

# NIETZSCHE

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# Preface

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Until rather recently, most philosophers in the English-speaking world have paid Nietzsche little heed. European philosophers of diverse orientations have considered him a thinker to be reckoned with throughout the course of this century; but he has seldom been taken seriously across the English Channel (and North Atlantic). Outside of what used to be the Continentally-inspired underworld, he for the most part has been either ignored altogether, or accorded only minor significance as a forerunner of existentialism, or else crudely caricatured, vilified, and cavalierly dismissed. Indeed, his long neglect was no doubt at least in part due to the fact that a great many people formed their impressions of him from the uses made of him by fascist and racist ideologues, and from the related scandalous treatment accorded him by such commentators as Bertrand Russell. Russell may be an extreme case; but it is worth noting some of the things he says about Nietzsche in his *History of Western Philosophy* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1945, pp. 760-3, 766-7):

Nietzsche, though a professor, was a literary rather than an academic philosopher. He invented no new technical theories in ontology or epistemology; his importance is primarily in ethics, and secondarily as an acute historical critic. . . . His general outlook . . . remained very similar to that of Wagner in the *Ring*; Nietzsche's superman is very like Siegfried, except that he knows Greek. This may seem odd, but that is not my fault. . . .

[Nietzsche] attempts to combine two sets of values which are not easily harmonized: on the one hand he likes ruthlessness, war, and aristocratic pride; on the other hand, he loves philosophy and literature and the arts, especially music. . . .

True virtue [for Nietzsche], as opposed to the conventional sort. . . , is not profitable or prudent; it isolates its possessor from other men; it is hostile to order, and does harm to inferiors. It is necessary for higher men to make war upon the masses, and resist the democratic tendencies of the age. . . . He prophesied with a certain glee an era of great wars; one wonders whether he would have been happy if he had lived to see the fulfillment of his prophecy. . . .

He condemns Christian love because he thinks it is an outcome of fear. It does not occur to Nietzsche as possible that a man should genuinely feel universal love, obviously because he himself feels almost universal hatred and fear, which he would fain disguise as lordly indifference. His 'noble' man — who is himself in his day-dreams — is a being wholly devoid of sympathy, ruthless, cunning, cruel, concerned only with his own power. King Lear on the verge of madness, says: 'I will do such things — what they are yet I know not — but they shall be the terror of the earth.' This is Nietzsche's philosophy in a nutshell.

Happily, it is no longer necessary to fight the battle that had to be waged to discredit this absurd picture of Nietzsche — even if, in some quarters, its influence still lingers on. As his writings have become more widely available, in better translations, and as more discerning commentators have weighed in, a different picture of him has at least begun to emerge; and it has become possible not only to discuss him in polite intellectual society, but also to engage the interest of a growing number of philosophers in the bearing of his thought upon a variety of issues of concern to them.

Such earlier and more recent studies as Morgan's *What Nietzsche Means* and Danto's *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (to mention only two of the more notable cases in point) have contributed to this transformation of the climate of opinion; but the greatest credit for it belongs to Walter Kaufmann (whose untimely death occurred just as this book was being finished). Through his many excellent translations of Nietzsche's writings, his useful commentaries and introductions to them, and his fine and widely-read *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, he did more than anyone else in our part of the world has done to rescue Nietzsche from both his unjust detractors and his ill-motivated abusers, and to gain for him the attention and appreciation he deserves. I have not attempted to write another book of the sort he wrote. His remains perhaps the best introduction to Nietzsche's life and intellectual development (although

Hollingdale's *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* and Hayman's recent *Nietzsche: A Critical Life* are also deserving of mention); I commend it to the reader both in its own right and as a very helpful background text for this study. My concerns and approach here, however, are rather different.

Nietzsche was a thinker, figure and influence about whom many sorts of books have been and can and should be written. This book is an instance of only one of them. He had many sides and moments, and has had many audiences with differing sensibilities and interests; and no single work can do justice to all of the former, or satisfy all of the latter. The 'perspectivism' of which he speaks is not without a certain application in this context. The vantage point from which — and the eyes with which — he is viewed in the present study may be complemented by others, as others are here, to good effect. And that which is thus viewed does not have a sharp and clear shape and structure, but rather acquires definiteness only in the course of interpretation. These circumstances, however, far from diminishing Nietzsche's interest, are elements of his greatness and importance, and are among the reasons why we never will (or in any event should) have done with him.

Nietzsche's productive life was relatively short, encompassing less than a score of years (beginning in the early 1870s, and ending with his collapse in 1889), the second half of which was of far greater importance than the first. In this brief period, however, he did a prodigious amount of writing, and dealt with as broad a range of matters as almost anyone ever has. In addition to the considerable number of works he published and prepared for publication, he left a great mass of notes, which scholars undoubtedly will be mining for generations, and which can neither be entirely ignored nor easily digested. And even the works he completed for the most part consist chiefly in assemblages of rather loosely connected notes rather than sustained arguments and systematic treatments of particular topics. He had a great deal to say, about a great many things; and no single study can take account of more than a part of it.

This is so even if attention is confined — as it is here — to what Nietzsche has to say on matters of a philosophical nature, passing over his interspersed reflections on other matters (which are many), and his excursions along literary lines. The present study is an examination of his philosophical thinking; and while this already makes it selective (as well as interpretive), it is of necessity selective in other ways as well. In deciding what in Nietzsche's philosophical thinking and writings to deal with, and how to do so, I have been guided by two basic intentions: first, to do at least

something approaching justice to the range, manner and issue of his philosophical endeavours; and second, to render them accessible, intelligible and interesting to philosophers and philosophically-minded readers more generally in the English-speaking world, regardless of their particular philosophical orientations and prior acquaintance with him. I have considered it neither necessary nor desirable to deal with the extensive secondary literature on him; that either would have added considerably to the length of this book (which is long enough as it is), or would have required that less be said about Nietzsche himself (which would have worked against my chief aims).

On the other hand, I have found it necessary for my purposes to make extensive use of things Nietzsche wrote but had not incorporated into any of the works he published or prepared for publication up to the time of his collapse. These unpublