriotic talk

of ‘democratic liberalism’ and British ‘beneficence’ as only so much cover for ‘national vindictiveness’ being meted out through what honesty would call, a ‘war of annexation’.[313] A Glaswegian student studying in Leipzig saw the article and took it upon himself to inform the British public of the lecturer’s anti-British activities by translating several excerpts which were published in the *Glasgow Herald*. These excerpts provoked several public protests which culminated in the events reported as follows:

The *Glasgow Herald*, Saturday, 24 February 1900, described the events thus:

> A notice was posted in the Students' Union, signed ‘John Bull, MA.’ calling upon the students to meet in the German class-room and protest against the conduct of the lecturer. As a result, some 500 students collected at the room yesterday, and, pending the arrival of Dr. Tille, sang patriotic songs. Seeing the state of matters, Dr. Tille on arriving refused to enter the room, and made an effort to escape through the arches.[314]

Picking up on the ritualised nature of the event, the *Worcestershire Chronicle* added:

> There were three professional gowns in the side room, and to make sure they had secured that worn by the object of their wrath all three were torn into ribbons.[315]

And continuing in the *London Evening Standard*:

> Cries of ‘Duck him in the Kelvin’” were raised and while a move was made in the direction of the river, the lecturer’s hat was seized and his clothes nearly torn from his back. While the students were moving on towards the Kelvin […] the Principal himself arrived […] the Principal, Professor, and Lecturer were roughly hustled into the class-room and imprisoned there […] Professor Murdock Cameron asked them to give Dr. Tille a hearing. After a time this was granted and Dr.Tille said he was very, very sorry that his few remarks had caused any ill feeling. The opinions expressed were not his own.[316]

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[313] ‘Extraordinary Scene at Gilmorehill: The German Lecturer and the Boers’, *Glasgow Herald*, 24 February 1900, p.9.
[314] ‘Extraordinary Scene at Gilmorehill: The German Lecturer and the Boers’, *Glasgow Herald*, 24 February 1900, p.9.
[315] ‘Exciting Scene at Glasgow’, *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 3 March 1900, p.6.
[316] ‘Glasgow Students and the War: A German Professor Mobbed’, *London Evening Standard*, 24 February 1900, p.4.

The angry mob – apparently out of ideas – were willing to be appeased by this explanation, and after giving three cheers for the lecturer, dispersed.[317] However, despite the appeal made by his own students who afterward urged Tille not to sever his ties with the university, and accompanied by the reassurance that none of his own students had actually taken part in the riot, Tille resigned his position, feeling that he was unable to carry on teaching at an institution where he had been assaulted.[318]

The article in question, critical of the British Army and published in Germany, telegraphed to the British public – albeit unintentionally – the distance Tille felt between himself and his host society. And because the article originally appeared in a German journal and was never meant for British eyes, Tille was perceived to be fuelling, in secret, nationalism in the Fatherland. The claims that the extracts did not represent the tenor of the article and that they were being taken out of context, or that these extracts were part of a private communication not meant for publication, were met with the response that the article translated in its entirety would 'speak for itself' and was published in full.[319]

The plot thickens when we discover that public gut reaction was not wrong. Once published in full, it appears that Tille, who was dubbed by the papers as 'Nietzsche's chief English disciple',[320] should more accurately have been described as Nietzsche's 'chief disciple in England', who was, after all, not English but German, and in fact a German nationalist. Upon resigning his post at Glasgow University, Tille left England and returned to Germany where he published anti-British literature. For example, speaking about the 'Englishman arrogance'[*sic*], Tille wrote:

> The Briton is still looking down on the German with a feeling of deeply inherent, arrogant contempt, which makes it impossible for him to see him as an equal opponent. He is a rival, but not a socially acceptable rival, rather one of another rank. He is looked down on in the way as an earl looks down on his financier who he owes and therefore has to invite to social evenings at his house. It is definite that we will drive out this contempt and that it will need a few more blows until it is driven out.[321]

While some might say that Tille lit the match that started the riot, the fact that such a reaction could be sparked in the first place from a mere few extracts tells us something about

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[317] 'Extraordinary Scene at Gilmorehill: The German Lecturer and the Boers', *Glasgow Herald,* 24 February 1900, p.9.
[318] 'A Student's Appeal: Balm for Professor Tille', *Dundee Evening Post*, 17 March 1900, p.5.
[319] 'Extraordinary Scene at Gilmorehill'.
[320] 'Death of Nietzsche'.
[321] Alexander Tille, 'Zehn Jahre auf einem schottischen Lehrstuhl', trans. Oliver Fiala. *Velhagen & Klasings Monatshefte,* 2 (1899/1900), 257-62.

British national sensibilities which provided more than sufficient kindling for the fire. This is evident from the growing Germanophobia which was a significant feature of British life surrounding the events we have been narrating. Stefan Manz, in his essay subtitled 'Alexander Tille and The Limits of Anglo-German Intercultural Transfer', mentions several issues that contributed to and were symptomatic of the tense relationship between Germany and Britain at the time, among them being Wilhelm II's Kruger telegram, violence against German nationals living in England and popular novels about German invasions. I will focus here on the astonishing influence of the invasion novel which has become recognised as a literary genre ever since the publication of George Chesney's 1871 *The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer.*[322] Plotted around a fictional German invasion of England, the success of Chesney's work – not to mention the controversy surrounding it – spawned over 400 similar works before 1914. As we shall see in a moment, the genre tapped into a British audience that was more than willing to be taken along for the ride and were often convinced that their reality did in fact reflect these works of fiction.[323] Take, for example, William Le Queux's 1906 book *The Invasion of 1910* that sold in the millions and was also serialised in the *Daily Mail*. The book describes an advance army of German spies: 'Most of these men were Germans who, having served in the army, had come over to England and obtained employment as waiters, clerks, bakers, hairdressers, and private servants'.[324] Le Queux's fictional Britain is thereby plunged into a state of paranoia in which 'spy mania was rife',[325] and 'each time a foreigner was discovered there was a cry of "spy," and many innocent men had fortunate escapes'.[326] But when the *Morning Post* published a letter claiming 'at the present moment there are at least ninety thousand (90,000) German reservists in these Islands and German intelligence officers in every county',[327] Le Queux's fictional Britain was transformed into a 'reality' of British public life. The letter made its way to the desk of 'the head of the director of military operations counter-intelligence section (M.O.5), Lieutenant-Colonel James Edmonds'.[328] David French, in his article 'Spy Fever in Britain: 1900-1915', documents the reaction to Le Queux's third novel, *Spies for the Kaiser: Plotting the Downfall of England*:

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[322] George Chesney, *The Battle of Dorking*: *Reminiscences of a Volunteer* (London: Blackwood and Sons, 1871).
[323] For a consideration of both the success and controversy surrounding Chesney's work, see I. F. Clarke, 'The Battle of Dorking, 1871-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 8 (1965), 309-28.
[324] David French, 'Spy Fever in Britain: 1900-1915', *The Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), 355-70.
[325] William Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910: With a Full Account of the Siege of London* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada, 1906). p.113.
[326] *The Invasion of 1910,* p.162.
[327] 'Britain's Peril', *Morning Post*, 6 May 1907, p.1.
[328] 'Spy Fever in Britain: 1900-1915', p.356.

> Almost as soon as the book was published he received a stream of letters telling him of the suspicious behaviour of German waiters, barbers and tourists in the vicinity of telephone, telegraph, and railway lines, bridges, and water-mains on the east coast and near London. The letters presented an almost exact mirror image of his book. He immediately sent them to Edmonds, who used them to construct a picture of what he supposed was the German intelligence organization in Britain.[329]

In this way, popular novels not only fed popular alarm but helped to confirm the suspicions already held by British intelligence in an environment increasingly hostile to German nationals. But recognising the sharp edges on both sides, Manz points out that there was also a high incident of German nationalism amongst Germans living in Britain and that their cross-cultural experience, instead of fostering a new appreciation, actually bred a new contempt for the 'other'. After years of living and working in Britain, many Germans went back to support the far right and helped to fuel Anglophobic attitudes, so that, while the commotion surrounding Tille certainly provides a striking example of this phenomenon, he was by no means unique.[330]

3.3 In Nietzsche's Defense

Taking a step back, the reader will quickly appreciate the broader picture that has been forming around Tille and the vital context this affords us for understanding Nietzsche's own reception. Nietzsche was a German philosopher whose first works translated into English were introduced into a fever pitch of British nationalism by none other than a German nationalist, who in his spare time – as popular suspicion proved correct – was helping to fuel nationalistic fervor in Germany. By starting our investigation here, I am not trying to imply that Tille was responsible for creating the association between Nietzsche and nationalism, but rather the events surrounding Tille are a focused way of drawing us into the world in which we can see a certain inevitability concerning Nietzsche's fate, one that Tille, by virtue of who he was, helped to seal.

How should we approach this all too prominent feature of Nietzsche's early reception? Let me restate my strategy more specifically here: First, I will argue that these

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[329] William Le Queux, *Spies for the Kaiser: Plotting the Downfall of England* (London, Hurst and Blackett, 1909).
[330] 'Translating Nietzsche, Mediating Literature'.

various attempts to marry Nietzsche with German nationalism were from Nietzsche's point of view not simply the making of an uneasy alliance, but an unholy alliance for which he would have sought an immediate annulment. This annulment has already been granted by others, and in chapters four and five we will examine in some detail the grounds on which this has been done. But the second, perhaps different part of my strategy will be to try to establish the fact that such a fateful match could only have been made in the first place by people with a singular lack of imagination for what the death of God means. This may seem like an odd connection to make but how these pieces fit together and why recognising this connection matters will become clearer below when we tackle this second part of this strategy under 3.5 and 3.5.1.

3.3.1 Nationalism in Biography and Writing

Turning then to our first task, there are at least two ways to put distance between Nietzsche and a German nationalist agenda. First, there is Nietzsche's outright rejection of German nationalism. It is not difficult to produce Nietzsche's own words which straightforwardly express his disdain for nationalist sentiments and German culture in general, delivered as they are in his characteristically stark and unvarnished manner. Nietzsche says, 'As far as Germany extends, she corrupts culture'.[331] French expansionism on the other hand becomes an occasion to mock the German Spirit: 'At long last we ought to understand deeply enough Napoleon's surprise when he came to see Goethe: it shows what people had associated with the "German Spirit" for centuries. "*Voilà un homme!*" – that meant: 'But this is a *man!* And I had merely expected a German."'[332] Elsewhere, sneering at Germany's national anthem, he says, '("*Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles*"), which means *sub specie speciei*, namely the German species, bears emphatic witness of the opposite'.[333] In his personal correspondence, he writes about his present-day Germany in disparaging terms. For example, in his letter to Reinhart von Seydlitz dated 14 February 1887, a friend from Wagner's circle, he writes, 'It represents the most stupid form of the German *Geist* that there has ever been – and this *Geist* has in its time certainly expected of itself all sorts of *Giest-lessness*'[334] and so on.

[331] *EH*, 'Why I Am So Clever', para.5, p.248.
[332] *BGE*, para.209, p.133.
[333] *GS*, para.357, pp.309-310.
[334] *Selected Letters*, p.262.

Second, in addition to Nietzsche's explicit statements, there are some striking biographical details which also shine a light on Nietzsche's thinking about nationalism. In this regard there is substantial and early precedent in Nietzsche's reception history for using biography as a way of interpreting his philosophy. For example, Nietzsche's first British interpreter Havelock Ellis begins his brief introduction with biographical details; the first full-length English language commentary on Nietzsche by the American author H. L. Mencken devotes several chapters to Nietzsche's life;[335] and A.R. Orage, who is often noted for having offered the most accurate early account in English of Nietzsche's philosophy, begins both his commentaries with biography.[336] And Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's *The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche* seems to have set a final seal of approval on this method, whereby the details of Nietzsche's life became a legitimate way to understand the details of his philosophy. Perhaps more significantly, Nietzsche modelled this interpretive strategy himself. For example, his sister Elisabeth points out that Nietzsche's treatise on Schopenhauer 'had nothing to do with Schopenhauer's philosophical doctrines, and that it dealt only with the effect of the great philosopher's personality upon himself [...] I gratefully enjoyed the mighty impression that Schopenhauer himself had made upon me'.[337] And she quotes Fritz Kogal who said 'Nietzsche considers only Schopenhauer's personality'. This description of Nietzsche's encounter with Schopenhauer would seem to flow quite naturally from Nietzsche's contention that philosophy was meant to be just that, an encounter, an experience that shapes life and not something 'that can be mastered completely and forever with the aid of our square little reason'.[338]

We will start then with an early instance of this type of argument where biographical details are taken to carry significant weight in understanding how Nietzsche related to German nationalism; we will then consider one or two more recent examples. Bracketing the discussion with early and late examples will not only help to clarify Nietzsche's actual position but will support the claim that from the beginning of his reception in the English-speaking world, Nietzsche has been found guilty by association and that his defenders had to set about – almost immediately – trying to disabuse the general public of

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[335] H. L. Mencken, *The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche* [1908], (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2006), pp.1-35.
[336] A. R. Orage, *Friedrich Nietzsche, The Dionysian Spirit of the Age* [1911] (London: Forgotten Books, 2012), pp.11-23. See also, A. R. Orage, *Nietzsche in Outline and Aphorism*, third edn. (Edinburgh & London: T.N. Foulis, 1911), pp.1-6.
[337] Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, *The Life of Nietzsche*, vol. 1, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (New York: Sturgis and Walton, 1912), p.321.
[338] *GS*, para.373, p.335.

this opinion and (we might add) have been doing so to a lesser or greater degree ever since with considerable success.

3.3.2 Havelock Ellis in the Nineteenth Century

Tille's first translations that appeared in 1886 were accompanied by English comment on Nietzsche that same year. Havelock Ellis's series of three articles published in the April, June and August editions of *The Savoy* start with this justification: 'I know of no attempt to present Nietzsche from a British point of view'.[339]

And it is with just that awareness of his British audience that Ellis carefully selects Nietzsche's biographical details, presenting Nietzsche as a descendent of Polish aristocracy, and describing Nietzsche's affinity for Polish Chopin and Polish Copernicus. Ellis says that Nietzsche 'termed Chopin as the deliverer of music from German heaviness and stupidity'.[340] In this way, Ellis makes clear that he is creating these associations not simply to establish Nietzsche's stature in history but in order to deliver Nietzsche *himself* from 'German heaviness and stupidity'. Intent on absolving Nietzsche from the 'sin' of being German, Ellis even bothers to mention that physiologically Nietzsche looked more Polish and was often 'greeted by Poles as a fellow countryman'.[341] In case we missed the point, Ellis uses his limited space in this relatively short article to contrast Nietzsche's love for an Hellenic golden age with his contempt for modern German culture and German nationalism. Ellis is careful to point out that it is precisely amid 'an outburst of flamboyant patriotism and the widely expressed conviction that the Franco-Prussian war[342] had been a victory for German culture' that Nietzsche 'pours contempt on that assumption.'[343]

This theme is picked up again in Ellis's second *Savoy* article which starts out once more with Nietzsche's anti-German credentials, explaining that 'Nietzsche regarded it as merely an accident that he was born in Germany'.[344] And mining Nietzsche's work for yet more disparaging remarks about German culture, he quotes: 'nowhere else has there been such a vicious misuse of the two European narcotics, alcohol and Christianity'.[345] Or again, 'Germans regard bad writing […] as a national privilege.' Finally, Ellis appears to revel in

[339] Havelock Ellis, 'Friedrich Nietzsche', *Savoy*, no. 2 (1896), pp.79-94 (p.79).
[340] 'Friedrich Nietzsche', p.80.
[341] *Ibid*.
[342] The Franco-Prussian War, referred to in France as The War of 1870. (July 1870 - January 1871)
[343] 'Friedrich Nietzsche', p.86.
[344] Havelock Ellis, 'Friedrich Nietzsche – II', *Savoy*, no. 3 (1896), pp.68-80 (p.69).
[345] 'Friedrich Nietzsche – II', p.69.

Nietzsche's belief that '"German virtue" – and this was the unkindest cut of all – had its origin in France'.[346]

It does not take much historical imagination to realise that part of this exercise in public relations was to try to make Nietzsche presentable to a British public who were already suspicious of German nationalistic ambitions and had been put on their guard by the publication of Nordau's *Degeneration* the previous year. If after reading these articles, you did not understand that Nietzsche was really a 'Pole' who was in no uncertain terms disenchanted with the state of contemporary German culture, then you had missed the point.

3.3.3 The Twentieth and Twenty-First Century

For the most part, we will try to remain within the focus era of this present chapter, 1895 to 1913, but on occasion, and this is one of those occasions, we will need to look further ahead so that upon looking back, with the advantage of hindsight, the reader will appreciate the perennial nature of the troubles which started early in Nietzsche's reception history and have persisted to the present day.

Turning then to a more recent example of this kind of apologetic, in an article titled 'What was Nietzsche's Nationality?' Daniel Blue gathers up Nietzsche's biographical details in order to trace Nietzsche's shifting relationship toward his own national identity, and he does this against the backdrop of the shifting shape and fortunes of German nationhood. Blue points out that Nietzsche's tendency to orient himself away from the shared patriotism of the group expressed itself early on. When Nietzsche was only seventeen years of age, he wrote an essay extolling Napoleon III's victory over Saxony which shocked his classmates and inspired a patriotic rebuttal paper from a fellow student.[347] And because Nietzsche shed his Saxon accent and spoke disparagingly about Saxon parochialism, it may be easy to conclude that he must have been a Prussian nationalist;[348] nevertheless, Blue argues that Nietzsche never had a 'patriotic devotion to his own people embodied in the state'.[349] In fact, when he was hired by the University of Basel at twenty-four years of age, Nietzsche was required to give up his Prussian citizenship which he did 'without evident hesitation'.[350] Moreover, Nietzsche went on to live stateless the rest of his life. After 1871, when the German states

[346] *Ibid*.
[347] Daniel Blue, 'What Was Nietzsche's Nationality?' *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, n.v., no. 33 (Spring 2007), 73-82 (p.76).
[348] *Ibid.*, p.78.
[349] *Ibid.*, p.77.
[350] *Ibid*., p.80.

united into one nation, Nietzsche began to speak of 'Germans', lumping Prussian, Saxon, Franconian and Swabian people into a single political unit and 'started to speak of these diverse people impersonally and disclaiming his own membership'.[351]

Walter Kaufmann makes use of this distance that Nietzsche places between himself and German culture in his own urgent attempt to distance Nietzsche from the catastrophe of WWII. Kaufmann ends his introduction to his own translation of *The Will to Power* with Nietzsche's draft to a preface made in the autumn of 1885:

> THE WILL TO POWER. A book for *thinking*, nothing else: it belongs to those for whom thinking is a *delight*, nothing else – That it is written in German is untimely, to say the least: I wish I had written it in French so that it might not appear to be a confirmation of the aspirations of the German *Reich*. […] It is precisely among the Germans today that people think less than anywhere else. But who knows? In two generations one will no longer require the sacrifice involved in any nationalistic squandering of power and in becoming stupid. (Formerly I wished I had not written my *Zarathustra* in German.)[352]

What was Nietzsche's nationality? Blue answers the question by saying that 'Nietzsche was no longer German, just as he was once not Saxon and was once not Prussian either'.[353]

Blue and other biographers have painted Nietzsche as a stateless and restless wanderer spending his summers in Switzerland and wintering on the French Riviera, and who often construed himself as the 'Good European' and at times indulged in the fantasy that he might be a descendent of Polish aristocracy.[354] Add to this the fact that he frequently mocked the nationalist sentiment of his day and Nietzsche quickly looks like an unlikely apologist for German nationalism.

3.4 Demonised and Sanitised

And this is often where things are left, especially at a popular level where Nietzsche's anti-nationalism is mentioned ad nauseam.[355] Nietzsche's commentators, having recognised

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[351] *Ibid*., pp.73-82.
[352] *WP*, 'Editor's Introduction', pp.xxii-xxiii.
[353] 'What Was Nietzsche's Nationality?' p.80.
[354] See for example, R.J. Hollingdale, *MHP;* Walter Kaufmann, *PPA;* Rudiger Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography.*
[355] See for example: Sean Illing, 'The Alt-Right Is Drunk on Bad Readings of Nietzsche. The Nazis Were Too', *Vox*, 17 August 2017 <https://www.vox.com/2017/8/17/16140846/alt-right-nietzsche-richard-spencer-nazism> [accessed 1 August 2018]; Sean Illing, 'What Nietzsche's Philosophy Can Tell Us About Why Brexit and Trump

the problems in reception history that joined Nietzsche and nationalism together and having then separated them out again, perhaps in a manner similar to that above, consider their work done. Readers in their turn can now consider the matter settled – Nietzsche has been absolved from the sin of nationalism wherever nationalism is a pejorative term and can move on. However, it is here that I wish to delay our progress and dwell a little longer, but not because I wish to argue that Nietzsche was a German nationalist after all. I am convinced that attempts to appropriate him in this way are entirely inappropriate, if by appropriate we mean trying to understand what Nietzsche actually means.

But in the context of my overarching thesis, I am making *another* claim concerning Nietzsche and nationalism: I am claiming that Nietzsche's rejection of nationalism is connected to his atheism. If this is true, then without a serious consideration of this connection, it is quite possible that we have not as yet understood the essential character of Nietzsche's anti-nationalist posture. Following this buried lead, there is the further misgiving that while Nietzsche may have oftentimes been summarily 'demonised' without a hearing, it might also be the case that many attempts to set the record straight have produced an equally lopsided view, whereby Nietzsche is sanitised beyond recognition and delivered this way to popular rumor and impression. It is easy to envisage how – after reading Ellis in the nineteenth century, Kaufmann in the twentieth or Blue in the twenty-first – someone could then imagine themselves to be Nietzsche's travelling companion walking the same road together; after all, 'I am an atheist against rabid nationalism and Nietzsche was too'. Perhaps

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Won, *Vox*, 11 June 2017 <https://www.vox.com/conversations/2016/12/20/13927678/donald-trump-brexit-nietzsche-democracy-europe-populism-hugo-drochon [accessed 1 August 2018]. Sue Prideaux, 'Far Right, Misogynist, Humourless? Why Nietzsche is Misunderstood', *Guardian*, 6 October 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/oct/06/exploding-nietzsche-myths-need-dynamiting> [accessed 1 November 2018]; Sue Prideaux, 'The Alt-Right Misreads Nietzsche, But They Aren't the Only Ones', *Los Angeles Times*, 28 October 2018 <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-prideaux-nietzsche-20181028-story.html> [accessed 10 November 2018]; Christopher Bray, 'Reclaiming Nietzsche', *The Spectator*, 30 April 2016 https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/reclaiming-nietzsche> [accessed 10 November 2018]; Dominic Selwood, 'On This Day in 1900: Friedrich Nietzsche Dies', *Telegraph*, 25 August 2017 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/08/25/day-1900friedrich-nietzsche-dies/> [accessed 12 November 2018]; David Rutledge, 'Neo-Nazis Are Claiming Nietzsche as Their Own, but What Does His Philosophy Really Say? *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*, 20 October 2018 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-21/nietzsche-and-the-alt-right/10382460> [accessed 13 November 2018]; Allan Massie, 'Nietzsche: The World's Most Misunderstood Philosopher', *Catholic Herald*, 29 November 2018 <https://catholicherald.co.uk/the-worlds-most-misunderstood-philosopher/ [accessed 12 December 2018]; Natasha Lennard, 'The Philosopher with a Thousand Eyes', *Dissent Magazine*, Summer 2017 <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/nietzsche-great-politics-hugo-drochon-review> [accessed 12 December 2018]; Joe Niccum, 'Renowned Philosopher Embraced: Misunderstood by Extremist Hate Groups', *University of Kansas News Service*, 25 November 2019 <https://today.ku.edu/2019/11/21/renowned-philosopher-embraced-misunderstood-extremist-hate-groups-2 [accessed 1 December 2019].

this sort of over-identification is common partly because as Fraser astutely points out, 'Nietzsche is a charismatic figure and everybody wants to be his friend'.[356] But it is at the crossroads of Nietzsche's atheism and anti-nationalism that many of his readers, upon choosing their own path will glance back over their shoulder, only in time to catch a glimpse of Nietzsche's receding figure as he disappears into the distance, heading off in an entirely different direction. Therefore, understanding the way in which Nietzsche's atheism drives his anti-nationalist sentiment may help us avoid making this kind of mistake. And so, with these unanswered questions in mind and as yet unable to put a finger on the exact problem, we will follow the hunch that there is something incomplete, perhaps even out of place, with the picture of things thus far.

3.5 The Story of German Nationalism

We will start our exploration of the links between Nietzsche's atheism and his anti-nationalist posture by looking beyond Nietzsche's explicit anti-nationalist statements and instead attempt to form a rudimentary understanding about the conception and development of the German nationalism which Nietzsche found himself pitted against. Broadly speaking, there are two competing versions of the story of how German national consciousness emerged and it will soon become clear how making this distinction can help us draw the line between Nietzsche's rejection of nationalism on the one hand and his atheism on the other.

Historian Robert Berdahl argues that under the pervasive influence of Friedrich Meinecke's 1907 work *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat,* the majority of approaches to understanding the emergence of German national consciousness have tended to make a sharp distinction between the development of other nationalisms and the uniqueness of German nationalism. Unlike other nationalisms which were politically self-determined, Germany's nationalism was culturally pre-determined[357] following a sort of teleological path which was demanded by the common language, thought and culture of a people, shaped 'through the quiet workings of the national spirit'.[358] In other words, unlike other nationalisms, in Germany's case political unification did not precede the national consciousness and the state

[356] *Redeeming Nietzsche,* p.22.
[357] Robert M. Berdahl, 'New Thoughts on German Nationalism,' *The American Historical Review*, 77 (February 1972), 65-80 (p.70).
[358] *Ibid*., p.66.

did not precede the nation.[359] This is what Berdahl refers to as the 'cultural origins' thesis concerning the rise of German nationalism.[360]

By now it seems unnecessary to ask what Nietzsche would have made of such a theory. Irrespective of whether we think Nietzsche's assessment of contemporary German culture approaches anything like fairness or accuracy, we can already see how this vehicle for understanding German nationalism is immediately stalled by Nietzsche who has disassembled the 'cultural origins' theory by disassembling German culture itself. Ellis summarises Nietzsche's thought on the matter this way:

> Culture, he says, is, above all, unity of artistic style in every expression of a people's life. The exuberance of knowledge in which a German glories is neither a necessary means of culture nor a sign of it, being, indeed, more allied to the opposite of culture–to barbarism. […] Such culture is really a phlegmatic absence of all sense of culture. Largely, also, it is merely a bad imitation of the real and productive culture of France which it is supposed to have conquered in 1870. Let there be no chatter, he concludes, about the triumph of German culture, for at present no real German culture exists.[361]

One question all of this might prompt us to ask is what sort of historical work might have been done had historians of German nationalism been reading Nietzsche and followed his withering valuation of German culture? I imagine this 'cultural origins' thesis would have been swiftly called into question long before Bardahl's relatively late attempt to do so toward the end of the twentieth century, in an essay which perhaps now seems ironically titled 'New Thoughts on German Nationalism'. In his essay, Bardahl argues for a decidedly less romantic view as an alternative explanation for the rise of nationalism in Germany:

> Nationalism in Germany, as elsewhere, was defined not only by language or culture or ethnicity; nationality was also determined by the dictates of utility, by nationalists and politicians for whom nationalism was a functional concept.[362]

Bardahl goes on to argue that nationalists and politicians used nationalism as a tool to achieve the ends of the state such as increasing the military strength of the state, growing the state's economic power and 'advancing' a 'backward' nation.

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[359] *Ibid*.
[360] See for example *Ibid*., p.68. Helmut Walser Smith in a chapter titled 'Nation and Nationalism' also makes a similar observation about the way this story has generally been construed. See Helmut Walser Smith, 'Nation and Nationalism', in *Germany 1800-1870: The Short Oxford History of Germany,* ed. Jonathan Sperber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.230-55 (p.238,239,248).
[361] 'Friedrich Nietzsche', p.86.
[362] 'New Thoughts on German Nationalism', p.71.

But Bardahl also recognises a sort of symbiotic circle here, whereby the nationalism which is being used as a tool for economic advancement is itself reinforced by the economic development that it is being used to advance. This is because, through the process of economic modernisation, traditional society breaks down; and with this social disintegration, traditional bonds and loyalties are destroyed, which in turn creates 'both the means and the psychological need for a broader community, the nation'.[363]

3.5.1 Nationalism and Mediocrity

I suggest that Nietzsche, with his usual acuity, saw well in advance of Bardahl and Smith the state of affairs they have described. Nietzsche saw that nationalism was the tool of the state used in one instance to gain economic power and in yet another instance to create social cohesion where it had been weakened by those same gains in economic power. In other words, Nietzsche was not blind to the fact that while nationalism may have undermined one set of kinship ties, it also created new ones which were attached – and this is significant – to notions of a far-reaching egalitarianism.

The association between nationalism and egalitarianism may at first glance seem somewhat counterintuitive because in some regions of popular thought, nationalism is indexed under hierarchical thinking where one group is privileged and prized over another, the very opposite of egalitarian and democratic thinking and therefore opposed on those grounds. But nationalism is at least as likely to be just egalitarianism with boundaries. As Smith notes, 'this affinity is finite; it cannot reach to the rest of humanity'[364] but 'it erased internal differences within the nation'.[365]

But equality – Nietzsche reminds the atheists in the town square – comes from God. And it is only when the consequences of God's death reach us that we can move beyond the popular and seemingly straightforward observation that Nietzsche was not a nationalist, to recognising the actual grounds on which he rejected nationalism. If nationalism is a pejorative term in Nietzsche's vocabulary, it is for reasons other than those his popular audience might instinctively ascribe. From the account of Nietzsche's atheism, we can see that nationalism comes at a price, because the social cohesion that nationalism affords is bought at the expense of the levelling out and democratisation of society. And it is precisely because Nietzsche was not willing to incur this kind of cost that Nietzsche was not and could

[363] *Ibid*., p.74-76. Similarly, Smith argues for the levelling and equalising power of nationalism 'Nation and Nationalism', p.234.
[364] *Ibid*.
[365] *Ibid.*, p.240.

not be a nationalist. Nietzsche opposes nationalism because stripped of its vainglory it turns out to be another expression of the ascetic instinct, a mere guise for the herd's *ressentiment.* And from Nietzsche's perspective, if the decaying races assert themselves against the nobility through nationalism, or to put it another way, if atheists continue to cling to metaphysical notions of equality, there can be only one inevitable outcome: mediocrity (Christian mediocrity).

Sometimes these various elements – that Nietzsche was an atheist, that he was undemocratic[366] and that he was an anti-nationalist – appear together in the same article but are stated as independent and unrelated facts about Nietzsche so that it is not at all clear that Nietzsche's anti-nationalism is not incidental to but is in fact the necessary outcome of his anti-egalitarianism, itself a consequence of his atheism as we have been arguing. 'He raged against democracy and egalitarianism, but also against nationalism and anti-Semitism', says Alex Ross in his article in *The New Yorker* exploring Nietzsche's appeal to the political 'left' and 'right'.[367] Likewise, Scotty Hendricks in his *Big Think* article explains that Nietzsche 'claimed that the Germans were great because of the "Polish blood in their veins", and saw German nationalism as a dangerous joke'. Nevertheless, Hendricks admits, 'Nietzsche did reject egalitarianism, democracy'.[368] By mentioning Nietzsche's anti-egalitarian and anti-democratic perspective, these authors appear to have taken a candid picture of the philosopher without attempting to hide his ugly side. But why does Nietzsche 'reject' democracy and 'rage against' egalitarianism? We are not told. And by leaving Nietzsche's ideas disassembled in this way, the tenuous relationship between the reader's own atheism, anti–nationalism and egalitarianism never becomes the subject of reflection and thereby remains unchallenged.

3.6 Symptom or Cure?

We said at the beginning of this chapter that we would examine the early evolution of Nietzsche's reputation as nationalist, Darwinist and madman in the Anglophone world. We

[366] Undemocratic i.e. vehemently anti-egalitarian.
[367] Alex Ross, 'Nietzsche's Eternal Return: Why Thinkers of Every Political Persuasion Keep Finding Inspiration from the Philosopher', *New Yorker*, 7 October 2019 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/10/14/nietzsches-eternal-return> [accessed 12 December 2019].
[368] Scotty Hendricks, 'How the Nazis Hijacked Nietzsche, and How it Can Happen to Anybody', *Big Think*, 16 December 2017 <https://bigthink.com/scotty-hendricks/how-the-nazis-hijacked-nietzsche-and-how-it-can-happen-to-anybody> [accessed 12 December 2019].

also said that if we dig down far enough, we will discover that these various offshoots of the Nietzsche legend all emerge from a seminal misunderstanding about Nietzsche's atheism. Given this theory of common origins, we should expect to find other family resemblances appearing in the various strata of Nietzsche's legend we have labelled so far, not least of all in the collective and perhaps primordial fear of mediocrity that forms a sort of natural bridge between Nietzsche's reputation as a nationalist and the association of Nietzsche in the popular mind with both social Darwinism and madness.

I am not suggesting that there was any agreement between Nietzsche and his popular audience over what counted as mediocrity or even what the root cause of mediocrity might be. We have already noted that Nietzsche saw nationalism as an expression of mediocrity while it could be argued from another perspective that nationalism was in fact a popular response and attempt to overcome the perceived problem. Setting aside such disagreements for the moment, my first point here is that Western or even human mediocrity (however that was defined) was not a specifically Nietzschean concern but was in fact a fairly widespread judgement about the general pallor of a people entering the twentieth century. Historically speaking, this is a relatively uncontroversial claim, as we shall see but the second point of my argument is that the spectre of mediocrity articulated in terms of *fin-de-siècle* angst provided the conceptual scheme into which Nietzsche was quickly absorbed, so that Nietzsche's legend sometimes grew between the conflicting claims that Nietzsche was a symptom of mediocrity on the one hand and a cure for mediocrity on the other. Therefore, it is incumbent upon me to provide the reader with at least some sense of the prevalence of this type of diagnosis – or perhaps misdiagnosis – of the culture around the time that Nietzsche first appeared in the English-speaking world.

3.6.1 *Fin-De-Siècle*

Our attempt to enter the cultural mood, however, could potentially take us on a long circuitous route, and so rather than wandering off into a broad historical survey, I will try instead to demonstrate the prevalence of the aforementioned cultural anxiety while remaining somewhere within the vicinity of Nietzsche's atheism. Taking this shortcut, we will not have to venture much further beyond Nietzsche's antagonist Nordau and the comment he drew from popular playwright George Bernard Shaw, who as it happens also made his own

significant contribution to the Nietzsche legend in those early days which we will consider below.

A brief consideration of the interaction between these bestselling authors might serve here as an adequate sign of the times.

In his dedication of *Degeneration* to Caesar Lombroso, Nordau writes:

> Degenerates are not always criminals, prostitutes, anarchists and pronounced lunatics; they are often authors and artists. These, however, manifest the same mental characteristics, and for the most part the same somatic features, as the members of the above-mentioned anthropological family […] Some among these degenerates in literature, music, and painting have in recent years come into extraordinary prominence, and are revered by numerous admirers as creators of new art, and heralds of the coming centuries. This phenomenon is not to be disregarded. Books and works of art exercise a powerful suggestion on the masses.[369]

Nordau then proceeds to expose the degeneracy of the particular authors, composers and artists he has in mind which besides Nietzsche, included several household names such as Tolstoy, Ibsen, Wagner and Manet.

Shaw, in turn, summarises Nordau's particular brand of judgement like this:

> Maeterlinck is 'a poor devil of an idiot'; Mr. W. D. O'Connor […] 'an American driveller'; Nietzsche 'belongs, body and soul, to the flock of the mangy sheep'; Ibsen is 'a malignant, anti-social simpleton.'[370]

Idiots, drivellers and simpletons they may have been, and yet Nordau believed that these degenerates posed a grave threat to civilisation, because if through their various mediums they were allowed to spread their anti-rationalist impulse, they would usher in an end of civilisation as we know it, the *'fin-de-siècle', 'a Dusk of Nations',* as Nordau's chapter titles put it. Nordau writes with all the appearance of a prophet delivering an apocalyptic warning, but as I will argue below, he was only able to ape a sort of prophetic rage while continuing to operate well within the cultural boundary markers of his day. I am using Nordau as an example of the broad cultural mindset precisely because his 'prophetic word' did not issue from 'beyond' so to speak but followed the contours of well-established convention. How else should we explain the popularity of his work?

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[369] *Degeneration*, from the author's dedication.
[370] George Bernard Shaw, *The Sanity of Art* (London: The New Age Press, 1908), p.45.

3.6.2 Popularity and Imitation

We have already mentioned the success of Nordau's book which enjoyed seven new impressions in the first year of translation and a new *popular edition* released in 1898. Linda Maik, commenting on the combination of Nordau's popularity and unique approach suggests, not unreasonably, that Nordau's *Degeneration* 'may have been the most controversial international best seller in the 1890s […] a literary brouhaha seldom seen before or since his time'.[371] His style of delivery may have been unusual, but I suggest that the origin of his message was the same as its destination, highlighted not only by Nordau's popularity but his ability to inspire others to attempt similar projects of their own. But while imitation might be the highest form of flattery, Shaw points out that Nordau had managed to spawn English critics 'without half his cleverness or energy of expression, clumsily imitating this sham scientific vivisection in their attacks on artists whose work they happen to dislike'.[372] Nordau had struck a nerve, and the attention he received suggests that ideas about mediocrity, decadence or degeneration already hung in the air at the end of the nineteenth century and formed part of the reflexive framework through which many in that generation assessed themselves.

Perhaps more telling of the widespread nature of this cultural anxiety is the way that others disagreed with Nordau's assessment. Some accepted the reality of degeneration but argued that degeneration was a cyclical phenomenon and therefore that Nordau was being alarmist.[373] And then there were those like Shaw who dismissed degeneration as 'nothing but the familiar delusion of the used-up man that the world is going to the dogs'.[374] But significantly nowhere do Shaw or other detractors deny the fact that large swathes of the population had already been infected with this way of thinking prior to Nordau's book. On the contrary, Shaw confirms the cultural breadth of the idea as he casts things in a rather mercenary light by describing Nordau as 'a vigorous and capable journalist, shrewd enough to see that there is a good opening for a big reactionary book'.[375] In this way, Shaw frames Nordau's project as a supremely cynical exercise designed to take advantage of the already pervasive notion of cultural decline.

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[371] 'Nordau's Degeneration: The American Controversy', p.607.
[372] *The Sanity of Art*, p.52.
[373] Kenyon Cox, Anton Seidl, Mayo H Hazeltine, 'Nordau's Theory of Degeneration', *North American Review*, 160 (June 1895), 735-52 (p.744).
[374] *The Sanity of Art,* p.28.
[375] *Ibid*.

To summarise then, the popularity of Nordau's book coupled with his ability to inspire other writers to imitation, along with the alternative explanations for degeneration and the fact that Shaw could make the argument that Nordau was capitalising on people's fears (and be understood) are all indications that the fear of mediocrity cast its long shadow across the end of the Western nineteenth century. And so, when Nietzsche first appeared in the English-speaking world, it is not hard to imagine why his audience, filled with this sort of cultural angst, would have asked the only relevant question: Is Nietzsche a symptom of mediocrity or a cure for what ails us?

3.7 Nietzsche the Darwinist

With this heightened awareness of the cultural mood, we can now consider the ways that Nietzsche was seen to fit the categories of symptom and cure. We will begin by circling back around to Tille. As with the earlier discussion concerning Nietzsche's nationalism, I am not hereby laying all responsibility for the making of Nietzsche's legend in those early years at the foot of Tille's door. We have been arguing all along for the greater cultural forces at play and any contribution to Nietzsche's legend that Tille or other individual interpreters made should be taken within that wider cultural context. It is true that Tille who provided the first translations of Nietzsche's works played his part – along with Nordau – in shaping the first rather striking and often lasting impressions of Nietzsche in the English-speaking world. Nevertheless, I want to keep in view that the way in which Tille, Nordau and others presented Nietzsche depended largely on their attempts to locate him on their own particular cultural register.

For example, the uninitiated reader, opening the first English translation of *Thus Saith Zarathustra* and turning its crisp new pages to the translator's introduction, might have formed the impression that he or she had been swiftly brought to the centre of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* – if not his entire philosophy – and from this vantage point could now survey and understand the rest of his work. The crucial summing up in Tille's introduction is where he explains:

> It was only after Darwin had in his *Origin of Species* of 1859 placed the whole idea of evolution on a scientific basis, that the same poet Wilhelm Jordan could celebrate in his epos *Die Nibelunge* the higher bodily and intellectual development of the human race as the great goal of humanity, and the centre of ethical obligations. […] Only after Nietzsche [...] had taken up the idea and made it almost the leading

> motive of his Zarathustra, did it impress itself upon large circles of the educated youth. And it is Nietzsche's undeniable merit to have led this new moral ideal to a complete victory.[376]

Additionally, in *Von Darwin Bis Nietzsche, Ein Buch Entwicklungsethik*, published in German in 1895, Tille says:

> With Nietzsche's Zarathustra, the leading thought of Darwin's evolutionary theory is applied to today's humanity and the future development of humanity for the first time in a way that is pure and undiluted by ruling moral belief […] The two principles of social selection and social elimination still have to be applied to all areas of moral life and the existence of people and the ethical and social theories should be transformed through it.[377]

Although never translated into English and therefore not directly watering the seedbed of Anglo opinion, we are left in no doubt as to the nature of Tille's own thinking about Nietzsche and how he intended his reputation to grow in the somewhat stony cultural soil of the English-speaking world. It would be well over a decade or two before alternative treatments of Nietzsche's connection to Darwinism appeared alongside Tille's; but these alternatives were written in French, by which time Tille's Darwinian reading had taken deep roots.

It is worth noting that this determined effort to identify Nietzsche with Darwin is simultaneously reflective of both the prominence of Darwinian theory *and* the *fin-de-siècle* angst with which we have framed our present discussion. There is not room here to trace the precise relationship of these ideas occurring concurrently at the turn of the twentieth century, but I do want to suggest that by this time, Darwinism and the *fin-de-siècle* angst formed a symbiotic relationship whereby Darwinism helped to raise the ugly spectre of mediocrity by placing humans on the same level with brute animals and yet the same perturbed generation paradoxically looked to certain forms of Darwinism for an answer to the problem. We shall briefly distinguish between some of these Darwinists below but the significant point here is that the way in which Nietzsche might be categorised as a symptom or cure depended on these other, specifically Darwinian categories.

In this context, it is understandable why Tille's claims quickly brought Darwinism to the front of Nietzsche interpretation. For example, one of the rare obituaries to Nietzsche that

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[376] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra, A Book For All and None*, trans. Alexander Tille (London: T. Fischer Unwin, 1899). From the editor's introduction, xxii-xxiii.
[377] Alexander Tille, *Von Darwin bis Nietzsche. Ein Buch Entwicklungsethik,* trans. Oliver Fiala (Leipzig: Naumann, 1895).

appeared in a British newspaper was in *The London Evening Standard,* on 27 August 1900. The obituary describes Nietzsche as wanting to 'build up a system of ethics on a purely scientific basis' and then devotes what seems to be a disproportionate amount of space – when one considers everything Nietzsche wrote – to comparing 'Herbert Spencer, Huxley and other English evolutionists' and their different approaches to Darwinism. For reasons we shall see below, this obituary would have turned Nietzsche in his recent grave, but how did Nietzsche's work come to be summed up in a discussion about Darwinism in the first place? It is no surprise when the English author writing in an English newspaper finally reveals his source as none other than 'Nietzsche's chief English disciple Alexander Tille' who admires Nietzsche for neither evading nor veiling the logical consequences of Darwinism. The obituarist then spells out what he means by 'the logical consequences' in a single decisive move:

> Man has a body and a mind, which latter he ought to develop on the old lines of selection, survival, and transmission to the highest possible level of perfection, until, in due course, he will reach a stage as much superior to that of the present species as men are to the anthropoid apes. This, crudely stated, is Nietzsche's famous doctrine of the Übermensch or beyond man.[378]

The unsuspecting reader would be led to believe that Nietzsche saw the Übermensch as nature's evolutionary goal, the eventual and inevitable outcome of natural selection. This would fortify or at least help to form the popular opinion that Nietzsche was indeed a Darwinist. Moreover, if the reader made it beyond Tille's introduction and read just a mere three paragraphs of book one of *Thus Saith Zarathustra*, they could verify this interpretation for themselves by checking it against Nietzsche's own words. For anyone trying to corroborate these claims in the way I am suggesting, it would appear as though his interpreters had been offering a virtual paraphrase:

> I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. […] All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? [...] The overman shall be the meaning of the earth! […] Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman – a rope over an abyss […] What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an *overture* and a going under.[379]

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[378] 'Death of Nietzsche'.
[379] *Z*, para.3-4, pp.125-27.

An editor's introduction, an obituary and the first few paragraphs of *Thus Saith Zarathustra.* Not much to build a reputation on perhaps, and this was part of the problem. For example, several authors of Nietzsche's reception history have noted the unfortunate choice of works which were selected as the first to be translated into English. *Zarathustra* and the works of 1888 were considered to be inaccessible because of their polemical style and mysterious nature. This is not the easy reproach of scholars looking back from their own chronological vantage point a century later, but a decision bemoaned by commentators shortly after the publication of the first translations. Thatcher in his detailed history underlines several such comments. For example, with only a handful of years to reflect on Nietzsche's consequent reception – or lack thereof – Beatrice Marshall suggests 'it would be less erratic to begin with a work like "*The Birth of Tragedy*".[380] Likewise, Arthur Symons hoped that the publication of *The Dawn of Day* would help to rectify the situation, because it was 'the ripest and least extravagant of Nietzsche's books'.[381] In a similar vein, Ratner-Rosenhagen, writing from the American perspective, says 'a key problem […] was the books Tille and Common chose to translate', and she quotes Havelock Ellis's complaint that 'the English publishers exclusively brought forward the latest, the most extravagant, the most insane portions of his work'.[382] But I am not sure that Tille or Thomas Common who collaborated on the first translations would have agreed that any error in judgement had been made, Common and Tille were both Darwinists and in all likelihood had deliberately selected Nietzsche's works with the intent purpose of introducing Nietzsche to English readers – at least in part – as someone who could philosophically legitimate their Darwinian perspective.[383]

I have been arguing that readers in a cultural context which had taken to excessively checking its own pulse and temperature, who were partly provoked by and partly looking to Darwinian theory to answer their questions regarding their own health, only required limited, though carefully selected, Nietzschean resources to steer them in this very particular direction. An editor's introduction, an obituary, and perhaps the first few paragraphs of *Thus Saith Zarathustra* – which one's friend had read – this is the stuff of popular reception.[384] And

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[380] Beatrice Marshall, 'Nietzsche', *Academy* LXIV, March 7 1903, p. 234, cited in *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914,* p. 37.
[381] *Athenaeum*, March 7 1903, p.298, cited in *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914,* p.37.
[382] *American Nietzsche,* p.47.
[383] See, for example, Thomas Common, *Nietzsche as Critic, Poet, Philosopher, Prophet: Choice Selections from His Works* (London: Dutton, 1901). Introduction.
[384] If anyone thinks I am making too much out of too little, perhaps reference to a contemporary popular icon will help. Stephen Hawking died during the writing of this chapter and within hours of the breaking news of his death, his book *The Brief History of Time: From Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988)

so, acknowledging the long-term impact of such paltry evidence, Gregory Moore in his essay 'Nietzsche and Evolution' cites Tille as his earliest example of critics who 'interpreted the Übermensch narrowly, as a response to the debates about the future of evolution […] The idea was common amongst a great many subsequent commentators – especially social Darwinists and eugenicists – and remains, stubbornly, a popular misconception'.[385]

The reader will have noticed that in several places along the way I have placed a sizable question mark over the idea that Nietzsche was a Darwinist without offering anything by way of explanation. On that account I now want to try to size up Tille's strident and – at a popular level – stubbornly influential claim by comparing it to the far more tempered views of recent scholarship. Today, anyone suggesting that Darwin and Nietzsche were simply mining from the same quarry of ideas knows that they must first of all remove the rather large boulder of Nietzsche's own vehement opposition to Darwin and 'the scholarly oxen' who, Nietzsche says, 'have suspected me of Darwinism'.[386] Take, for example, Richardson's *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*. Richardson wants to make clear the connections between Darwin and Nietzsche but he knows he has to head off what today might be the obvious and inevitable objections to his project by preempting them right at the beginning of his book with these words:

> Most of what Nietzsche says about Darwin and Darwinism is hostile. Indeed, the most striking things he says reach the pitch of denunciation and insult. He likes to call Darwin mediocre and attacks Darwinism on a host of theoretical and evaluative grounds.[387]

And while Richardson intends to narrow the theoretical distance that lies between them, he does so through a careful excavation of specific ideas that Nietzsche felt had simply eluded Darwin or at least the Darwinists. By contrast, Tille, with none of the subtlety and nuance that would be required today, unproblematically describes Nietzsche as an advocate

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once more shot to the top of the bestseller lists. The book first became a bestseller in 1988, cementing his iconic status in popular culture as a scientist, genius and authority not only on cosmology but just about anything else, including how humanity would be viewed by aliens from another planet or the existential threat robots pose to the human race. But as well as being a bestseller, *A Brief History of Time* is also reputed to be one of the least read bestsellers of all time, even inspiring 'The Hawking Index', a way of ranking the books that are most quickly and most often abandoned by their readers. Nonetheless, while *A Brief History of Time* may have been little read and serially abandoned, it was a crucial step in the making of Hawking's icon even before his celebrity status had really taken off. Hawking is associated in popular thought with 'time' and 'blackholes' even though most people have never read a word he wrote. This goes to show how little direct contact and on what paltry evidence these strong associations are created, that sometimes the less contact and evidence the better.

[385] Gregory Moore, 'Nietzsche and Evolutionary Theory', in *A Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. Keith Ansell Pearson (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), pp.517-31 (p.518).

[386] *EH, '*Why I Write Such Good Books,*'* para.1, p.261.

[387] *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*, p.3.

of Darwinian thinking. What I want to note here is that Nietzsche took multiple swipes at Darwin and Darwinists – but just as his overt statements against nationalism could not prevent him being labelled a nationalist – his hostility toward Darwin failed to prevent him being labelled a social Darwinist in the English-speaking world.

3.8 Darwin and the Darwinists

However, it might be possible to explain the conflict between Nietzsche's own self-perception and Tille's interpretation of him by the fact that Nietzsche was not directly familiar with Darwin but only as he was mediated through certain Darwinists. Nietzsche, in other words, had simply misunderstood Darwin and his hostility toward him was largely misdirected so that while some of Nietzsche's critiques could be applied aptly to particular Darwinists – especially to those British theorists such as Huxley and Spencer[388] – they did not apply to Darwin himself. Following this train of thought, if Nietzsche had taken the trouble to become directly familiar with Darwin he would have realised that he was in his corner so to speak. And therefore, Darwinists of a different stripe could legitimately claim Nietzsche for themselves without ignoring Nietzsche's concerns. If this is the case, it appears as though we have arrived back where we started. Was Tille right to claim Nietzsche as a true Darwinian despite his protestation to the contrary? If so, does this close the gap between Nietzsche and his popular audience at the time by lending credence to the popular opinion that Nietzsche was in fact a social Darwinist?

3.8.1 Social Darwinism and Social Darwinism

In order to move forward with this question, it will be helpful to further explore the distinction that I have suggested exists between various types of Darwinists. The language of social Darwinism is punctuated by a number of strikingly different accounts concerning how evolutionary theory legislates value. I will begin by indexing these accounts for quick reference by way of some general comments from several influential advocates of both – which might be deemed the gentler or softer versions of social Darwinism and those of the more brutal variety. This will provide a general if only visceral impression of the range of opinion in Darwinian thought, but from this we will select two thinkers who represent the

[388] Spencer is referenced more often than Darwin in Nietzsche's works.

extreme ends of opinion for closer examination and then attempt to locate where Nietzsche stood in connection to both.

Perhaps the most influential advocate of a gentler social Darwinism was the English evolutionist Herbert Spencer who placed evolutionary processes within the broader framework of a sort of cosmic progress:

> Now, we propose in the first place to show, that this law of organic progress is the law of all progress. […] From the earliest traceable cosmical changes down to the latest results of civilization, we shall find that the transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous, is that in which progress essentially consists.[389]

This teleological account of natural processes that sees everything moving from 'the homogeneous to the heterogeneous' provides the moral dimension in which human society exists. The tie between morality and heterogeneity is encoded in the writings of the sociologist Gustave Ratzenhofer who explains that 'the ethical nature of humans is directed at nothing other than at the flourishing of the species, and this rests on the *mutual dependence of all humans*'.[390] And it is because of this ethical directedness of evolution – and not because of any innate human value – that Bartholomeus von Caneri uses nature in order to legislate values after a utilitarian fashion: 'always act such that the maxim of your desires can always serve simultaneously as the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.[391]

Perhaps a mediating position is that of Bertha von Suttner, leader of the German peace movement and the author of *Lay Down Your Arms* for which, in 1905, she became the first woman to be awarded the Nobel peace prize. Suttner describes a more limited heterogeneity which required the elimination of the barbaric races which would eventually lead to world peace. She imagines nature to be working in tandem with her pacifist ideals, culminating eventually with the 'extinction of ethnic hatred […] [that] the prize of eternal peace can and will be achieved through the eternal struggle, which follows [natural] law.' It is important to note, however, that for Suttner the 'eternal struggle' was defined as competition not war.[392]

And finally we return once more to Tille who expresses the diametrically opposing view to Spencer's own in the following crystalline words: 'even the most careful selection of

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[389] Herbert Spencer, 'Progress: Its Law and Cause; With Other Disquisitions', *Humboldt Library of Popular Science Literature*, 1 (1881), 535-62 (p.536).
[390] Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.44. (Italics mine).
[391] *Ibid*., p.27.
[392] *Ibid*., p.179.

the best can accomplish nothing, if it is not linked with a merciless elimination of the worst people'.

With this general sense of the range of ideas that exist under the banner of social Darwinism, we will take a closer look at Spencer and Tille, who will mark for us the limits of Darwinian thought around the time of Nietzsche's introduction to the English-speaking world.

3.8.2 Herbert Spencer

Although Spencer was not actually categorised as a social Darwinist until the publication of Richard Hofstadter's 1944 book *Social Darwinism in American Thought*,[393] his ideas essentially operated at that conceptual level and gained successful and widespread influence without that specific attribution. For example, the popularity of his ideas is simply assumed in the backdrop for George Bernard Shaw's stage play '*Man and Superman*', first performed in 1905. In the first scene of the play, the audience is introduced to Roebuck Ramsden, 'an Evolutionist from the publication of the Origin of Species' who sits in his study facing a bust of 'Mr. Herbert Spencer'.[394] Thus, from the opening lines, Darwin and Spencer are the 'venerable' figures who set the scene and act as the perfect foil for Shaw's 'irreverent' 'Nietzschean' alternative his play is going to propose. Furthermore, the international influence of Spencer's social Darwinism, beyond the Anglosphere, is illustrated by the aforementioned Suttner, who won the Nobel peace prize in the same year as Shaw's play was published. Richard Weikart notes that 'Spencer's influence shone through' in Suttner's acceptance speech in which she states, 'those who recognize the law of evolution and seek to advance its operations are convinced that what is to come is always a degree better, nobler, happier than what lies in the past'. Suttner's pacifist vision of humanity's future tied to Darwinian thought is also a recurring theme in several of her novels.[395]

But decades before Spencer's influence reached the zenith of popularity and international fame we have just described, Nietzsche had addressed numerous problems

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[393] Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, *1860-1915* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944). Prior to Hofstadter's cementing Spencer's reputation as a Social Darwinist in 1944, the term had only been applied to Spencer twice. *Cf* Thomas Leonard, 'Origins of the Myth of Social Darwinism: The Ambiguous Legacy of Richard Hofstadter's *Social Darwinism in American Thought*', *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization*, 71 (July 2009), 37-51. (p.40).

[394] George Bernard Shaw, *Man And Superman: A Comedy and a Philosophy* [written in 1903, first performed in 1905], Project Gutenberg ebook, p.29.

[395] *From Darwin to Hitler,* p.179.

which atheism presented for Spencer's theory. A few details about Spencer's social Darwinism and how it worked will help us better understand Nietzsche's concerns.

The mechanism at work in Spencer's social Darwinism might be roughly sketched as follows: Natural selection forms behavior by shaping the *feelings* that supply the *motivation* for the kind of *conduct* that promotes the survival of a particular organism. For an example of how this works, Spencer observes that behavior at the most basic level is patterned on attempts to avoid painful experiences and to act on those that bring pleasure. But Spencer expands his emotivist account to explain the ascent of certain behaviors on the social level so that it appears as though society itself evolves along similar lines to biological life: 'The multitudinous creatures of all kinds which fill the earth, cannot live wholly apart from one another'[396] and, forced to live in each other's presence, selection begins to work for the survival of the whole group. This group selection works by bringing *egoism* and *altruism* together, whereby 'the state of mind accompanying altruistic action, being a pleasurable state, is to be counted in the sum of pleasures which the individual can receive'.[397] In this way, the *feeling* of pleasure provides the sympathetic *motivation* needed for altruistic *conduct*, and thus pleasure, sympathy and altruism are bundled together in service of the survival and progress of both an individual and a society. Spencer acknowledges that this 'compromise between egoism and altruism has been slow establishing itself'[398] nevertheless, he is able to trace its advance in various areas of human life together all the way up to international relations – however faint those traces might be. Spencer talks about this advance in terms of measuring the progress of civilization and assumes a sort of inevitability about this progress as he aims to show that a 'kindred conciliation has been, and is, taking place between the interests of each citizen and the interests of citizens at large; tending ever towards a state in which the two become merged in one'.[399]

This then is the rough shape of Spencer's social Darwinism but provides enough of a picture for us to begin highlighting the various features with which Nietzsche takes issue. As well as noting the places where Nietzsche and Spencerian Darwinists diverge from one another, I will try to demonstrate that in Nietzsche's own judgement these points of divergence stem once more from a recalcitrance on the part of other atheists to accept – what

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[396] Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Ethics*, vol. 1 [1897], introduction by Tibor R. Machon (Indianapolis: LibertyClassics, 1978). Liberty Fund ebook, p.29. <https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/333/Spencer_0155-01_EBk_v6.0.pdf> [accessed 2 February 2021]
[397] *Ibid.*, p.141.
[398] *Ibid*., p.155.
[399] *Ibid.,* p.157.

in Nietzsche's view – are some fairly rudimentary facts about what the death of God actually means.

First, Nietzsche takes issue with social Darwinism as an account of how nature has legislated and elevated values of compassion and altruism in society. One of the points of Nietzsche's genealogical approach is to untie the function and value of our morality today from the moorings of function and value in some originating past. The questions of origins and present purpose should be understood as two distinct questions, but Nietzsche says, 'Unfortunately they are usually confounded' and 'Naively, as has always been their way: they seek out some "purpose" […] then guilelessly place this purpose at the beginning'.[400] Although in this instance Nietzsche is talking about the specific example of punishment, it applies to his broader genealogical approach to morality. Thus, Spencer is inferring origins from today's utility in an attempt to justify sympathy, compassion and altruism through natural history, but Spencer's 'faith in morality' is a bad faith shaped by 'sentimentality in the face of the past'. As Nietzsche says:

> Even the basic conditions of life are falsely interpreted for the benefit of morality: despite our knowledge of the animal world and the world of plants. 'Self-preservation': the reconciliation of altruistic and egoistic principles in the perspective of Darwinism.[401]

And as we might expect, Nietzsche explains that this 'sentimental' 'faith' is placed in a 'falsely interpreted' past in terms of its commitment to the metaphysical beyond – more specifically a Christian metaphysical beyond:

> Utilitarianism (socialism, democracy) criticizes the origin of moral evaluations, but it *believes* them just as much as the Christian does. (Naiveté: as if morality could survive when the *God* who sanctions it is missing! The 'beyond' absolutely necessary if faith in morality is to be maintained.)[402]

Second, Nietzsche does not think nature provides a rational ground for the notion of progress let alone provide any sort of guarantee that society will progress along any particular lines. We noted above that for Spencer, the continuing conciliation between egoism and altruism was not only the measure of civilisation's progress but the inevitable direction of civilisation given the way that natural selection works. As Richardson puts it, Spencer

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[400] *GM,* Second Essay, para.12, pp.76-77.
[401] *WP*, para.253, p.147.
[402] *Ibid*.

presents progress as 'a pervasive cosmic tendency', as if nature aims toward the goal of perfecting individuals and societies by integrating ever increasing diversities, and that this progress will eventually reach its end and limit in world peace.[403] However, Nietzsche clearly counters all this by pointing out that Spencerian forms of social Darwinism are merely Hegelian interpretations of nature that have not yet grasped that Darwin defeats Aristotle.[404] Put simply, nature has no necessary goal; therefore, how can we talk coherently about the *progress* of nature let alone be assured of any particular outcome? So, Nietzsche says 'it is hasty and almost unreflective to assume that progress must *necessarily* take place.'[405]

Looking back then, Nietzsche perceives that other 'genealogies' are really only sentimentalised and sacralised versions of the past that reveal the genealogist's attachments to the values that grew out of belief in God, and looking forward, Nietzsche thinks all talk about progress in terms of an assumed goal amounts to the same thing. It is simply a matter of smuggling in Christian metaphysical commitments under the guise of naturalism, so that unlike many atheists, Nietzsche sees God lurking behind words like 'nature', 'progress', 'perfectibility' and 'Darwinism'.

> To what extent the fateful belief in divine providence – the most paralyzing belief for hand and reason there has ever been – still exists; to what extent Christian presuppositions and interpretations still live on under the formulas 'nature,' 'progress,' 'perfectibility,' 'Darwinism,' under the superstitious belief in a certain relationship between happiness and virtue, unhappiness and guilt. That absurd trust in the course of things, in 'life,' in the 'instinct of life.'[406]

For Nietzsche, this 'trust in the course of things' is 'absurd' because it does not register the obvious fact that once God is removed, what remains is an indifferent nature and not an interested party which can 'ground and justify' the legislation of our values.[407] And once this idea takes root, we will discover that there is nothing inevitable about the 'progress' we have made or perhaps we should just say the particular direction in which we find ourselves moving. In fact, Nietzsche thinks the opposite is true: 'Nature is a bad economist: its expenditure is much larger than the income it procures; all its wealth notwithstanding, it is

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[403] *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*, p.162.
[404] *WP*, para.422, pp.226-27.
[405] Friedrich Nietzsche, *HAH*, trans. Alexander Harvey (Chicago: Kerr, 1908).
[406] *WP,* para.243, pp.139-140.
[407] Daniel W. Conway, 'Returning to Nature: Nietzsche's Götterdämmerung', in Nietzsche: A Critical Reader, ed. Peter R. Sedgwick (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), pp.31-52 (p.41).

bound sooner or later to ruin itself'.[408] In fact, the disturbing realisation that nature cannot justify our values is itself part of the evolution through natural and social selection which Nietzsche thinks could well be part of humanity's undoing or as he puts it 'nature ruining itself'. As we noted in the previous chapter, Nietzsche envisages humanity as walking a precarious line between the last man who professes atheism but helps himself to the values that found justification with God and the nihilist who is incapable of legislating values without God.[409] And the analysis we have made here concerning the contention between Nietzsche and Spencer's social Darwinism makes clear just how razor thin that line is between the last man and the nihilist. The sharp end of Nietzsche's critique is this: if an atheist can confer God's metaphysical legislative powers onto nature – whereby nature becomes the ground of genealogy and progress, the beginning and the end of all things – then the atheist can maintain their values. But if these same atheists were to suddenly become aware of the solipsistic nature of these attempts to use nature to legislate value, they would lose their balance and fall off into nihilism.

3.8.3 Tille

If the gentler Spencerian Darwinism did not truck with Nietzsche's atheism, Tille believed that his more brutal variety of Darwinism would. While Nietzsche appeared vehemently opposed to Darwin, Tille could reasonably present Nietzsche as the true Darwinist over against those so-called Darwinists who had as of yet not faced the logical consequences of their own theory.

Considering the particular features of Tille's Darwinian thought, this seems plausible. For example, Tille recognises the theological origins of egalitarianism and related notions of human rights, and he spells out in no uncertain terms the implications of God's death for this kind of morality: 'Darwinism knows no inborn human rights, but only earned ones, and Darwin knows no other rights, than those earned through their own labor'.[410]

And in a similar vein, Tille says:

> From the doctrine that all men are children of God and equal before him, the ideal of humanitarianism and socialism has grown, that all humans have the same right to exist and the same value, and this ideal

[408] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Schopenhauer as Educator*',* [1873-1874] in *UM*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R .J. Hollingdale, pp.125-194 (p.7).
[409] See chapter two, 2.9
[410] *Von Darwin Bis Nietzsche*, p.204.

> has greatly influenced behavior in the last two centuries. *This idea is irreconcilable with the theory of evolution*….It [evolution] recognizes only fit and unfit, healthy and sick, genius and atavist.[411]

Disposing with egalitarian sentiment, Tille unflinchingly divides humanity into decaying and ascending races, where the decaying races no longer have the right to exist and the ascending races have an ethical responsibility to eliminate them:

> Everywhere in nature the higher triumphs over the lower, and thus it is only the right of the stronger race to destroy the lower. When the latter do not have the ability to resist, they also have no right to exist.[412]

> Even the most careful selection of the best can accomplish nothing, if it is not linked with a merciless elimination of the worst people.[413]

All of this has a familiar ring to it and requires little effort on behalf of the reader to draw several striking parallels between Nietzsche and Tille in this regard. Therefore, in one sense I find myself in agreement with Weikart who contends that we cannot simply dismiss connections between Nietzsche and Darwinism as a 'facile misinterpretation of a complex thinker'.[414] In fact, given these similarities, it would seem reasonable to class Nietzsche as a social Darwinist, as long as we pegged him with Tille toward the more brutal end of the register. Nevertheless, without having to deny these several and significant resemblances – we must also recognise that Nietzsche's critique of Darwinism is *not only* about the resulting morality.

Eliminating egalitarianism, exalting health and vitality over Christian asceticism and declaring war against the lower types do not in the end close the gap that exists between Nietzsche and the Darwinists in the way that we might have expected. In fact, it is precisely across this ugly broad ditch that Dirk Johnson sees Nietzsche defending 'Christianity from those who used Darwin to vent vulgar anti-clerical, anti-Christian sentiments'.[415] This is because Nietzsche was not only concerned with the act of reevaluating values but he was equally concerned with how one would go about making such a reevaluation. In other words,

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[411] *Von Darwin Bis Nietzsche*, (Liepzip, 1895) cited in *From Darwin to Hitler*, p.94.
[412] Alexander Tille, *Volksdienst* (Berlin: Weiner'sche Verlagbuchhandlung, 1893), pp.26-27.
[413] *Von Darwin Bis Nietzsche*, p.214.
[414] *From Darwin to Hitler,* p.46.
[415] Dirk R. Johnson, *Nietzsche's Anti-Darwinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.38.

Nietzsche would ask the searching question: on what grounds do we legislate or what exactly do we think we are doing when we legislate?

As in any court of law, it is not just the contents of what is legislated but the legislative procedure that counts. Therefore, even though Tille may exist at the more brutal end of social Darwinian thought that eschews Christian virtue, Nietzsche would trace the same procedural steps that Tille took to arrive at his anti-Christian position as his Spencerian counterparts had taken who were eager to preserve a Christian morality.

To draw out this legal analogy, laws and legal systems may look different from one country to another, but given that roughly two-thirds of the world's legal systems are based on English common law – against all appearances and more often than not – these legal systems actually share the same source. The irony then is that the same charges brought against Spencer can also be brought against Tille. For example, Tille remains as teleologically obsessed as Spencer, placing evolutionary progress as nature's goal and the highest good. As Tille puts it, 'the proclamation of social elimination must therefore be one of the supreme features of every ethics which elevates as its ideal the goal that the theory of evolution has demonstrated'.[416] Tille then places Nietzsche's Übermensch as the end goal of natural biological processes. There are in fact a couple of different ways that the Übermensch becomes the Darwinian evolutionary goal which Johnson summarises in the following manner:

> While one group sees Nietzsche's vision primarily in "scientific" terms – the *Übermensch* representing a "fitter" biological type in the literal sense of evolution – the other interprets the relationship more figuratively. Here, the *Übermensch* represents a *symbolic* transcendence of modern man and "evolution" expresses a "higher" dialectical stage. Though interpretations often reflect a hybrid of these two positions, common to both is an implied *progression* along an evolutionary continuum to a superior stage of human development.[417]

But Nietzsche would say that the idea that we are inevitably progressing in a sustained fashion toward 'end goals' that are 'demonstrated' by evolutionary theory along a continuum favored by nature itself is to fall once more under what he calls morality's 'spell'.[418] It is an attempt to conjure up 'a world we can revere, that is adequate to our drive to worship – that

[416] *Von Darwin Bis Nietzsche*, p.214.
[417] *Anti-Darwinism*, p.45.
[418] *WP*, para.253, p.146.

continually proves itself – by providing guidance in the particular and general –: this is the Christian viewpoint in which we have all grown up'.[419]

And once again it is this naïve – and perhaps at times dishonest – disavowal of Christianity which at once professes atheism and yet holds on with both hands to Christian metaphysical commitments that puts social Darwinists from opposing ends of the Darwinian spectrum at odds with Nietzsche's atheism. In this way:

> [Nietzsche] always remained more critical of self-anointed free-thinkers and founders of new religions than of traditional Christians. Second, he does not naturally assume that Darwin's science necessitates the extreme anti-clericalism and anti- Christian fulminations of some of his followers. The latter point is significant for his subsequent engagement, because it implies that he could see Darwin's thought as a positive and conscientious perspective *within* the Christian tradition.[420]

We have seen that the enduring association of Nietzsche with social Darwinism in popular imagination was made early on in Nietzsche's reception history in the English-speaking world. As we noted, this stubborn identification of Nietzsche with Darwinism is simultaneously reflective of the prominence of Darwinian theory *and* the *fin-de-siècle* angst at that time which we have tried to demonstrate throughout this section. We also noted somewhat paradoxically that Darwinism became the solution to the very problem of mediocrity that it helped to create and which plagued the *fin-de-siècle*. What kind of cure Darwinism offered depended largely on whether you approached it from the gentler or more brutal ends of the spectrum which we have also attempted to delineate here. However, it is precisely this sort of cathartic reconciliation that Nietzsche resists as he unearths the theological underpinning of both the values that some social Darwinists legislate and the legislative procedure which both varieties of social Darwinism seem to follow. Or to put it the other way around, when we consider the philosophical substructure of Nietzsche's atheism, it becomes impossible to place him comfortably anywhere on the existing range of social Darwinism. On closer inspection, we discover that this hastily made connection between Nietzsche and the Darwinists is yet again the result of either ignoring or failing to understand Nietzsche's broader philosophical critique of what often tries to pass for atheism. Although atheistic Darwinists might feign a good 'naturalistic' accent, and even use words like 'nature', 'progress' and 'Darwinism', Nietzsche the philologist detects just another dialect of a wholly theological language.

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[419] *Ibid*.
[420] *Anti-Darwinism*, p.26.

3.9 Conclusion

Nietzsche arrived in the English-speaking world during a period of escalating British nationalism. In order for a German philosopher to win an English-speaking audience in this environment, Nietzsche's Anglophone defenders almost immediately set about disassociating Nietzsche from the equally fervent and corresponding German nationalism of the time. There was plenty of biographical and textual evidence with which Nietzsche's defenders could successfully accomplish their task – evidence that is frequently marshalled today, forming a significant part of the way in which Nietzsche is still presented to contemporary popular audiences.

But Nietzsche's anti-nationalism is not simply the hallmark of a progressive cosmopolitanism, but a hallmark of his atheism. In as much as Nietzsche perceives nationalism as a form of egalitarianism, Nietzsche condemns it as another manifestation of the herd's ascetic instinct along the road to cultural decadence.

Concerns about decadence and mediocrity – far from being Nietzsche's exclusive domain – formed the cultural horizon of a generation at the *fin-de-siècle*, and while Darwinism had helped to fuel these concerns, paradoxically, certain forms of social Darwinism provided hope of cultural renewal. Depending then on where Nietzsche's audience placed him on the spectrum of social Darwinism, he was caught between the conflicting claims that he was a symptom of mediocrity on the one hand and a cure for mediocrity on the other. But Nietzsche does not sit comfortably anywhere on the spectrum of social Darwinism, not because of any objection he might have to a particular set of values, but because the attempt to legislate values from nature is in Nietzsche's view yet another manifestation of the ascetic theistic instinct. The historical data provides one level of explanation as to why he was received one way, but an understanding of his atheism reveals that a gaping chasm remains between Nietzsche and his would-be defenders.

Under Nietzschean categories, the growth of Nietzsche's legend at a popular level does not disclose the consciousness of an individual but rather the shared thoughts and conventions of the crowd to which the individual belongs. Thus, as Nietzsche predicts, his popular reception appears to be an expression of the need of the herd.

Chapter Four

Nietzsche the Warmonger (The War and Interwar Years)

Some have made such sweet and shallow sense of him [Nietzsche] that, if their versions of him are accepted, he would best be left to the apostles of self-improvement.[421]

Richard Schacht

'We have invented happiness', say the last men, and they blink.[422]

Nietzsche

4.0 Philosophers: Mocked and Mistrusted

Unlike the French – who are rumoured to treat their philosophers like celebrities – the English have long suspected the philosopher of being a silly and irrelevant character who goes about with his head in the clouds and whose project is founded on an obfuscating and esoteric language which only he understands.[423] By way of contrast, this well-worn, often comedic trope might help us appreciate Nietzsche's unique if not exaggerated presence on the political stage in the wake of WWI. During this time, Nietzsche's popular English-speaking reception subverted the usual stereotype of the detached philosopher breathing a rarified

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[421] *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, p.1.
[422] *Z*, First Part, 'Zarathustra's Prologue', para.5, p.129.
[423] Take, for example, Mel Brook's irreverent comedy *A Brief History of the World*, dir. Mel Brooks (Twentieth Century Fox, 1981) in which the out-of-work philosopher Comicus – otherwise Plato – takes his turn in the dole queue. He describes himself as 'a stand-up philosopher' who 'coalesce[s] the vapors of human experience into a viable and meaningful comprehension'. The dole clerk quickly understands, and neatly surmises, 'Oh, a bullshit artist', much to Comicus's consternation. In a similar vein, in the sketch 'Mrs Premise and Mrs Conclusion Visit Jean-Paul Sartre', in 'Whicker's World' (episode 27), Monty Python's Flying Circus (BBC1, 1972), marking the distance between philosophers and the man on the street, Mrs. Premise and Mrs. Conclusion are in the launderette arguing over the meaning of Jean Paul Sartre's *Roads to Freedom*. 'The nub of that is, his characters stand for all of us in their desire to avoid action'. 'Mind you', she waivers, 'the man in the off license says it's an everyday story of French country folk'. In the dole queue, launderette and off-license, the philosopher's words hold nebulous meaning and working on the suspicion that philosophy is in fact a gigantic confidence trick Douglas Adams in his famed *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* counts philosophers amongst the useless people who are sent away from earth. And sometimes this is the professional opinion of one type of philosopher about another. Consider Noam Chomsky's comments about Jacques Derrida: 'But when I read, you know, Derrida [...] it's like words passing in front of my eyes [...] So maybe I'm missing a gene or something, it's possible. But my honest opinion is, I think it's all fraud'. *Cf* Noam Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky*, ed. Peter R. Mitchell and John Schoeffel (New York: The New Press, 2002), p.231.

philosophical air, and Nietzsche was seen instead as a dangerous thinker who in the more extreme accounts had all of Germany in his grip and was in fact directing the theatre of war.

But charges of such a radical nature did not go undisputed, even in the English-speaking world and even at the height of the inevitable jingoism of war time propaganda. Granted, Nietzsche's defenders were few and far between and attempts at an academic level to disentangle Nietzsche from the events of WWI were only occasionally voiced at a popular level.[424] Nevertheless, the significance of these early attempts to clear Nietzsche's name in public demonstrate an early and growing awareness that when it came to Nietzsche, scholars had to contend with a more general audience. That is to say, Nietzsche's wartime defenders anticipated the kind of apologetics that Nietzsche scholarship would have to engage in thereafter, a project which – as we shall see in the next chapter – was momentarily abandoned after WWII when even ardent Nietzscheans such as literary luminary Thomas Mann finally came to publicly distance themselves from their hero. Whether Mann and others distanced themselves out of philosophical conviction or rather out of political expedience, it remains that scholars were put in the *unusual* position of having to justify their own philosophical pursuits through an exercise in public relations.

In view of this, the first part of this chapter will consider how the parameters of Nietzsche's post-WWI reception came to be so firmly established to the extent that the discussion from that era continues to frame and determine the direction of popular accounts of Nietzsche's atheism today. In these accounts, the earlier 'simplistic' interpretations which straightforwardly blamed Nietzsche for the war play the perfect foil for the more 'nuanced' understandings being offered by contemporary authors, who pick up where the advance guard of Nietzsche scholarship left off in correcting popular and 'crude misunderstandings' – although in some instances, as we shall see in a moment, with less nuance and understanding than Nietzsche's early twentieth-century defenders.

Listening to this conversation crisscrossing the decades will help make clear the philosophical commitments which have shaped Nietzsche's reception shared between readers of different periods. Many commentators who blame Nietzsche for the war and many commentators who grant him absolution are related superficially at least by their atheism. However, both groups are more meaningfully related to each other through a deeper philosophical root system which has very little to do with atheism and which Nietzsche intended his atheism to unearth. I will argue, somewhat paradoxically, that these two groups

[424] And then often by German/Jewish scholars such as Nietzsche's early translator Oscar Levy – and therefore more easily dismissed.

of atheists through their diametrically opposing actions of at once condemning and absolving Nietzsche, are an expression of a humanity shaped in a particular way through shared metaphysical and therefore moral commitments which are in fact implicitly theistic, however deeply buried they may be. For values such as human rights, compassion, progress and peace are part of the register of values by which Nietzsche is measured, values which inevitably depend upon a secret telos toward which human beings are aimed and toward which history is unfolding, or perhaps a universal characteristic that binds humanity across history, or perhaps a substance that grants equal worth and dignity to all humans. In other words, Nietzsche is being measured using values that belong to a Chrstian moral hinterland, but to which both groups of readers are typically unwilling to admit. Being alert to all of this will help to keep the larger goal of this thesis in view: beyond providing an account of how Nietzsche has been received, I want to offer what I am arguing is a Nietzschean evaluation of his own popular reception.

4.1 Warmonger

We will begin this chapter by listening to a number of voices that held Nietzsche responsible for plunging the world into the Great War, which – as we shall see presently – was not an unusual or idiosyncratic view of things but was broadcast with surprising frequency across the wider cultural conversation by authors of highly regarded and popular literary works, journalists, and pamphleteers alike.

William Salter, one of Nietzsche's early defenders, writing for an academic audience in 1917, acknowledges the degree to which Nietzsche had become associated with the Great War, noting that it 'is even called "Nietzsche in Action," or the "Euro-Nietzschean (or Anglo-Nietzschean) War"'.[425] Salter had in view comments like those below which I have selected more or less at random from the abundance of similar commentary that filled the British newspapers at the time. 'The German campaign of barbarism in Belgium is simply Nietzsche's bookish dream of a conquering pitilessness put into practice'.[426] And 'the war is Nietzsche's war in that it represents the attempt of the militarist bureaucracy that rules Germany to enthrone Nietzsche's theories'.[427] Comments like these made a mere three

[425] William Mackintire Salter, 'Nietzsche and the War', *International Journal of Ethics,* 27 (1917), 357-79.
[426] 'The Philosophy of Savagery', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 October 1914, p.6. <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2008/oct/13/4> [accessed 28 May 2019].
[427] 'Thus Spake Nietzsche', *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 29 October 1914, p.2.

months after the onset of hostilities, flowed out of the associations that were readily made between Nietzsche and Germ an nationalism and Nietzsche and social Darwinism prior to the war which we considered in the previous chapter. Commentators could quickly and quite naturally link the current conflict to a German philosopher without causing any undue confusion for their popular audience. For example, the following statement was published in the *Daily Mirror* on 10 October 1914:

> We have heard a lot about Nietzsche since this war came upon us. 'Who was Nietzsche?' asked the man in the street. He was a German philosopher […] proudly atheistic free thinker who preached a violent revolt against Christian faith and morals. His gospel was power. He died after spending twelve years in a mad house hopelessly insane and it would appear that he has driven the rest of the German people mad as well.[428]

The author assumes that many of his readers will already have a vague awareness of Nietzsche's connection with the war and only needs to add some clarity by way of a summary of Nietzsche's life and philosophy – something which he offers with all the appearance of helpful concision to the 'man in the street'. If Nietzsche's culpability was a well-established fact, the task remained to apportion blame correctly:

> Since the war began Friedrich Nietzsche has been widely discussed, and the question has been asked how far his 'Neue Moral' explains the attitude of the Germans in international affairs. Newspapers and magazines have been filled with estimates which may bewilder the public.[429]

Coming to the aid of a potentially bewildered public, members of the Oxford Faculty of Modern History offered their own estimates concerning Nietzsche's involvement, in a series of pamphlets entitled *Why We Are at War: Great Britain's Case* in which the authors concluded that Nietzsche had misled the entire German nation. In one pamphlet from the aforementioned series, titled *Nietzsche and Treitschke – The Worship of Power in Modern Germany,* author Ernest Barker is mystified by how Germany could have abandoned truly 'great thinkers' like Kant – who were worthy of the epitaph – in favour of 'other thinkers' like Nietzsche. Barker asserts that having abandoned Kantian duty Germany had been reconfigured around the 'prophet' of power who 'helped to make the spirit, of that new

[428] 'Nietzsche', *Daily Mirror,* 10 October 1914, p.8.
[429] Herbert Leslie Stuart, *Nietzsche and the Ideals of Modern Germany* (London: Edward Arnold, 1915), Preface, p.6.

Germany whose note, it has been said, is subdual'.[430] Barker concludes his section on Nietzsche's philosophy by explaining that Nietzsche not only inspired this spirit of conquest but he also gave it a focus by helping to 'swell the contempt and hatred of England which, if one may judge from much recent German literature, is almost a national passion'.[431]

Joining these pamphleteers who mourned the passing of great thinkers produced by a nobler Germany were popular and distinguished authors such as Thomas Hardy and Joseph Conrad, who both held Nietzsche responsible for the war. Describing Germany's cultural death by Nietzsche's pen, Hardy wrote to the *Manchester Guardian*:

> What a disastrous blight upon the glory and nobility of that great nation has been wrought by the writings of Nietzsche […] I should think that there is no instance since history began of a country being so demoralised by a single writer, the irony being that he was a megalomaniac and not truly a philosopher at all.[432]

Hardy's literary stature meant that the pertinent extracts from this letter were enthusiastically republished in newspapers across Britain.[433] Hardy's comment is of special interest here both because he was an atheist and because his awareness of and interest in Nietzsche began as early as 1894, long before the first English translations of Nietzsche had appeared. At times, Hardy seems sympathetic to Nietzschean themes which he sometimes addressed directly in his writing, offering poetic responses to the 'death of God' in his poem 'God's Funeral'[434] and in a companion poem, 'A Plaint to Man' (written in 1909 but published at the start of the war in 1914), in which a dying God tells his readers:

> And to-morrow the whole of me disappears,
> The truth should be told, and the fact be faced
> That had best been faced in earlier years:

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[430] Ernest Barker, *Nietzsche and Treitschke: The Worship of Power in Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), p.5.
[431] *Ibid.,* p.16.
[432] 'Vandalism at Rheims: Mr. Thomas Hardy's Views', *Manchester Guardian*, 9 October 1914, p.7.
[433] See for example: 'Mr. Thomas Hardy on the Crime of Rheims: Germany a By-Word', *Western Gazette*, 9 October 1914, p.5. 'Mr. Thomas Hardy on the Rheims Outrage: Some Things That Cannot Be Replaced', *Gloucestershire Echo*, 7 October 1914, p.3. 'Germany's Blight: Mr. Thomas Hardy on the Rheims Outrage', *Leeds Mercury*, 7 October 1914, p.4. 'The Mutilation of Rheims Cathedral: Letter from Mr. Thomas Hardy,' *Western Daily Press*, 7 October 1914, p.8. 'The Mutilation of Reims Cathedral: Mr. Thomas Hardy and the Bombastic Writings of Nietzsche', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 7 October 1914, p.4.
[434] Thomas Hardy, *Poems of Thomas Hardy: A New Selection* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2017), p.262.

> The fact of life with dependence placed
> On the human heart's resource alone.[435]

But at other times, Hardy was offended by what he took to be Nietzsche's naturalism: 'to model our conduct on Nature's apparent conduct, as Nietzsche would have taught, can only bring disaster to humanity'.[436] Hardy also condemns the philosophy that would 'insanely regard life as a thing improvable by force to immaculate gloriousness'.[437] Thus, literary critic Eugene Williamson concludes that any affinity Hardy may have felt with Nietzsche was 'overshadowed by his understanding of war as the inevitable consequence of the Nietzschean will to power'.[438]

In a similar vein, novelist Joseph Conrad draws the line between Nietzschean thought and German aggression in his essay 'Crime of Partition', published immediately after the war in 1919. Like Hardy, Conrad, also an atheist, had referenced Nietzsche in numerous letters from 1899 to 1913. In other words, Hardy and Conrad were not only just now joining the chorus of Nietzsche's fashionable detractors, but had arrived at this view – however inaccurate it may have been – through their own ambivalent relationship with Nietzsche across a couple of decades. We shall return to this shortly.

Beyond these broad and general indictments that Nietzsche had 'demoralised the nation', driven Germans to madness and incited hatred, British propagandists also claimed that Nietzsche was involved with the intimate details of the war as well. For example, in a pamphlet with another tell-all title, *Fighting a Philosophy,* author William Archer explains 'how strong is Nietzsche's claim to a posthumous Iron Cross of the first class'[439] by asserting in startling terms that Nietzsche's philosophy was actually woven into the minutiae of German state and warcraft:

> There is not a move of modern Prussian state craft, not an action of the German army since the out-break of war, that could not be justified by scores of texts from Nietzschean scriptures. […] The dominant ideas of his philosophy, the ideas most frequently and emphatically expressed – the ideas, in a word, that get home to the mind of nine readers out of ten – are precisely those which might be

[435] *Poems of Thomas Hardy,* p.260.
[436] Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Works of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Michael Millgate (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1984), p.339.
[437] Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: 1914-1919,* vol. 5 (Clarendon Press, 1978), p.50; also see 'Nietzsche and the War'.
[438]'Thomas Hardy and Friedrich Nietzsche', p.411.
[439] William Archer, *Fighting a Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), p.6.

> water-marked on the protocol-paper of German diplomacy and embroidered on the banners of German militarism.[440]

The idea that Nietzsche 'watermarked' German protocol papers and 'embroidered the banners of German militarism' may not have appeared entirely fantastic to an audience that had grown accustomed to Nietzsche's frequent 'public appearances' with the prominent German military figures historian Heinrich von Treitschke and the General Friedrich Bernhardi, their names often flowing together in the same sentence.[441] The precise nature of their association was often left vague but suggestive of Nietzsche's collaborative relationship with German aggression, such as the cartoon depicting Nietzsche, Treitschke and Bernhardi as three Shakespearean witches stirring a smoking cauldron with the emanating plumes of smoke spelling 'war'.[442]

A decade later, Nietzsche's translator Oscar Levy provides insight into the effectiveness of these associations as he remonstrates over their lasting effects:

> Nietzsche has been under a cloud for considerable time. The war propaganda which accused him together with such disparate associates such as Treitschke and Bernhardi, of the authorship of the great war has had a more lasting effect than his sponsors in England and elsewhere had imagined.[443]

With the gift of hindsight, Nicholas Martin is able to see something of the absurd in this arrangement wherein Nietzsche who had died in 1900 was 'leading a posthumous conspiracy with his "followers"' which included a historian who had died before Nietzsche in 1896 and a now aging military strategist.[444] However, it was not only state engineers or high-level military strategists pushing tokens about on war room maps who were being moved by this mysterious power from beyond the grave; the soldiers in the trenches represented by those tokens were themselves animated by the same seemingly ubiquitous

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[440] *Ibid*., p.4.
[441] At times Treitschke and Bernhardi are described as Nietzsche's followers: 'War to TREITSCHKE and GENERAL BERNHARDI and all the conscious or unconscious followers of NIETZSCHE is noble and splendid in itself'. *Cf* 'The Great Illusion', *The Times,* 14 September 1914, p.9. Sometimes, there was a more precise division of labour with, 'Nietzsche as the philosopher of individual life, Treitschke as the political historian and philosopher of state life and Bernhardi as the concrete embodiment of the two'. *Cf* 'The Philosophy of War', *Shipley Times and Express,* 22 January 1915, p.5. And again, 'Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Bernhardi are but expositors and elaborators of the hellish and inhuman system which I call Bismarckism'. *Cf* 'England's Golden Luck: How the Press Hinders the Government', *Fulham Chronicle*, 30 October 1914. p.6.
[442] 'The German War Cauldron', *Westminster Gazette*, 21 December 1914, p.3.
[443] Oscar Levy, 'Where Does Nietzsche Stand Now?' *Daily Herald*, 17 December 1924, p.9.
[444] Nicholas Martin, '"Fighting a Philosophy": The Figure of Nietzsche in British Propaganda in the First World War', *The Modern Language Review,* 98 (2003), 367-80 (p.368).

Nietzschean force – in fact it was widely reported that German soldiers carried copies of *Zarathustra* in their packs, an ersatz scripture, 'the bible of the military caste in Germany'.[445] News from the front was valuable and it does not take much historical imagination to see how these rumoured and randomly configured relationships ensured that Nietzsche would make headlines back home as *warmonger*.

Commenting on this extraordinary portrayal of a philosopher, Martin notes, 'Never before, at least in modern times, had a philosopher been held responsible for war'.[446] From one point of view – even in light of our observations concerning the vague and fickle fortunes of ideas promulgated at a popular level – it may still seem perverse that Nietzsche, who was openly critical of the Kaiser and perennially scathing about German culture, nationalism and social Darwinism, would be deemed the architect of the intellectual framework that essentially gathered up the very ideas that we have just said Nietzsche disavowed and then be held responsible for WWI. And so, as widely held as this view of things may have been, it was not altogether uncontended:

In a 1914 article titled 'Is it Nietzsche?' Ashley Dukes comments:

> The war has brought in its train a certain volume of nonsense regarding Nietzsche. […] Amiable persons who have never read a line of his writings have deduced from their own conception of the superman something which they call 'a gospel of brutality'.[447]

And a book review titled 'Nietzsche's Appeal to the World of Today' opens with the following comment:

> Professor Henri Lichtenberger […] rightly expresses astonishment in his new preface about the fact that Nietzsche's Will to Power should ever have been thought to be the theoretical expression of that Chauvinistic Imperialism which led to the World War.[448]

And again, a section in the *Daily Herald* mentions *Beyond Good and Evil* under the self-aware title 'Books We All Pretend to Have Read' and notes how Nietzsche's thought has been distorted through his popular reception:

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[445] 'Friedrich Nietzsche and This War: The Philosophic Basis of German Militarism', *Scotsman*, 15 August 1914, p.6.
[446] '"Fighting a Philosophy": The Figure of Nietzsche in British Propaganda in the First World War', p.375.
[447] Ashley Dukes,'Is it Nietzsche?', *Globe,* 8 October 1914, p.1.
[448] 'Nietzsche's Appeal to the World of Today', *Daily Herald,* 11 August 1926, p.9.

> As always happens with thinkers of great subtlety and originality, his ideas got warped in their progress through the public mind. In this way he was made responsible for creating a ruthless temper which possessed first the Germans.[449]

Another article recalls, 'At the beginning of the Great War the name of Nietzsche was on the lips of many who had never heard it before'.[450] The author reframes this household name by explaining that Nietzsche had no love of German nationalism and that before his political usefulness was discovered by German militarists, he was despised by them. However, this time the author does not eliminate the connection between Nietzsche and the war altogether but wants to be more precise about where Nietzsche's thinking and German nationalist ambition converge: 'His doctrine that power is the only quest and to attain it all things are permissible, fitted in well with Prussianised German ideals'.[451]

All of this suggests that there is varied material illustrative of the prevailing early twentieth century view that Nietzsche was meaningfully responsible for the Great War. The prevalence of this view is evidenced not simply by the sheer number of statements to that effect – of which the above is a small sampling – but by the variety of different commentators at the time who shared this view. Perhaps more significant is the way in which these commentators routinely talked about Nietzsche's involvement in the war as if it were 'common knowledge' and therefore could presume upon their readers' tacit agreement. And finally, those who came to Nietzsche's defence perceived themselves as going against this tide of popular opinion. Consequently, regardless of which side of the argument one might have taken, Nietzsche was being conveyed to a popular audience thematically, through the categories which arose between these firmly established poles of debate.

4.2 Legacy

It is now time to consider how this framing of the discussion has persisted and been adapted by present-day authors whose popular presentation of Nietzsche relies on the key elements of the early twentieth-century dispute. The result of these efforts is a somewhat formulaic presentation of Nietzsche as the badly misunderstood and misappropriated

[449] 'Books We All Pretend to Have Read', *Daily Herald*, 26 September 1923, p.7.
[450] 'Nietzsche, The Prophet of His Race', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 15 October 1929, p.8.
[451] *Ibid*.

philosopher, whose reputation recent authors are working to recover using a standard set of arguments which we will consider momentarily.

In the following section I am going to treat Nietzsche's association with war in general and Nietzsche's association with the Nazis and the events of WWII in particular as if they were separate issues. There is an obvious overlap between these issues which are in the end related, and for the sake of concision contemporary popular accounts of Nietzsche's philosophy and reception will sometimes – not unreasonably – allow these issues to run together, dealing with them almost simultaneously. For some heuristic purposes, this might make sense – but there is sufficient distinctiveness to the debates to warrant a separate treatment of each. It is after all possible to imagine a world in which Nietzsche could have become associated with war without ever having been associated specifically with the Nazis; the recursive nature of these rumours notwithstanding, these associations were made at different times, in different ways and for different reasons. And by the same token, the corresponding arguments, now advanced in order to disassociate Nietzsche from these issues, also originate at different points and have their own discrete history. That is not to say that the popular rumours have not built upon each other; no doubt the Nazi Nietzsche was easier to imagine precisely because first of all Nietzsche had become popularly known as a nationalist, a social Darwinist, a madman and then crucially as a warmonger.

4.3 Nietzsche's Anti-Militarism

One way to remove the stain of blood from Nietzsche's hands is to trumpet his anti-war credentials. Solomon and Higgins's strategy, writing for a recent general readership, is to proceed as if Nietzsche's anti-militarism is something that can be taken for granted, so that without any supporting statements from Nietzsche himself, they simply speak about it as a matter of course. 'Despite his anti-militarism', they begin, but without explanation or citation it is not clear to what this 'anti-militarism' refers.[452] Nevertheless, the point has been made, and not every member of a popular audience will notice this sleight-of-hand. Nietzsche biographer Sue Prideaux, author of *I Am Dynamite: A Life Of Nietzsche,* also states in matter-of-fact terms that Nietzsche was 'so hostile to pan-German militarism'.[453] Prideaux goes one further than Solomon and Higgins by providing Nietzsche's own compelling words:

[452] *NRS,* p.40.
[453] Sue Prideaux, *I Am Dynamite: A Life Of Nietzsche* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018), p.373.

> 'If we could dissuade from wars, so much the better,' he had written in one of his late notebooks. 'I would know how to find better use for the twelve billion that it cost Europe each year to preserve its armed peace; there are other means of honoring physiology than through army hospitals. […] To take such a select crop of youth and energy and power and then put it in front of cannons – that is *madness*.[454]

When Prideaux informs her readers that Nietzsche wrote this in one of his 'late notebooks', she is following a convention that, at least in theory, has broad scholarly support. In *Nietzsche: A Very Short Introduction*, Michael Tanner outlines this convention whereby all quotes from the *Nachlass* should be clearly demarcated. But Tanner also recognises that 'almost no one observes that elementary rule. Even those who claim that they will do this usually slip into unattributed quoting from the immense *Nachlass* when it confirms the line that they are taking on him'.[455]

Prideaux *is* following good protocol then, but it is here that the strength of her assumptions concerning Nietzsche's anti-militarism might be called into question. This is because Prideaux, like Tanner, wants to apprise her popular audience of the fact that many misappropriations and distortions of Nietzsche – including his image as a warmonger – can be attributed to the heavy use of the *Nachlass.* In line with scholarship that has been questioning the canonicity of the *Nachlass* since the 1950s, Prideaux argues that the notes – which according to one account Nietzsche had set aside to be burned – were salvaged by others and then elevated to 'the status of Holy Writ'[456] by Martin Heidegger, Alfred Baumler and other scholars in service of the National Socialist Party. Furthermore, these notes, preserved against Nietzsche's own wishes, were distorted by his sister Elisabeth[457] whose ambition was to 'shape the chaotic *Nachlass* into a book of her own making'.[458]

> It consisted of 483 aphorisms selected from the Nachlass, the notes and drafts that Nietzsche never intended to be read by anybody else, let alone published. […] What Elisabeth published in *The Will to Power* did not represent his final views on anything.[459]

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[454] *Dynamite*, p.373.
[455] Michael Tanner, *Nietzsche: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.5.
[456] *Dynamite,* p.376.
[457] We shall examine the issue of Elizabeth's distortions in detail in chapter five.
[458] *Dynamite*, p.365. (We shall examine Elisabeth's role in greater detail in the following chapter).
[459] *Dynamite,* p.372.

The upshot of all this is that while Solomon and Higgins present no textual evidence for Nietzsche's principled anti-militarism, Prideaux is only able to produce a solitary quote from Nietzsche's late notebooks, which for anyone paying attention, carries little weight on account of the fact that Prideaux has already instructed her readers that it should not.

Furthermore, this is also an example of how a problem that arose in Nazi Germany is being used to respond to a problem that originally issued from a different pre-Nazi era. While Heidegger's elevation of the *Nachlass* was certainly a stage in the development of Nietzsche's image as a warmonger, Heidegger did not deliver his influential Nietzsche lectures at the University of Freiberg until 1936. As we have already demonstrated, Nietzsche's image as a warmonger developed independently of and prior to the elevation of the *Nachlass.* But Prideaux effortlessly dismisses this development as a series of unwarranted misappropriations and then the issue is quickly folded into the even more egregious falsifications that Nietzsche's work underwent in Nazi Germany.

However, by attending to the details surrounding the development of Nietzsche's image during WWI, I want to call into question the plausibility of this narrative which so easily characterises Nietzsche's association with war as a case of straightforward misappropriation. To illustrate this point, we might return for a moment to Hardy's letter to the *Manchester Guardian* in October 1914, a time when many were still anticipating that the war could be over by Christmas and a second world war would have been inconceivable. Hardy's letter drew the ire of British Nietzscheans who responded in the form of several letters to the editor making what has since become the standard argument – that Nietzsche had been misrepresented. Hardy responded in short form:

> Sir, I would gladly reply to your correspondents who think I have misrepresented Nietzsche. I will only remark that I have never said he was a German; or that he did not express such sentiments as your correspondents quote to the avoidance of other sentiments that I could quote, e.g. 'You shall love peace as a means to new wars, and the short peace better than the long. I do not counsel you to conclude peace but to conquer … Beware of pity.' Yours, &c., Thomas Hardy.[460]

In contrast with the aforementioned assertions regarding Nietzsche's anti-militarism which either appear without footnotes or with footnotes that go nowhere, the obvious strength of Hardy's response is that the quotation he supplies carries the authority of being from

[460] 'Mr. Hardy Replies to his Critics'.

Nietzsche's published work: *Human, All Too Human,* with the implied threat that 'there is plenty more where this came from'.

Of course, I am not attempting on such slim evidence to adjudicate between the two positions regarding Nietzsche's association with war. At this point I am simply demonstrating how this association, which grew out of the context of WWI, is used as a foil by contemporary authors who want to present their 'fairer', more 'enlightened' reading of Nietzsche than those attributed to wartime propagandists. These observations also alert the reader to the fact that disentangling Nietzsche from war is not as straightforward as some contemporary popular presentations might lead an audience to believe; and sometimes the desired outcome is only accomplished through imprecision, sleight-of-hand or the momentary suspension of the author's own cardinal rules. I will press the point a little further with a brief perusal of some of the 'other sentiments' Hardy may have had in mind. It is important to note that these sentiments are not only expressed in Nietzsche's published works but are taken from what are conventionally designated as Nietzsche's middle, mature and final writing periods. Consider the following:

> War essential. It is vain rhapsodizing and sentimentality to continue to expect much (even more, to expect a very great deal) from mankind, once it has learned not to wage war.[461]

> I welcome all signs that a more virile, warlike age is about to begin, which will restore honor to courage above all.[462]

> You say it is the good cause that hallows even war? I say unto you: it is the good war that hallows any cause. War and courage have accomplished more great things than love of the neighbor. Not your pity but your courage has so far saved the unfortunate.[463]

> Like the beginnings of everything great on earth, soaked in blood thoroughly and for a long time.[464]

> Viewed more closely, it is war which produces these effects, war *for* liberal institutions which as war permits *illiberal* instincts to endure. And war is a training in freedom. For what is freedom? That one has the will to self-responsibility. That one preserves the distance which divides us. That one has become more indifferent to hardship, toil, privation, even to life. That one is ready to sacrifice men to

[461] Friedrich Nietzsche, *HAH*, trans. by Marion Faber, with Stephen Lehmann (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1996), para.477, p.230.
[462] *GS*, para.283, p.228.
[463] *Z*, 'On War and Warriors', p.159.
[464] *GM,* Second Essay, para.6, p.65.

> one's cause, oneself not excepted. Freedom means that the manly instincts that delight in war and victory have gained mastery over other instincts – for example, over the instinct for 'happiness'.[465]

> Here we must beware of superficiality and get to the bottom of the matter, resisting all sentimental weakness: life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker, suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation – but why should one always use those words in which a slanderous intent has been imprinted for ages?[466]

In other words, Nietzsche's contemporary 'defenders' cannot simply argue from authority but have to shift the weight of their argument elsewhere, which they do by taking Nietzsche's talk of war and warriors – found in the authoritative published middle, mature and final writings – metaphorically. This being the case, all of Nietzsche's discussion of war can be read metaphorically as violence sublimated into the struggle and competition of the agon. But as we saw above, Nietzsche says it is only sentimental weakness and the assignation of slanderous intent that makes people squeamish when life is defined, to put it in the mildest terms, as exploitation. And if these terms are metaphorical, why does Nietzsche think we need his help in warding off superficial sentimentality or in assigning better intentions? It seems that an individual or a people would be able to steel themselves for the competition in which they outdo their competitors artistically or athletically without the aid of Nietzsche's philosophical project. Furthermore, in the context of the aforementioned quotes, Nietzsche pits war against real things like happiness, sentimentality, love and pity, which would also seem to suggest a more literal approach. Nevertheless, Solomon and Higgins explain that Nietzsche's love of 'warrior imagery' is a reflection of his own idealisation of the Homeric Greeks, a reflection of the 'macho literary currency of the day' and compensation for his own poor health. 'The primary struggle in Nietzsche's mind was his own struggle within himself, with his health, with his Christian bourgeois upbringing […] All the rest, we can charitably but cheerfully say, was mere metaphor'.[467] With equal optimism, commenting on the chapter 'On War and Warriors' in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, the SparkNotes study guide – often the first port of call for the student looking for some initial clarity and guidance in their new field of inquiry – describes it as one of the most misquoted sections in all of Nietzsche's works. Once more, Nietzsche's reputation forged during the Great War and the development of his reputation during the Nazi era, are collapsed into each

[465] *TI,* 'Skirmishes in a War with the Age', para.38, pp.103-04.
[466] *BGE*, para.259, p.203.
[467] *NRS*, pp.40-41.

other as the commentator explains that the passage is 'cited as evidence that Nietzsche was a proto-Nazi warmonger' and 'those who read such passages out of context must be reminded that Nietzsche is talking about an intellectual, inner struggle, and not a literal war of violence and bloodshed'.[468]

4.4 The Centrality of The Will to Power

The decision to read Nietzsche metaphorically here is in fact premised on another significant decision which has already been taken about a more complicated hermeneutical issue just beneath the surface of this debate regarding Nietzsche's language. If we take a moment to gather up the language used by Nietzsche's detractors and defenders circa WWI (quoted above) the following pattern emerges: *The Superman, Neue Moral, conquering pitilessness, ruthless temper, life as a thing improvable by force, gospel of brutality, gospel of power, philosopher of power, the worship of power, power as the only quest*. All of this language skims across the surface of Nietzsche's theory of the will to power which is identified as the theoretical place where Nietzsche's thought most easily becomes connected with war, either as a legitimate interpretation or a falsification of this central idea.

But herein lies the problem: there is no agreement among scholars on the level of importance Nietzsche placed on the will to power *nor* what Nietzsche intended the will to power to mean. Regarding where the will to power should be placed in Nietzsche's thought, those who believe that his connection with war is simply the result of giving the will to power a central role in his philosophy are bound to reverse course on Heidegger and argue that the will to power is after all, one of Nietzsche's fringe ideas. One important way that this argument has gained prominence has been to de-emphasise the book bearing the same name. This in turn has been accomplished first by demonstrating that the *The Will to Power* was more a contrivance of Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth than any work of his, and secondly by recounting the evocative story of how Nietzsche intended to burn the very notes Elisabeth used in *The Will to Power*.

It was once thought that Nietzsche intended to write his magnum opus organised around the will to power, a plan which was only accomplished posthumously with the publication of *The Will To Power* in 1901. However, in 1964, the first edition of Nietzsche's complete notes arranged in chronological order was published by Girogio Colli and Mazzino

[468] SparkNotes Editors. 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra', *SparkNotes* (2005) <https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/zarathustra/section2/page/3/> [accessed 15 August 2020].

Monitinari. Their philological work made clear the extent to which *The Will To Power* had been curated by Elisabeth. The following year, in 1965, Hollingdale published his Nietzsche biography that included the aforementioned 'note burning' story. It is worth reproducing this account at length in order to appreciate Hollingdale's language which, as we shall see, has gained a momentum all of its own with each new telling.

> When Nietzsche departed from Sils-Maria for the last time he left behind in his room not only a quantity of books but also a heap of paper. He expected to return the following summer, but he specifically told his landlord, one Durisch, that the paper was waste: notes and jottings for which he had no further use, and which he asked Durisch to burn when he got round to clearing the room out. Durisch did, in fact, not burn it, but collected it together from Nietzsche's waste-paper basket and from the floor nearby and put it into a cupboard. Later, when tourists came to see the house Nietzsche had lived in asked for some memento of the philosopher, he brought out armfuls of this paper and invited them to help themselves. [...] Durisch was approached and asked what he was doing with 'Nietzsche's manuscripts'; unwilling to risk trouble, he at once sent the whole load of refuse to Elizabeth [*sic*] [...] when the Will to Power was prepared, it was among the 'manuscripts' from which selection was made.[469]

Responding to Paul Katsafanas, who thinks that this account is apocryphal, Brian Leiter appeals to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, a student of Nietzsche's friend Overbeck who Leiter identifies as the original German source of the story. 'Bernoulli does not specify the exact contents', Leiter admits, nevertheless he assumes that it was 'voluminous material' that 'Nietzsche asked to be destroyed'.[470] And most importantly, it was this material that found its way into *The Will to Power*. Commenting on the 693 fragments used by Elisabeth in the first edition of *The Will to Power*, Julian Young asserts that 'many of these had in fact been consigned to Nietzsche's wastepaper basket in Sils'.[471] And Prideaux, drawing on Holland, retells the story this way:

> An avalanche of paper had recently arrived from Sils Maria. When Nietzsche had left Sils [...] his room in Gian Durisch's house had contained all sorts of notes and jottings. He told Durisch that it was rubbish, and that he should burn it. Durisch got as far as putting it in a cupboard but before he could get around to bonfiring, pilgrims arrived to walk Zarathustra's mountains [...] they seized upon any sacred

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[469] *MHP*, pp.250-251.
[470] Brian Leiter, 'The Nachlass and "The Will to Power," once again', *Brian Leiter's Nietzsche Blog,* 17 June 2017 <http://brianleiternietzsche.blogspot.com/2017/06/the-nachlass-and-will-to-power-once.html> [accessed 1 July 2021]
[471] *FNPB* – fn. 9 of chapter 26, p.628.

> relic [...] when Elisabeth got to hear, she demanded everything be sent to Weimar, where it joined the ever-deepening snowdrift of the literary estate, the *Nachlass*.[472]

Hollingdale has Nietzsche leaving a 'heap', 'armfuls', a 'cupboard' full of paper, perhaps, in his landlord's house, a 'whole load of refuse'. By the time the story reaches a popular audience, Hollingdale's 'heap of paper', Young's 'many' fragments, and Leiter's 'voluminous material', has turned into Prideaux's 'avalanche', part of a deep 'snowdrift', and Durisch cannot simply place the papers in the fireplace but he has to have a 'bonfire'. The rhetorical force of the story creates the impression that *The Will to Power* draws heavily on an immense amount of notes added to the *Nachlass* but from which Nietzsche had already distanced himself with an element of drama. Thus, the story has served to justify scholars and popular authors alike whose reading strategy involves pushing *The Will to Power* and along with it the will to power, to the margins of Nietzsche's thought.

Recently, Nietzsche's note burning story has been called into question once more, this time by Jing Huang in her article with the telling title which asks 'Did Nietzsche Want His Notes Burned?' Huang has further substantiated the idea that Nietzsche did in all likelihood ask Durisch to burn some of his papers, so in her account the basic outline of the story still holds. But Huang asks questions about the details of the story concerning the specific content and amount of material that was meant for burning but which made its way into *The Will to Power*. There is not room here to convey Huang's entire argument; nevertheless, one or two of her observations are enough to indicate the kind of problems the traditional account runs into when it is used to suggest that Nietzsche had abandoned the book project and the theory of the will to power.

Huang points out that the various versions of the story have relied on secondhand accounts and in order to rectify the situation, she turns to the following firsthand testimony.

> There are three relevant testimonies: Koegel's article from 1893, Petit's letter to Elisabeth dated 1905 and Elisabeth's account in her 1907 book. Koegel and Petit, however, only tell us that the unwanted material includes a few handwritten pages such as a previously unknown version of the preface of *Twilight of the Idols*, while its majority consists of proof sheets of Nietzsche's published works.

Huang then points to 'the only clear account' of the notes in dispute which is offered by Elisabeth.

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[472] *Dynamite*, pp.364-365.

> Thanks to this account, we know that, [...] 11 'aphorisms' saved from the flames were incorporated into WP. [...] in contrast to the impression given by Hollingdale's account, Nietzsche did not discard 'many' of the materials later printed in WP, but only a very small proportion of what this book includes (only 1 percent!).[473] And, by taking a look at the rescued notes, we can further conclude that the 'burning' story indicates little about Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power, for these notes mainly focus on topics such as critique of morality while touching upon the 'feeling of power' only once (WP 534).[474]

There is more to be said regarding the meaning of this story, but it appears as though it is a somewhat shaky interpretation of events which is readily embraced by those wishing to distance Nietzsche from war. Be that as it may, suppose we leave this popular interpretation of events intact. I will argue that it is not at all as obvious as it may seem why diminishing the importance of the will to power for Nietzsche carries the kind of implications assumed by advocates of this story, i.e., absolving Nietzsche of his connection to war. We will return to this presently.

4.4.1 The Meaning of The Will to Power

With respect to the meaning and coherence of the will to power, Nietzsche's present day popularisers consistently point out that the will to power is an ill-defined theory that is both incoherent on its own terms and inconsistent with other areas of Nietzschean thought. In this regard, questions arise as to whether or not the will to power introduces a series of ideas that militate against the aims of Nietzsche's overall philosophy whereby he is smuggling in *a will, a subject, a telos, a metaphysics, an asceticism, a causality, a mechanistic biologism* – all at once.

All of this results in a far-ranging and interminable debate amongst scholars whose own attempts to provide definition are often accompanied by their own acknowledgement about the theory's elusive meaning.[475] James Porter puts it pithily: 'Modeled on a line of

[473] 1 percent of the second extended edition of *WP*, published in 1906 which contained 1067 aphorisms.
[474] Jing Huang, "Did Nietzsche Want His Notes Burned? Some Reflections on the *Nachlass* Problem", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 27 (2019), 1194-1214 (pp.1203-1204).
[475] Arguments concerning the prominence of the will to power in Nietzsche's thought are bookended by Martin Heidegger and Karl Löwith. Heidegger, as we have been arguing, moves the *Nachlass* and along with it, the will to power, to the centre of Nietzsche's thought, while Karl Löwith not only moves the will to power to the margins but removes the offending concept entirely from his own exposition of Nietzsche's works. *Cf Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*. Of course, how the will to power is weighted in terms of its importance might depend, in part, on what we think it actually is. For example, Richard Schacht sees

argument that nowhere seems to get off the ground or ever reach a conclusion the theory of the will to power is nowhere spelled out as such'.[476] Fortunately, our present interest does not require that these multitude of tensions be resolved, only that we pay attention to how those who are eager to remove the stigma of war from Nietzsche set about resolving this tension for themselves and for their popular audience.

Most contemporary authors attempting to 'defend' Nietzsche follow Walter Kaufmann – dubbed the dean of Nietzsche studies, he remains a towering figure in

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it as a metaphysical reality in which Nietzsche roots his evaluative project. This seems immediately plausible when Nietzsche's announcement of his forthcoming work at the end of *On the Genealogy of Morals* entitled *The Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values* is taken together with those passages which would seem to place power at the very heart of all things. Thus, Schacht argues that the will to power is so fundamental that even the phenomenon of 'becoming' is derivative in relation to it' (*Nietzsche*, p.207), suggesting that 'the will to power not a being, not a becoming, but a *pathos* – the most elemental fact from which a becoming and effecting first emerge' (*WP*, para.635, p.339). It is striking, therefore, when Brian Leiter dismisses all of this as Nietzsche's 'crackpot metaphysics of the will to power'. Leiter argues instead for Nietzsche's 'anti-realism about value', that there is no objective vindication for Nietzsche's evaluative position, not even the will to power. Again, Leiter's view also finds good textual support, including Nietzsche's various claims that evaluative statements come down to a 'matter of taste' because 'whatever has value in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature – nature is always valueless, but has been *given* value at some time' (*GS,* para.301, p.242). But how then do we explain the volume and intensity of Nietzsche's rhetoric with regard to power and the ordering of human relationships? Leiter suggests Nietzsche's rhetoric should be understood not as an appeal to 'truth' but – in keeping with his general anti-metaphysical posture – as the appropriate way of appealing to the higher psychological types, something along the lines of 'let he who has ears, let him hear'. Although Schacht and Leiter go their separate realist and anti-realist ways, what I find helpful in both is that neither of them immediately try to make the will to power more palatable for their readers and as a result they have more exegetical flexibility in their respective approaches over those who do otherwise. Take for example Walter Kaufmann who, in advance of Leiter, regards the will to power as a psychological phenomenon, but immediately moves to dull its sharp edge by depoliticizing the concept, which in Kaufmann's view is less about overcoming others but about overcoming oneself. Similarly, Maudemarie Clark attempts to resolve the moral dilemma that the will to power apparently represents by suggesting that it is about developing 'abilities' and 'capacities' to achieve certain goals. 'The satisfaction of the will to power [...] has then nothing essential to do with power over others, but is a sense of one's *effectiveness* in the world'. *Cf* Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, p.211. While those who attempt to sanitize the will to power in the manner of Kaufmann and Clark might resolve certain moral quandaries for themselves, in contrast to Schacht and Leiter, it seems that they will be left with too many pieces of the Nietzschean exegetical puzzle to know what to do with in the end. Notwithstanding any tension between moral and exegetical dilemmas, Bernard Reginster points out that this preoccupation with the moral direction of the will to power is to confuse its consequences with its essence (*Affirmation*, p.138). Returning to the issue of what the will to power actually consists of, Reginster underlines several questions that remain, such as is the will to power identical to our drives or is it one drive among many? Is the will to power a second-order desire which allows us to fulfill our first-order desires, in which case do those first-order desires have a value independent of the pursuit of power? Or is the will to power the inverse of what has just been described, whereby power is what all other drives pursue? Or does the will to power, as John Richardson suggests, refer not to attainment of a particular goal or even to the journey toward attainment but in what might be described as the continual enhancement of the journey toward attainment. *Cf* John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) (pp.24-27). I will not try to resolve these issues here, but we can already appreciate the perspective of Nietzschean scholars such as James Porter who observes, 'The so-called theory of the will to power is one of the most contested aspects of Nietzsche's writings'. *Cf* James I. Porter, 'Nietzsche's Theory of the Will to Power' in *A Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. by Keith Ansell Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), pp. 548-64 (p.548). Likewise, Henry Staten says 'Nietzsche's theory of will to power is pulled by two contradictory imperatives'. *Cf* Henry Staten, 'A Critique of the Will to Power', in *A Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. Keith Ansell Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), pp.565-582. (p.565). And Reginster observes, 'Few of Nietzsche's ideas have been more maligned'. *Cf Affirmation*, p. 103.

[476] 'Nietzsche's Theory of the Will to Power', p.548.

Nietzsche's post WWII revival. I will postpone a more in-depth look at his legacy until the next chapter and focus here instead on those who, like Kaufmann, believe the key to breaking the link between Nietzsche and war is to reinterpret the will to power for their popular readership.

Take, for example, John Kaag's memoir *Hiking with Nietzsche: On Becoming Who You Are.* Kaag frames his discussion about the will to power with a discussion about the German novelist Herman Hesse and his relationship to Nietzsche's work. It is noteworthy that Kaag finds resources to deal with the will to power which – although not available in English until the 1960s – appeared in German immediately after WWI. Hesse was an avid reader of Nietzsche's works but Kaag explains that Hesse was not a disciple of Nietzsche. The philosophical point at which Hesse parts company with Nietzsche is the will to power. Conveying Hesse's view (or is it his own?) Kaag says 'the will to power seemed simplistic and futile, especially in light of Nietzsche's admission later in life that the powers of decay and decadence were inescapable'.[477]

Rather than focusing on *Zarathustra*'s rhetoric, filled as it is with vainglory, Kaag says Hesse chose to focus on Zarathustra himself who represented 'the internal struggles of a multifaceted nature'.[478] Kaag then goes on to summarise Hesse's 1919 novel *Demian* in which the protagonist Emil Sinclair finds a spiritual mentor and friend in Max Demian.[479] The plot turns on the realisation that this brilliant friend Demian is in fact a part of Emil himself. Kaag continues:

> [Demian is] a hidden wellspring of spiritual energy that Sinclair can tap at any time if he possesses the proper knowledge. At the end of the book, wounded on a battlefield, Sinclair, with Demain's help, discovers that he is capable of saving himself, and a reader is left to assume that he does.[480]

Through Hesse, Kaag has both rendered the offending aspect of the will to power 'simplistic and futile' while at the same time offering his readers an alternative approach

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[477] John Kaag, *Hiking With Nietzsche: On Becoming Who You Are* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), p.199.
[478] *Ibid*.
[479] Perhaps the early hidden clue to Demian's true 'identity' is in his name which may be an anagram for the German *niemand* (no one) or perhaps Hesse was evoking Socrates's *daemon* (a guiding inner voice). In the context of the story I suggest that it is likely that Hesse was evoking both: Demian is *no one* but Sinclair's *guiding inner voice*. Alternatively, Joseph Milek suggests that Demian might be an anagram for the German *Jemand* (Someone) but evidently, he has trouble reconciling this with his preferred alternative explanation, choosing between them he feels it is 'far more likely' that Hesse is referencing a guiding inner voice. *Cf* Joseph Milek, 'Names and the Creative Process: A Study of the Names in Hermann Hesse's "Lauscher," "Demian," "Steppenwolf," and "Glasperlenspiel"', *Monatshefte*, 53 (1961), 167-80 (p.171).
[480] *Hiking With Nietzsche,* pp.200-01.

which turns inward. The will to power becomes an internalised journey of the individual who in search of salvation must learn to reconcile those hidden aspects of himself and realize that he already possesses the resources within himself to help himself. I imagine that Schacht has something like this interpretation of Nietzsche in mind when he observes that 'some have made such sweet and shallow sense of him [Nietzsche] that, if their versions of him are accepted, he would best be left to the apostles of self-improvement'.[481] Kaag practically describes it this way himself. 'If this sounds pat or simple, it is', he says, but nevertheless he commends the cathartic approach that helped him personally to interpret his own divorce and navigate the beginning of a new relationship.[482] The unintended consequence of Kaag's framing is that the alternative on offer to what Hesse had written off as 'simplistic and futile' – we now discover just over the page – is 'pat and simple'. Unless of course this is actually the point of the exercise and Kaag's priority is to defuse Nietzsche for both himself and readers like Eileen Pollack who writes the review quoted first on the back of Kaag's book in which Pollack admits:

> I never truly appreciated Friedrich Nietzsche. I might even have been a little afraid of him. But *Hiking with Nietzsche* changed that. John Kaag's luminous new book provides the reader with a deep understanding of and empathy for the philosopher's thought.[483]

Those who are 'a little afraid of him': this might be descriptive not just of a particular target audience but of the authors who write for them as well. At any rate, it is one possible lens through which to read other depoliticised, highly individualised and internalized presentations of the will to power, several examples of which I have provided in the appendices and all of which draw on claims that Nietzsche makes about the theory.[484]

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[481] *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, p.1.
[482] *Hiking With Nietzsche,* p.201.
[483] *Ibid*., back cover.
[484] For other examples of readers being guided toward an understanding of the will to power as primarily a form of individual self-mastery, consider S. T. Joshi, editor of *Atheism: A Reader,* who includes Nietzsche in his own anthology of worthy atheists. Joshi's introductory paragraph to a carefully selected Nietzschean passage explains that Nietzsche's '"will to power," sought to actualize the potentialities of the mind and body'. In his introduction to his anthology, Joshi condescendingly explains that 'the overwhelming majority of people on the earth are […] incapable of comprehending the issues at stake […] because their religious belief is so essential to their psychological well-being', all the while working to psychologically shield himself and his readers from those unpleasant things Nietzsche says within the covers of the same book. *Cf Atheism: A Reader*, ed. S. T. Joshi (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000), pp.9-10 and p.199. *See also* Sarah Bakewell who describes Nietzsche's genealogical approach which can 'enable us to see our illusions more clearly and lead more vital, assertive existence'. 'The way to live is to throw ourselves, not into faith, but into our own lives, […] without harboring peevish resentment against others or against our fate. Philosophy was life itself – the life of an individual' *Cf* Sarah Bakewell, *At The Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being & Apricot Cocktails* (London: Vintage, 2017), p. 20. Solomon and Higgins, also scandalised by the political implications of the will to power, make the following emphasis: 'More problematic is the notion of power within one's social group. On the one hand, one thinks

My aim here is not to dispute this approach to the will to power but to ask whether or not shrinking the will to power and then relegating it to the fringes of Nietzsche's thought actually accomplishes what it sets out to do. The reader may have noticed that in my account of Nietzsche's atheism in chapters one and two, I did not mention the will to power nor did I quote heavily from the *Nachlass*. Instead, I have deliberately placed the will to power in the margins of this study, confining my brief sketch of the scholarly discussion to the footnotes and appendices. This is primarily because I want to avoid the charge that my argument concerning the chasm between Nietzsche and other atheists is in any way dependent on these much-disputed texts and terms – it is not.[485] And by the same token, I want to demonstrate

immediately of power over other people and power institutionalised as reich. It is worth noting again that the word Nietzsche uses is Macht not Reich and thus might better be understood as personal strength rather than political power. It does not mean power in the "nasty, jackbooted sense that sends flutters up the European spine. The term means something like effective realization and expression. […] Indeed, self-mastery is in Nietzsche's opinion one of the most effective strategies that the will to power employs; and he insists that it is essential to accomplishing anything great. Certainly, a wide range of different practices might be put under the rubric of self-mastery including self-discipline, self-criticism, even self-denial' (*NRS*, pp.220-22). And *SparkNotes* skews Nietzsche's interest in the same direction: 'While the will to power can manifest itself through violence and physical dominance, Nietzsche is more interested in the sublimated will to power, where people turn their will to power inward and pursue self-mastery rather than mastery over others'. *Cf* SparkNotes Editors. 'Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)', *SparkNotes* (2005) <https://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/nietzsche/themes/> [accessed 15 August 2020]. Likewise, Prideaux introduces the concept of self-mastery before later depoliticizing the will to power all together: 'What is called freedom of the will is essentially superiority with respect to something that must obey. But this something need not be outside ourselves. Nietzsche is also talking about self-mastery' (*Dynamite*, p.276). And then: 'Tragically for Nietzsche, the need to overcome ourselves became so blatantly distorted into the need to overcome others' (*Dynamite*, pp. 379-80). And finally Laurence Gane and Piero's *Nietzsche: A Graphic Guide* explain 'Superficially, the idea of the Will to Power suggests a crude principle – the victory of the strongest. But fundamentally, it is a psychological principle' (pp.85-87). However, Gane and Piero break the mold by placing this psychological principle firmly in the context of social relations. *Cf* Laurence Gane and Piero, *Introducing Nietzsche: A Graphic Guide* (London: Faber and Faber, 2013), p.92.

[485] Much is made of the fact that Nietzsche abandoned *WP*, and while I am happy to set these preparatory notebooks aside for the sake of this present discussion, as well as the problems that Jing Huang has raised (see section 4.4), such a move is not without its issues. For example, Julian Young claims that 'world peace' was one of 'Nietzsche's fundamental aims' (*FNPB*, p.548). Young says, 'To be sure, Nietzsche did not become, overnight, a pacifist' (p.139). In other words, after his own experience as an army medic, Nietzsche did not simply lose his taste for war. If then Nietzsche's pacifism was a conviction that grew gradually, at what point does it become clear that Nietzsche now held unwavering pacifist convictions, expressed in and supported by his own philosophical enterprise? This important question is complicated by the details of Young's own historiography: First, Young himself characterises the preparatory work that was gathering in Nietzsche's notebooks for *WP* as a 'fascist (or perhaps neo-con) philosophy' (p.540). And whereas Young, when discussing Nietzsche's earlier work, *HAH*, is able to argue that Nietzsche had a 'dalliance' with 'macho morality' (p.257), notably, Young does not characterise the fascism found in the notebooks for *WP* as a mere dalliance, not least of all because, as Young points out, Nietzsche intended the forthcoming work based on these notes to be the fullest expression of his entire body of thought (pp.536-538). Moreover, the first hint of Nietzsche's dissatisfaction with the work only emerges in February 1888 (p.542) and Nietzsche did not abandon it altogether until later that year when in a letter dated 30 August, Nietzsche informs his mother that 'a well and long prepared work which should have been completed this summer, has literally "gone down the plug hole"' (p.541).

One problem then, is that the fascist, violent and genocidal sentiments expressed in these notebooks would seem to place a question mark over Nietzsche's alleged pacifism, at least for the duration of the intervening period which also happens to coincide with the writing of what are often classified as Nietzsche's 'mature' works. This means that at the point where Nietzsche is considered to be working at the height of his powers, he is also considering 'to what extent a sacrifice of freedom, even enslavement, provides the basis for the emergence of a *higher type*' (*WP*, para.859, p.458). Such a sacrifice would demand 'a declaration of war on the masses by higher men' (para.861, p.458) and 'the annihilation of the decaying races' (para. 862, p. 459).

that framing the will to power as self-mastery and then replacing it with the revaluation of values as the centre of Nietzsche's thought does nothing to neutralise the problem at hand. This approach only *appears* to do the work we think it does because of the way Nietzsche is perceived to be oriented toward the individual in their respective Nietzschean schemes. Prideaux expresses it this way:

> To be the source of political theories had never been Nietzsche's aim. The irony of his appropriation is that he was only ever interested in man as an individual, rather than man as a herd animal – be the herd political or religious.[486]

But it is this idea that Nietzsche was 'only ever interested in man as an individual' that I want to call into question. As we shall see shortly, even Prideaux only holds this view intermittently herself, just long enough at least to create the illusion that there is the possibility she might be able to reconcile things in the end.

Before arriving at the roadblock ahead, it is worth glancing back and asking what Nietzsche himself would have made of himself being treated as a slightly controversial figure

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Nietzsche thinks that we must steel ourselves for the double task of shaping humanity's future, on the one hand 'through breeding and, on the other hand, the annihilation of millions of failures, and not to perish of the suffering one creates, though nothing like it has ever existed!' (para.964, p.506). And again, 'One must learn from war: (1) to associate death with the interests for which one fights – that makes us venerable; (2) one must learn to sacrifice *many* and to take one's cause seriously enough not to spare men' (para.982, p.513).

There is also the interesting question of *why* Nietzsche abandoned the work. It would be rather tidy if it turned out that Nietzsche was in fact holding himself to the higher standard of his alleged pacifist convictions and therefore abandoned the project with the express purpose of abandoning violence. However, Young's own careful analysis of Nietzsche's reasons for abandoning *WP* suggests quite the opposite. According to Young, Nietzsche was indeed holding himself to his own earlier 'higher' standards, but very specifically with regard to his anti-metaphysical posture. Young argues that Nietzsche was torn between casting himself as a great philosopher on the one hand, whereby he would offer *The Will to Power: An Attempt at a New Explanation of All Events* – the first proposed title in 1885 – and his own commitment to intellectual integrity on the other. In the end, Nietzsche's desire for what he terms 'intellectual cleanliness' prevailed, and Nietzsche ceased to see the will to power as the cosmological, biological or psychological *explanation* of everything and instead came to see the will to power as an evaluative means of *demarcation* 'between the healthy life and *décadent* life' (p.548). Young says, 'The will to power remains, to the end, the governing 'principle' of healthy life [...] From this it follows that the constant quest for power remains the meaning of (healthy) life, the 'why?' that can make healthy life able to withstand any 'how?' and hence the standard of value' (p.548).
If this evaluative standard is what remains after Nietzsche has abandoned the metaphysical project, then Young's account provides readers with a way of recognising the lines of continuity between Nietzsche's unpublished preparatory notes and his published, therefore authorised, works. I would also argue that in addition to those notes which made their way in some form or another into *The Wagner Case*, *TI*, *EH* and *AC*, all those 'demarcating' passages of *WP* which evaluate, divide and set one type of human against another would seem to appear authentically Nietzschean in as far as one can see how they can be integrated into Nietzsche's overall philosophy which he did not abandon. At the very least, using Young's criteria of demarcation, these more troublesome notes are not so easily dismissed simply because Nietzsche abandoned the overall work, and might explain why Nietzsche confesses to his friend Overbeck, 'My "philosophy," [...] is no longer communicable, at least not in print'. *Cf* Friedrich Nietzsche, Letter to Franz Overbeck, 2 July 1885 <http://www.thenietzschechannel.com/correspondence/eng/nlett-1885.htm> [accessed 9 June 2021].

[486] *Dynamite*, p.378.

who nevertheless can be assimilated, more or less without incident, once we set aside his notes and learn to read his texts of war as a guide to personal growth. It is true that Nietzsche would have been contemptuous of German nationalism and suspicious of the state (see section 3.3 in chapter three); however, be that as it may, it is difficult to see how Nietzche's self-perception as an incendiary, monumental or even apocalyptic figure fits with the mildly contentious, oftentimes bland character who appears in popular presentations, potentially as a sort of 'Nietzsche for everyone'. In other words, one does not have to think of Nietzsche as being directly in control of German state affairs in order to begin questioning the portrayal of an apolitical, culturally disinterested Nietzsche for whom only the individual mattered.

4.5 On the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture

To bring to light several of the issues at stake, it will be helpful to think about all of this in the context of Andrew Huddleston's intriguing work *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture.* Huddleston argues that the excellence of great individuals in Nietzsche's understanding is not only for themselves (as if only they mattered although they may well view themselves this way), nor is it only for their instrumental value in advancing a culture (even though there may be any number of benefits that filter down).[487] Instead, Huddleston identifies the role of the great individual in Nietzsche's soteriological scheme as the savior from the mediocrity of humanity; therefore, he argues that the great individual's excellence lies in his 'redemptive function for humanity more generally'[488] and again 'redemption of the human species is up to them'.[489] For example, Nietzsche requests:

> Grant me the sight, but one glance […] of a man who justifies *man,* of a complimentary and redeeming lucky hit on the part of man for the sake of which one may still *believe in man!* […] The sight of man now makes us weary – what is nihilism today if it is not *that*? – We are weary *of man*.[490]

Thus, Huddleston argues:

> Nietzsche is therefore not concerned narrowly with the personal interests of the great individuals and their ilk. He is also concerned with the good of humankind as a whole. He simply disagrees with his

[487] Andrew Huddleston, *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p.40.
[488] *Ibid.*, p.41.
[489] *Ibid.* p.122.
[490] *GM*, First Essay, para.12, p.44.

> more socialistic opponents about what this good for humankind consists in, and how it is to be secured.[491]

So that, when Nietzsche says that the great individual becomes the goal of humanity, he does not simply mean that humanity's sole end is to produce these great individuals, but the great individual can become humanity's goal in the sense that the broader mass of humanity can be shaped around them and their respective projects. In other words, far from renouncing all collectivist thinking, Huddleston argues that Nietzsche believes human lives 'have their highest worth and dignity when they are consecrated to culture'.[492] And culture in Nietzsche's understanding is not about *individuals* consuming 'the best that has been thought and said, to be digested in moldy tomes', but rather our lives taken together, 'the whole way of life, and its characteristic attitudes, practices, modes of comportment, and so on [...] culture as a massive piece of collectively-embodied art'.[493] This does not mean each individual is being called to '*tender their own good* on the altar of culture. It is rather that *in devoting their lives to the collective project of culture, they truly come to live the best life for them'*[494] (italics his).

Contrary to the Christian view that sees human dignity as innate and possessed in equal measure by each individual and the enlightenment equation of human dignity with individual freedom and autonomy, Nietzsche believes instead that any serious conception of human dignity requires that we recognise *inequality* amongst people for at least two reasons: first, because dignity is something that must be earned and will inevitably be earned in different measures[495] and second, because that dignity can only be earned by becoming attached to a great individual and their project. The 'last man's desire for comfort and ease is not good for him or humanity; of course he does not know what is good for him and the ignorant decadent must be met with the characteristic hardness of the great individual. Huddleston acknowledges that sometimes Nietzsche indulges in fantasies of wiping out the decaying races, but it is also true that at other times Nietzsche wants to repurpose the lower types through the subjugation of their wills to the will of the higher types. Thus, against Christian and Enlightenment instincts – which Huddleston recognizes continue 'to exert a powerful influence on the modern moral imagination' – Nietzsche believes that human

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[491] *Decadence and Flourishing*, p.42.
[492] *Ibid.*, p.105.
[493] *Ibid.*, p.46.
[494] *Ibid.*, p.105.
[495] *Ibid.*, pp.106-07.

dignity is necessarily connected to 'slavery in some sense or other'.[496] If we follow Nietzsche's concern for collective culture and human dignity, we are led, perhaps counterintuitively, toward inegalitarian, elitist and paternalistic modes of thought. Perhaps in our exposition of Nietzsche's view of culture and human dignity, the reader has discerned the contours of the Judeo-Christian narrative; and as a way of bringing Nietzsche's perspective into sharper focus, I will take a moment to make this connection more explicit. Ironically, Huddleston puts some distance between Nietzsche and the Christian narrative precisely where it seems they converge most clearly. He says Nietzsche envisages that 'such a great individual is a "saviour" of sorts, yet a saviour not from sin, but from the pervasiveness of human decadence and mediocrity'.[497] But in order to counterpose these ideas, Huddleston has to work with an oddly abstracted notion of sin which perhaps envisages sin as an object that attaches itself to people or perhaps as the breaking of a set of rules. But many Judeo-Christian traditions speak about sin more explicitly as the failure to reflect the image of God, or to put it another way, the failure to be human. Conversely, the apostle Paul's assertion that 'Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation'[498] is not a declaration of Christ's deity as such but the declaration that Christ is the first fully fledged human being and the invitation to follow Christ is an invitation to wrap our humanity around him and in doing so be rescued from 'human mediocrity' or subhuman forms of life.[499] Nietzsche riffs on the New Testament vision for human culture that proposes that our lives, when considered collectively, have the potential to possess an aesthetic unity. Huddleston points to Nietzsche's belief that 'man has value and meaning only insofar as he is *a "stone" in a great edifice'*.[500] Huddleston refers to this among 'Nietzsche's pregnant architectural images',[501] but surely this is not Nietzsche's pregnant architectural imagery but is in fact the architectural imagery of the New Testament where both the apostles Peter and Paul describe the new humanity as stones being built into a great temple with Christ as the chief cornerstone.[502] Read this way, the Judeo-Christian narrative at one level actually affirms Nietzsche's belief that *human* dignity – and in the Christian version, our *humanity* – is connected to 'slavery in some sense or

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[496] *Ibid.*, p.107.
[497] *Decadence and Flourishing,* p.41.
[498] Colossians 1.15.
[499] Of course, Nietzsche and the New Testament authors are working with divergent views of what counts as mediocrity so that what Nietzsche wants to save humanity 'from', Chrisitianity promises to save people 'to'. In other words Nietzsche's definition of mediocrity or subhuman are the ascetic values being offered by Christianity.
[500] *GS*, para.356, p.303.
[501] *Decadence and Flourishing*, p.123.
[502] II Peter 1. 21 and Ephesians 2. 21.

other.'[503] In this vein, Paul declares that 'we are slaves of Christ'.[504] Additionally, all of this provides the crucial context to understanding Nietzsche's claim that Jesus is 'the noblest human being'.[505] Christ has played the role of 'the man who justifies man' by shaping humanity around himself and it is precisely this ambition that Nietzsche has for the great individuals he dreams about, who claim like Christ claims, 'I will draw all men to myself'.[506] Or as Nietzsche declares, 'He breaks the history of mankind in two. One lives before him, or one lives after him'.[507] Recognising the manner in which Nietzsche follows the contours of the Christian story is not only helpful for clarifying Nietzsche's own position, but it is indispensable for understanding how Nietzsche might respond to contemporary readers who think that by marginalising the will to power and narrowing its meaning to self-overcoming, they have successfully dealt with the perceived threat. Replacing the will to power with the revaluation of all values in some ways only serves to heighten the political nature of Nietzsche's project, unless we think that the invention of values and the subsequent taking measure of and shaping of humanity is an entirely apolitical activity and everyone will just come along quietly. Nietzsche did not think so, which is why he refers to the invention of values as 'monumental history'.[508] Just take one value for example which has been baptised as good but which Nietzsche wanted to baptise as 'evil': compassion. It is for this reason that R. Kevin Hill in *Nietzsche: A Guide for the Perplexed* describes the meaning of a revolution in morals as a terrifying realisation.[509]

Among the problems which emerge with the standard line of argument that proposes that Nietzsche eventually loses interest in culture and becomes only interested in great individuals is that it renders his critique of German culture as all bark and no bite. The reader will recall that contrary to the cultural origins' theory – which proposes that the spirit of German culture gave rise to German nationhood – Nietzsche finds German culture so vacuous that he questions whether such a thing as German culture exists at all from which something like German nationhood could emerge. But what does it matter what Nietzsche has to say about German culture if collective culture is in the final analysis of no account? However, the fact that Nietzsche makes specific criticisms of German culture – which carries

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[503] *BGE*, para. 257. p.201.
[504] Romans 6. 20-22 and Ephesians 6. 6.
[505] *HAH*, Section 8, 'A Look at the State', para.475, p.175. (Hollingdale translation) (Again, not as Paul Cohn translates it, 'the most loving of men' – see fn. 255).
[506] John 12. 32.
[507] *EH*, 'Why I Am a Destiny', para.8., p.333.
[508] 'Uses and Disadvantages', para.2, pp.67-72.
[509] Kevin Hill, *Nietzsche: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007), pp.2-3.

on in his mature and late writings – would seem to reinforce his concern for collective life, not diminish it, in which case we might just as easily, if not more naturally, infer that he has an alternative superior culture specifically in mind. And this is often the case; for placed alongside Nietzsche's scathing assessment of German culture is his fairly consistent admiration for French culture which in his view possessed an aesthetic unity of style and was in fact the source of anything that might pass for culture in Germany.[510]

Moreover, without this concern for the collective culture, the great individuals – oddly isolated from human culture – become pale figures unable to fulfil the salvific role of 'man who justifies man' and become drained of their world-historic significance.

Therefore, as this chapter has proceeded, the reader may have become aware of a growing tension that appears between attempts to clear Nietzsche of nationalism on the one hand and attempts to clear him of warmongering on the other. If the charge of fomenting violence and war is dealt with as a discreet issue – at least momentarily – it can be rebuffed with an emphasis on a highly individualised reading of the will to power whereby Nietzsche's interest in culture is set aside in favour of great individuals who have learned to master themselves. But in the absence of any broader cultural concerns, Nietzsche's critique of German culture, upon which German nationalism was predicated, is undermined. But then

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[510] Nietzsche points out that not only do educated German and European readers lack any psychological insight of their own but as products of their culture they are rendered incapable of reading 'the great masters of the psychological maxim' such as the French aphorist Francois de La Rochefoucauld (*Cf HAH*, para.35, p.31) and 'other French masters of psychical examination [...] skillful marksmen who again and again hit the bullseye' (para.36, p.32). We know from Isabelle von der Pahlen's own recollections of her first meeting with Nietzsche that he was reading La Rouchefoucauld's *Maxims* on the night train from Geneva to Genoa, one leg of his journey to Sorrento where Nietzsche would also begin work on *HAH*, in which he not only mentions French aphorists by name but his own aphoristic style is itself a tribute to these writers – wherever imitation is the highest form of flattery (Paolo D'Iorio, *Nietzsche's Journey to Sorrento: Genesis of the Philosophy of the Free Spirit*, trans. by Sylvia Mae Gorelick (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 12-14). In 'The Wanderer and His Shadow', in *HAH*, Nietzsche says that in Montaigne, Larochefoucauld, La Bruyere, Fontenelle, Vauvenargues and Chamfort, 'We are closer to antiquity than in the case of any other group of six authors of any other nation. Through these six the spirit of the final centuries of the old era has risen again – together they constitute an important link to the great, still continuing chain of the renaissance […] If they had written in Greek, the Greeks would have understood them [...] What clarity and precision those French men possess' (*HAH*, 'The Wanderer and His Shadow', para. 214, p.362-363). And these conduits of ancient culture and of the renaissance have both arisen in and produced a particular culture. Recognising an aesthetic unity that makes a culture a culture, Nietzsche says, 'European *noblesse* – of feeling, of taste, of manners, taking the word, in short, in every higher sense – is the work and invention of France; European vulgarity, the plebeianism of modern ideas, that of England' (*BGE*, para 253, p.192). And again, 'Even now France is still the seat of the most spiritual and sophisticated culture in Europe and the foremost school of taste' (*BGE*, para 254, p.192). This is a view that he carries into his late writing expressed unequivocally in *EH*: 'I believe only in French culture and consider everything else in Europe today that calls itself "culture" a misunderstanding – not to speak of German culture' (*EH*, 'Why I Am So Clever', para. 3, p.243). Perhaps the seriousness with which Nietzsche held these views is best appreciated by the suggestion that in order to recapture the hallowed moments when he was a guest in the Wagners' home in Tribschen, 'days of trust, of cheerfulness, of sublime accidents, of *profound* moments', Nietzsche says, 'I return once more to France' because 'as an artist one has no home in Europe, except Paris' (*EH*, 'Why I Am So Clever', para 5, 247-248).

again, if Nietzsche remains interested in collective culture – enough to condemn one culture and admire another – then forcing every warlike utterance through a metaphorical filter might have missed Nietzsche's point: Nietzsche was not against war wholesale; it only mattered that the war was waged by the right person.[511]

In fact, this is something recognised early on in Nietzsche's English reception. Writing in 1917, Salter says that Nietzsche 'went so far in this direction that he had little sympathy with the German Liberation-Wars against Napoleon – the Germans thereby frustrated the possibilities of a united Europe which Napoleon was holding out'.[512] And again, 'Nietzsche would have welcomed a victory of Napoleon'.[513]

But it is not as though contemporary authors intent on sanitising Nietzsche are entirely oblivious to Nietzsche's broader cultural concerns. For example, in the conclusion to their popular presentation of the will to power, Solomon and Higgins state:

> Many of Nietzsche's examples indicate that self-mastery is not itself the primary goal, but that self-discipline and even self-denial, typically aims at some further end, artistry or virtue.[514]

The 'further end' and 'artistry' that Nietzsche had in mind, I have been arguing, is nothing less than the shape of humanity itself and human civilisation, seen as Huddleston puts it – 'as a massive piece of collectively embodied art'. Prideaux is intermittently aware of this feature too, so that although she says that Nietzsche was 'only ever interested in man as an individual', it is difficult to reconcile this with what she says just two paragraphs later:

> Nietzsche's statement that 'God is dead' had said the unsayable to an age unwilling to go so far as to acknowledge the obvious: that without belief in the divine there was no longer any moral authority for the laws that had persisted throughout the civilization built over the last two thousand years. What happens when man cancels the moral code on which he has built the edifice of his civilization. What does it mean to be human unchained from a central metaphysical purpose?[515]

At this point Prideaux openly acknowledges that 'man' and 'the edifice of his civilization' are indeed the focus of Nietzsche's concerns, because when civilisation reaches

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[511] I am not aware of anywhere in the literature that points out how the individualist reading of Nietzsche weakens Nietzsche's critique of German nationalism by making his critique of collective culture by and large irrelevant, and simultaneously rendering the great individuals as pale and irrelevant figures robbed of their salvific role.
[512] 'Nietzsche and the War', p.369.
[513] *Ibid*., p.369.
[514] *NRS*, p.222.
[515] *Dynamite,* p.379.

the end of metaphysics it also falls off into a crisis of metaethics; this much, Prideaux claims, is 'obvious'. Nevertheless, some things can be hidden in plain sight, and the problem mysteriously disappears again with Prideaux's helpfully enumerated and individually tailored 'Nietzschean solution', unaccompanied, at this point, by the concern for how this individualised solution relates to the collective crisis of civilisation in Nietzsche's thinking.

> One might reject science as faith; one might reject religious faith itself but still retain moral values. First, man must become himself. Secondly, *amor fati*; he must accept what life brings, avoiding the blind alleys of self -hatred, and *ressentiment*. Then finally man can overcome himself to find true fulfilment as the *Ubermensch*, the man at peace with himself, finding joy in his earthly purpose, rejoicing in the sheer magnificence of existence and content with the finitude of his mortality.[516]

Prideaux may have titled her book with Nietzsche's epigram *I Am Dynamite*, but she is careful to never light the fuse; instead, the invisible boundary of good and evil is left fully intact and transgressors continue to be morally evaluated according to this old and familiar way of reconciling the individual with the collective. Clearly Prideaux is not facing a metaethical crisis of her own; therefore, her focus on self-improvement is immediately followed up with a moral judgement upon society: 'Tragically for Nietzsche, the need to overcome ourselves became so blatantly distorted into the need to overcome others'.[517] It is little wonder then, that Prideaux and those like her who attempt to reconcile themselves with Nietzsche do not attempt a serious reconciliation between Nietzsche's concern for the individual and his concern for a civilisation facing the death of God. While the tension continues to emerge periodically, here and there, it is quieted using familiar, that is to say, habitual techniques. Perhaps the tension might be resolved more permanently if these authors were able to take the rather more frank approach of the artist and atheist Francis Bacon,[518] who in an interview with David Sylvester observed sanguinely:

> But I'm not upset by the fact that people do suffer, because I think the suffering of people and the difference between people are what have made great art, and not egalitarianism. […] Who remembers or cares about a happy society? [...] So far one remembers a society for what it has created.[519]

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[516] *Dynamite,* p.379.
[517] *Dynamite,* pp.379-80.
[518] When Bacon first moved to London, he spent the later half of 1926 reading Nietzsche.
[519] David Sylvester, *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1981), p.125.

4.6 Conclusion

Nietzsche's link with war was forged at the height of the English and German nationalistic fervor of WWI. The ensuing debate over whether or not this reputation is ill- or well-deserved has persisted to the present day wherein Nietzsche's connection with war is frequently used as a foil by those who present their own work as a corrective to what are ostensibly unfair and simplistic distortions. Some claim that this spurious connection will not hold up in light of Nietzsche's anti-militarism. However, Nietzsche's alleged anti-militarism does not find much in the way of textual warrant if we are to take seriously the various claims about what counts as official canonical Nietzschean texts, whereas there are numerous texts which appear to suggest that Nietzsche perceives war as important for, and the inevitable outcome of, his own project. Dealing with these problem texts, authors will insist on a metaphorical, non-literal reading of anything that sounds war-like.

I have argued that this decision to read these passages metaphorically is in fact predicated on a particular understanding of Nietzsche's will to power, which is usually interpreted by those who want to absolve Nietzsche of any connection with war as one of his fringe ideas and, as it is ill-defined, should therefore be interpreted as an inward journey of self-mastery. The problem is that this approach to the will to power requires a depoliticised and highly individualised approach to Nietzsche's overall project. However, in light of Huddleston's work which integrates Nietzsche's concern for civilisation with his concern for great individuals, the attempt to read Nietzsche in this depoliticised, individualistic manner consistently and throughout his work is unsustainable. Consequently, the diminishment of the will to power for Nietzsche's thought and the restriction of the concept to purely individual terms do very little to alleviate the perceived problem and make the metaphorical reading of Nietzsche's statements about war less compelling. What does become clear is that time and again Nietzsche's defenders and detractors belong together as people who do not take the consequences of the death of God for civilisation seriously and therefore remain on the other side of the chasm that lies between themselves and the philosopher they claim to have understood. Nietzsche perceives an unusual brutality in such readers who appear in his visions of humanity's collective future as the 'Pharisees' – with all that epithet implies – because they are the hypocrites and crucifiers of humanity's future.

The good *must* be the pharisees – they have no choice. [...] For the good are *unable* to create; they are always the beginning of the end: they crucify him who writes new values on new tablets; they sacrifice the future to *themselves* - they crucify all man's future.[520]

'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink. [521]

[520] *Z*, Third Part, 'On Old and New Tablets', para.26, pp.324-25.
[521] *Z*, First Part, 'Zarathustra's Prologue', para.5, p.129.

Chapter Five

Nietzsche the Nazi (Post WWII)

Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth, is the manipulative presence behind the Nietzsche–Nazi Myth.[522]

Solomon and Higgins

One may wonder how and why what is so naively called a falsification was possible (one can't falsify just anything).[523]

Jacques Derrida

5.0 Silence and Madness

Those who visited Nietzsche in the final years after his collapse frequently commented on his silence, struck perhaps by the contrast between the strident and articulate voice in his writings and the speechless state in which they now found him. Apparently, after ranting incoherently for hours at a time, Nietzsche would go into extended periods of silence. R. J. Hollingdale, in his moving account of Nietzsche's slow demise, provides the recollections of several friends: Nietzsche's friend Erwin Rhode says that he hardly uttered 'a single sentence for a month at a time'. Likewise, his friend Franz Overbeck writes in one letter that Nietzsche 'has grown very quiet'. And after paying what would be his final visit to Nietzsche, Overbeck writes that 'he made literally not one sound while I was there'.[524] These last silent days of Nietzsche's life naturally evoke the motif of silence in his parable of the madman. The madman and the crowd, like Nietzsche and his friends, are no longer comprehensible to each other and Nietzsche says the madman 'fell silent and looked at the crowd that had gathered to watch the commotion; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment'.

It may have only been coincidence that Nietzsche's life at times reflected his art, but I have been arguing that Nietzsche deliberately made art that would reflect his future reception.

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[522] *NRS*, p.10.
[523] Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation. Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida*, English edition ed. by Christie V. McDonald based on the French edition ed. Claude Levesque and Christie V. McDonald, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Schoken Books, 1985), p.24.
[524] *MHP,* pp.246-247.

Standing on the edge of the parable's market square, we can see once more how Nietzsche endeavoured to predict and explain the future of his own reception, always marking the distance between himself and his audience and providing – rather uniquely and within his own texts – a way of measuring that distance. On this occasion, Nietzsche represents the distance in terms of a silence that proceeds from the chasm that lies between himself and his audience. This silence in Nietzsche's reception is nowhere more pronounced than in the years immediately following WWII. After the Jewish holocaust, famously described as 'the most fantastic outburst of collective insanity in human history',[525] it became both popular and academic opinion that this 'collective insanity' had been inspired by Nietzsche's own insanity. Nietzsche's voice was now so closely associated with Hitlerian speech that scholars placed a corresponding distance between themselves and the 'proto-Nazi' philosopher, and Nietzsche studies fell all but silent.

For example, in his book *From Luther to Hitler* published in 1941, William McGovern consistently refers to Nietzsche and the Nazis in the same sentence, so that it becomes difficult to tell them apart both in attitude and intent:

> The Nazis approached the attitude toward morals assumed by Nietzsche […] It is only when we bear Nietzsche's philosophy in mind that we can understand the true meaning of the official statement of the Nazis that 'right is whatever profits the national socialist movement and therewith Germany'.[526]

In Crane Brinton's 1948 contribution to the Harvard series *Makers of Modern Europe*, Nietzsche and the Nazis are not entirely indistinguishable from each other; however, Brinton attempts to convey a sense of mutual edification between the two, whereby Nietzsche provides the Nazis with distinction and the Nazis offer Nietzsche a place to belong.[527] And in Gyorgy Lukács's 1952 book *The Destruction of Reason,* he draws a straight and seemingly unproblematic line between Hitler and Nietzsche as he describes Hitler as the 'executor of Nietzsche's spiritual testament'.[528]

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[525] Noam Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East? Reflections on Justice and Nationhood* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p.58.
[526] William Montgomery McGovern, *From Luther to Hitler: The History of Fascist-Nazi Political Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941), p.630.
[527] Crane Brinton, *Nietzsche,* Makers of Modern Europe series (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), p.211.
[528] György Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason* [1954], trans. by Peter Palmer (London: The Merlin Press, 1980), p.752.

After WWI, scholars had worked hard to persuade an English-speaking audience that Nietzsche was not in fact a warmongering nationalist and madman, but with Nietzsche's reputation now cemented as the proto-ideologist for Nazism, Ratner-Rosenhagen observes, 'Few were willing to try it again'.[529] And again:

> Given the popular press's image of Zarathustra as the Ur-text of European totalitarianism, and the academy's general disregard for him, it was hard to imagine that Nietzsche's philosophy had much of a future in American intellectual life.[530]

It goes without saying that the state of Nietzsche studies in the English-speaking world today is entirely unreflective of this ignominious past in which wary scholars, perhaps hedging the future of their own careers, cautiously – and quite understandably – backed away from Nietzsche. As we noted earlier, Nietzsche is in that unusual and exclusive group of philosophers who has actually had a popular reception. The scale of Nietzsche's popularity today is conveyed succinctly by author Michael Tanner in the latest edition of *Nietzsche: A Very Short Introduction*, in which he points out that 'there is now a flourishing Nietzsche industry, and almost certainly more books appear on him each year than on any other thinker'.[531]

But before such an extraordinary revival of interest could occur in the English-speaking world, Nietzsche had to be de-Nazified. There is a fairly standard story which has been creating reasonable doubt around the Nietzsche–Nazi connection for several decades and which has gone largely unchallenged at least until the 1990s when the scope and limits of the story's function were called into question, but notably not its accuracy.

We shall begin then by briefly outlining this redemptive story, pointing to various examples of its influence on Nietzsche's popular reception. With an appreciation for the scope of the narrative's success, we will trace it back to its source before considering the various problems with the narrative itself. Once again, consistent with the concerns of this thesis, we will note how the gap between Nietzsche's atheism and his atheist interpreters proves to be a helpful way of understanding and plotting the course of Nietzsche's reception history. In this regard, I am going to argue that Nietzsche's English reception which Nazified him one minute and de-Nazified him the next should not be mistaken for a discovery of the true Nietzsche or of a coming to terms at last with the real meaning of the Nietzschean text.

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[529] *American Nietzsche*, p.220.
[530] *Ibid*.
[531] *Nietzsche: A Very Short Introduction*, p.3.

Instead, I will argue that it is only by failing to take Nietzsche's atheism seriously, remaining at a remote and safe distance from him on the other side of the chasm, that Nietzsche could be 'rehabilitated into the pantheon of western philosophers'.[532] I am not arguing that this was the only way that Nietzsche could be included in the pantheon of western philosophers, but simply that these were the conditions under which his post WWII 'rehabilitation' took place.

5.1 Nazi Misappropriation

Steven Aschheim summarises how the standard narrative about Nietzsche and the Nazis selects and arranges the evidence in such a way so as to de-Nazify Nietzsche. Aschheim suggests that previous inquiries into how Nietzsche was adopted by the Third Reich – and subsequently the way Nietzsche became Nazified in popular imagination in the English-speaking world – never went much beyond rearranging the same three pieces of evidence. [533] Here is one such arrangement of the evidence to which he refers: *one*, Nietzsche's official Nazi interpreter Professor Alfred Bäumler imposed an artificial unity on Nietzsche's works by reading the Nietzschean canon through the *Nachlass*. *Two*, a thread joins Bäumler to Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth – who edited and arranged the *Nachlass* – which signals his acceptance of the Nazification of the Nietzsche Archive at Weimar with Elisabeth at the helm. *Three,* pinned between the first two and with threads connecting to both, is the famous picture of Hitler in front of Nietzsche's bust, also at Weimar, and thus arranged and orchestrated by Elisabeth. The meaning of the photo is still unclear but it is believed to be somehow linked to the other two pieces of evidence.[534]

Aschheim's larger point here – when set in the context of his overall project – is that Nietzsche scholarship gives the general impression that it was on the basis of slim evidence, provided by unreliable Nazi sources all manipulated by Nietzsche's sister, that Nietzsche gained his Nazi reputation. And now this same evidence is offered back to us as a way of de-Nazifying Nietzsche by reframing this unfortunate association – for an English-speaking audience – as a case of misappropriation transparently aimed at ideological and propaganda purposes.

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[532] Max Whyte, 'The Uses and Abuses of Nietzsche in the Third Reich: Alfred Baeumler's "Heroic Realism"', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43 (April 2008), 171-94.
[533] Steven E. Aschheim, 'Nietzsche and National Socialism', *Michael: On the History of the Jews in the Diaspora*, n.v. (1993), pp.11-27 (pp.13-14).
[534] Aschheim adds that 'more minor works by Richard Ohler, or the 'authorized' assessment of Heinrich Hartle will also be thrown in'. *Cf* 'Nietzsche and National Socialism', p.14.

Aschheim does not dispute the evidence; he can concede that Bäumler had his own idiosyncratic reading of Nietzsche, and Elisabeth's fascism would have distorted her brother's reception in one way or another. As for the incriminating picture of Hitler that speaks a thousand words, Aschheim suggests make of it what you will. It is not a question of whether or not the Nazis misappropriated Nietzsche – undoubtedly, they did – but for Aschheim it is a question of whether or not this version of intellectual history, even if left intact and entirely undisputed, constitutes a closed case, effectively tying off the investigation into the Nietzsche–Nazi connection, never to be reopened. As we shall see momentarily, that is precisely how this account has functioned in Nietzsche scholarship over several decades and it is in this context that Donatella Di Cesare points out that Aschheim has opened a new line of inquiry in the Nietzsche–Nazi case.[535]

Aschheim has been joined by others in this line of questioning. For example, Max Whyte also recognises how this combination of ideas – whether by design or default – leads us to a number of investigative dead-ends, effectively throwing us off the scent of a Nietzsche–Nazi trail, so that the Nazified Nietzsche is 'summarily dismissed as a crass and manipulative misinterpretation', and commentators continue 'downplaying the significance of Nietzsche for the Third Reich'. Again, Whyte accepts the evidence before him, confirming that 'from the outset of the war Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche sought to popularise her brother as a German nationalist and post-humous comrade in arms'.[536] He also describes Bäumler as 'the most prominent of Pro-Nietzschean Nazis' but who nonetheless read Nietzsche's works through the *Nachlass,* manipulated as it was by Elisabeth.[537] And he explains that while Heinrich Hoffmann's photo of Hitler contemplating the bust of Nietzsche 'seemed to place an official stamp of legitimacy on Nietzsche's Nazi transformation', if looked at from another angle, it might have been intended to be ironic and was perhaps meant to put distance between Hitler and Nietzsche, framed as it was with only half of Nietzsche's bust in view.[538] But like Aschheim, Whyte is pointing out that this story of how Nietzsche became associated with Nazism in the first place, effectively circumvents any further investigation into their connection:

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[535] Donatella Di Cesare, *Heidegger and The Jews: The Black Notebooks*, trans. Murtha Baca (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), p.48.
[536] 'Uses and Abuses', p.175.
[537] *Ibid.*, pp.180 and 191.
[538] *Ibid.*, p.191.

> The claim that the national socialists simply falsified the true Nietzsche has spawned a sort of interpretive myopia, a failure to engage with Nietzsche's concrete, historical role in the ideological apparatus of the new regime.[539]

As we shall see further below, both Aschheim and Whyte leave the basic facts of the narrative intact but work to establish the Nietzsche–Nazi connection by other means.

With the basic features of this narrative in place, we will now consider what kind of success this account has had in de-Nazifying Nietzsche as well as note one or two places where these sorts of accounts of Nazi misappropriation continue to define popular perceptions of Nietzsche today. Aschheim observes, 'Today Nietzsche's de-Nazification – and the de-Nietzscheanism of Nazism, I would argue, has become close to a fait accompli within western culture'.[540] With the same sense of the triumph of this narrative, Tracy B. Strong notes, 'Perhaps no opinion in Nietzsche scholarship is now more widely accepted than that the Nazis were wrong and/or ignorant in their appropriation of Nietzsche'.[541] And Di Cesare, once again signaling the large scale de-Nazification of Nietzsche, explains that it 'took place throughout western culture', beginning from 1950 and culminating in the 1970s and not really wavering until the 1990s.[542]

A striking example of how this apologetic has been passed along by scholars to a popular audience comes from Solomon and Higgens's *What Nietzsche Really Said*. The book's expressed purpose, we may recall, is to introduce Nietzsche to a popular audience. The authors open with the nicely alliterated chapter title, 'Rumors: Wine, Women, and Wagner', and in punchy style proceed to dispel thirty unsavory rumors about Nietzsche in roughly the same number of pages, clearing the way for the rest of the book. Rising to near the top of the list of course is rumor number three, 'Nietzsche was a Nazi', followed closely by 'Nietzsche hated Jews', 'Nietzsche favored eugenics' and 'Nietzsche was a fascist' as rumors four, five and six. In response to the accusation 'Nietzsche was a Nazi', Solomon and Higgins begin by pointing out that Nietzsche died 20 years before the Nazi party was formed in 1919. Having raised this chronological problem, they then turn their attention to the famous photo of 'Hitler staring eyeball to eyeball at a bust of Nietzsche', which they refer to as 'Exhibit B'. And here begins the inevitable incrimination of Nietzsche's sister:

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[539] *Ibid*., p.172.
[540] Steven Aschheim, 'Nietzsche, Anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust' in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, ed. Jacob Golomb (London: Routledge, 1997), ebook (Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2001), pp.3-19 (p.3).
[541] Tracy B. Strong, 'Nietzsche's Political Misappropriation'. in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche,* ed. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.119-47.
[542] *Heidegger and The Jews,* p.47.

> Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth, is the manipulative presence behind the Nietzsche-Nazi Myth. She was indeed sympathetic to the growing fascist cause and married to a notorious anti-Semite of whom Nietzsche thoroughly disapproved. […] It was she years, after her brother's death, who invited Hitler for his 'photo-op' at the Nietzsche archive. Elisabeth took over Nietzsche's literary estate after his incapacitation, and she even published apocryphal books and 'editions' of Nietzsche's notes under his by-then famous name. […] Unfortunately, Elisabeth's political views became firmly attached to Nietzsche's name, and the association survived even the exposé of her forgeries and misappropriations of Nietzsche's works.[543]

If a picture speaks a thousand words then perhaps Laurence Gane and Piero's *Introducing Nietzsche: A Graphic Guide*, provides popular audiences with a more detailed and compelling version of this story than most, depicting Nietzsche in sharp confrontation with his sister while he smashes the glass out of a photo frame containing a picture of the Kaiser.[544]

The rough shape of the story of Nazi misappropriation can also be made out at a popular level in the Anglophone world in the most recent attempts to discredit contemporary far right ideologues who also identify Nietzsche as *their* philosopher. For example, Richard Spencer, a leader of the so called alt-right, claims to have been radicalised by reading *Genealogy of Morals*; describing his awakening, he says, 'You could say I was red pilled by Nietzsche'.[545] Recognising, or perhaps remembering, the dangers of an intellectual titan being co-opted and used to lend an air of legitimacy to populist movements and at the same time wanting to protect Nietzsche's reputation – and it is not always clear which priority takes precedence – several journalistic attempts at damage control simply reproduce a short-hand version of the account which we have already described. For instance, David Rutledge compares the contemporary alt-right to the WWII Nazis and asks, 'Was Nietzsche a proto-Nazi?'[546] Rutledge concludes that the Nazis did indeed believe this to be the case but then immediately disassociates Nietzsche from the Nazis in the prescribed and familiar manner in which Nietzsche's Nazification becomes Elisabeth's hermeneutical problem. The problem is easily avoided as long as we are aware of the illegitimate readings created by the misleading and 'diligent efforts of his fascist-sympathizing sister'.[547] Naturally, conclusions

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[543] *NRS*, p.10.
[544] *Introducing Nietzsche: A Graphic Guide*, p.92.
[545] Graeme Wood, 'His Kampf', *Atlantic*, June 2017 <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/06/his-kampf/524505/> [accessed 12 November 2019].
[546] 'Neo-Nazis Are Claiming Nietzsche as their Own'
[547] *Ibid.*

are arrived at much faster at the level of popular reporting, but Rutledge assures his general audience that his speedily made case has the full weight of scholarly procedure behind it as he informs his readers – not inaccurately – that 'few serious Nietzsche scholars today view him in this light [of Nazi ideology]'.[548]

Putting the argument in ever wider circulation, Sean Illing's headline reads, 'The alt-right is drunk on bad readings of Nietzsche. The Nazis were too'. But Illing's big exposé is merely a restatement of the standard line of argument:

> People often say that the Nazis loved Nietzsche, which is true. What's less known is that Nietzsche's sister, who was in charge of his estate after he died, was a Nazi sympathizer who shamefully rearranged his remaining notes to produce a final book, *The Will to Power,* that embraced Nazi ideology. It won her the favor of Hitler, but it was a terrible disservice to her brother's legacy. [...] And it would appear that 'bad Nietzsche' is back, and he looks a lot like he did in the early 20th century when his ideas were unjustly appropriated by the (original) Nazis.[549]

Rutledge might want to nuance Illing's Nazi/alt-right connection by asking if 'the contemporary alt-right misreading of Nietzsche [is] the same as its Nazi-era forebear'.[550] This could be a helpful distinction to make, but regardless of any differences that might lie between them, the crucial unquestioned assumption remains: the Nazis and the alt-right have both *misappropriated* Nietzsche and have only managed to do so because they have managed to *misread* him.

So far, we have tried to follow Aschheim's characterisation of the postwar discussion concerning Nietzsche's Nazification. His depiction seems to find support in contemporary popular accounts in which the circumscribed nature of the discussion only allows readers to glimpse the vaguest connections between Nietzsche and the events of WWII.[551] In this way, the now fading apparition of a Nietzsche in Nazi uniform can immediately be dismissed by the once credulous audience as nothing more than the lingering spectre of Nazi propaganda. Aschheim believes it is this adumbrated intellectual history that has been largely responsible and almost totally successful in exorcising the idea of a Nazi Nietzsche from both scholarly and popular opinion. We will now trace the success and prevalence of this version of intellectual history back to its source before considering the various ways in which it has been contested.

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[548] *Ibid.*
[549] 'The Alt-Right Is Drunk on Bad Readings of Nietzsche. The Nazis Were Too'
[550] 'Neo-Nazis Are Claiming Nietzsche as their Own'
[551] For further examples, see fn.342.

5.2 Walter Kaufmann

The power and prevalence of this particular intellectual history can only be fully appreciated when it is heard as an echo of the singular voice of Walter Kaufmann who began a new era in Nietzsche scholarship in 1950; it is his voice that has reverberated in the subsequent decades through the work of innumerable contemporary commentators who one after another have all taken their soundings from him. In 1939, at the age of nineteen, Kaufmann became part of the Jewish intellectual displacement, forced to leave Germany and immigrate to the United States, where Kaufmann taught philosophy at Princeton from 1947 until his death in 1980. Although there were other Jewish and German intellectual emigres who, like Kaufmann, felt that Nietzsche needed to be rescued from the hands of the Nazis, it was Kaufmann who single-handedly achieved this monumental feat.[552] Not only did Kaufmann manage to win an audience for Nietzsche in the Anglosphere, but through his commentary and multiple translations, he determined *how* Nietzsche would be received by his English-speaking audience over the next few decades, at both a scholarly and popular level. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that for several decades, Nietzschean scholarship in the English-speaking world was all just footnotes to Kaufmann, to borrow another philosopher's epitaph.[553] If anyone thinks that I am overstating the case, consider the language employed by other Nietzschean scholars to describe Kaufmann's influence. For example, noting the phenomenal success of Kaufmann's book *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, Ratner-Rosenhagen points out:

> From 1950 to 1974, the book went through four editions, and from its first printing onward established its hegemony in Nietzsche studies. Many regard it as the single most important – certainly the most popular – study of the German philosopher ever written in any language. Throughout his career, Kaufmann presided over the English-language Nietzsche industry.[554]

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[552] See, for example: *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Correspondence, 1926-69*, ed. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, trans. Robert and Rita Kimber (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1992), p.166; Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*, 1933-1944 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1944), pp.127-128; Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmidd Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp.36, 196 and 275.
[553] After writing this section, Stanley Corngold's Kaufmann biography was published in which he draws the same analogy – 'all modern Nietzsche scholarship begins to read like so many footnotes to Kaufmann'. *Cf PHH*, p.11.
[554] *American Nietzsche*, p.220.

In a similar vein, Strong describes Kaufmann's influence over Nietzsche studies in the following monolithic terms:

> The power of Kaufmann's book [...] effectively gave him and his supporters control over Nietzsche studies in America. […] His was the only opinion that would always be sought.[555]

And again:

> Kaufmann's Nietzsche was *the* Nietzsche for American and British studies.[556]

'Presiding over', 'gaining control', 'establishing hegemony', and *'the* Nietzsche' are the sorts of phrases employed by Nietzschean scholars who want to express both the indebted and perhaps at times indentured nature of their own work.

The story of how Kaufmann managed to achieve the unachievable begins with his concerted effort to wrestle Nietzsche's works out of the hands of the Nazis. Aschheim goes so far as to say:

> I am not sure if it is an exaggeration to claim that the basic aim of Nietzsche's most insistent and influential post-war expositor, translator and popularizer Walter Kaufmann, was casuistically to rid Nietzsche of these sullied associations and to provide him with the kind of liberal humanist face consistent with American academic values of the time.[557]

Ratner-Rosenhagen might find this sort of assessment too one-dimensional. As she sees it, 'the common charge that his [Kaufmann's] interpretation is little more than a veiled attempt to rescue Nietzsche from the Nazis misses the mark'.[558] Instead, Ratner-Rosenhagen wants to consider Kaufmann's broader philosophical project, i.e., 'Kaufmann's innovation, then, was to draw out Nietzsche's unexpected harmony with the full range of competing philosophical, sociological, and cultural discourses of the period'. In this regard, Ratner-Rosenhagen points out that Kaufmann emphasized 'the Enlightenment, empirical and pragmatic dimensions' in Nietzsche's philosophy. And she argues that contrary to what is

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[555] Tracy Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, expanded edn. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p.313.
[556] Tracy Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p.312.
[557] *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, p.4.
[558] *American Nietzsche*, p.224.

commonly thought, Kaufmann did not turn Nietzsche into an existentialist but rather used Nietzsche's philosophy to introduce existentialism to his immediate American audience.[559]

From one angle, I can agree with Ratner-Rosenhagen that not all of Kaufmann's work was about de-Nazifying Nietzsche, but then again, in order to harmonise Nietzsche with the various contemporary competing ideas – as Ratner-Rosenhagen would have it – he would surely have to be brought into the common frame of values and language of the broader cultural discourse of the time. Broadly speaking, this common frame was comprised, as Ratner-Rosenhagen has already intimated, of both Enlightenment and existential projects, and we might add, *their shared humanist values* (Jean Paul Sartre had published his *Existentialism is a Humanism* in 1946). But it is precisely this context of *humanist values* that complicates the question: is Kaufmann's interpretation 'little more than a veiled attempt to rescue Nietzsche from the Nazis', or as Aschheim puts it, 'to rid Nietzsche of these sullied associations?'

I want to respond to this by asking: what would it take to satisfy readers that Nietzsche had indeed been purified from Nazism, in a culture where humanism provided the common frame of values? To put it another way, in a context shaped by humanist values, would it have been possible to de-Nazify Nietzsche in any meaningful sense without also imbuing Nietzsche with those same values? Or as a thought experiment, we might try to imagine what it would be like to rehabilitate Nietzsche from Nazism into another context altogether, say, a pagan Roman context. Nietzsche may not have been unequivocally admiring of Rome. Nevertheless, he admired the Roman 'noble and frivolous tolerance' toward belief,[560] and he thought that 'every mind of any account in the Roman Empire was Epicurean'.[561] This left the aristocratic race unbound by the social constraints of morality, so that the Romans were among 'the strong and noble, and nobody stronger and nobler has yet existed on earth or even been dreamed of'.[562] Roman strength realises a new depth in the psychological complexity and genius of Julius Caesar who stood just 'five steps from tyranny'.[563] Only Napoleon would later embody 'the ideal of antiquity […] [the] "supreme rights of the few"! Like a last signpost to the *other* path'.[564] Taking it further, Nietzsche frequently contrasts Roman master morality with Christian slave morality, from which

[559] *American Nietzsche*, p.224.
[560] *BGE,* para.46, p.61.
[561] *AC*, para.58, p.193.
[562] *GM*, First Essay, para.16, p.53.
[563] *TI*, 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man', para.38, p.104.
[564] *GM*, First Essay, para.16, p.54.

Christianity always emerges the worse.[565] In Nietzsche's estimation, the Roman Empire is the 'most admirable of all works of art in the grand style', which has been desecrated by the Christian ascetic instinct.[566] And so, we return to our question: what measures do we imagine we would have to take in order to rehabilitate Nietzsche into this parallel universe? It might conceivably be more straightforward to bring Nietzsche into the common frame of Roman values, or in Ratner-Rosenhagen terms, into harmony with 'the full range of competing philosophical, sociological, and cultural discourses of the period'. This speculation is contingent, of course, upon Nietzsche's own sympathies actually being in some accord with Roman values as he imagined them to be. But perhaps the fact that I, at least, find it easier to imagine Nietzsche's thinking being rehabilitated into a Roman world instead of mid to late twentieth-century America not only suggests a closer resemblance of ideas between Nietzsche and Roman paganism but might suggest deeper links connecting Nietzsche to the Nazis.

Returning to our own universe, it is not clear that even purging Nietzsche of various Nazi markers such as anti-Semitism, social Darwinism and German nationalism would have been sufficient. In order for Nietzsche to be really de-Nazified, Kaufmann also had to provide him, as Aschheim says, 'with the kind of liberal humanist face consistent with American academic values of the time'. So, to return to our original question concerning Kaufmann's overall project, I am arguing that it becomes quite difficult to tell where the one project of de-Nazifying Nietzsche leaves off and the other project of giving him a humanist face begins. It may be that in de-Nazifying Nietzsche in a manner acceptable to his own context, Kaufmann has also de-Nietzschefied Nietzsche, which may explain why some atheists feel it is perfectly safe to approach this postwar Nietzsche, whom Robert Ackerman describes so vividly as a 'King Kong in chains […] under heavy sedation'.[567]

Perhaps this view of a sanitised Nietzsche is expressed most extremely and perhaps rather tactlessly by Goosta who says:

> So, Kaufmann achieved his objective; to use the blindness of American liberalism in its hour of victory to hide one of the most powerful origins of its opposition. Kaufmann then is just an extension of the

[565] For a helpful discussion concerning Nietzsche's view of the Romans, see Richard Bett, 'Nietzsche and the Romans', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 42 (Autumn 2011), 7-31.
[566] *AC*, para.58, p.192.
[567] Robert Ackerman, 'Current American Thought on Nietzsche', in *Nietzsche Heute: Die Rezeption seines Werkes nach* 1968, ed. Sigrid Bauschinger, Susan L. Cocalis and Sara Lennox (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1988), p.129.

> war, part of an intellectual Nuremberg. He really did all this to destroy Nietzsche by diffusing him, placing him outside of context as a mere wisdom writer and intellectual curiosity.[568]

That being said, how should we go about measuring the extent of Kaufmann's distortions or understanding their significance for his reception?[569] I suggest that we do not need to go to Goosta's extreme by saying that Kaufmann 'did all this in order to destroy Nietzsche' or to claim with Sokal that 'Kaufmann has given us an antiseptic image of him [Nietzsche]'.[570] There may well be various aspects of Nietzsche's multifaceted personality present in Kaufmann's work. But perhaps what matters is that in various ways and to perhaps an undefinable extent, Kaufmann sanitised Nietzsche. And at this point, if we want to understand the significance of Kaufmann's attempt to sanitise Nietzsche, then it might be more helpful if debate over Kaufmann's text gave way to a consideration of Kaufmann's audience. Again, it seems to be the direction Nietzsche himself would have us look, asking questions about how he has been interpreted by Kaufmann *in order to serve the cultural needs of his time*. With this in mind, David Pickus reminds us how Nietzsche reads the history of philosophy in terms of how it has met psychological needs, or as Nietzsche puts it in the opening sections of *Beyond Good and Evil*, how it has met the 'desire of the heart'.[571] Applying this principle to Nietzsche's reception history, Pickus talks about it in terms of the 'disposition in Nietzsche scholarship' and makes the following suggestion:

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[568] I came across Goosta early in my research and although no longer web accessible, Kaufmann's biographer Stanley Corngold quotes 'a web reviewer calling himself "Goosta" (coding perhaps, "Giusta": "real," "true," "authentic") [who] has cleverly-provocatively-analyzed in bizarre over-the-top rhetoric' Kaufmann's supposed ideological baggage.

[569] Various versions of this critique of Kaufmann's Nietzsche have recently been challenged by Kaufmann's biographer Stanley Corngold who published a major (714-page) Kaufmann biography at the end of 2018. Critics of Kaufmann's Nietzsche are a pressing concern for Corngold who uses Nietzsche to introduce Kaufmann to his readers. We might characterise Corngold's overall argument in the following manner: Corngold says 'there is scarcely a critique of Kaufmann's book that entirely hits the mark' (*cf.* Walter Kaufmann: Philosopher, Humanist, Heretic, p. 595; see also p. 60), but by the same token, the way he frames his arguments seems to suggest – unintentionally at times – that Kaufmann's critics are not too wide of the mark either. Indeed, Corngold's arguments sometimes confirm rather than allay critics' concerns about Kaufmann's sanitisation of Nietzsche, by providing Kaufmann's motives and explaining his methods for eliding certain unpleasant features of Nietzsche's thinking. Furthermore, Corngold often engages with the specific critiques he is taking issue with, using phrases like 'this is not entirely wrong' or 'this point has merit'. And regarding his own arguments, he says, 'Admittedly these disclaimers do not take care of the question once and for all […] There are elements in Nietzsche elided by Kaufmann which made him fair game for a Nazi appropriation'. *Cf.* Walter Kaufmann: Philosopher, Humanist, Heretic, p. 585. Thus, Corngold is not arguing in absolute terms that Kaufmann did not sanitise Nietzsche; rather, he is arguing about the degree to which Nietzsche was sanitised.

[570] *PHH*, p.582.

[571] *BGE*, para.5, p.12.

> It seems right to think that (once he left off thundering about 'scholarly oxen') he would ask students of his philosophy to investigate how a 'wish of the heart' broadly defined, colored commentary on him.[572]

Perhaps then, if someone asks the question 'how much and to what extent did Kaufmann sanitise Nietzsche?' the answer is "enough".

To repeat what I said in the introduction to this chapter, this pendulum swing in English reception which Nazified Nietzsche one minute and de-Nazified him the next should not be mistaken for a discovery of the true Nietzsche or a coming to terms at last with the real meaning of the Nietzschean text. Instead, what it demarcates quite clearly is the shape of the moral map on which English speakers have tried to locate Nietzsche without realising their map is too small. It is true that after rejecting his father's Protestantism and his mother's Judaism, Kaufmann himself became an atheist, but it was still an atheism governed by a Christian asceticism, whereby he remained answerable to Judeo-Christian values that had grown out of the metaphysical God. In as much as Nietzsche can be made to meet those Christian ascetic ideals, he is sanitised and in as much as he fails to meet those Christian ascetic ideals, he is demonised. But the entire discussion is framed in moral terms that stubbornly refuse to allow Nietzsche to move beyond 'good and evil'. Nietzsche's own words about the history of Western philosophy can be applied here to his own reception history; that is to say, the story of Nietzsche's English reception has been 'dominated by morality' and his interpreters have been 'led by instinctive moral definitions in which former cultural preconditions are reflected' so that 'ulterior moral motives have hitherto obstructed the course of the interpretation of Nietzsche's works'.[573] Nietzsche says, 'in the entire history of philosophy there *is* no intellectual integrity – but only "love of the good"'.[574] And applying Nietzsche's polemic to his own reception, we might also say, 'Nietzsche's reception has had no intellectual integrity, but only the "love of the good"'.

5.2.2 Problems With the Narrative

Irrespective of whether we think that de-Nazifying Nietzsche sufficiently sums up Kaufmann's project or not, and whether we think he managed to accomplish this while still leaving Nietzsche intact, the fact remains that his project would not get going until he began

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[572] David Pickus, 'Wishes of the Heart: Walter Kaufmann, Karl Jaspers, and Disposition in Nietzsche Scholarship', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, n.v., no. 33 (Spring 2007), 5-24 (p.6).
[573] *WP,* para.413, p.222.
[574] *WP,* para.460, p.252.

to purge Nietzsche of his Nazi links. And one of his first moves was to provide the appropriate evidence that would problematise Nietzsche's Nazi history. The evidence Kaufmann gathers and the way he presents it should be instantly recognisable in light of the popular versions of this story we noted above. For example, Kaufmann discusses Bäumler, Elisabeth and Hitler in numerous places and often in concert with each other and within a paragraph or two. Kaufmann says that 'Alfred Bäumler was the professor whom the Nazis called to Berlin to "interpret" Nietzsche'. He then makes the all-important connection between Bäumler and Nietzsche's sister by explaining that Bäumler 'followed Frau Forster Nietzsche [and] accepted her edition of the *Will to Power* as Nietzsche's magnum opus'. And a few sentences later, Kaufmann attempts to quantify Hitler's knowledge of Nietzsche, 'Hitler, of course, knew fifty times as much about Wagner as he did about Nietzsche'.[575] The reader can conclude that when Hitler stood in front of Nietzsche's bust, that was probably as close to Nietzsche as the Führer ever got.[576] Again, bemoaning the politicised and militarised versions of Nietzsche's concept of the will to power, Kaufmann charges Bäumler and then Elisabeth respectively for these distortions.[577] And, in one more example, Kaufmann urges us to 'recall Bäumler's principle of Nietzsche exegesis' which contends that 'the true Nietzsche appears only in the notes', notes which Kaufmann has been at pains to explain were edited by his fascist and anti-Semitic sister. Furthermore, any differences between Nietzsche and Hitler, Kaufmann says, were written off by the Nazis as a chronological problem; after all, 'Nietzsche could not know the whole truth fifty years in advance'.[578]

My point here is that within his larger strategy, Kaufmann employed and thereby promoted a number of tactics for dealing with the question of Nietzsche's Nazism. One such tactic was to offer a particular intellectual history which offered up these names in various combinations. In doing so, Kaufmann pointed to what might possibly be the fastest way to break the Nietzsche–Nazi connection, providing helpful, even necessary concision for subsequent commentators communicating with a potentially suspicious popular audience. After all, what better way to deal with the damning accusation 'Nietzsche was a Nazi' than by satisfying people's wrath through the provision of an ideological scapegoat, 'no, but his sister was'?

The only problem with this widely circulated and often repeated narrative whose longevity is no doubt testament to its remarkable success, is that it is not true. I realize that by

[575] *PPA,* pp.40-41.
[576] *Ibid*.
[577] *PPA,* p.179.
[578] *PPA,* pp.289-90.

saying this it is rather like trying to stop a train that left the station long ago and has picked up a good head of steam ever since. Nevertheless, I want to join with the most recent Nietzsche scholarship which has rather unexpectedly begun to question precisely this version of events. Of course, given the unusual level of scholarly agreement that this argument has enjoyed over several decades and which has given it a momentum all of its own, we may be reluctant to apply the brakes. How then should we settle this new dispute?

Robert C. Holub raises this dispute in his book *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem* by asking some fairly straightforward questions regarding Elisabeth's influence over her brother's reputation. Working to what might be considered fairly minimal standards of scholarship, Holub simply wants to know what the philological evidence is that has led Nietzsche scholars over several decades to transfer all of Nietzsche's sins onto his sister. To be clear, Holub is not contesting the fact that Nietzsche's sister kept a tight control of the publication of her brother's works nor that she worked hard to curate his reception, sometimes going as far as to fabricate facts about Nietzsche's life and sometimes to tamper with manuscripts. Nor does Holub want to deny the cloud of anti-Semitism that hung over her husband's Teutonic colony in Paraguay and how at times Elisabeth adopted these anti-Semitic sentiments.[579] But Holub is asking for specific examples of how Elisabeth, either in her Nietzsche biography or in the manipulated texts, helped to present Nietzsche as anti-Semitic. How precisely did her tampering and fabrication help to perpetuate the political goal of making Nietzsche appealing to the Third Reich in this respect?

This far-fetched claim that Nietzsche scholars have been almost uniformly wrong about Nietzsche's sister for several decades should be easily set aside by producing the relevant evidence regarding the precise nature of Elisabeth's anti-Semitism and by providing the relevant details of her alleged tampering with the Nietzsche Archive, supposedly in order to curry favour with the Nazis. But this line of inquiry – rather disconcertingly – threatens to derail the whole argument.

For Elisabeth may have falsified various letters, but it should be asked to what end? If you wanted to deceive an audience into thinking that Nietzsche was a good Nazi before his time who shared their anti-Semitism, then you would arrange your material in such a way so as to establish his anti-Semitism; yet time and again, the edited letters include references to Nietzsche's anti-anti-Semitism and none of the letters include anti-Semitic material. Because

[579] Robert C. Holub, *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem: Between Anti-Semitism and Anti-Judaism* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp.20-21.

of the controversial nature of this argument, I think it is worth quoting Holub's findings at length:

> With regard to anti-Semitism Elisabeth's edition of the correspondence contains several letters in which Nietzsche expresses his antipathy to that movement, and he accuses her of 'committing great stupidity' by marrying Forster and involving herself – and him – with someone who will always be known for his anti-Semitism. In the last letter Schlechta suspects is doctored, Nietzsche even writes of his sudden admiration for the young Kaiser […] for opposing anti-Semitism and the conservative *Kreuzzeitung* remarking that his sister should emulate him.[580]

Where is the rabidly ideologically driven anti-Semite who frenziedly changed her brother's letters to make him an anti-Semite?

> There is no incidence in his correspondence or in his writings and notebooks in which Elisabeth made Nietzsche appear favorably inclined toward anti-Semitism or adversely disposed toward Jews and Judaism. […] Anyone who has examined her actual manipulations could not possibly conclude that she was promoting a view of her brother as anti-Jewish or as someone who had sympathy with the burgeoning anti-Semitic movement of the early 1880s. […] On numerous occasions in her biography and in other essays she informs her reader of Nietzsche's antipathy to any form of anti-Jewish sentiment.[581]

This would explain why as one reads various versions of the story about Elisabeth manipulating the Archive, the details are never mentioned, leaving readers to fill in the gaps in the account for themselves. Holub points out that accusations are made more by 'suggestion and innuendo than by philological proof and logical argumentation'.[582] As it turns out, the readers' own fertile imaginations have successfully rounded out the story and perpetuated the story without any need for demanding the philological evidence. As Holub says, of Kaufmann along with his French and German counterparts Richard Roos and Karl Schlechta:

> [They] never produce a shred of evidence in their works that Elisabeth had doctored anything Nietzsche wrote, or invented anything and attributed it to her brother, that would make him appealing to the anti-Semitic fanatics of the Third Reich. Their accusations are subtle and associative.[583]

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[580] *Ibid*., p.21.
[581] *Ibid*.
[582] *Ibid*., pp.27-28.
[583] *Ibid*., p.29.

Holub has done us the service of pointing out the textual and historical record and going against what scholars have maintained as the standard narrative for decades. Aware that he is going against the grain, Holub describes the situation in charitable terms – at least as charitably as might reasonably be expected – as he explains that Kaufmann along with Roos and Schlechta 'had great familiarity with the textual situation surrounding Nietzsche's works and literary remains, as well as his correspondence'. By contrast, 'later post war commentators', Holub explains, 'who have no direct acquaintance with, or interest in, philological details, have been less circumspect in their accusations'.[584]

5.2.2.1 Why Has this Narrative Endured?

But this begs the question as to how or why scholarship has not directly acquainted itself with the vital philological details.

It is of course open for someone to shrug his or her shoulders and chalk it up to historical accident, in other words, 'it is just one of those things'. 'Holub is persuasive in his exoneration of Elizabeth', Leiter admits, but then follows this nonchalantly with, 'Baeumler and the Nazis did far more damage to Nietzsche's reputation than she'.[585] However, I am tempted once more to chalk this up to the psychological needs of the scholars and how they have met the psychological needs of their audience. If anyone thinks I am being belligerent here, perhaps this example from John Gray in his book *Seven Types of Atheism* will help. Gray wants to demonstrate the influence of Nietzsche on Ayn Rand who had disavowed Nietzsche. Gray examines Rand's first published novel, *We The Living*. In a forward to the 1959 American edition of *We The Living*, Rand told her readers that in some places she had 'reworded the sentences and clarified their meaning, without changing their content […] the novel remains what and as it was'.[586] But Gray, with all the tenacity of an expert philologist, has chased down the earlier texts only to discover that Rand's revisions are 'crucial'.[587] Quoting from a first edition, he shows the text 'excised by Rand from later editions' is a particularly 'violent rejection' of Christian ethics.[588] That this good textual work appears here

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[584] *Ibid*.
[585] Brian Leiter, 'Nietzsche's Hatred of "Jew Hatred"', *The New Rambler Review*, 21 December 2015 <https://newramblerreview.com/book-reviews/philosophy/nietzsche-s-hatred-of-jew-hatred> [accessed 20 January 2021]
[586] Ayn Rand, *We The Living,* 2nd edn (New York: Signet Books, 1959), p.viii.
[587] *Seven Types of Atheism*, p.48.
[588] *Ibid*., p.49.

is striking, but not, I hasten to add, because of any revelation concerning Rand, but because just two pages earlier, when Gray makes clear that anti-Semitism is Elisabeth's problem and not Nietzsche's, this sort of philology is entirely absent. Instead of textual evidence, Gray offers his readers – as Holub predicts – the usual 'associative' arguments based on her brother's loathing, who she married and who attended her funeral.[589]

I have tried to convey here a sense of the enduring nature of Kaufmann's influence and the historical dimension of Aschheim's complaint; in his view, Kaufmann has drawn a closed, charmed circle, and it is only by remaining within this circle that subsequent commentators have managed to eradicate the Nietzsche–Nazi connection. It seems then that for those who want to exonerate Nietzsche from Nazism and at the same time undermine the intellectual framework of the contemporary far right, it would be imprudent to wander beyond the standard line of argument which we have been observing in various places and which has gone largely unquestioned. But even without calling the facts of the standard narrative into question, Aschheim thinks it has placed artificial limits on the discussion, and he suggests ways that we can step over this imaginary boundary.[590]

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[589] '[Nietzsche] loathed the anti-Semites who were so prominent at the time – including his repulsive sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, who married an anti-Semitic high-school teacher with whom she travelled to Paraguay to set up an "Aryan colony", one of many services to racism that Hitler cited when he attended her funeral'. *Ibid*., p.46

[590] It is important to place the discussion on the denazification of Nietzsche in the context of Nietzsche's broader postwar reception in which Nietzsche's influence on analytic philosophy, as we noted in chapter one, has been 'somewhat negligible' (see section 1.2.2). We shall recall that post WWII, both the Anglo analytic *and* the French traditions have laid claim to being Nietzsche's legitimate philosophical heirs and both traditions have had to find their own way to shed Nietzsche's Nazi reputation. In this regard, several commentators have noted that these traditions have found quite different ways to accomplish the same task (see, for example, Aschheim, Di Cesare and Strong). I want to pause briefly here to differentiate between these two approaches to the same problem.

Although Kaufmann acknowledges that 'Nietzsche was at least as close to existentialism as he was to analytical philosophy' (*PPA*, p.423) and cannot be claimed by either, methodologically, Kaufmann belongs to the analytic tradition. Kaufmann not only believed that Nietzsche's texts contained fixed meaning, which is the obvious prerequisite for his all-important arguments about Nazi misreadings, but he also believed, at least for rhetorical purposes, in the plain meaning of texts. Ratner-Rosenhagen points out that Kaufmann loaded his pages with affirmations that Nietzsche's positions were 'unquestionably', 'singularly unequivocal' and 'abundantly plain' (American Nietzsche, p.223). Kaufmann could then organise Nietzsche's work into a system, and with this meaning-filled system of signs, he could approach the de-Nazification of Nietzsche in an equally systematic fashion, first by exposing the dubious intellectual origins of the idea and then presenting the textual evidence or providing an alternative reading strategy necessary for supplanting such a notion.

By contrast, French interpreters like Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault do not generally attempt to call Nietzsche's reception history into question nor do they dispel Nazi interpretations with their own interpretive strategies; in fact, they do not typically aim their arguments against the Nazification of Nietzsche at all. There may be several reasons for this. First, it is conceivable that Nietzsche's French postwar interpreters are simply being consistent with Nietzsche's French reception prior to the world war era. We noted in chapter three that Nietzsche seemed to have a comparatively gentler entry into the Francophone world prior to WWI, and writing after WWII, Kaufmann observes from 1950 that 'the French […] had retained a far more favorable picture of his thought than people in the Anglo-Saxon countries' (*PPA*, p. 9). If Kaufmann is correct, then it might be the case that the French Nietzsche, having never been Nazified to the same degree, simply did not need to undergo the process of a formal de-Nazification in quite the same way. This continuity of tradition seems to form at least part of the story.

We have been considering a particular story about how Nietzsche was Nazified and how this story is used to delegitimise the Nietzsche–Nazi connection. I have tried to demonstrate how this version of Nietzsche's reception history, which has gone largely unquestioned at a scholarly level, has done most of the heavy lifting so that more favourable readings of his texts could prevail. And this same reception history, rarely bolstered by actual exegesis of Nietzschean texts at a popular level, often bears the full weight of the argument as Nietzsche's atheism is carried over to a popular English-speaking audience.

In what follows, we will consider several interpretive strategies that deal with actual texts, frequently employed in a determined effort to show that Nietzsche made no significant contribution to the crimes of the Third Reich. I will then respond to these strategies, applying some of the central themes of this thesis. And I will bracket all this with Aschheim's

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However, regardless of the gentler French reception, Derrida *does* acknowledge the seriousness of the Nazi problem for the future of Nietzsche's works:

> There is nothing absolutely contingent about the fact that the only political regime to have effectively brandished his name as a major official banner was Nazi. I do not say this in order to suggest that this kind of "Nietzschean" politics is the only one conceivable for all eternity, nor that it corresponds to the best reading of his legacy, nor even that those who have not picked up this reference have produced a better reading of it. No. The future of the Nietzsche-text is not closed. But if, within the still open contours of an era, the only politics calling itself – proclaiming itself – Nietzschean will have been a Nazi one, then this is necessarily significant and must be questioned in all of its consequences. (Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation. Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida*, English edition ed. Christie V. McDonald based on the French edition ed. Claude Levesque and Christie V. McDonald, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Schoken Books, 1985), p.31).

This may explain why Derrida and other French interpreters do not attempt to sanctify Nietzsche from an unholy complicity by offering a verse-by-verse rebuttal couched in an alternative history. Rather, working with the idea that 'the future of the Nietzsche text is not closed', French deconstructionists, intent on opening up a future for the text, simply get on with their respective philosophical projects. These projects are themselves profoundly influenced by Nietzsche but proceed without any reference to Nietzsche's reception history. Aschheim complains that 'the issue by and large goes unmentioned, unnoticed; the very need to refute the putative Nietzsche Nazi link has been obliterated'(*Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, p. 4). But this seems to be entirely consistent with the postmodern hermeneutical approach in which the locus of meaning no longer lies with the author or the text but with the reader. In this context, meaning is shown to be inherently unstable so that talk of legitimate and illegitimate readings drop out, and the French Nietzsche, no longer burdened by the weight of his own reception history or the need to be right – both of which are preoccupations of Kaufmann's analytic approach – can exist in the historical vacuum of someone else's philosophical project.

To summarise, there is a sort of continuity between Nietzsche's French pre and postwar reception. Additionally, the French postwar Nietzsche has emerged in a manner consistent with the theoretical apparatus of *deconstruction*. By contrast, in the Anglophone world, Nietzsche has undergone several transformations that have made him at times reviled and at other times respected; he has been both demonised and sainted by his English-speaking audience.

There is not room here to explore the relevant forces which have led to this divergence between Nietzsche's French and English receptions. One possible avenue of exploration could be the different ways that atheism manifests itself in French and English-speaking cultures. John Gray suggests that Nietzsche is still part of the discourse amongst French atheists who tend to be 'better educated than atheists in English-speaking countries' (Seven Types of Atheism, p.45). However, a serious comparative study between French and English atheism would require another volume and therefore also remains well outside the purview of this present work.

commentary, beginning with his recognition of the breadth of Nietzsche's influence in Nazi Germany – often overlooked by a debate primarily focused on the legitimacy of various readings – and ending up with an exploration of his suggestion that Nietzsche's connection with Nazi Germany was by way of a complicated complicity.

5.3 Aschheim

Aschheim's first response to the rather polite Nietzsche of contemporary Anglo popular reception is to consider Nietzsche's earlier German reception. He wants to highlight the 'process of popularization among broad spectrums of German society' which he believes is usually 'by-passed'.[591] Aschheim points to the many ways in which an 'appropriately Nazified Nietzscheanism permeated large areas of everyday life' in Germany.[592] Among these, he mentions the rapid pace of publication and distribution of Nietzsche's works, which in turn meant that versions of Nietzsche's writing could work their way into the school system. Additionally, Nietzsche's heroic themes inspired articles in S.S. journals, while lectures about Nietzsche were broadcast on the radio and Nietzsche became the subject of talks to miners and workers organisations. Nietzsche also informed 'the literature of numerous branches of professional life: educational, legal, medical-anthropological etc.'[593]

Notably, Aschheim is not hereby attempting to establish a one-for-one equivalency between the usual Nazi markers and what appear to be corresponding Nietzschean concepts. In fact, for reasons we shall see in a moment, Aschheim thinks this approach to the question of Nietzsche's connection to the Nazis is generally misleading. Instead, irrespective of any concerns over what counts as legitimate and illegitimate interpretations, Aschheim is alerting readers to the scale of Nietzsche's popularity and making us aware of Nietzsche's function and influence in German culture, whereby a form of Nietzscheanism – albeit an 'appropriately nazified Nietzscheanism' – seeped into every nook and cranny of German life and played a widespread and significant role in producing Nazi self-identity.

This is significant because arguments over the Nietzsche–Nazi connection have tended to be structured around various related Nietzschean themes either confirming or denying their synonymity with Third Reich policy. For example: Was Nietzsche a nationalist or good European? Was he a social Darwinist or anti-Darwinist? Was he heralding the era of

[591] 'Nietzsche and National Socialism', p.14.
[592] *Ibid*.
[593] *Ibid*.

great politics or the end of great politics? Was the will to power about a spiritual self-conquering or the exertion of will over all other wills? Is the Übermensch a racial concept or is the Übermensch transnational? Was Nietzsche anti-Semitic or was he in fact an anti-anti-Semite? If we can show that the preponderance of texts, or at least the preponderance of the most authoritative texts, lean one way or the other, then Nietzsche will be Nazified or de-Nazified accordingly. However, focusing on the question of anti-Semitism as an obvious Nazi marker, Aschheim notices something of the interminable nature of this kind of debate, recognising that in Nietzsche's texts, 'there are clearly sufficient allusions, hints and themes to satisfy all comers'.[594] So, for example, while some readers are able to discern a profound hatred of Jews, others – often themselves Jewish readers – see a sort of philosemitism in Nietzsche's writings.[595]

As the discussion about the Nietzsche–Nazi connection in this chapter has already been circling around the question of anti-Semitism, we will try to spiral in on this concern, taking our investigation beyond the unsubstantiated claims about Elisabeth's tampering, in order to consider how various contentious texts have been handled by both sides. Once more, I am aware that this matter deserves a book-length work, but I will do my best in the space allotted to provide the reader with the arguments that have persisted for decades after the war and which now and then have managed to find their way to popular-level discourse about Nietzsche. Once we are familiar with the various features of the debate, and after I have made my own attempt to resolve what Di Cesare calls the 'debate that never stops', we will have the proper context in which to consider Aschheim's approach to the question of Nietzsche's connection to the Nazis.

5.4 Anti-Anti-Semitism

Recognising once more how Kaufmann has set the tone for Nietzsche's postwar Anglo reception, we will consider two influential and compelling arguments that he advanced and that have been repeated innumerable times to demonstrate that Nietzsche was not anti-Semitic and therefore cannot be connected in any meaningful way to the catastrophic events of WWII: Kaufmann goes on the offensive to show not only that Nietzsche was *not* an anti-Semite, but that he was in fact an anti-anti-Semite.

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[594] *'Nietzsche, Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust',* p.6.
[595] *Heidegger and the Jews*, p.48.

To this end, Kaufmann famously gathers up several quotes from Nietzsche's books and letters in which Nietzsche makes derogatory remarks as he offers his scathing analysis of anti-Semitism.

For example, Nietzsche says that an anti-Semite 'lies as a matter of principle'.[596] He describes anti-Semitism as a 'stupidity', 'disease' an 'infection'.[597] And he has a remedy for this disease: he suggests that they 'expel the anti-Semitic squalors out of the country'.[598] Referring to his brother-in-law and other anti-Semites who had left Germany to establish a Teutonic community in Paraguay, he writes, 'I am so happy that they voluntarily exile themselves from Europe'.[599] Kaufmann points out that the notion of getting rid of anti-Semites so possessed Nietzsche that even as he descended into madness, he scrawls in one letter, 'Abolished Wilhelm, Bismarck, and all anti-Semites'. And in his last note to his friend Overbeck, Nietzsche concludes with these words, 'Just now I am having all anti-Semites shot'. [600]

In case we are tempted to attribute these outbursts to a mind adrift from reason, Kaufmann reminds us that they are anchored by Nietzsche's often stated belief that the mass movement of anti-Semitism is itself a politics of resentment and an extension of the slave revolt. Therefore, Nietzsche was not only expressing an affinity with the Jews, but he was also establishing a hierarchy between German and Jew in Europe, as he describes Jews as 'beyond a doubt the strongest, toughest, and purest race that now lives in Europe'. We might reinforce Kaufmann's point here with a discarded fragment in which Nietzsche talks about the good German being one who de-Germanises himself, he then says that 'Jews among Germans are always the higher race […] more refined, spiritual, kind'.[601] Finally, out of this hierarchy comes the inevitable and unavoidable resentment, because 'the anti-Semites do not forgive the Jews that the Jews have Geist and money'. And again, 'Anti Semites – just another name for underprivileged'.[602]

Commenting on the abundance of material like this – of which the above is a mere sampling – Holub says that it is clear why 'postwar scholars could extricate Nietzsche so cleanly from claims of hostility and prejudice toward Jews'.[603] But the strength of this line of

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[596] *PPA*, p.298.
[597] *PPA*, p.291 (fns).
[598] *PPA,* p.45.
[599] *PPA*, p.44.
[600] *PPA*, pp.45-46.
[601] Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy In Germany:1890 - 1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.262.
[602] *PPA*, pp.45, 291.
[603] *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem*, p.25.

argument does not consist solely in the abundance of supporting texts; Kaufmann shows that Nietzsche's opposition to the anti-Semites can be seen to be rooted in several of his own philosophical categories including *power, resentment* and *the orders of rank of slave and nobleman.* Grafted onto the frame of Nietzsche's overall project then, for all intents and purposes, Kaufmann appears to be helping readers see where and how Nietzsche's opposition to anti-Semitism actually fits in the larger scheme of his philosophy. And Holub, although ultimately arriving at different conclusions, is nevertheless able to confirm Nietzsche's integrity on this point, albeit in a different manner: Holub finds that there is no discrepancy between Nietzsche's published and unpublished writing when it comes to his opposition to anti-Semites.[604] In light of this hard evidence, Michael Duffy and Willard Mittelman conclude, confidently and with an air of finality:

> It is impossible to convict the Nietzsche who broke from association with Wagner of being anti-Semitic. Although traces of his early stereotyping appear from time to time, he is strongly and consistently anti anti-Semite.[605]

5.4.1 Judaism and Nietzsche's Jewish Contemporaries

Given what appears to be Nietzsche's principled opposition to anti-Semitism, when the reader is confronted with potentially problematic texts, it now seems obvious that such texts warrant another type of interpretation, and once again Kaufmann provides what has become the standard hermeneutical strategy. Often appearing alongside the pseudo-philological argument that blames Nietzsche's sister for his Nazification, and functioning with the same sort of sweeping effectiveness, Kaufmann suggests that we redirect these troubling texts so that they are no longer aimed at contemporary Jews but at Judaism, and Judaism's priestly caste and prophets. Judaism then provides the helpful category under which the reader can place any troubling Nietzschean texts which Elisabeth could not be reasonably blamed for.

These subtle distinctions are not only for the rarified air of the academy but have been successfully quashing 'malicious rumors' about Nietzsche's anti-Semitism at a popular level. A friend, who has no background in philosophy, recently informed me that Nietzsche was not anti-Semitic but anti-Judaism, or so he had been told in a podcast. And for a rather complete

[604] Holub's conclusions will be considered below.
[605] Michael F. Duffy and Willard Mittelman 'Nietzsche's Attitude Toward the Jews', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49 (April to June, 1988), 301-17 (p.17).

example of how all the arguments we have considered so far are combined to inform a general readership, consider this letter published in the *Washington Post*:

> Nietzsche could be critical of Judaism, but he was critical of almost every religion (especially Christianity) and institution. Much of the Nazis' alleged affinity for Nietzsche was not from reading his works but through his sister Elisabeth, who met Adolf Hitler and tried to promote her dead brother's writings. […] Most important, Friedrich Nietzsche despised anti-Semitism. His sister and her husband hated Jews and shared visions of a pure race. […] Nietzsche, regardless of his genius, certainly had his flaws. But anti-Semitism was not one of them. [606]

It is also worth noting that it was not just postwar liberal academics, intent on making Nietzsche palatable to a progressive audience, who first took note of these anti-anti-Semitic passages. These texts provided a serious challenge to Nazi apologists who had to work at either explaining these texts away, bracketing them out or perhaps ignoring them altogether – *if* Nietzsche were to be the philosopher of the Third Reich. Unsurprisingly then, some Nazi ideologues concluded instead that Nietzsche was entirely incompatible with their ambitions. Two notable examples of this are Heinrich Hartle and Ernst Krieck. Hartle did not reject Nietzsche's usefulness for the Third Reich altogether but was aware that a straightforward 'synthesis of Nietzsche's ideas and National Socialist race theory was impossible'.[607] Krieck on the other hand viewed Nietzsche as being 'utterly at odds with the *volkisch* spirit of National Socialism'.[608] Aware of his contempt for anti-Semites, Krieck was certain that Nietzsche's philosophy 'does not point the way to the future for the German people'.[609] Marking Nietzsche's opposition to socialism, nationalism and racial thinking, Krieck concludes sarcastically that 'apart from these three bents of mind, he [Nietzsche] might have made an outstanding Nazi'.[610]

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[606] Alexander E. Hooke, 'Nietzsche Had His Flaws Anti-Semitism Wasn't One of Them', *Washington Post*, 25 August 2017 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/nietzsche-had-his-flaws-anti-semitism-wasnt-one-of-them/2017/08/25/9e26e3dc-875a-11e7-96a7-d178cf3524eb_story.html> [accessed 13 February 2020].
[607] 'Uses and Abuses', p.187.
[608] *Ibid*., p.188.
[609] *Ibid*.
[610] *Ibid*.

5.4.2 Understanding Nietzsche's Anti-Anti-Semitism

However, despite this agreement between several Nazi apologists and postwar Anglo commentators on this issue, I am convinced that it is possible to discern a deeper sort of anti-Semitism in Nietzsche's thinking. This argument has been advanced by others in a few different ways (for example, Overbeck, Holub and O'Brien), and although Holub comes to somewhat different conclusions, his recent emphasis on historical contextualisation is particularly helpful – and we shall turn to this momentarily. However, I want first of all to offer my own iteration of this argument by overlaying the central concern of this thesis – that is to say, the way Nietzsche relates to other atheists – onto the discussion about how Nietzsche relates to Jews and anti-Semites. As we have already seen, it is relatively easy to demonstrate that Nietzsche opposed both nationalists and social Darwinists, in the same way we can demonstrate that Nietzsche opposed anti-Semites. Nevertheless, we have also seen that without an appreciation of Nietzsche's contempt for other atheists, it is just as easy to take his opposition to these things at face value and draw entirely wrong conclusions. Therefore, just as we have done with other issues, such as nationalism and social Darwinism, I want to place the debate over anti-Semitism in the chasm that lies between Nietzsche and the atheists. Because if my central thesis is as versatile as I have been claiming, a thoroughgoing understanding of why the chasm between Nietzsche and the atheists exists will provide the necessary context in which we can receive Nietzsche's seemingly, yet deliberately contradictory statements, putting them alongside each other and then looking just beyond them for their meaning. After we have considered my own version of this argument, formulated as it is under the rubric of this thesis, I will reinforce my view concerning the meaning of Nietzsche's anti-anti-Semitism, with the historical considerations offered by Holub.

We begin by reading the following two passages alongside each other. Speaking about the Jews, Nietzsche says:

> Their after-effect has falsified mankind to such an extent that today the Christian is able to feel anti-Jewish without realizing that he is the ultimate consequence of the Jews. [611]

Describing other atheists, he says:

[611] *AC*, para. 24, p.146.

> How much naiveté – adorable, childlike and boundlessly foolish naiveté is involved in this belief of the scholar, in his superiority, in the good conscience of his tolerance, in the unsuspecting, simple certainty with which his instinct treats the religious man as a lower and less valuable type, beyond, before, and *above* which he himself has developed – he, the little arrogant dwarf and mob man.[612]

If these two passages are conceptually adjacent to each other, as I will attempt to demonstrate below, then perhaps we might understand Nietzsche's posture toward the Jews and anti-Semites in a way analogous to the central claim of this thesis, which recognises that Nietzsche pitted himself against other atheists, not because he questions the atheist claim that God is dead but as a way of arguing for a more thoroughgoing, fully realised – embodied – atheism. Nietzsche's contempt for atheists does not mean he is contemptuous of atheism, but as we have been arguing, he is contemptuous of those who think they are atheists but who – upon God's death – do not have the vaguest notion of 'what has really happened here' and who are still living in 'God's shadow', where their own humanity is shaped by a conspicuously Christ-shaped God. With this in mind, observe what happens when we exchange the subject labels between these two passages:

> Their after-effect has falsified mankind to such an extent that today the [Atheist] is able to feel anti-[Christian/Anti-God] without realizing that he is the ultimate consequence of the [Christian].

> How much naiveté – adorable, childlike and boundlessly foolish naiveté is involved in this belief of the [anti-Semite], in his superiority, in the good conscience of his tolerance,[613] in the unsuspecting, simple certainty with which his instinct treats the [Jewish] man as a lower and less valuable type, beyond, before, and *above* which he himself has developed – he, the little arrogant dwarf and mob man.

In other words, following the same fundamental structure of his opposition to other atheists, Nietzsche's critique of the anti-Semites is that they have not really understood the subterranean depths of Jewish influence upon themselves. So that in much the same way that Nietzsche might tell a market square full of professing atheists that they are in fact just secularised Christians with profound metaphysical, even Christian metaphysical commitments, Nietzsche is effectively telling the anti-Semites of his day that they are in fact Jews with similar, if not the same, thoroughly Jewish ascetic values, in as much as Christian

[612] *BGE*, para. 58, p.54.
[613] It may seem counterintuitive to talk about the anti-Semite resting in the 'good conscience of his tolerance', and yet this is precisely how the most vocal proponents of political anti-Semitism of the time perceived themselves, contrasting their own 'reasonable' grievances with those of the unreasonable and brutish anti-Jewish Hep-Hep riots which took place in the German confederation between August and October 1819. For further discussion see section 5.5 below.

values are modified Jewish values rooted in the Judeo-Christian God. With Christian anti-Semites in view, he says 'the Christian is merely a Jew of a 'more liberal persuasion' and in various places he draws out specific characteristics that anti-Semites, Christian or otherwise, have in common with Jews: They lie like Jews and they are as ascetic and therefore as unnatural as Jews.[614] But there is not just a parallel and analogous relationship but a continuous and sequential relationship between Nietzsche's statement that Christianity is 'the one great curse' and that 'the Jews are the most fateful nation in world history'.[615] Anti-Semites do not just happen to share some common characteristics with Jews but are, as Nietzsche says, 'the ultimate Jewish consequence'. Nietzsche seems to take pleasure in frequently reminding anti-Semites – who would have imagined a clear distinction between themselves and Jews – that there is in fact a deep bond between them. Nietzsche makes this continuity clear when he says: 'The symbol of this struggle, inscribed in letters legible across all human history, is "Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome" : – there has hitherto been no greater event than this struggle'.[616] And his conclusion is that even though Rome sent Israel into exile, Israel won a total and complete victory because Rome was conquered by Christianity and Christianity is simply a vehicle for Jewry.

At this point, some might object that I have not taken seriously enough the earlier distinction that Nietzsche's opposition is actually aimed at Judaism and not his Jewish contemporaries. This approach has been refined by Duffy and Mittelman, who do not distinguish between Jews and Judaism in a general fashion but differentiate between three distinct types of Judaism that Nietzsche had in mind: first, the Judaism of older pre-prophetic parts of the Bible; second, the prophetic Judaism out of which Christianity arose; and third, modern Judaism. They argue convincingly that Nietzsche is favourably disposed to the first category of Judaism, which he perceives to present the lost heroic God of the Old Testament, who like the Greek gods is a natural yet valorised version of humanity. However, it is the second category of prophetic Judaism that gives birth to Christianity, whose God is what humans are not and who makes humanity unnatural by becoming humanity's ascetic goal – which Nietzsche despises because such Judaism falsifies everything. On the other hand, Nietzsche clearly expresses an affinity, even admiration, for the third category of modern-day Jews.[617]

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[614] *AC*, para.55,
[615] *AC*, para.24, p.146.
[616] *GM*, para.16, p.52.
[617] 'Nietzsche's Attitude Toward the Jews'.

For the sake of argument, we might say that at one level, these categories are a helpful way of sifting and sorting through the various conflicting statements, and on the surface, they would seem to create the space in which to receive some sections of Nietzsche's writing as expressions of philosemitism and thus effectively defeating my argument that Nietzsche harboured any form of anti-Jewish sentiment. Thus, having sorted Nietzsche's writing into these tidy categories, we might think we have finally settled the matter; not only is he clearly opposed to the anti-Semites but we now discover that he also offers high praise to modern Jews – what more can be said?

As we have seen, Nietzsche's writing generally operates several layers deep, and one of the ways that Nietzsche leads us from one layer to the next is not by permanently separating out these 'contradictory' statements from each other but through the placement of sharply contradictory statements alongside each other, so that the next layer of meaning lies just beyond or perhaps in between such conflicted statements. In which case, Nietzsche's admiration and affinity with this third category of Judaism deserves further consideration below.

Leiter, also intent on clearing Nietzsche of anti-Semitism, offers his readers a slightly different set of distinctions. He says, 'the target is *obviously* not the religion or the adherents but *the values* they embrace'.[618]

But does Nietzsche think that there exist sharp enough tools to separate the *Geist* and the *Seel* of a people? Does Nietzsche imagine values as abstracted objects that can be picked up and put down again, embraced and then rejected without doing violence to a people? I have been arguing that what differentiates Nietzsche's atheism from the atheism of his contemporaries is precisely that Nietzsche refuses to talk about God and values in abstract terms but rather in terms of the shaping of humanity itself. Certain values produce and indeed possess a certain kind of people. It is worth noting, as Holub does, when Nietzsche begins discussing Jews in the *Genealogy of Morals*, "The notion of a Jewish priest is nowhere mentioned in Nietzsche's text".[619] He goes on to say:

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[618] Brian Leiter, 'Nietzsche's Hatred of Jew Hatred, Review of Nietzsche's Jewish Problem: Between Anti-Semitism and Anti-Judaism, by Robert C. Holub'. *The New Rambler,* 21 December 2015 <https://newramblerreview.com/book-reviews/philosophy/nietzsche-s-hatred-of-jew-hatred> [accessed 20 February 2021].

[619] Robert Holub, "Nietzsche on Jewry, Degeneration, and Related Topics: Response to Ken Gemes", *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 52 (Spring 2021), pp.40-50.

> Indeed, it is the Jewish people as a whole, Nietzsche suggests, which is priestly: "the Jews, that priestly people who ultimately knew no other way of exacting satisfaction from its enemies and conquerors than through a radical transformation of values, through an act of *the most intelligent revenge*".[620]

And even though Nietzsche is not necessarily discussing modern Jewry in this passage, Holub makes the astute observation that he is echoing the conspiratorial anti-Semitic notions of his day:

> Jews rebel as a group, not at the instigation of a clever group of priests separate from the rest of the people. Like anti-Semites in the 1880s, Nietzsche represents Jews undertaking a unified group action against a common enemy.[621]

5.4.3 Understanding Nietzsche's Jewish Affinity

Nietzsche's empathy for modern Jewry has been explained in various political, personal and psychoanalytical ways. Weaver Santaniello summarises several of these. For example, Alfred Low argues that the conservative Jewish temper was a stabilising influence in a Europe threatened by disruptive and destabilising socialist revolution, and therefore Nietzsche saw Jewish conservatism as a stabilising political ally. Alternatively, Arnold Coutinho thinks that Nietzsche's empathy for Jews grew naturally out of his anti-Nationalist and transnational view of the world through the eyes of a good European. And Arnold Eisen psychologises Nietzsche's expressions of admiration for Jews as a sort of 'compensation for his excessive condemnations of ancient Judaism'.[622] I do not want to deny that Nietzsche expresses a certain type of affinity for his Jewish contemporaries, but it is dubious as to whether or not these affirming statements actually clear Nietzsche of possessing anti-Jewish sentiments; perhaps Nietzsche's affinity should be understood in an altogether different manner.

If we want to understand how and at what level this affinity functions, my suggestion is once again that we should overlay Nietzsche's positive and affirming statements about Jews with our earlier and ongoing discussion about Nietzsche's posture toward atheists and certain Christians. Recall for a moment our observations toward the end of chapter two where we noted Nietzsche's effusive praise for a number of Christian theists, such as Jesus, Dostoevsky and Pascal. Nietzsche's admiration for them is based on the fact that they at least

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[620] *Ibid*.
[621] *Ibid*.
[622] Weaver Santaniello, *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews: His Critique of Judeo-Christianity in Relation to the Nazi Myth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p.138.

had an inkling as to what was going on. In sharp contrast to the atheists in the town square who were too dull to perceive the meaning of God's death and were unlikely to notice what had happened for a long time to come, these *theists* actually understood what was at stake and Nietzsche treats them as equal counterparts. I will show in a moment that Nietzsche's admiration and affinity for modern Jewry – an affinity I see no need to deny – operates on the same grounds.

It would be more straightforward if Nietzsche could simply separate the history of a people from the people themselves, but he cannot, and the way he tells the story of Jewish history not only reflects a common set of anti-Semitic attitudes from his own day, but leads his readers to reflect on their contemporary situation as the end result of a long history of Jewish contrivance. For example, in paragraph 24 of *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche recognises a people who share a similar sentience with himself, whose self-awareness means they actually know what they are doing and do what they do on purpose for their own ends. Nietzsche suggests that the Jews have seen in decadence a new sort of path to power; they know how to use decadence to make themselves 'something stronger than any party *affirmative* of life'.[623] They do not, in other words, believe these values of decadence, but in a supremely cynical act, they have used them to take control of the world around them. Holub summarises:

> The Jews are a people seeking to preserve itself at any price; they are not concerned with the welfare of their adopted nations or with the fate of humankind, but only with their own egotistical interests. […] Their plan is inherently dishonest; they are hypocritical and do not believe the values they espouse and promote among an innocent and gullible populace. They are therefore a paradigm for deceit and duplicity in their dealings with others.[624]

To reiterate, the significance of all this is twofold. First, as Holub points out, 'if we comb the Anti-Semitic tracts and periodicals written during the early 1880s, these features would fit in seamlessly with those of European Judeophobes'.[625] Second, this secret history leading up to Nietzsche's day helps him to understand his own contemporary situation as resulting from a more profound Jewish influence than the anti-Semites themselves are aware of because they have not understood this history. Nietzsche recognises in the anti-Semites the same slow-wittedness he encounters in the town square atheists whose historical consciousness and self-awareness hardly rises to the level of that of brute beasts. In

[623] *AC*, para.24, p.147.
[624] *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem,* p.191.
[625] *Ibid*.

Nietzsche's view, what usually passes for atheism is a series of category mistakes, and it is precisely because the madman and the crowd are talking about categorically different things that their conversation in the town square falls into the silence of mutual incomprehensibility.

But this self-awareness that Nietzsche attributes to the Jews (at least historically) does not make them Nietzsche's friends but rather worthy and sworn enemies – unless of course we think that Nietzsche's claim that Jesus is the 'most noble human being' who ever lived, along with other expressions of genuine admiration, should be taken to mean that Nietzsche loves God or that he is a philo-Christian. Notably, Duffy and Mittelmen do not get nearly so confused about Nietzsche's admiration for Christian theism and Christian theists as they do over Nietzsche's admiration for modern-day Jewry. In fact, one of the ways they try to reinforce their position is to point out that Christianity was Nietzsche's 'real target', not realising that in highlighting how Nietzsche compliments the Jews, they are also highlighting one of the ways Nietzsche raises them to the level of worthy enemy.

Nietzsche brings us to the verge of this confrontation as he prophesies:

> Among the spectacles to which the coming century invites us is the decision as to the destiny of the Jews of Europe. That their die is cast, that they have crossed their Rubicon, is now palpably obvious: all that is left for them is either to become the masters of Europe or to lose Europe as they once a long time ago lost Egypt, where they had placed themselves before a similar either-or.[626]

To summarise, I have been arguing that it is not only possible to recognise Nietzsche's opposition to the anti-Semites but that he also held anti-Semitic views; and rather than these ideas being held in awkward tension, Nietzsche's opposition to the anti-Semites is a necessary feature of understanding the radical nature of his own anti-Semitism. And simply gathering up passages that express contempt for anti-Semites and reading them alongside flattery for contemporary Jews does not put Nietzsche in the clear of anti-Semitism any more than gathering up expressions of Nietzsche's disdain for atheists and connecting them to his admiration for Christian theists and the many accomplishments of Christian theology would make him less an anti-Christ or anti-Christian. Rather, all of this is Nietzsche's way of drawing the battle lines. But the anti-Semites, along with the atheists, possessed as they are of a 'childlike naiveté' and 'unsuspecting simple certainty' do not 'realize' where the lines have fallen, even as Nietzsche clearly marks them out. But this helps Nietzsche accomplish through his text, the very division between human and human he intends, proving once again

[626] *D*, para.205, p.124.

that his philosophy is not simply an object to be studied but a vehicle for creating the situations and experiences it describes. Nietzsche hereby distinguishes himself once again from the 'mob men' and 'arrogant little dwarves' whose petty squabbles about the entirely wrong things are actually taking place around the legs of the titans who are the ones who must confront each other over the future shape of humanity. Lest we need reminding that this is in fact the scale of Nietzsche's ambition, he says, 'The uncovering of Christian morality is an event without parallel, a real catastrophe. He that is enlightened about that, is a *force majeure*, a destiny-he breaks the history of mankind in two'.[627]

I think my approach has several advantages. First of all, it is not only attached to the surface of Nietzsche's texts or superficially rooted just one layer beneath the surface but can be followed all the way down to the deep substructure of Nietzsche's atheism and is consistent with it. This approach is also not dependent upon having to categorise Nietzsche's works into early, middle and late periods or pre and post-friendship with Wagner and then trying to argue why we should lend more weight to writings from one of these periods over the others. And finally, my approach does not ultimately leave Nietzsche's writing sorted into tidy categories. While these categories may serve a heuristic purpose by helping us notice and sort through the differences that exist, I do not think Nietzsche intended us to leave them in this disassembled state. If we do not bring them back together again and allow them to create the tension he intended, we might miss the point entirely.

5.5 First Use of 'Anti-Semitism'

This understanding of Nietzsche's anti-anti-Semitism is intrinsic to the architecture of Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole and is supported – as I have tried to demonstrate – by the inner structure of Nietzsche's own atheism. I will now attempt to reinforce this view from the outside as it were, by giving some attention to the particular historical context in which Nietzsche wrote. In this regard, it is surprising how often the discussion concerning Nietzsche and what is termed 'anti-Semitism' proceeds without a consideration of the term's own origins, how the term became widely used in the first place and to what exactly it was meant to refer. The term anti-Semitism has been in use as a political concept for almost 150 years, and during this time, plenty of political scaffold has gone up around it. If we take seriously the shifting meanings that various illocutionary contexts provide for the term itself, we will

[627] *EH*, Why I Am a Destiny, para. 8, p.333.

discover further support for what at first seems to be the counterintuitive idea that Nietzsche was vehemently anti-anti-Semitic while at the same time holding his own profoundly anti-Semitic views.

Making this case, Holub plots the emergence of the term 'anti-Semitism' around several politically motivated events that occurred more or less simultaneously late in the year 1879 when the term first appeared in popular usage and became a political movement: 1) The beginning of the anti-Jewish speeches of the court chaplain Adolf Stoecker in 1879. Stoecker was appointed court preacher at the Domkirche in Berlin in 1874 until he was removed from this role in 1880 in connection with his political views that he had begun to express the previous year. 2) An article from 1879 by the Prussian historian Heinrich von Treitschke, 'Our Views', which began an extensive debate that became known as the 'Berlin Anti-Semitism Controversy'. 3) The publication of one of the seminal pamphlets in the anti-Semitic movement by journalist Wilheim Marr's, 'The Victory of Judaism over Germanism Considered from a Nonreligious Point of View'.

So that we can see the force of Holub's argument, I have included several excerpts below from Stoecker's speech, Treitschke's article and Marr's pamphlet, which will provide the reader with a sense of what kind of appeal the anti-Semites were making and therefore how the term anti-Semitism was first defined in that context. Among the notable features that these three – preacher, historian and pamphleteer – had in common was their attempt to give their particular version of anti-Semitism an air of respectability, by distancing themselves from religious and political fanaticism on the one hand and identifying with a 'reasonable' middle-class morality and accompanying sense of 'fair play' on the other. They also wanted to make clear that these views were shared by people from all walks of life and political leanings comprising a large majority in German society. Noting how the anti-Semites pivoted toward the middle class, D. A. Jeremy Telman explains: 'Having failed in their attempt to attract the proletarian vote, the Christian Socialists changed their platform so as to appeal to a more middle-class constituency. Anti-Semitism became the rallying cry which united several conservative movements'.[628] Likewise, Marcel Stoetzler, reflects:

> While the industrial workers tended to be unimpressed by being patronized by priests and professors, the middle classes – who had for the preceding half century supported liberalism against the conservative concept of 'the Christian state' – were looking towards state support in respect to both

[628] D. A. Jeremy Telman, 'Adolf Stoecker: Anti-Semite with a Christian Mission', *Jewish History*, 9 (Fall 1995), 93-112 (p.102).

> their own economic distress and the threat of a revolutionary working class challenging private property.[629]

Making this type of appeal to this type of audience, the court chaplain Adolf Stoecker opens his speech with the following words:

> The Jewish question has long been a burning question. Amongst us it has flamed brightly for several months. It feeds on neither religious fanaticism nor political passion. The orthodox and the freethinker, the conservative and the liberal, write and speak about it with equal violence. None of them treats Jewry as the apple of discord because of religious intolerance but because of social concern.[630]

In a similar vain, Treitschke is careful to mark the difference between his own anti-Semitic views and the earlier anti-Jewish Hep-Hep riots in 1820. For Treitschke, the riots play the irrational and emotive foil to his own clear-eyed observations that 'correctly recognized a great danger'.[631] Treitschke conveys the sense that recognition of this Jewish-shaped danger was widespread and trenchant. Moreover, he is careful to place any invective he might use in the mouths of a level-headed educated class. For example, he says:

> Let us not deceive ourselves: the movement is very deep and strong […] even in the best-educated circles, among men who would reject with horror any thought of Christian fanaticism or national arrogance, we hear today the cry, as from one mouth, 'The Jews are our misfortune!'[632]

And Marr, just as keen to present himself as an objective and fair-minded journalist, introduces his seminal pamphlet, claiming that 'written without a trace of religious prejudice, it allows you to peer into the mirror of cultural and historical facts'.[633]

However, if this view of the 'Jewish problem' was as widespread and trenchant as these three prominent commentators claimed, then some explanation was needed as to why these views were not more frequently and publicly expressed by the press. The

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[629] Marcel Stoetzler, 'Liberalism, Nationalism and Anti-Semitism in the "Berlin Anti-Semitism Dispute" of 1879/1880' (unpublished PhD thesis, Middlesex University, 2003), p.40 <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/13385/> [accessed 20 January 2020].
[630] Adolf Stoecker, 'Our Demands on Modern Jewry' [speech delivered at the Christian Social Workers' Party rally of September 19, 1879], in *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts*, trans. Richard S. Levy (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1991), pp.58-66 (p.58(?)).
[631] 'Liberalism, Nationalism and Anti-Semitism in the "Berlin Anti-Semitism Dispute" of 1879/1880', p. 135.
[632] Heinrich von Treitschke, *A Word About Our Jewry* (Cincinnati Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1958), p.6.
[633] William Marr, 'The Victory of Jewry Over Germandom' [published as '*Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum*' by Rudolph Costenoble, Bern, Switzerland, in 1879], in *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts*, trans. by Richard S. Levy (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1991), pp.76-93 (p.76(?)).

straightforward and predictable answer which each writer offers was that the liberal press was really a Jewish-owned press which not only operated out of a general irreverence for German tradition but which was also intent on shutting down any conversation about the 'Jewish problem'.[634]

When we recognise the historical context in which the term anti-Semitism came into popular usage, it becomes clear that the term was not just associated with but in a sense was first defined by a specific political movement voicing a particular set of grievances – over Jewish influence on culture, the press and financial institutions – and all ostensibly on behalf of a broad cross-section of German society. It was this political movement, manifest through various check/platforms and publications, to which Nietzsche was responding. With this contextualised meaning of anti-Semitism, trying to assign liberal concerns over racism, egalitarianism, democracy and civil rights to Nietzsche's vehement opposition to the anti-Semites is a futile exercise. Nietzsche would have had no sympathy whatsoever for the 'poor, hard-done-by' educated middle class who were easily scandalised by other people's irreverence for German culture – which according to Nietzsche did not exist in the first place – but who did not have the wherewithal to do anything about it and instead pitifully turned to priests and professors who in the name of 'justice' and 'fair play' expressed their resentment on their behalf. Here was the Nietzschean drama in which slave morality was wielded by the priestly caste against an elite ruling class being reenacted all over again, this time not on the stage of Imperial Rome but on the local stage of contemporary German society. Yes, Nietzsche was concerned about egalitarian and democratic tendencies – prevailing.

Therefore, while it is true that Nietzsche was thoroughly contemptuous of the anti-Semites, his contempt was carefully aimed at the behaviours and attributes of a specific political group.

This becomes clearer when we realise that Nietzsche's anti-anti-Semitism did not even amount to any sort of disagreement with anti-Semitic observations of Jewish influence and control of various areas of German life. In fact, as we shall see, at times, it is difficult to

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[634] See for example: 'Our Demands on Modern Jewry', pp.58-66 (pp.58(?) and 63 (?)); Heinrich von Treistchke, 'Our Prospects' [1879], in Martin Soetzler, *The State of the Nation & the Jews: Liberalism and the Antisemitism Dispute in Bismark's Germany* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), Appendix 1, pp.309-316 (p.311); Heinrich von Treistchke, 'Our Prospects' [1879], in Martin Soetzler, *The State of the Nation & the Jews: Liberalism and the Antisemitism Dispute in Bismark's Germany* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), Appendix 1, pp.309-316 (p.311); William Marr, 'The Victory of Judaism over Germanism Viewed From a Nonreligious Point of View' [published as '*Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum*' by Rudolph Costenoble, Bern, Switzerland, in 1879], trans. by Gerhard Rohringer (2009) <http://www.kevinmacdonald.net/Marr-Text-English.pdf> [accessed 1 March 2018]. (This is the same pamphlet as that in fn. 636 but a different translation.)

distinguish between Nietzsche's observations of Jewish influence on German society and those of prevailing anti-Semitic opinion. Additionally, Holub provides several examples of anti-Semitic comments which Nietzsche made not only *after* his break with the anti-Semitic Wagners but which were sandwiched between his own sharp condemnations of anti-Semitism. For instance, in a postcard to Koselitz, he dismisses Dostoevsky's translator derisively as the 'Jew Goldschmidt' along with his 'synagogue rhythms'. Holub finds something curious about the timing of this slur, and asks:

> How could Nietzsche include in such a casual fashion an anti-Jewish remark when three days before – and two days after – he wrote this remark, he was excoriating the anti-Semite Fritsch for his journal, his movement, and his ideological convictions?[635]

In addition to the numerous Jewish slurs that Nietzsche uses in his unpublished notes and letters, are the character traits Nietzsche attributes to the Jews in his published works. Anti-Semitic slurs not only appear in Nietzsche's early writings but in his middle writings as well; in other words, these slurs also appear in his writings after his break with the Wagners. For example, in *Human All too Human*, Nietzsche speculates distastefully that 'perhaps the youthful stock-exchange Jew is the most repulsive invention of the entire human race'.[636] And speaking of the Jews in *Daybreak*, he claims, 'Their demeanour still reveals that their souls have never known chivalrous noble sentiments'.[637] Recently, Ken Gemes, a Nietzsche scholar, has broken with standard scholarship and observes that 'clearly being an anti-anti-Semite does not preclude one's having negative attitudes toward Jews'.[638]

In case we are once again having difficulty trying to reconcile Nietzsche's own prejudicial generalisations concerning the Jewish collective character with his fervent opposition to anti-Semitism, it may help to bring to mind a group with whom we personally find ourselves in general agreement politically and ideologically, but whose character and conduct we might find entirely questionable. Holub notes that it is just this sort of outlook which Nietzsche describes and which could easily be applied to himself. In *Beyond Good and Evil,* aphorism 251, Nietzsche says:

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[635] *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem,* p.160
[636] *HAH,* 475, p.175. (Hollingdale translation)
[637] *D*, 205, p.206
[638] Ken Gemes, 'The Biology of Evil: Nietzsche on Degeneration (*Entartung*) and Jewification (*Verjüdung*)', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 52 (2021), 1-25 (p.2).

> About the Jews, for instance: Just listen. – I have yet to meet a German who was well disposed towards Jews. And however unconditional the rejection of genuine anti-Semitism might be on the part of every prudent or political person, such prudence and politics are not really aimed at anti-Semitic sentiment in general, but instead its dangerous excess, and especially at the outrageous and disgraceful expression of this excessive sentiment – this cannot be denied.[639]

Nietzsche is suggesting that it is possible to be against the anti-Semite's character and conduct while at the same time sharing their concerns and sentiment. It is this space that Nietzsche carves out and occupies himself.

Recall for a moment how Duffy and Mittlemen arrived at their verdict, that it is 'impossible to convict Nietzsche of anti-Semitism' because 'although traces of his early stereotyping appear from time to time, he is strongly and consistently anti-anti-Semite'.[640] I argued earlier that anyone who thinks they can resolve this dispute by reading the surface meaning of texts, counting up quotes and taking things on balance has not appreciated the radical form of Nietzsche's anti-Semitism, rooted as it is in the deep structure of Nietzsche's atheism. I have also attempted to reinforce this argument with an appeal to the historical context that provides the term 'anti-Semitism' with quite a different illocutionary force. Only with an appreciation for the term's historical usage will we be able to appreciate that there was in fact no dissonance between Nietzsche's condemnation of anti-Semitism and his own anti-Semitic or Judeo-phobic statements, because as Holub says, there was a 'disassociation of Anti-Semitism from Anti-Jewish sentiments in Nietzsche's mind'.[641]

Was Nietzsche anti-Semitic? And if so, is this the evidence that connects Nietzsche to the crimes of Nazi Germany? Rooting this discussion both in the structure of Nietzsche's atheism, and in the historical use of the term 'anti-Semitism' reveals just how complicated and circuitous the path becomes as we try to answer this question. We cannot straightforwardly declare that Nietzsche was or was not anti-Semitic without qualifications. We have seen that we cannot absolve Nietzsche of anti-Semitism by blaming his sister's tampering with Nietzsche's texts or bad Nazi readings. Nor can we absolve Nietzsche by simply counting up the anti-anti-Semitic statements, adding them to the seemingly pro-Jewish statements and then weighing these accumulated texts against – what for all appearances seem to be – contrary Judeo-phobic texts. And we cannot simply redirect the seemingly Judeo-phobic statements toward Judaism's priestly caste – for all the reasons we have

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[639] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. Rolf Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), para.251, p.141.
[640] 'Nietzsche's Attitude Toward the Jews', p.17.
[641] *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem*, p.160.

explored above. But neither can we simply align Nietzsche with the political anti-Semitism of his day or for that matter drag him into the twentieth century and then from the twenty-first century anachronistically align him with the national socialists. All of this, in the context of our broader discussion concerning Nietzsche and the Nazis, reinforces what we said at the beginning of this section: we should be hesitant to take the approach whereby we simply identify a set of Nazi markers, and then see whether or not we can index a set of adjacent and corresponding Nietzschean texts, imagining ourselves to have thereby eliminated the ambiguity concerning Nietzsche's influence on the events of WWII. I have attempted to avoid these shortcuts to nowhere, and have chosen instead to follow this winding road all the way to the top from where we can look back and fully appreciate Aschheim's suggestion – with which we introduced this section – that Nietzsche's connection with Nazi Germany was by way of a 'complicated complicity'. And as I promised earlier, we will now end this chapter with an exploration of that complicity.

5.6 Mediating Links, Transmission Belts and Thematic Parallels

I will begin with a description of how Aschheim thinks this complicity works before we look at any specific examples. Instead of straightforwardly trying to acquit Nietzsche of anti-Semitism or equate Nietzsche's anti-Semitism with that of the Nazis, Aschheim wants to analyse:

> [...] the concrete mediating links, the transmission belts that demonstrate conscious appropriation, explicit acknowledgments of affiliation and influence, the recognized thematic parallels and (more speculatively) the preconditions, the creation of states of mind and sensibility that render such events conceivable in the first place.[642]

It might be helpful to frame Aschheim's concepts of 'mediating links', 'transmission belts' and thematic parallels' with Ludwig Wittgenstein's broader discussion about language in general. In *Philosophical Investigations,* Wittgenstein speaks about language in the now well established terms of games. Language games, rather than being all related to each other in a singular way – perhaps by some shared essence or definitive set of rules – are instead '*related* to one another in many different ways'.[643] He likens the relationship he is talking

[642] 'Nietzsche, Anti-Semeitism and The Holocaust', p.5.
[643] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, third edn. (Eaglewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1958) p.32.

about to the spinning of thread, in which 'we twist fiber on fiber'. He points out that the strength of the thread is not dependent on 'the fact that some one fiber runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibers'. But these multiple places where the fiber of one language game touches another – what Wittgenstein also refers to as transcontextual bridges – are not wholly identical, shared characteristics. The 'complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing' between language games are in fact *incomplete* similarities.[644] Language games are 'set up as objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way, not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities'.[645] Wittgenstein expresses these shared characteristics or incomplete similarities as 'family resemblances'.

The concepts of family resemblances and transcontextual bridges, inform our understanding of the operation of language in general and provide the broader philosophical underpinning to Aschheim's argument which rejects the simplistic either/or approach in this special case. There is no one singular way in which Nietzsche's language game is connected to the Nazi community, and yet there is something undeniably familiar between the two, not because they share any one completely identical trait, but because there are multiple recognisably similar traits. We are, in other words, looking at family resemblances or transcontextual bridges in Wittgenstein's terms, or in Aschheim's terms, mediating links, transmission belts or thematic parallels.

Peering beyond the static philosophical argument about how language games work as objects of comparison, Aschheim recruits Martin Jay and Derrida who propose that we consider specific examples. Both Jay and Derrida appeal to our intuitions – however vague they might be – about how we might go about reading other, unrelated authors. Jay suggests that while it may be unfair to saddle Marx with responsibility for the Gulag and Nietzsche with Auschwitz, 'it is true that their writings could be misread as justifications for these horrors in a way that those of say John Stuart Mills or Alex de Tocqueville could not'.[646] The force of this argument lies in the fact that armed with little more than a gut instinct and perhaps only a passing acquaintance with these authors, we still cannot imagine producing a credible Nazi reading of their texts. That such a reading, at least for the time being, seems unlikely to be granted authority by a given interpretive community is precisely because the transmission belts or thematic parallels do not exist between these authors and Nazi

[644] *Ibid*., p.31.
[645] *Ibid*., p.51.
[646] Martin Jay, 'Should Intellectual History Take a Linguistic Turn? Reflections On the Habermas-Gadamer Debate', in *Fin de Siècle Socialism and Other Essays* (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.12- 26, p.23.

convention in the same way that they exist between Nietzsche and the Nazis whom Aschheim thinks share more than a passing family resemblance. In spite of the various problems that Nietzsche's texts – considered earlier – may throw in the path of the eager Nazi reader, the transcontextual bridges appear in abundantly sufficient number so that Derrida states quizzically: 'One may wonder how and why what is so naively called a falsification was possible (one can't falsify just anything)'.[647] Thus, Jay observes the 'potential for specific distortions […] latent within the [Nietzschean] text.'[648]

In addition to the broader philosophical argument about language and our intuitions about comparative texts, I would like to offer a comparative reading of Nietzsche in an alternative context. I believe Aschheim's point can be reinforced not only by postulating other texts which we cannot imagine being 'falsified' in the same fashion as Nietzsche's texts were by the Nazis, but by recognising that Nietzsche's texts read in a different ideological and cultural context *have* been 'falsified' in a remarkably similar fashion.

5.6.1 Nietzsche and the Soviets

Turning back the clock and moving our pin to a different point on the map, we will consider Nietzsche's influence in Soviet Russia. However, given that there has been – as the influential scholar of Russian literature George Kline observed in 1969 – 'a customary opposition' between the two, readers might naturally be skeptical. Aware that the opposition between Nietzsche and Soviet ideology has largely gone unquestioned over the years, four decades after Kline's observation, in 2010, intellectual historian Bernice Rosenthal – who has traced Nietzsche's influence from the pre-Bolshevik revolution all the way through Leninism and Stalinism – introduces a collection of essays on the subject with the observation: 'Nietzsche and Soviet culture? Their very juxtaposition is shocking'.[649] And while academics such as Steven Pinker[650] and John Gray,[651] writing from very different ends of the atheistic spectrum, have started to employ the Nietzsche/Russia connection to reach their respective general audiences, for the most part, it remains largely unexplored territory. Therefore, it is

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[647] *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation,* p.24.
[648] 'Should intellectual history take a linguistic turn?', p.33.
[649] Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, 'Introduction', *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture: Ally and Adversary*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.1-32 (p.1).
[650] Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism and Progress* (New York: Penguin Books, 2019), p.445.
[651] John Gray, *The Immortalization Commission: Science and The Strange Quest to Cheat Death* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2011), pp.172-173.

incumbent upon me to demonstrate the legitimacy of this connection before I use it to reinforce Aschheim's assertions concerning Nietzsche's complicity in the events of Nazi Germany.

The reasons for drawing this intellectual iron curtain between Nietzsche and the Bolsheviks and the later Soviet Union are both historical and philosophical. Perhaps the most obvious historical objection would be that Lenin explicitly condemned Nietzsche's works which were removed from public libraries, creating a situation in which Nietzsche's 'name was unmentionable or could be used only as a pejorative'.[652] And the obvious philosophical objection would be that the Bolshevik revolution was a decision to privilege the collective over the individual while Nietzsche was associated in early Soviet culture with bourgeois individualism. Taken together then, the philosophical and historical contexts would seem to marginalise Nietzsche in post-revolutionary Russia and suggest that his work had a negligible, barely measurable influence.

But it is the nature of such violent ruptures in history, associated as they often are with a sharp philosophical parting of ways, to give the impression that the old building has been razed to the ground and that the new edifice is being built on entirely different foundations, especially when the act of laying the foundations for a new world is integral to the self-understanding of those inhabiting the 'new' controlling narrative. But it is precisely at these junctures that serious intellectual history can be of the greatest help in investigating the subsurface conditions and materials upon which the new building rests. In our case, recent scholarship has revealed a more complicated distribution of philosophical and historical fault lines, starting with Nietzsche's widespread influence in Russia *prior* to the Bolshevik revolution. In this regard, intellectual historians have pointed out Nietzsche's contribution to Russian intellectual life on the one hand where young intellectuals such as Evegny Andreevich, Lev Shestov or Dmitry Merezhkovsky read Nietzsche with sensitivity and seriousness, and Nietzsche's dissemination into popular culture on the other by popular authors such as Konstantin Balmont, Maksim Gorky, Petr Boborykin and Leonid Andreev. On this note, Edith Clowes observes:

> Two literary figures, the 'decadent' poet Balmont and the fiery story teller Gorky, became the focal points of the Nietzschean craze […] The vagabonds who peopled Gorky's earliest tales became messengers bearing Nietzsche's philosophy to his Russian readership. Very popular characters, such as Konovalov who accepts responsibility for his fate, Chelkash who defies the powers that be, Varenka

[652] Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2002), pp.2-3.

> who celebrates physical power and beauty, were spokesmen who made Nietzsche comprehensible and appealing to the public.[653]

But the Nietzsche of these popular authors, lacking the careful treatment of the aforementioned intellectuals, tended to meld with a 'powerful, widespread vulgar image'[654] and as Rosenthal notes, '"democratized" the idea of a brutal amoral, Superman.'[655]

> Popular culture was laced with vulgarized rendition of Nietzsche's thought. The prefix super was affixed to a wide range of entities even dogs. A vaudeville house in Saint Petersburg staged a farce about contemporary philosophy titled 'Thus spoke Zarathustra'.[656]

That Nietzsche fuelled intellectual life and the resurgence of Russian literature from the 1890s onward and in the same time frame provided material for Russian vaudeville is testimony once more to Nietzsche's unique ability to leave the academy and find a popular audience. Nevertheless, Clowes notes, 'Soviet critics, if they discuss the topic at all, usually claim that Nietzsche was little more than a passing if intense fashion'.[657] Bernice Rosenthal joins Clowes in calling this typical response into question asking 'But was Nietzsche only a *fin de siècle* fashion in Russia, a variation on the theme of literary and cultural decadence?'

> That he was something more serious was testified to by widely different sources. Thus, N. K. Mikhailovski's left-wing Populist journal *Russkoye Bogatstvo* acknowledged, while deploring, the enormous interest and excitement aroused by Nietzschean ideas, especially among young intellectuals. The politically conservative newspaper *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* grouped Nietzsche with Marx (and, interestingly enough, Tolstoy!) as source of an intellectual poison which was corrupting the faith and morals of Russian young people. One Russian critic declared as early as 1901 that Nietzsche was already exerting a powerful influence upon Russian thought, and could no longer be dismissed as a passing intellectual fancy.[658]

Becoming aware of the extent of Nietzsche's influence on Russian life prior to 1917 suggests a different meaning to Nietzsche's banishment from post-revolutionary Russia. It is true that Nietzsche's advocates were eventually forced to renounce him out of political

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[653] Edith Clowes, *The Revolution of Moral Consciousness: Nietzsche in Russian Literature, 1890-1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988), pp.64-65.
[654] *The Revolution of Moral Consciousness,* p.66.
[655] *New Myth, New World,* pp.31-32.
[656] *Ibid*., p.31.
[657] *The Revolution of Moral Consciousness,* p.2.
[658] George L. Kline, '"Nietzschean Marxism" in Russia', in *Demythologizing Marxism,* ed. F. J. Aldermann (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p.169.

expedience, but his ideas and thinking already enjoyed a far-reaching influence, so that this sort of censorship inevitably and rather unwittingly granted Nietzsche a certain measure of notoriety. It would be a naïve intellectual history that imagines Nietzsche's ideas were simply legislated out of Russian existence; Nietzsche's ideas may have gone underground, but as Rosenthal points out, 'some of the most powerful ideas are those that are hidden'.[659] Referring to this as Nietzsche's 'buried influence', Rosenthal traces the virtually invisible trail of Nietzschean ideas in the production of Bolshevik and Soviet culture. We shall return to examine the kind of influence Nietzsche had momentarily.

But first, we must also address the philosophical puzzle of how to fit Nietzsche's individualism into Soviet collectivism. For those struggling to make the pieces fit together, Kline makes this intriguing suggestion: 'The customary opposition of Nietzsche and Marx as individualist and collectivist, respectively, is a dangerous half-truth'.[660] Similarly, Rosenthal suggests that 'Nietzsche was not a proponent of individualism as we understand it'.[661] But are these the idiosyncratic readings of scholars who want to tie Nietzsche, perhaps a little too closely, to Soviet Russia? As a way of exploring the possibility these scholars suggest, I will simply refer the reader to my reworking of Andrew Huddleston's argument in the previous chapter, which focuses on Nietzsche's concern for the *collective.*[662] Huddleston's argument is helpful, precisely because it proceeds without any special interest in the Nietzsche–Russia connection while at the same time reconciling Nietzsche's ambition for great individuals with his deep and abiding concern for the collective. Placing Nietzsche's individual in the context of his concern for the decadence and flourishing of culture removes the philosophical objection that Nietzsche could not have influenced such a collectivist culture in any significant way.

So far, I have tried to respond to two problems of perception: first, the historical fact that Nietzsche's writings were included on the Soviet index of banned books must be weighed against the extent of Nietzsche's influence in pre-Soviet Russia which could not be feasibly banished by edict. Second, the philosophical dichotomy between individualism and collectivism does not drive Nietzsche and Soviet culture irreconcilably apart, for the simple reason that Nietzsche himself was concerned with culture as well as the individual; and in the context of his broader philosophy, he worked to reconcile them to each other. It will be helpful to make a brief note at this point about the direction that scholarship has been moving

[659] *New Myth, New World,* p.1.
[660] '"Nietzschean Marxism" in Russia', p.166.
[661] *New Myth, New World*, p.9.
[662] See section 4.5

with regard to the *type* of influence Nietzsche exerted in Russian life. And the title of Edith Clowes's book, *The Revolution of Moral Consciousness: Nietzsche in Russian Literature*, brings us straight to the heart of the matter.

5.6.2 Soviet Brutality

Clowes's study is a far-ranging exploration of Russian literature – from high art to low-brow popular novels and everything in between – in which she convincingly demonstrates how the more brutal moral dimensions of Nietzsche's vision circulated throughout a large body of Russian work and bled into popular imagination. In fact, readers who had no direct contact with Nietzsche's books but who only read *about* Nietzsche were seen as being particularly vulnerable to Nietzsche's corrupting influence. Thus, Clowes points out that not only were Nietzsche's works themselves heavily edited for their anti-Christian content, but literary criticism fell under an equally censorious eye. One Russian censor banned an essay because such an uncritical interpretation of Nietzsche might be used 'as a "guide in the vital area [of moral values]"'.[663] But Pandora's box is never closed in time, and when Clowes reaches her analysis of numerous popular novels, it is clear how Nietzsche's influence had begun to intrude on the moral imagination of a general audience in Russia prior to the Bolshevik revolution. For example, in Anastasia Verbitskaia's novel *Keys of Happiness*, the main character Jan warns against 'the ethics of pity and neighborly love':

> The weak latch onto the feet of the strong and drag them back. The weak and pitiful drag after us like the weight on the leg of a prisoner, slowing the flight of our soul, breaking the wings of our dream with their demands for love and compassion.[664]

Likewise, the protagonist Dimitry Vinogradov in Anatoly Kamensky's *People* 'scorns weak, herdlike qualities of human character and loves strong-willed people'.[665] And Kamensky's *Sanin* romanticises violence as a way of realising personal potential. Clowes concludes her extensive survey of Russian literature, observing that under the influence of Nietzsche, 'traditional moral codes are challenged and broken' and adds that 'Nietzsche was a crucial catalyst in the regeneration of the Russian impulse to moral rebellion'.[666]

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[663] *The Revolution of Moral Consciousness*, p.51.
[664] *Ibid*., p.102.
[665] *Ibid*., p.101.
[666] *Ibid*., pp.229-30.

After the moral rebellion, enacted as it was through mass murder, gulags and ongoing purges which became part of post-revolutionary Russian life, Russian artists continued to respond with a Nietzschean instinct. Gregory Fieden, observes that it was 'Nietzsche, the Russian Nietzsche' who paved the way for Babel's spectacular post-revolutionary success, whose works *Red Cavalry* and *Odessa Tales*, enjoyed a reception outside the Soviet Union and have 'remained to this day the jewels in the crown of post-revolutionary Russian literature'.[667] The literary connection between Nietzsche and Babel is not a matter of hindsight but was made by one of Babel's contemporaries, Bolshevik historian and sociologist Iakov Shafir, who titled his 1924 critical essay on *Red Cavalry*, 'Love for The Distant One', a reference to Zarathustra's commandment that replaces the 'selfishly' motivated love of neighbor with a love for the distant overman. Shafir highlighted 'a key aspect of Babel's Nietzschean strategy: to justify the perpetrators of cruelty by surrounding them with the "enormously heroic, in the best sense of the word, pathos". Nevertheless, critic Vladislav Veshnev did not agree with this assessment of Babel's work, but not because he wanted to deny Nietzsche's influence in Soviet culture; rather, in his view, Babel is simply not Nietzschean enough. Frieden delivers Veshnev's comments as follows:

> In a surprisingly Nietzschean move, he accused Babel of insolence in his attempts to justify the revolutionary violence […] with such petty bourgeois concepts as right and wrong: 'Herein lies the key to the understanding of Babel's art. First of all, we must note that Babel approached the revolution with a moral criterion. This alone is bad enough. Morality has no jurisdiction over revolution. On the contrary, revolution has jurisdiction over ethics'.[668]

The revolutionary, playwright and journalist Anytoly Lunacharsky, identifying with Nietzsche's 'militancy' and 'his spirit of exaltation', reflects on the death of populist writer Vladimir Korolenko:

> Righteous men are appalled by the blood on our hands. Righteous men are in despair over our cruelty. The righteous man will never understand that love 'demands expiatory victims,' that it is only a question of self-sacrifice (this he understands), but also of the sacrifice of others.[669]

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[667] Gregory Freidin, 'Revolution as an Esthetic Phenomenon: Nietzschean Motifs in The Reception of Isaac Babel (1923-1932)', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture: Ally and Adversary*, ed. by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.149-173 (p.155).
[668] *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture*, p.160-161.
[669] *New Myth, New World*, p.203.

Lunacharsky is clear about who will be sacrificed; echoing Nietzsche's desire to 'work on the age for the benefit of a coming time',[670] he says that the tyrant 'works on history, and thus he is *a priori* higher than the "shaded" individual, the average person "who raises the nature of man not one jot"'.[671] And this view was translated into the Soviet visual arts; for example, in her examination of 'Soviet photography and photomontage', Margarita Tupitsyn notes that where once Stalin had been pictured shoulder to shoulder 'in the ranks of marching coal miners […] in subsequent montages such as *October to the World* (*c*. 1933) two gigantic figures of Lenin and Stalin (equal in size) are positioned on top of the tiny crowds, with Stalin literally stepping on some of them with his boots'. Tupistsyn observes, 'Unintentionally, this compositional choice allegorizes the ongoing purges and arrests'.[672]

This has been an all too brief review of the growing area of scholarship which meets at the intersection of Russian literature and Nietzsche studies. But my purpose has been to show that through the concerted efforts of a growing number of contributors, a clear picture is emerging concerning the extent and type of influence Nietzsche had on Soviet culture. The investigation of Nietzsche's influence on Soviet culture may have been initially delayed by the exaggerated philosophical and historical chasm that was believed to lie between the two; however, this distance has meant that the investigation that eventually got underway has proceeded with several advantages – the foremost being that the investigation has not been confused by numerous attempts to identify Soviet markers connected with bright clear lines to corresponding Nietzschean themes, an equivalent methodological approach which we have been arguing actually hampered investigations into Nietzsche's influence in Nazi Germany. Discussion about the nature of Nietzsche's influence in the Soviet era does not revolve around the questions: 'Was Nietzsche a nationalist or good European?' 'Was Nietzsche a Social Darwinist or anti-Darwinist?' 'Was Nietzsche anti-Semitic or was he in fact an anti-anti-Semite?' etc. Not being distracted by these incidental and secondary issues has helped scholars identify where the transcontextual bridges actually exist between Nietzsche and Soviet culture, so that arguments about Nietzsche's alleged falsification which abound in the context of the Nietzsche–Nazi debate are notably absent here. Nietzsche may have been translated, censored and eventually banned in Soviet Russia, and yet with little effort scholars have recognised the significance of his writings in preparing the way for the violence that

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[670] 'Uses and Disadvantages', Foreword, p.60.
[671] Margarita Tupitsyn, 'Superman Imagery in Soviet Photography and Photomontage', in *Nietzsche and Soviet Culture: Ally and Adversary*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.287-310 (p.305).
[672] *Ibid*, p.303.

ensued. Is it not all the more plausible then, that Nietzsche, uncensored and in his own language, made an equal if not greater contribution to the violence of Nazi Germany?

In the study of Nietzsche's influence in Russia it is simply taken that in the shaping of a new moral consciousness, in which humanity is redefined around a new definition and object of love, Nietzsche played a formational and justifying role. And it is this sort of search for a new morality and not the distracting arguments over his Europeanism or anti-Semitism or Darwinism where Aschheim locates Nietzsche's connection to the Nazis:

> But surely, beyond its doctrinal emphases on destruction and violent regeneration, health and disease, the moral and historical significance of Nazism lies precisely in its unprecedented transvaluations and boundary – breaking extremities, its transgressive acts and shattering of previously intact taboos. It is here – however parodisitic, selectively mediated and or debased – that the sense of Nazism, its informing project and experiential dynamic, as a kind of Nietzschean Great Politics continues to haunt us.[673]

5.7 Conclusion

The extraordinary resurgence of interest in Nietzsche in the English-speaking world post WWII can be attributed in large part to Walter Kaufmann whose remarkable success in rehabilitating Nietzsche into the liberal humanist academy, depended not simply on purging Nietzsche of various Nazi markers but also on providing him with an acceptable liberal humanist face. Originating with Kaufmann, the widely circulated narrative that claims that it was only ever on the basis of slim evidence manipulated by Nietzsche's sister that Nietzsche became associated with the Nazis, has served to close off any further investigation into a Nietzsche-Nazi connection for several decades. However, taking on board Derrida's point that 'one can't falsify just anything', I have joined with those scholars exploring what Aschheim calls 'Nietzsche's complicated complicity' with the events of WWII, reflected for instance, in a more nuanced understanding of Nietzsche's anti-Semitism.

We can no longer scapegoat Nietzsche's anti-Semitic sister, nor simply assume that because Nietzsche was himself an anti-anti-Semite, he is therefore exonerated of holding anti-Semitic views. Following Holub, we have argued that the target of Nietzsche's anti-anti-Semitic statements was a contemporary German political movement, which meant that there was no necessary connection in Nietzsche's mind between political anti-Semitism

[673] 'Nietzsche, Anti-Semitism and The Holocaust', p.16.

and his own Judeo-phobic sentiments. To be sure, these sentiments are mixed with a measure of genuine admiration for modern Jews, but this is often expressed in a backhanded manner, so to speak, entirely consistent with the Jewish slurs and conspiratorial thinking found in anti-Semitic tracts of the day, the purpose of which was to identify the 'enemy' in our midst. I suggest then, that Nietzsche's seemingly philo-Jewish statements, are better understood in the way that we would understand Nietzsche's admiration of Christianity or the ascetic instinct, not as an endorsement but as a healthy respect for the sheer size of the issue to be confronted, which was never just about a priestly caste but a priestly people.

Therefore, instead of identifying a set of Nazi markers and looking for a one-for-one textual equivalency in Nietzsche's texts, Aschheim suggests that we look for transmission belts or mediating links. In Wittgenstein's terms, we are looking for family resemblances, so that rather than looking for a single completely identical trait between Nietzsche and the Nazis, we notice instead that there are multiple recognisably similar traits. I have argued that Aschheim's point can be reinforced not only by postulating other texts which we cannot imagine being 'falsified' in the same fashion as Nietzsche's texts were by the Nazis, but by recognising that Nietzsche's texts read in a different ideological and cultural context *have* been 'falsified' in a remarkably similar fashion. It is in the shaping of a new moral consciousness that scholars have recognised Nietzsche's influence in Russia. And surely, it is in the shaping of a new moral consciousness in Germany that we can recognise the connection between the Nazis and the revaluation of all values demanded by Nietzsche's atheism.

Chapter Six

The Missing Nietzsche (Contemporary Reception)

'Progress' unguided by humanism is not progress.[674]

Steven Pinker

'Progress' is merely a modern idea, that is to say a false idea.[675]

Nietzsche

6.0 Asymmetry

As we turn our attention to the contemporary popular reception of Nietzsche's atheism in the English-speaking world, it will be helpful to distinguish between the literature specifically dedicated to making Nietzsche accessible to a popular audience on the one hand and the literature dedicated to popularising atheism more generally on the other. With this distinction in mind, we will also notice a very clear asymmetry between these categories of literature and their respective responses to Nietzsche. I will argue that these asymmetrical, lopsided responses – in which Nietzsche is sanitised by one group and all but ignored by another, presents further evidence that the chasm which existed between Nietzsche and the atheists of a previous generation remains as wide as ever between Nietzsche and the atheists today. But once more, I am not only interested in corroborating the existence of such a chasm or demonstrating that it played an important role in Nietzsche's self-understanding, but I am also attempting to reconcile the many seemingly disparate features of Nietzsche's subsequent reception history at the edge of the chasm where understanding typically falls away.

We have by now encountered several popular works in this first category, such as Paul Strathen's *Nietzsche in 90 minutes*, Michael Tanner's *Nietzsche: A Very Short Introduction,* Laurence Gane and Piero's *Nietzsche: A Graphic Guide*, and Solomon and Higgins's *What Nietzsche Really Said*. We have also referred to several articles that fit into this first category,

[674] *Enlightenment Now*, p.12.
[675] *AC*, para.4. p.128.

such as Sean Illing's article in *Vox*, 'Nietzsche and the Alt-Right', and David Rutledge's 'Was Nietzsche a Proto Nazi?'; the fact that there are numerous iterations of what amounts to more or less the same article is emblematic perhaps of an uneasy preoccupation.[676] Recently, both Sue Prideaux's Nietzsche biography *I Am Dynamite: A Life of Nietzsche* and John Kaag's *Hiking With Nietzsche: On Becoming Who You Are*, were ranked first and second, respectively, on the list of top seven Nietzsche books to read on *Philosophy Break,* a website 'dedicated to popularizing philosophy'.[677] The *New Yorker* article 'Nietzsche's Eternal Return' and the *New York Times* reviews of Prideaux's and Kaag's aforementioned books are the more recent installments from the Manhattan press – which tend to refer to Nietzsche just often enough to keep their readership 'informed'.

Along the way, we have noted that much of this literature presents a Nietzsche who has been carefully cut from the cloth of progressive liberal ideals, so that through various attempts to absolve him from a number of unsavoury connections, Nietzsche ends up reflecting the generally insulated nature of the educated class. Having already spent considerable time in chapters three and four examining the motives and manner in which Nietzsche is made suitable for polite company, we will pay attention here to the second category of literature, asking how Nietzsche has been employed by various authors who have 'evangelically' promoted atheism to a popular audience. After all, we might reasonably expect Nietzsche, the atheist who provides the most comprehensive and thoroughgoing philosophy of atheism, to be consulted at length and referenced liberally in these various contemporary atheistic projects. However, when we turn our attention to the contemporary bestselling books aimed at promoting and shoring up atheism with a popular audience, the striking feature is not how he has been sanitised or even demonised, but how remarkably little attention Nietzsche receives, if any, from such authors.

Take, for example, four popular titles, published within a couple of years of each other, which gave their respective authors a new level of celebrity: Sam Harris's 2005 *End of*

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[676] See, for example: Rob Beschizza, 'The Alt-Right Loves Nietzsche, but Nietzsche Would Not Love Them', 17 August 2017 <https://boingboing.net/2017/08/17/the-alt-right-loves-nietzsche.html> [accessed 1 December 2018]; Eric Baker, 'Why the Alt-Right Loves Nietzsche', 2 January 2019 <https://jacobinmag.com/2019/01/neitzsche-heidegger-ronald-beiner-far-right> [accessed 1 November 2020]; Hugo Drochon, 'Why Nietzsche Has Once Again Become an Inspiration To the Alt Right', *New Statesman*, 29 August 2018 <https://www.newstatesman.com/2018/08/why-nietzsche-has-once-again-become-inspiration-far-right> [accessed 10 September 2019]; Jules Evans, 'How Alt-Right is Nietzsche Really', October 18 2018 <https://www.philosophyforlife.org/blog/nietzsche-alt-right> [accessed 10 September 2019].

[677] Philosophy Break, 'Friedrich Nietzsche: The Top 7 Books to Read, Reading list', n.d., https://philosophybreak.com/reading-lists/friedrich-nietzsche/ [accessed 23 October 2020].

Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason,[678] Richard Dawkins's 2006 *The God Delusion*[679], Daniel Dennett's 2006 *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*[680] and Christopher Hitchens's 2007 *God Is Not Great*: *How Religion Poisons Everything.*[681] All of these books became *New York Times* bestsellers, and all four authors became household names; but between them, only Dennett makes reference to Nietzsche, and only in the most passing and superficial way. This sparsity, however, is not an idiosyncrasy of the New Atheists but is typical of earlier iterations of these types of projects which stage dramatic 'take downs of religion' with missionary zeal. Take, for example, George Smith's *Atheism: The Case Against God*, at one time 'the world's most popular book on Atheism'.[682] First published in 1974, Smith's book, just like its popular descendants in the same genre, contains only a couple of fleeting and misleading references to Nietzsche. Four decades later, we can pick up almost any popular book promoting atheism and find that the situation has not changed. Take, for example, Frans de Waal's book – to pick something from the shelf more or less at random – *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism Among the Primates*, published in 2013. Ironically, despite the decidedly un-Nietzschean title, Nietzsche is actually recruited here, but only in support of some tangentially related argument, and de Waal quotes him just once for good effect.[683] More significant than de Waal are atheist anthologies where it is not guaranteed that Nietzsche will show up. While S. T. Joshi's 2000 book *Atheism A Reader* does contain a carefully selected Nietzschean passage framed just so, Hitchens's own 2007 anthology of worthy atheists, *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever,* does not. On the rare occasion when Nietzsche is referenced more extensively – relatively speaking – he is only brought into the discussion in order to dismiss him. One striking example of this, which we will consider below, is Steven Pinker's 2018 *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism and Progress,* also a *New York Times* bestseller. And this treatment of Nietzsche by what Gray calls 'campaigning atheists' is mirrored by the online atheist discourse.[684] There are different lists of top ten, top

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[678] Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005).
[679] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2006).
[680] Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (London: Penguin Books, 2006).
[681] Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007)
[682] George Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989), 301.
[683] Frans De Waal, *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism Among the Primates* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013).
[684] John Gray, 'What Scares the New Atheists?' *Guardian*, 3 March 2015 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/03/what-scares-the-new-atheists> [accessed 23 October 2020].

twenty or top forty atheist blogs and websites, but the would-be atheist will be hard pressed to find a post or article dedicated to discussing Nietzsche's atheism.

This preliminary survey of Nietzsche's contemporary reception makes clear the asymmetry between the two types of literature. It appears that on the one hand, authors who attempt to make Nietzsche available to a popular audience usually ignore the distance that lies between them: with one stride they close the gap so to speak, and the readers find themselves walking cheerfully alongside Nietzsche, shoulder to shoulder together with others in the know. On the other hand, when it comes to authors who aim at popularising atheism in the English-speaking world, Nietzsche is referenced very sparingly and tangentially, and on occasion he is demonised, but mostly he is simply ignored. And what emerges from this asymmetrical pattern of contemporary atheist response is the familiar pattern of avoidance.

Nevertheless, while we can ignore the chasm or ignore Nietzsche, as I will argue in a moment, both responses amount to the same thing; because regardless of which path we choose, we will arrive in the same place – from here, any problems and any challenges Nietzsche's atheism presents remain on the periphery of our cultural vision, allowing the herd to achieve a collective, albeit temporary deferment of a problem, the proverbial 'putting off of the evil day'.

6.1 Daniel Fincke

Daniel Fincke is a rare voice for a couple of reasons. *First*, not only does he admire the New Atheists and counts himself amongst them (Fincke claims to have one of the top twenty most read atheist blogs), but he is also personally interested in Nietzsche, who was the subject of his doctoral research, and furthermore, he offers an online course on Nietzsche's philosophy. *Second*, Fincke and John Gray (who we will consider presently) are the only popularisers of atheism whom I have come across who even acknowledge this rather obvious lacuna in the popular atheistic literature and then try to explain why it exists. At times, his explanations appear to pull in opposite directions as he attempts to hold together his admiration for the New Atheists in the one hand with his admiration for Nietzsche in the other. But it will be important to pay close attention to the details of this oftentimes muddled argument, the tortured nature of which is itself further evidence of the irreconcilable differences that remain between Nietzsche and contemporary atheists.

Fincke addresses the issue directly in two posts. The first is his 2011 post in which he pays tribute to the late Christopher Hitchens. Fincke recalls his own initial astonishment when he examined Hitchens's compendium of notable atheists for the first time and discovered that Nietzsche was not included:

> When I picked up his *Portable Atheist* I flipped to the table of contents to see what Nietzsche selections he'd included. And saw none. None?? Possibly the most famous, unabashed, and irreverent atheist of all time was not worthy of inclusion in Hitchens's compendium?[685]

Nevertheless, Fincke is able to come to terms with this odd state of affairs by recognising that even though Hitchens did not appreciate Nietzsche, Nietzsche would have appreciated Hitchens because he was the embodiment of a Nietzschean type, the 'lion' who 'in the loneliest desert […] would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert'.[686] The lion, no longer willing to call anyone 'lord' and 'God', turns against the dragon of 'thou shalt' and asserts his 'I will'. And though not yet able to create new values 'the creation of freedom for oneself for new creation – that is within the power of the lion'.[687] Fincke's enthusiasm for this idea is expressed in purple prose:

> Christopher Hitchens was this generation of English-speaking atheists' proudest and least abashed lion. Hitchens said No to authoritarian Thou Shalts with more irreverence and more moral conviction than any public intellectual I've ever heard. […] He was an utterly fearless dragonslayer. No usurper of moral credibility was treated with deference. There was not the slightest need to prove or justify himself or his atheism morally to religious vampires. They were to be held in the clearest and most uncompromising moral contempt.[688]

To be sure, Hitchens had a swagger that made him one of the more entertaining and certainly more engaging New Atheists, but assuming Fincke is not confusing swagger with the real thing, there are a couple of other problems with Fincke's lionisation of Hitchens. I must point out these problems here because later Fincke will offer an expanded version of this argument when he addresses Nietzsche's mysterious absence from the broader atheistic discourse.

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[685] Daniel Fincke, 'In Memory of Christopher Hitchens, A Nietzschean Lion', 16 December 2011 <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/camelswithhammers/2011/12/in-memory-of-christopher-hitchens-a-nietzschean-lion/> [accessed 1 July 2018].
[686] *Z*, First Part, 'On The Three Metamorphoses', pp.138-39.
[687] *Ibid*.
[688] 'A Nietzschean Lion'.

We can begin to address the first problem by listening carefully to the candid manner in which Fincke talks about his own psychological needs and how they were met by Hitchens's work:

> I wanted to convince the believers I was not a bad person. […] What was so liberating and set my heart blazing when I read Hitchens and his fellow New Atheists was their defiant insistence that it was they who had the moral high ground and that it was *not* the Church who we needed to justify ourselves to, but it was the churches that needed to repent–nay, *dismantle* themselves.
>
> Psychologically, for the first time, I stopped feeling the need to justify myself to the religious people I told I was an atheist. I stopped being so embarrassed about having to reveal I was not going to agree with them and stopped *feeling* the onus to accommodate them or to reflexively continue feeling that there was some kind of moral superiority on their side of the aisle. I had known full well, intellectually I was on the right side. But emotionally, I had not yet really found the way to say *no* to the moral institutions that had brainwashed me into habitual deference deep in my heart.[689]

This does not in and of itself, constitute a problem. The fact that Fincke finds psychological comfort in Hitchens's work does not necessarily invalidate his perception that Hitchens was in fact a Nietzschean lion. However, the real problem is directly adjacent to this and emerges when we start to ask questions about the cultural context from which such psychological needs might arise. For example, if I may respond to Fincke's personal anecdotal experience with my own, when I was growing up as an agnostic in the UK during the 1980s, I cannot recall a single moment when I felt compelled to 'justify myself to religious people' or the need to 'convince the believers that I was not a bad person'. I never perceived religious people as holding 'the moral high ground', one reason being that there were very few religious people in my orbit. And even amongst eleven-year-old boys who wanted to appear tough and sound smart, we knew instinctively that God and religion were ideas for the emotionally weak and the intellectually feeble. My point here is that Fincke is clearly writing from a very specific cultural experience distinctly different from my own. This experience gains further definition in his later post in which he describes New Atheism as a movement:

> It is a science education movement aimed at pushing back against active, religiously motivated, scientific miseducation which plagues our contemporary world. It is an identity movement trying to

[689] *Ibid*.

> make alienated and ostracized atheists proud of themselves. It is a recovery movement aiming to help people traumatized by the painful experience of leaving their religious beliefs and community behind because of their intellectual conscience.[690]

Scientific miseducation plaguing our contemporary world? Alienated and ostracised atheists? Trauma from leaving religion behind? These are a cluster of issues normally associated with American Christian fundamentalism, and herein lies the problem.

Hitchens does not hail from Fincke's American religious context but a secularised British context where atheists have assumed the intellectual and moral high ground for some time, so that if there is any 'onus' to justify oneself to the broader culture, it has been placed squarely upon the shoulders of the devoutly religious. Understandably, from the perspective of a former American evangelical troubled by his own fundamentalist Christian upbringing, Hitchens could well look like a Nietzschean lion, but this is an honest mistake and one easily made under certain cultural and psychological conditions. However, when Hitchens is viewed from the perspective of his country of origin, it becomes clear that he was quite simply following the familiar contours of his own cultural narrative, so that Hitchens's work, couched as it was in his own particular brand of wit and wisdom, was in fact a straightforward restatement of his native cultural axioms, an incessant repetition of the culture back to itself. Like Nordau before him, who we observed earlier was only able to ape a sort of prophetic rage while operating well within the cultural boundary markers of his day, Hitchens was not a lion in the Nietzschean sense, but merely one of the more belligerent members of the herd.

The second problem in this attempt to lionise Hitchens is that this glaring omission of Nietzsche from the discussion is not, as we have already noted, in any way unique to Hitchens. What are we to make of the fact that none of the contemporary atheist writers engage with Nietzsche? Are we to believe that they are all lions too? This is in fact one of the directions Fincke takes his argument. In his 2014 post 'Nietzsche, New Atheism, and Me', Fincke objects to the idea that 'no "evangelical atheists"/New Atheists engage with Nietzsche'; after all, Fincke himself does engage with Nietzsche and one other person he can think of does as well.[691] Fincke admits that Nietzsche is rarely mentioned in the contemporary popular atheistic discourse; and while he does not explicitly call all the contemporary atheist

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[690] *Ibid*.
[691] 'And I'm not alone. Steve Neumann for one talks about Nietzsche'. *Cf* Daniel Fincke, *Nietzsche, New Atheism, and Me*, 15 July 2014 <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/camelswithhammers/2014/07/my-thoughts-whenever-theists-praise-nietzsche-to-disparage-the-new-atheists/> [accessed 1 July 2018].

authors Nietzschean 'lions', he essentially assigns them the associated attributes. Fincke argues that the absence of Nietzschean references constitutes a sort of defiance of religious authoritarian mindsets and reflects the authors' own drive toward free and independent thinking, which owes no special reverence to Nietzsche or anyone else:

> It's quite valuable that few atheists at all are treating Nietzsche like some kind of prophet who must be revered or whose opinions must be given some sort of special weight. [...] Part of the whole point of New Atheism and of the university since the Enlightenment is to break the obsession with authority figures who cannot be questioned. The point is to appreciate that ideas are not true or false because some Great Philosopher said them but because they stand up to rigorous scrutiny. The point is not to replicate religious reverence and authoritarianism. [...] Nietzsche's views need only be his own. His reasons for them should be rationally assessed like anyone else's.[692]

The idea that atheists have 'rationally assessed' Nietzsche's views, putting his atheism through 'rigorous scrutiny', and that on the basis of such rigor and rationality, they have set Nietzsche aside, is a potentially reassuring thought for a popular atheist audience and provides a reasonable explanation for Nietzsche's exclusion from various atheistic projects. But then again, refusing to assign Nietzsche any 'special weight' does not appear nearly so 'valuable' in light of what Fincke has already said. First, he points out that among the atheist authors in the public square, few are Nietzsche specialists, and he thinks that non-specialists do well to refrain from talking about him.[693] So, this would suggest – straightforwardly for us but problematically for his argument – that Nietzsche is excluded from the discussion simply because atheists have not yet seriously engaged with him. This becomes even more troublesome because as one of the few Nietzsche specialists among the contemporary popularisers of atheism, Fincke recognises a prodigious gap that lies between the serious intellectual rigor of Nietzsche's atheistic project and what he calls 'movement atheism':

> But as to the charge the New Atheists are all superficial compared to Nietzsche or failing to answer his challenge to create a post-theistic viewpoint with all vestiges of Christianity weeded out–I'll admit, I don't think the average atheist or any of the famous atheist writers holds a candle to Nietzsche in terms of profundity, so far as I have seen. And I don't think that much atheist movement discourse has yet risen to constructive rigor that deals in depth with the kinds of problems he raises. Movement atheism is not, at least yet, a serious intellectual movement.

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[692] 'A Nietzschean Lion'.
[693] *Ibid*.

And again:

> But atheists under the *banner* of atheism doing serious intellectual work? Well, there are relatively few of us even trying […] it's only slowly happening. [...] Whatever you think of the New Atheists, they are not a fraction as scathingly insightful or profound in their takedown of theistic religions as Nietzsche.[694]

Thus, contrary to the idea that these are Nietzschean lions who are just too independent to mindlessly follow Nietzsche wherever he goes, the reality is that they could not follow him because they could not reliably tell you which way he went. Moreover, with or without Nietzsche, they have not yet ventured into the thicket of problems where he spent most of his time. And under these circumstances, not recognising Nietzsche as a 'prophet' or refusing to assign Nietzsche 'special weight' is not a virtuous act of independent thinking but the reflection of a collective ignorance. If Nietzsche deals with issues that have not yet even crossed the mind of other atheists but which will only dawn on them slowly some day in the distant future, then we might do well to assign Nietzsche prophetic status after all, and in one sense that is precisely the honour conferred upon him by zealous atheists who ignore him, because everyone knows a prophet is never honoured in his own home. At any rate, it is confusing to extol the virtues of not giving Nietzsche 'special weight' while simultaneously giving Nietzsche special weight in the manner that Fincke does himself.

Fincke finds it laughable when theists quote Nietzsche at him as some sort of rebuke, because atheists should not 'venerate him, or defer to him where he's wrong'.[695] But given the landscape he has so vividly described, would it not be more natural to assume that Nietzsche is not being invoked as an inerrant infallible word, but simply as a reminder of the vast territory his philosophy represents, which by Fincke's own admission has gone largely unexplored by his fellow New Atheists? And of course, somebody might reasonably want to question Fincke's own reading of Nietzsche, which presumably he does not think is infallible.

As it happens, there is plenty here to suggest that Fincke's misguided attempt to reconcile Nietzsche with 'evangelical' atheists does in fact stem from his own failure to grasp the fundamentals of Nietzsche's atheism, as Fincke worries about who has the *moral high ground*, as he trumpets the twinned *progress* of science and ethics, and as he tries to avoid *nihilistic despair*. In Fincke's opinion, nihilism is really a bated trap set by theists, a trap which we could easily avoid if our understanding that Nietzsche was not a nihilist were to be

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[694] 'Nietzsche, New Atheism, and Me'.
[695] *Ibid*.

combined with the ethically life ennobling vision the New Atheists provide. And here Fincke underlines his understanding of Nietzsche most clearly, as he points out that the New Atheists can draw on the progress of a myriad different disciplines whereas Nietzsche was '125+ years behind with respect to the facts on the ground'.[696] The ways in which Fincke fails to engage with Nietzsche are symptomatic of larger cultural issues which become clearer as we consider Steven Pinker's approach to Nietzsche next.

6.2 Steven Pinker

Steven Pinker's recent book, *Enlightenment Now*, has been described as a 'magisterial' and 'formidable'[697]work; and given the range of issues covered in this ambitious 500-page volume, it is conceivably, as another reviewer suggests, his 'magnum opus'.[698] Pinker is particularly relevant to our present discussion because he belongs to – what we now understand to be – a very select group of authors, unusual in their attempts to popularise atheism on the one hand, while also creating space to address Nietzsche on the other. Furthermore, the book's subtitle: *The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism and Progress*, suggests itself as a paradigm for everything Nietzsche thinks is wrong with modern culture. Indeed, Pinker's work provides an almost perfect case study of modern decadence to be scrutinized through Nietzschean categories, a task I will return to presently. However, before offering a Nietzschean account of Pinker, I want to begin by considering Pinker's account of Nietzsche.

It is helpful that Pinker has not mistaken Nietzsche for one of his own; he does not try to sanitise him and make him palatable for liberal sensibilities nor does he attempt, as Fincke does, to reconcile Nietzsche with the family of atheistic thinkers he admires most. Instead – in advance of what he tantalisingly promises will be a more detailed examination of Nietzschean morality in 'the final chapter'[699] – Pinker takes every opportunity to highlight the fact that Nietzsche belongs to another, altogether different tribe aligning him along the way

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[696] *Ibid*.
[697] *Enlightenment Now*, p.i.
[698] Vaibhav Garg, 'Enlightenment Now, Steven Pinker's Magnum Opus-A Review', 3 May 2018 <https://vaibhavgarg1982.medium.com/enlightenment-now-steven-pinkers-magnum-opus-a-review-8a73e2dca64a> [accessed 15 May 2020].
[699] *Enlightenment Now,* p.33.

with 'Aryans'[700] , 'prophets of doom'[701][702], 'cultural pessimists'[703] and the 'robopocalypse'.[704] In this way, Pinker informs his readers that Nietzsche is entirely incompatible with own project as he prepares for a final confrontation which occurs as promised in the final half of his final chapter. Positioning Nietzsche as Pinker does right at the end of the book might prompt the thoughtful reader to wonder if this is not indicative of the scale of the problem that Nietzsche has come to represent in Pinker's mind – the final hurdle, or ugly broad ditch that he has been preparing to cross all along and toward which he must now make his final run.

6.2.1 The Secondhand Madman

In a manner reminiscent of Nordau's introduction to Nietzsche in 1895, and entirely consistent with the way Nietzsche predicts he will be received by other atheists, Pinker presents Nietzsche once again as the madman:

> If one wanted to single out a thinker who represented the opposite of humanism (indeed, of pretty much every argument in this book), one couldn't do better than the German philologist Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). […] Nietzsche argued that it's good to be a callous, egoistic, megalomaniacal sociopath.[705]

And as with Nordau's *Degeneration*, Pinker's polemical introduction is indicative of how he means to proceed with his own account of Nietzsche *and* – perhaps rather imprudently – the way he will account for those contemporaries of his who read Nietzsche as well.

We could start, for example, with Pinker's rough sketch of Nietzsche's salvific plan. Pinker goes straight to Nietzsche's Übermensch who transcends the categories of good and evil in order to lift humanity out of the 'decadence and degeneration' brought on by Christian slave morality, Enlightenment worship of reason and liberal social reform. Pinker follows this description with five supporting Nietzschean quotes that exemplify the sociopathic nature of Nietzsche's philosophy. 'Lest you think I am setting up a straw Ubermensch', he quips, 'here

[700] *Ibid*.
[701] *Ibid.,* p.39.
[702] *Ibid.*
[703] *Ibid*., p.165.
[704] *Ibid*., p.296.
[705] *Ibid*., p.443.

are some quotations'.[706] The quotes that follow are genuine Nietzschean quotations, but they are taken from secondary sources and footnoted as follows: 'The first three quotations are taken from Russell 1945/1972. pp. 762-66. The last two from Wolin 2004, pp. 53, 57'.[707] A few pages on and we encounter two further Nietzschean quotations which also turn out to be quotes of Wolin quoting Nietzsche.[708] I do not wish to quibble over minor details, but if Nietzsche is the 'enemy' and 'opposite of every argument' in Pinker's book, then we might reasonably expect a more earnest engagement with Nietzsche, in which Pinker provides the appropriate evidence that he has in fact dealt directly, if not extensively, with Nietzsche's texts. Furthermore, when read alongside his secondary sources, Pinker's own summary of Nietzsche's philosophy reads more like an abbreviated version of Bertrand Russell's summary. However, the problem is not just that Pinker chooses to take on the 'enemy' of everything in his book by relying on secondary sources, but the secondary sources he has selected are themselves a device to help Pinker, and presumably his readers, maintain a 'healthy' distance from his subject. Pinker favors the non-specialist – the sort of commentator Fincke suggested should stay out of the conversation – whose primary qualification seems to be that they share Pinker's revulsion for Nietzsche and can be relied upon to confirm his view that Nietzsche was in fact a deranged madman. Pinker thinks that Nietzsche sounds like 'a transgressive adolescent who has been listening to too much death metal, or a broad parody of a James Bond villain like Dr. Evil in *Austin Powers*'.[709] Not to be outdone by Nordau, Pinker's badly drawn Nietzsche is not a Bond villain but a *parody* of a Bond villain, a parody of a parody as it were. Pinker goes on to connect Nietzsche to the events of the word wars and Stalin's Russia, – which in principle I agree with – but all of this leaves Pinker with a strange conundrum: how did this two-dimensional cartoon character leap off the page to inspire global chaos and havoc on an unprecedented scale? And why, despite this 'sea of blood', does Nietzsche continue to have such broad appeal?[710]

It turns out that the large and looming Nietzschean problem which Pinker has saved until last, has very little to do with Nietzsche's philosophy but is focused instead on a question of intellectual history: Why has Nietzsche been so extraordinarily influential? The task as Pinker sees it then, is to reconcile his own cartoonish Nietzsche with Nietzsche's

[706] *Ibid*., p.444.
[707] *Ibid*., p.491.
[708] *Ibid*., p.446.
[709] *Ibid*., p.444.
[710] *Ibid*., p.444.

massive and catastrophic influence in the last century on the one hand and his persistent ardent following of 'artists and intellectuals' on the other.

6.2.2. Bertrand Russell

Puzzling over Nietzsche's reception, Pinker makes the following argument against Nietzsche's coherence and cogency, which I will include here in its entirety if only to illustrate its brevity:

> It's not because the man's doctrines are particularly cogent. As Bertrand Russell pointed out in *A History of Western Philosophy*, they 'might be stated more simply and honestly in one sentence 'I wish I had lived in the Athens of Pericles or the Florence of the Medici.' The ideas fail the first test of moral coherence, namely generalizability beyond the person offering them. If I could go back in time, I might confront him as follows: 'I am superman: hard, cold, terrible, without feelings and without conscience. As you recommend, I will achieve heroic glory by exterminating some chattering dwarves. Starting with *you* Shorty. And I might do a few things to that Nazi sister of yours, too. Unless that is, you can think of a *reason* why I should not.' So, if Nietzsche's ideas are repellent and incoherent, why do they have so many fans?'[711]

I am not sure whether Pinker is being disingenuous or if it is just an unintended irony that he recruits Russell in order to attack Nietzsche's cogency and moral coherence. Of course, for Pinker, it is rhetorically helpful to imply that a titanic figure like Russell assessed Nietzsche roughly the same way he does, but is this the case? I want to take a short detour here to explore this question.

Russell is of interest for two further reasons: *First*, as I have been arguing, the evidence suggests that Russell is one of Pinker's main sources of exposure to Nietzsche; at any rate, he is the only commentator on Nietzsche that Pinker quotes directly, albeit briefly.[712] *Second*, although Russell is not a *contemporary* populariser of atheism, he might be seen to have spawned the genre of popular atheistic literature as we have it today with his popular book *Why I Am Not a Christian,* a precursor of sorts to Pinker's own work.

John Gray, in his *New Statesman* review of *Enlightenment Now,* also comments on Pinker's approach to Nietzsche and his use of Russell as some sort of 'intellectual authority' for his 'wild diatribe'. I do not disagree with Gray's assessment concerning the crudity of

[711] *Ibid*.,p.445.
[712] Not including the quotes of Wolin quoting Nietzsche.

Russell's Nietzsche, given that he was writing immediately after WWII. And if we must use the old snub, Gray is not entirely exaggerating when he says of Russell's Nietzsche, 'Today, it would not pass muster in a first-year undergraduate's essay'.[713] But even Russell's crude and dated approach to Nietzsche is more nuanced than Pinker's own, and when couched in certain biographical details of Russell's life, it sheds quite a different light on the way Pinker has attempted to implicate him here. Contra Pinker, I am going to argue that Russell was well aware that *he* lacked cogency and moral coherence *himself*; and because of this, rather than being able to easily dismiss Nietzsche, he actually felt the force of Nietzsche's thinking more acutely than most.

It is a relatively uncontroversial claim that Russell moved back and forth between different theories of morality over several decades, experimenting with *emotivism* and *error theory* at different points. Briefly put: *error theory* is the idea that moral judgements refer to properties that do not exist, such that all moral judgements are relative to one another and in the final analysis, false. *Emotivism* suggests that moral judgements are an expression of emotions and preferences and do not refer to an objective reality beyond themselves. The point here is that these theories were never satisfactory to Russell who often wanted his moral judgements to be placed on a surer footing. It goes without saying that Russell's political activism, for which he was imprisoned on more than one occasion, only served to wind this tension even tighter. At one point, or perhaps several, Russell threw his hands up in exasperation as he toyed with the idea of abandoning morality altogether. This tension between logic and ethics that Russell lived with is dealt with quite frankly in his academic writing over several decades. For instance, Russell states:

> I have no difficulty in practical moral judgments, which I find I make on a roughly hedonistic [i.e., *utilitarian*] basis, but, when it comes to the philosophy of moral judgments, I am impelled in two opposite directions and remain perplexed. I have already expressed this perplexity in print, and I should deeply rejoice, if I could find or be shown a way to resolve it, but as yet I remain dissatisfied.[714]

Russell cannot in the end bring himself to abandon morality, despite the fact that his reason and logic demand that he does: in his own words, 'No amount of logic, even though it

[713] John Gray, 'Unenlightened Thinking', *New Statesman*, 22 February 2018 <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/books/2018/02/unenlightened-thinking-steven-pinker-s-embarrassing-new-book-feeble-sermon [accessed 20 August 2020].
[714] Bertrand Russell, *Russell on Ethics: Selections from the Writings of Bertrand Russell*, ed. Charles Pigden (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.165–66.

be my own, will persuade me to do so'.[715] The irony of this statement is better appreciated in the light of his repeated claim to his brother, 'I would rather be mad with truth than sane with lies'.[716] But this valiant claim seems to come with a clause that says, 'Of course, I would rather be sane with lies than face the kind of truth that might have driven Nietzsche mad'. Intellectual historian Alberto Coffa noted that Russell has been described as 'an entire platonic dialogue in himself' and provides the following helpful summary observation:

> The point was not that Russell's opinions changed through the years in dialectical fashion […] Like every great philosopher, Russell felt the force of conflicting intuitions. Unlike most philosophers, however, he succumbed to those temptations without much regard for consistency. It has often been noticed that Russell gallantly and frequently refuted his earlier theories; and this is admirable. But it has not been noticed often enough that he didn't always discard the theories he had refuted.[717]

Charles Pigden makes a similar observation, specifically with regards to Russell's moral philosophy:

> Russell's mental development, therefore, is not always a stirring tale of intellectual progress. His first thoughts are often better than his second thoughts and his second thoughts better than his third thoughts. Thus, the emotivism that was his dominant view in the latter part of his life is vulnerable to objections that he himself had raised in an earlier incarnation, as was the error theory that he briefly espoused in 1922.[718]

With this background in place, we will be able to grasp both the significance of Russell's response to Nietzsche and the irony of Pinker using Russell to make his point regarding Nietzsche's cogency and coherence – to this we now turn.

It is true that Russell, like Pinker, also attempted to diminish the force of Nietzsche's atheism with his own variety of ad hominem arguments, in which he wonders if Nietzsche is the wrong kind of philosopher or perhaps the wrong kind of human being. Russell explains that Nietzsche is not an 'academic or technical philosopher' and assigns him a place in literature and art,[719] and he wonders if Nietzsche is perhaps a 'mere symptom of a disease'.[720]

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[715] *Russell on Ethics*, p.146.
[716] *Ibid*., p.122.
[717] Alberto J. Coffa, *The Semantic Tradition: From Kant to Carnap to the Vienna Station* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.106.
[718] Charles Pigden, 'Russell's Moral Philosophy', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/russell-moral/> [accessed 8 November 2020].
[719] Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p.760.
[720] *Ibid*., p.766.

But despite such pronouncements, Russell, who had read Nietzsche, found that the problems he raised resonated all too well with his own internal dialogue and philosophical concerns. Unable to simply shrug Nietzsche off, Russell concludes his chapter on Nietzsche not only by recognising the cogency of Nietzsche's argument but conceding that his own argument against Nietzsche's 'unpleasant but internally consistent ethic' is not an appeal to facts, but an appeal to human sympathies.[721] But Russell knows his emotional appeal (who is the technical and academic philosopher?) is undermined by his earlier observation, that not all humans develop sympathy in the same way.[722] It is also worth noting that this emotive response is not an aberration but is entirely consistent with Russell's response to Nietzsche years earlier when he says wishfully: 'If power is bad as it seems to be, let us reject it from our hearts'.[723] I am arguing, in other words, that Russell not only found Nietzsche to be compelling, but he found him compelling in that potent way in which one finds oneself *disturbed*.

But Pinker, careful not to convey Russell's hesitancy and apparently feeling none of it himself, continues axiomatically, 'The ideas fail the first test of moral coherence, namely generalizability beyond the person offering them'.[724] Pinker is so convinced by his tautologous argument that he follows it up with an imaginary conversation with Nietzsche – quoted above – in which he threatens Nietzsche and his sister with violence and by doing so believes he would be able to catch Nietzsche out with the logic of his own position. Of course, this is just a more emphatic statement of Pinker's own utilitarian commitments, but what else can Pinker do? Pinker has looked at Nietzsche's conclusions and results; does not like them; determines they are the rantings of a madman; refuses to examine in any detail the volumes of 'workings out' on offer – he certainly gives no hint of them to his readership – and then turns around and rejects Nietzsche's conclusions and results because they do not confirm his own prejudice or what he calls 'the first test of moral coherence'. And at this point it begins to look as though Pinker is simply making Nietzsche's case for him.

6.2.3 'Tyrannophilia'

Nonetheless, Pinker is more than satisfied that he has not only sufficiently demonstrated that Nietzsche's ideas are 'repellent' but – in the brevity of the paragraph we

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[721] *Ibid*., pp.773.
[722] *Ibid*., p.771.
[723] Bertrand Russell, 'The Free Man's Worship*',* in *Russell on Religion: Selections from the Writings of Bertrand Russell,* ed. Louis Greenspan and Stephan Andersson (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), pp.31-38 (p.34).
[724] *Enlightenment Now*, p.446.

have just examined – they are incoherent as well. He can now return to the question at hand: 'Why do they [Nietzsche's ideas] have so many fans?'[725] Pinker is not only concerned that Nietzsche's fan base is numerically large but that it is also broad and varied in its membership, which he believes includes numerous artists, 'second culture intellectuals', social critics, relativists and intellectual movements hostile to science and objectivity. Pinker provides a list of names for each category, ranging from figures as divergent as British literary figure George Bernard Shaw to French philosopher Jacques Derrida.[726] Just to be clear, the question Pinker is asking with a straight face is this: 'What kind of people find themselves at once inspired and justified by a *callous egoistic megalomaniacal sociopath* who is as *repellent* and as *incoherent* as a *parody of a James Bond villain* resembling *Dr. Evil* from *Austin Powers?*'

Pinker is nothing if not even-handed here, granting Nietzsche's 'acolytes' the same courtesy that he has already granted Nietzsche, substituting philosophical argument with his own psychological insight which delivers precisely the results we would expect. Part of his answer is to shift the conversation between those who attach themselves to Nietzsche specifically and those who attach themselves to tyrants and dictators more generally. This not only affords Pinker an opportunity to ask the question again in parallel form: 'Why would intellectuals and artists, of all people, kiss up to murderous dictators?'[727] But from here, he can reason from the general case of the *tyrant* to the particular case of *Nietzsche* and back again. Intellectuals and artists are made to feel 'appreciated' by tyrants who assign 'roles commensurate with their worth' and feed their 'professional narcissism'. Likewise, Nietzsche appeals to artists because he provides 'an ethic in which the artist […] is uniquely worthy of living' and because they share his 'disdain for the common man' and his sheer 'enjoyment of 'sniggering at the "booboisie"'[728]; this is deeply ironic, as the Harvard professor does not seem to realise that Nietzche, who found more nobility among the uneducated peasants, was actually laughing at him.[729] Pinker also adds that at a popular level, Nietzsche's ideas seem 'edgy, authentic, baaad'[730] (*spelling his* – is Pinker here sniggering at the 'booboisie'?). Using

[725] *Ibid*.
[726] *Ibid*., pp.406, 446.
[727] *Ibid*., p.447.
[728] *Ibid*., pp.446-447.
[729] For further discussion about Nietzsche's disdain for scholars and the educated class contrasted with his views concerning the 'common uneducated man', see Conclusion, 7.0 Dionysus, Reverence and Rank.
[730] *Enlightenment Now*, p.452.

this cluster of symptoms, Pinker diagnoses those who gush over tyrants or for that matter Nietzsche with 'Tyrannophilia syndrome'.[731]

'Nietzsche, to give him credit, was a lively stylist', Pinker manages, but to appreciate him for anything more than his 'literary panache' is, from his perspective, inexcusable.[732] We might gather up Pinker's views like this. The art and literature of Nietzsche's 'fandom' is comprised of a series of disingenuous and supremely cynical projects in which unscrupulous, sycophantic artists and academics are happy to entertain the writings of an evil madman, if only they can shine more brightly themselves in Nietzsche's own dark light. Anyone who thinks that I am putting too fine a point on all this might consider the final dramatic touch which Pinker adds to his already ghoulish depiction of all things Nietzsche. There is such a thing as overdoing it, or hamming it up, but Pinker must rely on his ability to convince his readers of Nietzsche's truly evil nature. And so, as Pinker implores his ill-prepared readers one last time to turn back, he begins to count the links in the chain that bind Nietzsche to none other than President Donald Trump.[733] By this point, however, it is not entirely clear who is being used to malign who. Pinker clearly states in his preface, 'This book is not about the forty-fifth president of the United States'.[734] But readers might justifiably wonder at the sincerity of such a claim in light of the fact that Pinker manages to mention 'Trump' or 'Trumpism' over eighty times throughout the course of the book which reaches – what I suppose is meant to be – its chilling denouement with Trump staring out of the mirror of Nietzsche's political reflection.

> Trump was endorsed in the 2016 election by 136 'Scholars and Writers for America' in a manifesto called 'Statement of Unity'. Some are connected to the Claremont Institute, a thinktank that has been called the 'academic home of Trumpism'. And Trump has been closely advised by two men, Stephen Bannon and Michael Anton, who are reputed to be widely read and who consider themselves serious intellectuals. Anyone who wants to go beyond personality in understanding authoritarian populism must appreciate the two ideologies behind them, both of them militantly opposed to Enlightenment humanism and each influenced, in different ways, by Nietzsche.[735]

Bannon influences Trump and Nietzsche influences Bannon, and therefore Nietzsche influences Trump. But what is Pinker's interest here? Is he interested in intellectual history or

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[731] 'Tyrannophilia' is a term coined by intellectual historian Mark Lilla.
[732] *Enlightenment Now*, p.446.
[733] And why not? Death Metal, Dr. Evil and Donald Trump.
[734] *Enlightenment Now*, Preface, p.xvii.
[735] *Ibid*., p.447.

is Pinker only interested in establishing guilt by association? The latter would be entirely consistent with everything we have observed about Pinker's argument to this point, which appears to be a composite of various demonising images of Nietzsche and his advocates. And it is not a matter of whether these links between Nietzsche and various political figures and thinktanks can be made justifiably; superficially at least, they are made easily in every direction but this is a fact that Pinker tellingly fails to notice. It is also instructive to watch how Pinker abandons both his methodological commitments and his register of values whenever it allows him to sanitise his political allies and demonise his political enemies.[736] The upshot of all this, is that by the time Pinker brings his ideological and political enemies *together*, there is absolutely no reason to believe that this is not just another example of how Pinker fills his circular fallacy with other fallacies, so that he can issue his final word of advice: 'Finally', he says, 'drop the Nietzsche'.[737]

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[736] I am not going to argue about whether these links should or could be made justifiably; superficially at least, they are made easily in every direction and that is part of the problem. For example, Pinker's preferred presidential candidate in the United States 2016 election was Hilary Clinton. Clinton was supported through public endorsement and campaign fundraisers by Robert Kagan, cofounder of the neoconservative think tank, 'Project for a New American Century'. It is well known that Kagan, along with other members of the think tank, have been inspired by the philosopher Leo Strauss. And Chomsky makes the rather uncharitable introduction that if Strauss had not been a Jew he would have been a Nazi. And, of course, at the end of this trail, we discover to no one's surprise that Strauss was also influenced by Nietzsche. However, it is not simply that Pinker fails to make these connections but that he is willing to abandon his own register of values and methodology if it will allow him to sanitise one candidate and demonise another. For example, the aforementioned think tank, formed in 1997, drew the road map for American interventionism in the Middle East, including the invasion and occupation of Iraq and the American proxy wars in Libya and Syria. One of Kagan's publicly stated reasons for backing Clinton in the 2016 election was precisely because Trump's isolationism would steer America off course, away from the foreign policy agenda that Clinton had so reliably followed, first as a U.S. senator and then as U.S. Secretary of State. While Kagan deems American foreign policy over the last 25 years 'an extraordinary success', it seems obvious that he is not measuring that success using Pinker's enlightenment humanist values. See, for example: Rania Khalek, 'Robert Kagan and other Neocons are Backing Hillary Clinton', *Intercept*, July 25 2016 <https://theintercept.com/2016/07/25/robert-kagan-and-other-neocons-back-hillary-clinton/>. At the risk of stating the obvious, these wars and proxy wars in the Middle East have simultaneously and exponentially multiplied death, disease, birth defects, starvation, poverty, refugees, rape, people trafficking, environmental damage in the region and environmental damage globally resulting from the astronomical energy needs of the U.S. military at war. It is astonishing then that Pinker, who never tires of reminding his readers to count and measure progress by numbers all but abandons this project here. Apparently, Pinker does not think it is worth counting dead bodies or barrels of oil if it will lead him to the unpleasant conclusion that the 'devil' was the 'better' candidate after all because he did not start any new wars in his term and moreover has the distinction of being the first president in 39 years not to do so. And with that forbidden thought, all of the statistics, charts and graphs that fill the rest of Pinker's book mysteriously…disappear. Pinker could have benefitted from his own advice, 'remember your psychology: much of what we know isn't so, especially when our comrades know it too' (*Enlightenment Now*, p.452).

[737] *Enlightenment Now*, p.452.

6.3 At the Altar

So as not to lose sight of the bigger picture, we can now take a step back and consider the overall effect of bringing together the disparate projects of Pinker's rabid denunciation of Nietzsche on the one hand and Fincke's attempt at reconciliation on the other. From this perspective, we might observe the following striking symmetries: between Fincke's lionisation of the new atheists who *do not* read Nietzsche and Pinker's demonisation of those atheists who *do* read Nietzsche; between Fincke's admission that there are very few Nietzsche specialists among popularisers of atheism and Pinker's obviously secondhand Nietzsche drawn from secondary non-specialist sources; and between Fincke's assertion that Nietzsche's philosophical questions have not yet occurred to 'evangelical' atheists and Pinker's unqualified rejection of Nietzsche's conclusions without serious consideration of any of the questions that led him there.

Taking a further step back, we notice that these interlocutors might also be arranged as part of a triptych of sorts whereby the works of both authors – Fincke and Pinker – flank either side of the largely silent response to Nietzsche in the rest of the popular atheistic discourse. Hinged together in this way, these three distinct but associated responses to Nietzsche provide unwitting commentary on each other, so that our ersatz central panel is not – as we might have otherwise presumed – left blank, but is adorned with the familiar spectacle of Nietzsche's town square. Painted in bold brushstrokes and with the astonished faces of the atheists in the crowd clearly illuminated, we do not have to guess at what their silence means. It is an anxious silence in which we once again hear the crowd's conflicted reaction to the madman: 'we're not entirely sure what you just said, but we're pretty sure we don't like it'.

To employ Pinker's terms, Nietzsche has 'flouted customs', 'questioned authorities' and 'undermined solidarities', and it is the responsibility of this would-be secular priesthood – if they are to defend their magisterium – to prevent Nietzsche's apostasy from spreading. Inevitably, each of these authors will protest that they claim no special authority for themselves. However, their collective and concerted efforts to suppress and silence Nietzsche is surely the familiar strategy of those attempting to keep people on 'the straight and narrow' by keeping them in the dark, and only goes to show how earnestly they have stepped into the role of the vacated priest as 'savior, shepherd and advocate of the sick herd'.[738] It is little

[738] *GM*, Third Essay, para.15. p.125.

wonder then that most popularisers of atheism have concluded that the path of least resistance is simply not to mention Nietzsche at all and hope that their readers do not notice.

6.4 Mouldy in 1872

I have allowed generous space for Pinker to air his grievances with Nietzsche in a transparent attempt to watch Pinker hoisted by his own petard. In what follows I want to offer a Nietzschean critique of Pinker. However, subjecting Pinker to the scrutiny of the entire Nietzschean canon would require more space than allotted here and could become a far-roaming project of its own. Instead, I will tether my response to the more focused critique that Nietzsche makes of one of his own contemporaries, namely David Strauss.

Nietzsche's 1873 essay, 'David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer', is not a personal attack on the man himself as much as Strauss serves as Nietzsche's paradigmatic case study of all that is wrong with modern thinking in Germany. In what follows, I will attempt to redirect Nitzsche's critique of Strauss onto Pinker, who I will take to be the paradigmatic case study of all that Nietzsche would find wrong with contemporary atheistic thought in the modern Anglophonic world. To be sure, there are differences between Strauss and Pinker and the eras to which they belong. For example, Nietzsche is concerned that Strauss is smuggling religion into his thinking through a form of Hegelian optimism, whereas Pinker distances himself emphatically from all 'nineteenth-century Romantic belief in mystical forces, laws, dialectics, struggles, unfoldings, destinies, ages of man and evolutionary forces [...]'[739] But such differences are not nearly as consequential as Pinker imagines them to be, so that with very little modification, Nietzsche's critique of Strauss can be applied to Pinker with surprising consistency and similar relevance. Commenting on the general bearing of Strauss's work, Nietzsche says, 'But that something written in 1872 should smell mouldy in 1872 arouses my suspicions'.[740] So much the worse for Pinker, whose principal ideas, it shall be seen, were problematised by Nietzsche in the nineteenth century.

Take for example Nietzsche's criticism that Strauss fails to make any connection between what he deems to be obviously related questions such as 'How do we conceive of the world?' and 'How do we order our life?'[741] Nietzsche states that 'it confuses us to see that

[739] *Enlightenment Now*, p. 11.
[740] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer' [1873], in *UM*, para.4, p.19.
[741] *Ibid*., para.9, p.41.

his [Strauss's] ethics are constructed entirely independently of the question: 'What is our conception of the world?'[742]

Aware of this disparate approach to related questions, the reader will not get beyond the first two pages of *Enlightenment Now* before noticing how Pinker also fails to make precisely the same connections that Strauss had failed to make between the 'is' and the 'ought'. For example, Pinker recounts delivering a lecture in which he described human thought as only so many patterns in brain tissue. He was then confronted with what he claims to be 'the most arresting question' he has ever fielded. A student in the audience raised their hand and asked, 'Why should I live?'

Pinker begins his response in the following manner:

> In the very act of asking that question, you are seeking reasons for your convictions, and so you are committed to reason as the means to discover and justify what is important to you. And there are so many reasons to live![743]

Pinker's reasons in summary form include the potential to flourish, refining the faculty of reason, finding explanations of the natural world, insight into the human condition, pleasure, satisfaction, enjoying beauty in nature and culture, both the ability to receive and the responsibility to show benevolence, kindness, love and sympathy to others, the capacity to perpetuate ourselves and the hope of progress.[744]

What would Nietzsche make of this sort of reply? We can answer this question by simply observing Nietzsche's response to a parallel problem in Strauss, who Nietzsche points out 'praises Darwin as one of the greatest benefactors of mankind'[745] but who 'does not dare to tell them [his readers] honestly: I have liberated you from a helpful and merciful God, the universe is only a rigid machine, take care you are not mangled in its wheels!'[746] It is safe to assume that Nietzsche would be just as bemused by Pinker's ability to cheerfully reduce human reason to 'patterns in brain tissue' one moment and then offer back the same 'patterns in brain tissue' as reasons to live the next. Furthermore, Pinker's attempt to quell a student's brewing existential crisis with 'a few of his favourite things' stylistically reflects the type of optimism which Nietzsche identifies in Strauss and characterises in the following manner:

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[742] *Ibid.*, para.7, p.29.
[743] *Enlightenment Now*, p. 3.
[744] *Ibid.*, p.3-4 .
[745] 'Confessor and Writer', para.7, p.29.
[746] *Ibid.*, para.7, p.33.

> Optimism has here for once made things too easy for itself. But the trick of the thing was precisely to make it look as though refuting Schopenhauer [read pessimism] was no bother at all and to cast one's burdens off with such playful ease […] This is to be achieved by showing that there is no need whatever to take a pessimist seriously.[747]

As we have already noted, Pinker does not believe in a Hegelian world-historical Spirit; nonetheless, his optimism, like Strauss's, is buoyed by a number of scientific and social achievements and by the accompanying belief – which perhaps in the absence of any Hegelian Spirit, is a belief more mysterious than Strauss's – that everything is moving in the direction of these kinds of successes. Pinker recruits a physicist to explain that 'optimism (in the sense that [he has] advocated) is the theory that all failures – all evils – are due to insufficient knowledge'.[748] Indeed, Pinker's whole project can be characterised as an attempt to showcase the success of science in overcoming this deficiency in knowledge and how it can be relied upon to overcome any further obstacles to progress that may lie ahead. And with little to help us distinguish between the two, Nietzsche observes that Strauss 'intends to present the evidence upon which the modern philosophy of life depends: all evidence he borrows from science and here too he adopts wholly the posture of a man of knowledge, not that of a believer'.[749]

But Nietzsche would say that Pinker, like Strauss, is simply 'telling us about his beliefs'.[750] This is a creedal confession of sorts and by putting it into writing, perhaps Pinker 'thinks he is inscribing the catechism of modern ideas' and constructing the broad 'universal highway of the future […] in the proud accents of the founder of a new religion'.[751]

Nietzsche thinks that this kind of optimistic belief is 'not merely an absurd but also a truly infamous mode of thinking, a bitter mockery of the nameless sufferings of mankind'[752] which are glossed over by an 'inordinately stupid ease and contentment doctrine'.[753] It is 'the misuse of success'[754] by a people who have become overly enamoured with the results of science and technology and have taken to drawing targets around wherever their arrows happened to have fallen.

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[747] *Ibid.*, para.6, p.28.
[748] *Enlightenment Now*, p.7.
[749] 'Confessor and Writer', para, 9, p.41.
[750] *Ibid.*, para. 3, p.14.
[751] *Ibid.*, para. 3, p.15.
[752] *Ibid.*, para. 6, p.28.
[753] *Ibid.*, para. 6, p.28.
[754] *Ibid.,* para.1, p.5.

Nietzsche also refers to this as 'the deification of success',[755] which he thinks at once ignores the hazards and vastly overestimates the potential benefits of following the chain of causation all the way down. Nietzsche says:

> Our age is typified by its pursuit of science […] The heir of but a few hours, he [the scientific man] is ringed around with frightful abysses, and every step he takes ought to make him ask: Wither? Whence? To what end? But his soul is warmed with the task of counting the stamens of a flower [...][756]

And again 'men pursue their business and their sciences so eagerly only so as to elude the most important questions'.[757] The reader will have caught the first trace of the madman, for whom scientific progress can provide no solace, who sees the frightful abyss and asks, 'Wither are we going'? Once again, Nietzsche's point is that neither Strauss, nor modern German culture, has discerned the true nature of the problems that face them. Contra Strauss and Pinker, Nietzsche recognises that no amount of progress fueled by scientific discovery, guided as it may be by reason and humanistic values, can resolve the problems that confront the modern world. This is because the crisis of modernity emerges prior to the optimistic successes of modern life, issuing instead at the origin of culture itself. Therefore, Nietzsche's emphasis on culture throughout his essay is meant to single out the real crisis which Strauss and now Pinker seem to have missed.

Nietzsche explains that 'culture is, above all, unity of artistic style in all the expressions of the life of a people'.[758] And again, 'true culture must in any event presuppose unity of style'.[759]

But with the death of the Christian God, Western civilisation has lost the story that gave aesthetic unity to the collective and which created a mutual commitment amongst its members. Now, working with a scientific approach to history, which indiscriminately hoovers up all the 'facts' of the past, modern people are left to choose a course for themselves from a 'pandemonium of myths […] thrown into a disorderly heap'.[760] Unable to choose one myth over another, the modern world does not possess a unifying story which can order and rank the constellation of forces at work in the life of the collective and the individual.

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[755] *Ibid.*, para. 7, p.31.
[756] *Ibid.*, para. 8, p.35.
[757] *Ibid.*, para. 8, p.36.
[758] *Ibid.*, para.1, p.5.
[759] *Ibid.*, para.2, p.7.
[760] *BT*, para.23, p.110.

Consequently, both individual and collective lack definition, thereby setting personhood, culture and freedom beyond the reach of modern people.

Given this state of affairs, Nietzsche finds it remarkable how unperturbed the educated, so-called 'cultured' class remains. 'How is it possible', Nietzsche asks, 'that the greatest self-satisfaction nonetheless continues to reign among educated Germans'?[761] How can they 'rejoice' in this 'grotesque juxtaposition and confusion of different styles'?[762]

Nietzsche thinks this self-satisfaction exists because the modern person, 'discovering everywhere identical reproductions of himself, he infers from this identity of all "cultivated" people the existence of a unity of style and thus the existence of a German culture'.[763] Nietzsche notes that it is 'a homogeneity of expression which almost resembles a unity of style'.[764]

> He perceives around him nothing but needs identical with and views similar to his own; wherever he goes he is at once embraced by a bond of tacit conventions in regard to many things […] this impressive homogeneity, this *tutti unisono* [everybody together] [...] seduces him to the belief that a culture here holds sway.[765]

Nietzsche dubs this person 'the cultural philistine' who treats 'his reality as the standard of reason in the world'.[766] Thus while Strauss's emphasis on the scientific approach to biblical texts played its part in undoing the Christian narrative, he remains unaware of his contribution to a problem he does not know exists.

The equation of 'reality' with 'philistine rationality', the tendency to only see or only acknowledge reproductions of oneself, nowhere appears more starkly than when Pinker confronts the fundamental question that lies at the heart of his project: 'What is progress'? He hints at the potential scale of the problem this question might pose to someone less sanguine than himself: 'You might think that the question is so subjective and culturally relative as to be forever unanswerable'.[767] As we shall see, Pinker relies on an 'impressive homogeneity' in order to answer this perplexing philosophical question, and when all is said and done, he expects to be embraced once more by 'a bond of tacit conventions'.

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[761] 'Confessor and Writer', para.2, p.7.
[762] *Ibid.*, para.1, p.6.
[763] *Ibid.*, para.2, p.8.
[764] *Ibid.*, para.11, p.49.
[765] *Ibid.*, para. 2, p.8.
[766] *Ibid.*, para.2, p.11.
[767] *Enlightenment Now*, p.50.

We recall that Pinker's unstated yet overriding purpose is to provide *reassurance* for himself and his readers about the future of *'reason, science, humanism and progress',* and therefore it would be intolerable to proceed with this sort of question mark hanging over a good portion of his book. It comes as no surprise then that in the pivotal moment of his entire argument, Pinker does not allow his readers to experience the tension that this question produces over the course of a chapter, a page or a paragraph, but instead, in the very next sentence, cheerfully informs his readers that 'in fact, it's one of the easier questions to answer'.[768]

Readers recovering from this astonishing revelation will ask: 'How are the problems of subjectivity and cultural relativity resolved so easily and finally so that the question of what it means to be human and therefore what would count as progress presents no serious challenge to the project that Pinker and his fellow atheists are working on?' Pinker's unwillingness to sustain philosophical tensions for any length of time is necessarily prohibitive of any serious philosophical reflection, and the speed with which he moves to resolve this particular tension is no exception. Pinker starts by providing a laundry list of his preferred values and virtues such as life, health, sustenance, abundance, peace, safety, freedom, equality, literacy, knowledge and intelligence. And then Pinker comments:

> Granted not everyone would agree on the exact list. The values are avowedly humanistic, and leave out religious, romantic, and aristocratic virtues […] If you're reading this, you are not dead, starving, destitute, moribund, terrified, enslaved, or illiterate, which means that you're in no position to turn your nose up at these values – or to deny that other people should share your good fortune.[769]

'You're in no position', Pinker reproaches anyone who might disagree, resorting to what Nietzsche describes as Strauss's 'desperate ploy: "whoever cannot help himself here is beyond help"'.[770] Once more, instead of offering an argument, Pinker has merely restated his 'beliefs' like this: It is easy to answer the question 'what is progress?' as long as we already agree on these particular values and leave out those other ways of selecting and ordering values which would contradict or entirely undermine our own.

A cheap trick, Nietzsche would argue: Pinker – along with all the other narrators of mainstream atheism – is simply helping himself to a humanity shaped by a very particular genealogy of descent growing out of a very specific valuation of existence and then

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[768] *Ibid*.
[769] *Ibid*., p.51.
[770] 'Confessor and Writer', para.9, p.42.

presuming on his readers' tacit agreement without ever acknowledging the long story that led him and his readers to that point. Pinker 'perceives around him nothing but needs identical with and views similar to his own', precisely that 'impressive homogeneity' which allows him to assume that a culture exists and therefore any problems can be handled further ahead with a little more knowledge. It is precisely this sort of philistine handling of these serious philosophical questions which Nietzsche thinks characterises Strauss but which could just as easily characterise Pinker's approach to the same questions. Hence Nietzsche says:

> That the problems Strauss passes in review are serious and dreadful ones, and have been treated as such by the wise of every age, is known to Strauss himself […] Of all the dread and gloomy seriousness of reflections into which one is plunged perforce when faced with the questions of the value of existence and the duties of man there is not the slightest suspicion as our gifted Master goes fluttering past us [...][771]

How then does Nietzsche respond to the question of progress which Pinker so easily dismisses?

6.5 Folk Religion, Providence and Progress

We will begin here with the following passage from *The Anti-Christ*:

> Yet the most modest expenditure of intelligence, not to say *decency,* would convince these interpreters of the complete childishness and unworthiness of such an abuse of divine dexterity. Even the slightest trace of piety in us ought to make us feel that a God who cures a head cold at the right moment or tells us to get into a coach just as a downpour is about to start is so absurd a God he would have to be abolished even if he existed. A God as a domestic servant, as a postman, as an almanac-maker – at bottom a word for the stupidest kind of accidental occurrence.… 'Divine providence' as it is still believed in today by almost every third person in 'cultured Germany' would be a stronger objection to God than any other that could possibly be thought of. And in any case, it is an objection to the Germans![772]

Nietzsche's ability to lampoon religion by casting it in such an absurd light so that even his religious targets cannot help but laugh at themselves, remains unrivaled. Today's bestselling atheists whose projects depend on their own astute observations and acerbic wit, must aspire to what Nietzsche has already accomplished. But even at his most sardonic,

[771] *Ibid.*, para.10, p.46.
[772] *AC*, para.52, p.182.

Nietzsche is able to make sharp and important distinctions about who and what he is attacking, which gives him a precision that other antagonists toward Christian theism often lack, precisely because they fail to make such distinctions. Nietzsche's parting of ways with other atheists, though seemingly occurring later and eventually, often happens at this point.

For example, in this passage, Nietzsche places the phrase 'divine providence' in inverted commas, not simply because he does not believe in the possibility of divinity or providence – though obviously he does not – but for the same reason he places the phrase 'Cultured Germany' in inverted commas. If Cultured Germany existed at all, he is saying, surely it would not look like this and for that matter neither would divine providence. Nietzsche is arguing that what people commonly refer to as 'divine providence' is a misnomer for their own childish and unworthy abuse of the concept, an 'abuse of divine dexterity', a religious nomenclature to interpret 'the stupidest kind of accidental occurrence' whereby the providential is reduced, in countless petty ways, to the provincial.

If we then read this passage alongside the parable of the madman – which serves again to keep our central thesis in view – it appears that the same charge Nietzsche brings against the atheists in the parable's town square is now being brought against the religious believer. We will recall that it is only by abusing the term 'God' that the atheists in the town square believed themselves to have got rid of God, but from whom did they acquire such terms of abuse in the first place? This passage in *The Anti-Christ* suggests that Christians themselves abused the terms 'God' and 'providence' and by doing so offer 'a stronger objection to God than any other that could be thought of'. After all, when the town square atheists laugh at the madman and offer various explanations for God's absence, they are in fact referring to the God described in the aforementioned passage in *The Anti-Christ*: it is God the 'domestic servant' who is 'missing'; it is God the 'postman' who has 'gone on holiday'; and God the 'almanac-maker' who is in 'hiding'. Nietzsche's point once again is that if these absurd characters were all that the terms 'God' and 'providence' ever referred to, then of course we could make quick work of Christian theism.

But Nietzsche thinks that with a modest application of 'intelligence' and 'decency', we will discover a more serious theism, which is a prerequisite for any atheistic project that wants to step out of God's shadow and not merely shuffle sideways from folk religion into folk atheism. Thus, with heavy irony, Nietzsche appeals to Christian piety, of all things – 'the slightest trace of piety' – as he pleads with 'cultured' German Christians to stop talking about God in such irreverent and impious tones. Nietzsche is well aware that what he offers here is not an objection to the providence of God but 'it is an objection to the Germans!'

In other words, having demolished popular views of divine providence with comical effect, he does not imagine himself to have eliminated the mysterious workings of divine providence operating – conceptually – deep within Western thought. Nietzsche thinks that a fully developed concept of divine providence as it has grown up and reached maturation in Western culture presents a persistent set of ideas which continue to underpin the Western psyche. This being the case, it would be quite possible for an atheist to laugh at the Christian who thinks that 'God told him to get into a cab just before a downpour' while still operating within a pseudo-providential view of the world themselves. Consequently, even if it were possible to quarantine everyone who thinks that 'God healed their head cold at just the right moment', Nietzsche does not think that the epidemic would have been contained.

This is because modern people are committed to a cluster of bad ideas cobbled together to create an eschatological scheme of sorts, namely 'humanity', 'progress' and 'the good'. In paragraph 4 of *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche says, '"progress" is merely a modern idea, that is to say, a false idea'.[773] As Nietzsche sees it, human progress is a false idea because it grows out of a commitment to humanity as such and preselected Christian notions of the good toward which humanity is inevitably being drawn in Christian eschatological fashion.[774]

But no longer able to trace ourselves back to divinity, having placed man 'back among the animals', and having shed what he refers to as Christianity's '*imaginary teleology* ("the kingdom of God", "the Last Judgment", "eternal life")',[775] Nietzsche warns against 'the vanity of thinking 'that man is the great secret objective of animal evolution'.[776] There is no human objective as such and therefore no type called human, nor is there an inevitability about what humans will become but rather we must choose what 'type of human being one ought to *breed,* ought to *will*, as more valuable, more worthy of life'.[777] This is why after his introductory paragraph, Nietzsche wastes no time in getting on with the work of reevaluating values:

> What is good? – All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man. What is bad? – All that proceeds from weakness. What is happiness? – The feeling that power *increases* – that resistance is overcome.[778]

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[773] *AC*, para.4. p.128.
[774] *AC*, para.15. p.137.
[775] *Ibid*.
[776] *AC*, para.14. p.136.
[777] *AC*, para.3. p.128.
[778] *AC*, para.2. p.127.

This ability to distinguish between folk religion and more serious theistic projects allows Nietzsche to get on with the work of disentangling his own atheism from Christian prejudice, including among other things, providential views of the world. And as I have been at pains to point out, it is precisely this sort of 'providential' view of the world that both advocates of Nietzsche, who make him presentable to a popular audience, and popularisers of Atheism, who ignore Nietzsche, are trying to protect in their own way.

6.6 Conclusion

Arriving at the contemporary popular reception of Nietzsche's atheism, we distinguished between two different types of literature: literature that addresses Nietzsche directly, which not only attempts to make him accessible but *acceptable* for progressive liberal sensibilities; and the literature that is focused on popularising atheism in general. Having already considered the various means and motives for sanitising Nietzsche in the preceding two chapters, we turned our attention here to the latter category, only to discover that the contemporary popularisers of atheism, instead of sanitising or even demonising Nietzsche, appear to have all but ignored him. Given that this is the case, we might have been tempted to think that the silence surrounding Nietzsche in the popular atheistic discourse would lead to a purely speculative discussion from which it would be difficult to draw any firm conclusions about what such a silence might mean. Reasonable guesses might have included some version of the following: Perhaps popularisers of atheism are silent about Nietzsche because they have successfully outmaneuvered Nietzsche; they have advanced beyond Nietzsche; Nietzsche is passé; they have not read Nietzsche; they have not understood Nietzsche; they do not like Nietzsche; they feel threatened by Nietzsche. However, the range of possible explanations quickly narrows when we consider the authors Fincke and Pinker, who not only address Nietzsche but address him in starkly contrasting ways: Pinker wants to excommunicate Nietzsche whereas Fincke wants to bring him into the fold. As we have noted along the way, neither author seems to be cognizant of just how exposed they are, but by the same token, those are the moments that provide the clearest explanation for the obvious lacuna in the literature.

In case any doubt remains, I will close this chapter with a few quotes from John Gray who meets all of the following criteria: he is an author of popular atheistic literature, he

addresses Nietzsche, he recognises that Nietzsche is missing from the atheistic discourse and provides the rare occasion upon which Nietzsche's absence is not only highlighted – 'the new atheists rarely mention Friedrich Nietzsche, and when they do it is usually to dismiss him' – but his absence is also explained to a general audience. All of this makes Gray the exception that proves the rule.

Gray's explanation for the mysterious missing Nietzsche is compelling not simply because it fits with my overarching thesis but because we have now dwelt long enough with Fincke's confusion, Pinker's fear and the empty space that lies between. From here on, we can follow Gray as he leads his unsuspecting audience to the edge of the Nietzschean abyss, into which personhood and progress, free will and rationality, humanity and equality disappear together:

> Humanists like to think they have a rational view of the world; but their core belief in progress is a superstition […] Among contemporary philosophers it is a matter of pride to be ignorant of theology. As a result, the Christian origins of secular humanism are rarely understood. […] The idea of progress is a secular version of the Christian belief in providence.[779]

> Yet it is forgotten whenever people talk of 'the progress of mankind'. They have put their faith in an abstraction that no one would think of taking seriously if it were not formed from cast-off Christian hopes. […] The humanist belief in progress is only a secular version of this Christian faith.[780]

> The reason Nietzsche has been excluded from the mainstream of contemporary atheist thinking is that he exposed the problem atheism has with morality. It's not that atheists can't be moral – the subject of so many mawkish debates. The question is which morality an atheist should serve.[781]

[779] John Gray, *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), Forward to paperback edition, p.i.
[780] *Ibid*., pp.3-4.
[781] 'What Scares the New Atheists?'

Conclusion

Arriving at the conclusion, it will be helpful to return to where we began and revisit several Nietzschean themes which were explored in the first two chapters and which have set the trajectory for this present work. *First*, I will begin by summarising and offering several reasons for Nietzsche's self-perception as a philosopher of Dionysus and what this has meant for the shape of Nietzsche's overall project. We will note once more how Nietzsche not only collapses traditional philosophical distinctions between *style* and *substance*, *appearance* and *being*, but in doing so, he blurs the lines between disciplines such as *philosophy* and *poetry*. Most significantly, for the shape of my own project, Nietzsche blurs the lines between *philosophy* and *history*. This is not simply about allowing one discipline to shed light on the other – a genealogy might well reveal a more tenuous relationship between values and philosophy – but this revelation is itself only a subsidiary aim for Nietzsche and is meant to serve his greater purpose: the revaluation of all values.

> The uncovering of Christian morality is an event without parallel, a real catastrophe. He that is enlightened about that, is a *force majeure*, a destiny; he breaks the history of mankind in two. One lives before him or one lives after him.[782]

And again:

> And one calculates *time* from the *dies nefastus* on which this fatality arose – from the *first* day of Christianity! – *Why not rather from its last? – From today?* – Revaluation of all values![783]

Therefore, while I have attempted to demonstrate how the meaning of Nietzsche's philosophy provides explanatory power for understanding why his atheism has been received

[782] *EH*, 'Why I Am a Destiny', para.8. p.333.
[783] *AC*, para.62. p.199.

the way it has been received and how his reception history in turn sheds light on the meaning of his atheism – understanding of this sort has only been a subsidiary aim of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is not an insignificant part of what I have been attempting to do, and I will briefly point to some of the ways that this goal has been accomplished. However, my broader aims and purposes have been stated in various places along the way, and I will restate them in this concluding chapter once more for good measure, this time tightly framed in the way I have indicated above – *Dionysus*, *Nietzsche's style*, the *collapse of philosophy and history into each other* and the resulting *revaluation* form the backdrop against which someone might attempt a project like this.

7.0 Dionysus, Reverence and Rank

Dionysus does not feature prominently in most of Nietzsche's works and is rarely the direct subject of an extended discourse. Furthermore, it might be argued that Nietzsche's conception of Dionysus changed over time and eventually gave way to more important ontological claims such as the will to power or eternal recurrence.

But the weight of a given theme in Nietzsche's texts cannot be determined by annotating each reference to that theme and adding them together; only heavy satire would imagine a Nietzsche who intends his readers to find Dionysus listed conveniently in the index of subjects under the heading 'Dionysus – see also Dionysian'. Further, whatever transformation takes place in Nietzsche's understanding of Dionysus and whatever new doctrines appear to have received greater, more formal attention in later years does not straightforwardly signify the diminished significance of Dionysus for Nietzsche's overall project – an easy but I think mistaken conclusion to draw. This becomes clear – as we noted in chapter two – when Nietzsche's works are viewed from Nietzsche's *own* perspective. The reader will recall that in various places, Nietzsche's own understanding of his life and work is presented in the form of *biography, retrospective prefaces* and *new books* added to earlier publications. I argued that, taken collectively, it appears that Nietzsche uses these addenda, in part, to summarise his work in Dionysian terms. This appears most obviously in *Ecce Homo*, where Nietzsche states bluntly in his preface, 'I am a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus'.[784] And after offering a survey and summary of his own works, Nietzsche concludes his

[784] *EH*, Preface, para.2, p.217.

biography with this final question: 'Have I been understood? – Dionysus versus the Crucified. – '[785]

In order to better understand this summation offered by Nietzsche about his own work, we might begin by taking particular note of the retrospective preface to his earliest work *The Birth of Tragedy* titled 'An Attempt at Self-Awareness'. In this new preface, Nietzsche invites his readers to understand his later and more sparing use of direct references to the Dionysian in terms of his own growing sense of *reverence*:

> Yes, what is Dionysiac? – This book contains an answer to that question – a man who 'knows' speaks here, an initiate and disciple of his god. Perhaps I would now speak more cautiously and less eloquently about such a difficult psychological question as the origin of tragedy amongst the Greeks.[786]

Nietzsche gently mocks his former self, possessed as he was of a great and eloquent 'knowledge' of the Dionysian – 'a man who 'knows' speaks here', he quips. Nietzsche's self-awareness, or as he says more carefully, 'an attempt at self-awareness', contrasts with his earlier quixotic zeal, that of a new initiate who simply does not know all that he does not know. Moved by greater reverence, Nietzsche now speaks 'more cautiously and less eloquently', and in hushed tones and slowly – a posture which he urges upon his readers in another new retrospective preface, this time for *Daybreak.* Against an age of 'indecent and perspiring haste', Nietzsche says:

> Let us say it, as it is fitting it should be said between ourselves, so secretly that no one hears it, that no one hears us! Above all let us say it *slowly*… [...] Nowadays it is not only my habit, it is also to my taste – a malicious taste, perhaps? – no longer to write anything which does not reduce to despair every sort of man who is 'in a hurry'.'[787]

And lastly, in the new retrospective preface for *The Gay Science* – as with the new retrospective preface for *The Birth of Tragedy* noted earlier – Nietzsche once more places the word to "know" in inverted commas and explains, 'Today it is a matter of decency not to wish to see everything naked, or to be present at everything, or to understand and "know" everything'.[788] Skipping from this retrospective preface to the newly added fifth and final book of *The Gay Science,* Nietzsche commends living with ambiguity and equates this with a

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[785] *EH*, 'Why I Am a Destiny', para.9, p.335.
[786] *BT*, Preface, para.4, pp.6-7.
[787] *D*, Preface, para.5, p.5.
[788] *GS*, Preface, p.38.

sign of reverence and good taste: 'Above all, one should not wish to divest existence of its rich ambiguity: that is a dictate of good taste, gentlemen, the taste of reverence for everything that lies beyond your horizon'.[789]

The significant point here in all these retrospective prefaces and newly added chapters is that *reverence*, *decency* and *good taste* are not just superficial comportment for Nietzsche but virtues – virtues which Nietzsche had come to associate with nobility and the higher ranks. He explains in *Beyond Good and Evil* – published in 1885 just prior to writing the retrospective prefaces and chapters which we have been considering: 'There is an *instinct for rank*, which more than anything else is a sign of a *high rank*; there is a delight in the nuances of reverence which allows us to infer noble origin and habits'.[790] Having made the connection between *reverence* and *nobility*, Nietzsche then uses this same connection to reevaluate and insult well-educated and cultured people – who presumably comprise the majority of his readers – by informing them that he has found greater reverence and therefore greater nobility among the peasant class who after centuries of church tyranny at least know how to reverence the Bible. Nietzsche goes on to contrast these 'noble' peasants with the educated class whose ignobility is evidenced precisely by their tasteless and shameless handling of everything:

> Conversely, perhaps there is nothing about so-called educated people and believers in 'modern ideas' that is an nauseous as their lack of modesty and the comfortable insolence of their eyes and hands with which they touch, lick, and finger everything; and it is possible that even among the common people, among the less educated, especially among peasants, one finds today more *relative* nobility of taste and tactful reverence than among the newspaper-reading *demi-monde* of the spirit, the educated.[791]

Nietzsche, who no doubt took some pleasure in scandalising his educated readership with this reversal of order of rank and class, explores this idea further in his new preface to *Human, All Too Human* in which he heuristically maps the progression of the *free spirit*, and in doing so, traces the distant origins of the 'lofty nature' to nothing less than a youthful *reverence*:

> It may be conjectured that a soul in which the type of 'free spirit' can attain maturity and completeness had its decisive and deciding event in the form of a great emancipation or unbinding, and that prior to that event it seemed only the more firmly and forever chained to its place and pillar. What binds strongest? What cords seem almost unbreakable? In the case of mortals of a choice and lofty nature

[789] *GS*, para.373, p.335.
[790] *BGE*, para.263, p.212.
[791] *Ibid*., p.213.

> they will be those of duty: that reverence, which in youth is most typical, that timidity and tenderness in the presence of the traditionally honoured and worthy, that gratitude to the soil from which we sprung, for the hand that guided us, for the relic before which we were taught to pray – their sublimest moments will themselves bind these souls most strongly.[792]

Conversely – if we recognise this correspondence that Nietzsche is drawing here between *reverence* and nature – the person who finds themselves bemused by the 'timidity and tenderness' of the reverent soul Nietzsche describes, by implication may simply not possess the nature from which it is possible for nobility to emerge in the first place. The person who has never felt shame to reach out and touch the hem and then only with 'delicate fingers'[793], but on the contrary, feels at liberty to shamelessly 'touch, taste and finger' everything – is in no condition to take the trembling first step of the journey that Nietzsche describes. The great 'emancipation' or 'unbinding' of the 'free spirit' cannot be experienced by someone who is unaware that they are bound and remain bound or who cannot for the life of them imagine that there is something that lies beyond the reach of their indelicate hands let alone their shrinking horizon. Think here of the crowd of atheists in the town square who first yell and laugh and then fall into silence, dumbfounded by the madman's reverence for the death of God – 'the light of the stars takes time'.

And at this point, it becomes difficult to distinguish between Nietzsche's repulsion for the self-satisfied, 'newspaper-reading *demimonde* of intellect, the cultured class' and the *scholars* who 'grow out of all kinds of classes'[794] but nevertheless comprise what Nietzsche refers to as 'the spiritual middle class […] who can never catch sight of the really great problems and question marks'.[795] Thus, Nietzsche announces his exit from this house of ill repute:

> I have moved from the house of the scholars and I even banged the door behind me. […] I am not, like them, trained to pursue knowledge as if it were nut cracking.[796]

We now have no shortage of Nietzschean metaphors to describe the petty 'nut cracking' projects of the scholars who have taken existence *indoors* and approach life as if it were a *mathematical* problem to be worked out on a *calculator* and eventually organised by

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[792] *HAH*, para.3, p. 9. (Harvey translation).
[793] *D,* Preface, para.5, p.5.
[794] *GS*, para.348, p.290.
[795] *GS*, para.373, p.334.
[796] *Z*, Second Part, 'On Scholars', pp.236-237.

our *square little reason*[797] into a tidy *system,*[798] or annotated on a *table*[799] or perhaps written into a *prologue.*[800] Such scholars 'consider a problem almost as solved when they have merely schematized it'.[801] And so comes Nietzsche's warning:

> *Beware of systematisers!* – Systematisers practice a kind of play-acting: in as much as they want to fill out a system and round off its horizon […] – they try to impersonate whole and uniformly strong natures.[802]

Why conquer the world when you can simply shrink the world to more manageable proportions? And in this way, Nietzsche cautions that if we follow these scholars, we will be led into a *charmless,*[803] *indecent*,[804] *degraded* and *absurd*[805] existence. Nietzsche, conversely, wants to lead his readers – at least those with the potential, that is to say, those who possess a measure of *reverence* – toward a Dionysian affirmation of life. Thus, before the reader has time to consider the contents of Nietzsche's philosophy, Nietzsche intends that they be swept up into a dramatic experience through the form and style in which his philosophy is delivered. Readers are confronted with an array of seemingly contradictory and disparate aphorisms but which are in fact connected by countless tendrils to an unspecified number of other aphorisms in innumerable ways, the meaning of a single aphorism bleeding into all the others. It is no longer a matter of looking beneath the surface of *mere style* as if that were the superficial thing that conveys the more *substantial content*. Nietzsche is collapsing the materiality of his form and style into the substance of his content and by doing so he is collapsing the traditional – and in Nietzsche's view, irreverent – formal philosophical distinction between *mere* appearances and *true* being.

To begin to read Nietzsche's texts then, is to experience the subversion of the philosophical method by which scholars have contented themselves with the mere schematising and systematising of a problem. Nietzsche's *reverence* will not permit him to present the dissected and reassembled anatomy of Dionysus, complete with final classifications. This symbol of abundant life is not only meant to be found when the text

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[797] *GS*, para.373, pp.334-36.
[798] *TI*, 'Maxims and Arrows', para. 26, p.35.
[799] *GS*, para.348, p.290.
[800] *BT,* para.12, p.62.
[801] *GS*, para.348, p.290.
[802] *D*, para.318, p.158.
[803] *GS*, Preface for the second edition, para.4, p.38.
[804] *D*, Preface, para.5, p.5.
[805] *GS,* para.373, p.335-336.

makes mention of Dionysus directly; instead, we are being asked to read just beyond the text to see that Dionysus is the violent boiling beneath the surface of every exuberant and conceptually overloaded turn of phrase – the vast and eternal becoming.

Yet, despite all that I have just said, I am not hereby suggesting that Nietzsche's writing *cannot* be organised systematically or that his ideas *should not* be exported into formal doctrine to be expounded upon in volumes of their own, or that we cannot trace changes in Nietzsche's positions over time which might provide further helpful categories for understanding his work. It may even be the case that the Nietzsche who warns his readers to 'beware of systematizers' eventually wanted to present a systematised version of his own work; this is not the contradiction it may first appear to be. I share Schacht's conviction that Nietzsche's thought is 'fundamentally coherent, both with respect to particular issues and in general'.[806] The question is not whether we can or should systematise Nietzsche's philosophy to some benefit or whether or not Nietzsche thought it should be done. A table of contents, an index and *The Nietzsche Dictionary* may all be helpful points of entry into some aspect of Nietzsche's work – and we all have to start somewhere.[807] Rather, the question is: was Nietzsche offering his philosophy as something to be disassembled and *finally solved* in this way or rather as something to be *experienced?*

If we assume the latter, then it seems that careful attention to how Nietzsche has been experienced and responded to over time is to begin to take seriously Nietzsche's philosophy not simply as a body of abstract thought – to be expounded and 'understood' – but as something to be encountered and that has been encountered. Therefore, one of the aims of this thesis has been to offer an account of Nietzsche's popular reception in the English-speaking world. But as we noted in chapter three, there are other reception histories, sometimes more narrowly focused on a particular time frame or a particular country and still others that have focused on Nietzsche's reception by a particular author – all of them rendered in impressive detail. However, I have been attempting to write a different kind of reception history, framed in Nietzsche's terms and dare I say, congruent with at least some of Nietzsche's aims.

[806] *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, p.7.
[807] Douglas Burnham, *The Nietzsche Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

7.1 History for Life and Action

Nietzsche – who characterised his day and age as being 'afflicted' with a 'consumptive historical fever' – is mistrustful of the historical sense whenever the historical sense turns against life and becomes a mere allegiance to the past, either seeing in the past some sort of gold standard to be recovered or as the case may be, permanently lost; or discerning in the past a secret telos toward which history has been unfolding; or discovering universal characteristics that bind humanity across history; or performing an activity for 'ants' whereby 'neutral' scholars collect 'objective' historical facts.

The problem with these various ways of studying or relating to the past is that they misunderstand the past as a source of immutable value and Nietzsche thinks that this creates hostile conditions for life. In his essay 'On the Uses and Advantages of History for Life', Nietzsche warns that this sort of history is injurious not only to individuals but to entire cultures:

> It is possible to value the study of history to such a degree that life becomes stunted and degenerate.[808]

> There is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of the historical sense, which is harmful and ultimately fatal to the living thing, whether this living thing be a man or a people or a culture.[809]

> History become pure, sovereign science would be for mankind a sort of conclusion of life and a settling of accounts with it.[810]

Even so, while Nietzsche does not try to fix values on some firm historical ground, he recognises that the past is in fact the source of all our values and in this way 'the past continues to flow within us in a hundred waves'.[811] This is why all of Nietzsche's works have a distinctly historical bearing, but it is important to understand that they commend a distinctly different type of historical sense:

> For its intention is to show why instruction without invigoration, why knowledge not attended by action, why history as a costly superfluity and luxury, must, to use Goethe's word, be seriously hated by us [...] We need history, certainly, but we need it for reasons different from those for which the idler

[808] 'Uses and Disadvantages', Foreword, p.59.
[809] *Ibid*., para.1, p.62.
[810] *Ibid*., p.67.
[811] *HAH*, Part 2, para. 223. p.268. (Hollingdale translation)

> in the garden of knowledge needs it [...] We need it, that is to say, for the sake of life and action [...] We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life.[812]

> The study of history is something salutary and fruitful for the future only as the attendant of a mighty new current of life, of an evolving culture for example, that is to say only when it is dominated and directed by a higher force and does not itself dominate and direct.[813]

How might history be 'dominated and directed by a higher force'?

Perhaps an answer to this question may be found in the way that Nietzsche distinguishes himself from the ordinary philologists. As Jessica Berry points out: 'By collapsing the distinction between philosophical and genuine philological work. Essentially declaring himself perhaps *the first philologist'*.[814] And perhaps Nietzsche might add, the first philosopher and a prelude to future philosophy:

> Here we see how countless men actually live only as forerunners of a real man; the scholars, for instance, as forerunner of the philosopher who knows how to make use of the scholar's ant-like labor in order to make his own statement on *the value of life.*[815]

One or two biographical details may help to summarise what we have said so far: Nietzsche published *The Birth of Tragedy* as a philologist and fully-fledged member of the academy, but the book's Dionysian vision for the enormity of life that contained questions about how much *life* there could possibly be in *truth* and *knowledge*, naturally set him against the academy which responded negatively to the book's publication – a foreshadowing perhaps of the fact that Nietzsche would eventually produce the majority of his published writings 'in exile'. It is true that the readers from the academy who expected a work of pure philology may have been affronted by the fact that Nietzsche's book did not meet the standards of a scholarly philological work. But perhaps they *also* sensed the subversive nature of Nietzsche's line of interrogation that placed a question mark not only against philosophy but – as fellow philologists may have noticed – against the philological tradition as well. Perceiving a sort of threat akin to heresy that needs to be contained, Ulrich Wilamowitz-Moellendorf – who Sanfranski notes 'later became the pope of classical

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[812] 'Uses and Disadvantages', Foreword, p.59.
[813] *Ibid*., p.67.
[814] Jessica N. Berry, 'Nietzsche and the Greeks', in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsch*e, ed. Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 83-87 (p.88).
[815] Friedrich Nietzsche, *'*We Classicists*', Unmodern Observations,* ed. and trans. William Arrowsmith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p.340.

philology' – ended his censorious review of Nietzsche's book by effectively calling for his excommunication from the academy in order to prevent young impressionable minds becoming infected:

> Let Mr N. keep his word, let him take up the thyrsus and move from India to Greece, but he should step down from the podium from which he is supposed to be teaching scholarship; let him gather tigers and panthers at his knees, but not Germany's young generation of philologists.[816]

However, a generation or so later, Francis Cornford, in his 1912 work *From Religion to Philosophy,* would comment on *The Birth of Tragedy* and its scholarly reception, observing that the book was 'a work of profound imaginative insight, which left the scholarship of a generation toiling in the rear'.[817] Nietzsche's Dionysian reverence had driven him beyond conventional scholarly methods, lending a certain inevitability to his formal exit from the university one way or another.[818] Alone, but no longer bound by academic convention and operating well outside the limits of contemporary acceptable thought, Nietzsche continued to collapse academic disciplines – including philosophy and history – into each other and in so doing, generated his own forward-looking and evaluative way of relating to the past.

In light of this, my aim has not been to write the most detailed history of Nietzsche's popular reception to date; in any case there is not space here. Nor am I merely interested in seeing how Nietzsche's reception history can help us better understand his philosophy (wherever understanding means to categorise) or how his philosophy can help us understand and write the history of his reception. Of course, allowing these disciplines to mutually inform each other has been one of my aims, and we will review a few ways this has been accomplished presently.

However, the back and forth between intellectual history and philosophy serves as the dynamo that generates the greater overarching aim of this thesis wherein I have endeavoured to follow Nietzsche in blurring the distinction between philosophy and intellectual history in order to bring to the fore the *evaluative nature* of Nietzsche's philosophy – something that he offered not so much to be evaluated but to evaluate or rather reevaluate his readers. Besides which, a Nietzschean reception history without these forward-facing philosophical concerns intent on valuation, would be Nietzschean in name only.

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[816] *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, p.83.
[817] *MHP*, p.85.
[818] Nietzsche resigned his chair at Basel in 1879 due to ill health.

But almost by definition, reevaluation happens in opposition to the current values and classifications of the day. As we noted earlier, Nietzsche frequently rearranges the class system: scholars who may come from every class but comprise the spiritual middle class; the peasant class that possesses 'nobility'; and the educated newspaper-reading *demimonde* and cultured class that is moved to the bottom of the heap as the 'last man'. Concerning his own philological project, Nietzsche says:

> For I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely - that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.[819]

But in what sense is Nietzsche inappropriate for the times or in opposition to the age? Beyond offending his fellow philologists and other German academics of the 1870s, I have been arguing that the story of Nietzsche's 125-year-old popular reception in the English-speaking world revolves around the specific opposition put simply in the title of this thesis *Nietzsche Contra the Atheists.* In a moment, we will allow what Nietzsche viewed as a virtuous historical sense to add some final detail and definition to this conflict which we have been following throughout this thesis. But before we proceed any further, I should acknowledge the problem with this sort of project: by bringing to the front Nietzsche's contempt for educated atheists everywhere in the context of an increasingly well-educated and secularised Anglophonic world, and by plotting his popular reception around this adversarial relationship, I have in a sense rendered my own work entirely inappropriate for our times and in opposition to the age. But then perhaps I should also take Nietzsche's sanguine approach to this: if this were not the case, there would be no working on the age for the benefit of a coming time.

7.1.1 Nietzsche's Future Readers

Nietzsche's evaluative goals are attended by his desire to cultivate a historical sense that might serve living and by the same token work toward the benefit of a coming time. As a way of clarifying how Nietzsche goes about this, it will be helpful to review three striking features regarding Nietzsche's posture toward his own reception:

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[819] 'Uses and Disadvantages', Foreword, p.60.

First, Nietzsche speaks directly about his reception and his readers. While we might expect an author to address the issue of his reception in the context of a preface or biography, it is the unconcealed manner in which Nietzsche both instructs and ranks his readers which warrants our attention. For example, in his preface to *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche says:

> It is clear enough, assuming, as I do assume, that one has first read my earlier writings and has not spared some trouble in doing so: [...] for they are not easy to penetrate. Regarding my Zarathustra, for example, I do not allow that anyone knows that book who has not at some time been profoundly wounded and at some time profoundly delighted by every word of it; for only then may he enjoy the privilege of reverentially sharing in the halcyon element out of which that book was born and in its sunlight clarity, remoteness, breadth, and certainty'[820]

And in *Ecce Homo*:

> This was said for the benefit of Germans; for everywhere else I have readers – nothing but first-rate intellects and proven characters, trained in high positions and duties; I even have real geniuses among my readers. In Vienna, in St. Petersburg, in Stockholm, in Copenhagen, in Paris, in New York – everywhere I have been discovered; but not in the shallows of Europe, Germany. And let me confess that my nonreaders delight me even more.[821]

Nietzsche not only speculates *about* his readers but frequently addresses them directly, as the following small and random sample illustrates. 'Let us look one another in the face', Nietzsche proposes in the opening line of *The Anti-Christ*, pulling his readers in close so that he can proceed with the rest of the book, occupying their personal space because what he has to say is meant to be taken personally. Nietzsche frequently imagines himself in conversation with his readers who ask him questions and who guess at answers and who misunderstand him: 'You ask me about the idiosyncrasies of philosophers?';[822] 'You will have guessed *what* has really happened here.'[823] 'Am I understood?...Have I been understood?...*"Not at all, my dear sir!"* – then let us start again, from the beginning'.[824] Likewise, Nietzsche poses questions to his audience and dares his readers to participate with

[820] *GM*, Preface, para. 8, p.22.
[821] *EH*, 'Why I Write Such Good Books', para.2, p.262.
[822] *TI*, '"Reason" in Philosophy', para.1, p.45.
[823] *GM*, Second Essay, para.22. p.92.
[824] *GM*, Third Essay, para.1, p.97-98.

him in his project: 'Would anyone like to take a look into the secret of how ideals are made on earth? Who has the courage?'[825]

We should not think of any of this as an odd quirk or a mere rhetorical flourish in which Nietzsche occasionally breaks the fourth wall as it were – a sort of self-conscious interval in the middle of his philosophy, or perhaps a device intended simply to get his readers attention. Rather, Nietzsche's preoccupation with his reception and his readers is entirely consistent with the evaluative and humanity-shaping aims of his philosophy. Nietzsche's self-obsession, which compelled him to write and rewrite his own biography, runs parallel to his obsession with what his readers are like and will be like and the effect his writing will have upon them. So that instead of being exclusively turned toward the particular philosophical problem at hand, Nietzsche is often turned toward his readers, who in Nietzsche's view are themselves part of the philosophical/historical problem to be addressed.

Second, not only does Nietzsche address his readers but he also offers predictions about how he will be received. Nietzsche predicts that he will not be understood by the majority of his readers, a view he expresses across his works in ways with which we are now familiar: Nietzsche knows that his meditations are '*untimely',* he is aware of his own 'inappropriateness' for the age. Resigned to the idea that his works are meant for a future generation, he says, 'It will be some time before my writings are readable'.[826] The madman looks up at the most distant stars and waiting for their light to arrive, he says, 'I have come too early. […] My time is not yet'. This refrain is repeated in *Ecce Homo* as Nietzsche touches on the matter of his books:

> Before I discuss them, one by one, let me touch on the question of their being understood or *not* understood. I'll do it as casually as decency permits; the time for this question certainly hasn't come yet. The time for me hasn't come yet: some are born posthumously.[827]

And writing with the same distant gaze, Nietzsche pens his 'prelude to future philosophy'.

These predictions appear prescient and could serve as a prologue to Nietzsche's reception history; indeed, scholars without his gift for seeing beyond their own horizons often suspect that prophecies are written *after* the events that they predict. But Nietzsche claims, 'I am the greatest psychologist', and his predictive powers arise out of his psychological

[825] *GM*, First Essay, para.14, p.47.
[826] *GM*, Preface, para. 8, p.23.
[827] *EH*, 'Why I Write Such Good Books,' para.1, p.259.

perspective that 'there are few individuals, and these are opposed by herd instincts and conscience'.[828] From this, Nietzsche surmises that most of his readers will be 'part of the crowd', 'mob men' and 'members of the herd' whose thoughts are 'continually […] translated back into the perspective of the herd'[829] so that his future reception will amount to little more than 'expressions of the needs of a community and herd'.[830] This perspective not only augments Nietzsche's predictive power by shrinking the number of interpretive strategies available to his popular audience but also gives him insight into the psychological makeup of the herd and therefore the sorts of needs that will be expressed through his reception. Put all of this together and Nietzsche appears convincingly clairvoyant.

But this is no side show in which Nietzsche attempts to astonish a susceptible audience. Rather, Nietzsche actually lets his readers in on the act and shows them how it is done, so to speak. And here we arrive at our *third* observation regarding Nietzsche's posture toward his own reception: Nietzsche's transparency is a form of generosity toward his readers and he is consistently generous in this regard. Nietzsche not only predicts but repeatedly explains the future of his own reception, so that on the one hand, Nietzsche marks the distance between himself and his audience, but on the other, he provides within his own texts, a way of measuring that distance and a way of explaining why the distance exists. Nietzsche knows what the psychological and cultural needs are and how they have been produced. All of this has shaped the evaluative concerns of this thesis as I have tried to ask what it would mean to think about Nietzsche's reception history in some way that Nietzsche himself would recognise and perhaps endorse.

Taking Nietzsche's view for guidance regarding his reception, we cannot help but notice that Nietzsche draws a bright clear line through the last 125 years of his reception that runs between those who understand the meaning of the death of God and those who do not:

In Nietzsche's estimation, the death of God is 'the greatest recent event'.[831] Speaking of God's death in terms of a bloody murder, the madman exclaims, 'There has never been a greater deed'.[832] God's death is an 'awe inspiring catastrophe',[833] a 'cataclysmic' and 'monstrous' event that Nietzsche says 'the like of which has probably never yet occurred on earth'. And again:

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[828] *GS,* para.149, p.196.
[829] *GS,* para.354, p.299.
[830] *GS*, para.116, p.174.
[831] *GS*, Book Five, para.343, p.279.
[832] *GS*, Book Three, para.125, p.181.
[833] *GM*, Third Essay, para.27, p.160.

> The uncovering of Christian morality is an event without parallel, a real catastrophe. He that is enlightened about that, is a *force majeure*, a destiny -he breaks the history of mankind in two. One lives before him, or one lives after him.[834]

In view of God's death, Nietzsche warns his readers metaphorically, 'some sun seems to have set'.[835] Then, he offers them a portent, saying that God's death 'eclipses' everything. Finally, he shows us cataclysmically, that God's death is the philosophical and historical equivalent of 'unchaining the earth from the sun'.[836] In the failing light, when the madman asks the atheists in the town square if they smell the stench of a decomposing God, he is also asking if they are aware of the stench of their own decomposing humanity.

But as reflected in the parable of the madman, Nietzsche anticipates that most atheists will respond to this history-breaking, humanity-dividing, total eclipse of everything out of the psychological necessity of the herd, doing what they can to mitigate the consequences of God's death. In other words, 'the greatest' and 'unequalled event' must be shrunk, and this has required his audience in various ways to demonise, sanitise, silence, tame, suppress and ignore Nietzsche to the best of their ability. 'The event itself is far too great, too distant, too remote from the multitude's capacity for comprehension even for the tidings of it to be thought of as having arrived as yet'.[837]

In light of the fact that Nietzsche not only tells us what will happen in the course of his reception history but also explains how and why it will happen in vivid detail, we may for a moment wonder how it is possible that Nietzsche's popular Anglophonic reception still ends up – just as Nietzsche predicted – being a series of misunderstandings. And we might also for a moment wonder how it is possible that more than a century of Nietzschean scholarship has failed to produce numerous commentaries on his reception history where this antagonism between Nietzsche and the atheists does not provide the explicit and controlling questions. At the same time, however, paying attention to our conflicting intuitions, we might wonder if it could have been any other way.

So, for example, our historical interests have led us to consider the cultural context in which Nietzsche became associated with social Darwinism. Placing humans on the same level as animals, Darwinism had fuelled concerns about cultural decline, but we also noted – paradoxically – that certain forms of social Darwinism provided hope of cultural renewal.

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[834] *EH*, 'Why I Am a Destiny', para.8. p.333.
[835] *GS*, Book Five, para.343, p.279.
[836] *GS*, Book Three, para.125, p.181.
[837] *GS*, Book Five, para.343, p.279.

Perhaps it was unavoidable that Nietzsche would be presented to a popular audience according to the categories of this contemporary widespread debate in the Anglophonic world. Nietzsche's first translator argued that he provided the intellectual framework for a Darwinian solution to human mediocrity; alternately, Nietzsche's first English commentary presented Nietzsche as evidence of the much feared, *fin-de-siecle* degeneracy. And as we noted, the advocates of different varieties of social Darwinism might respond to Nietzsche with a corresponding affinity or aversion to his work.

But as informative as these historical contexts and characters are when it comes to giving an account of Nietzsche's reception, they gain a new depth and dimension once eyed through the lens of Nietzsche's *philosophical* concerns. Nietzsche's genealogical approach reveals the deep grammar of the contemporary conversation, typically unacknowledged by those taking part, but which nevertheless determines the invisible limits of the conversation itself. Those listening from within the dialectical range of social Darwinism were bound to make their determination about Nietzsche on the basis of whether or not they felt he upheld their own register of values. But Nietzsche does not sit comfortably anywhere on the spectrum of social Darwinism, not because of any objection he might have to a particular set of values, but because the attempt to legislate values from nature is in Nietzsche's view yet another manifestation of the ascetic instinct. Moreover, when Nietzsche peels back the new and various labels – 'nature', 'Darwinism', 'progress' and 'perfectibility' – he finds the label 'God'. It is Nietzsche's atheism that creates the chasm or better put, Nietzsche's atheism is the chasm that opens up between himself and other 'atheists', some of whom condemn him for what they perceive to be his brutishness and others who commend him for the same. But Nietzsche perceives that all parties standing on the far side of this chasm continue to labour under some aspect of the conceptual framework of Christian theism going by another name.

Something similar happens when we explore the historical setting in which Nietzsche became associated with nationalism. As we saw, Britain's own nationalistic fervor was compounded by widespread fears of an imminent German invasion; and under these conditions, Nietzsche would naturally fall under the same suspicions as German immigrants in England who were reported on, harassed and sometimes violently attacked. Matters were not helped by Nietzsche's first translator, Alexander Tille, who himself became a target of nationalistic violence when he was discovered to be a German nationalist, publicly contemptuous of his host nation and secretly fuelling anti-British sentiment back in Germany. Therefore, no sooner had Nietzsche arrived in England than his defenders had to start driving a wedge between the German philosopher and German nationalism for a general audience.

Today, Nietzsche's anti-nationalist credentials are better known and are frequently played off against contemporary fringe elements such as the alt-right who might appropriate the earlier misalignment of Nietzsche with nationalism in support of their own nationalistic views.

But once again, Nietzsche's philosophy provides another level of explanation for Nietzsche's own reception history, and seen the other way around, his reception provides a set of clarifying case studies for various aspects of his philosophy. After Nietzsche's defenders have corrected the misconception that Nietzsche was a nationalist, Nietzsche himself remains at a puzzling distance from his generally progressive popular Anglo audience, because it is rarely explained – at least at a popular level – that Nietzsche's anti-nationalism is in fact the natural outworking of his anti-egalitarianism, which is itself the necessary consequence of his atheism. And so, readers are never struck by the oddness of their own easygoing combination of atheism, anti-nationalism and egalitarianism. It is true that if his early English-speaking readers had understood his atheism, Nietzsche would never have been labelled a nationalist in the first place, but it is also true that if contemporary popular audiences understood his atheism, Nietzsche's anti-nationalism would not be considered a meaningful progressive point in his favor. And we have traced similar patterns in other areas of his reception where Nietzsche has been demonised, sanitised or ignored; where he has been misappropriated, only to be corrected but always with the same result, whereby readers avoid Nietzsche's historical sense on the one hand and his apocalyptic visions of the future on the other.

It is Nietzsche's sense of history that leads him to his apocalyptic visions catalysed by God's death in which the sky is wiped away, the sea is emptied and the earth is unchained from the sun. But it is also Nietzsche's historical sense that allows him to consider another possible future: a new creation where a new sun appears in a new sky, pouring its light into a new sea, which he describes in moving terms in a passage from the *Gay Science*, densely packed with metaphors and allusions, a few of which I will point out here.

In this passage, which is quoted below, Nietzsche speaks about a different and virtuous historical sense possessed by what he calls the new nobility, the noble who perceives all human history converging on himself – who is able to experience it as his own history – and is at once both able to bear the 'immense sum of grief' from ages past while rejoicing in his ability to give his inexhaustible riches to the future ages and shape of humanity: 'Like the sun in the evening, continually gives of its inexhaustible riches and empties into the sea'. This, Nietzsche says, is the 'happiness of a God' and mingling divinity with humanity, he says, 'this divine feeling might then be called humanity'. To be sure, Nietzsche is inviting his readers, those with a sense of reverence, to experience history in a manner he may also have

imagined the Christian God once experienced his own death and resurrection. And the one who possesses this historical sense – 'to have all this at last in one soul, and to comprise it in one feeling' – Nietzsche designates as the 'heir of all nobility', 'the first of a future nobility' and the 'noblest of nobility'.

He is reflecting, in other words, on the historical sense possessed by none other than Jesus, the one Nietzsche heralds as the 'noblest human', the God under whose sky we have been living:

> *Future "Humanity."* – [...] In fact, this is one aspect of the new sentiment. He who knows how to regard the history of man in its entirety as his own history, feels in the immense generalization all the grief of the invalid who thinks of health, of the old man who thinks of the dream of his youth, of the lover who is robbed of his beloved, of the martyr whose ideal is destroyed, of the hero on the evening of the indecisive battle which has brought him wounds and the loss of a friend. But to bear this immense sum of grief of all kinds, to be able to bear it, and yet still be the hero who at the commencement of a second day of battle greets the dawn and his happiness, as one who has a horizon of centuries before and behind him, as the heir of all nobility, of all past intellect, and the obligatory heir (as the noblest) of all the old nobles; while at the same time the first of a new nobility, the equal of which has never been seen nor even dreamt of: to take all this upon his soul, the oldest, the newest, the losses, hopes, conquests, and victories of mankind: to have all this at last in one soul, and to comprise it in one feeling: – this would necessarily furnish a happiness which man has not hitherto known, – a God's happiness, full of power and love, full of tears and laughter, a happiness which, like the sun in the evening, continually gives of its inexhaustible riches and empties into the sea, – and like the sun, too, feels itself richest when even the poorest fisherman rows with golden oars! This divine feeling might then be called humanity![838]

[838] Friedrich Nietzsche, *GS,* ed. Oscar Levy, trans. Thomas Common (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), para.337, pp.264-265.

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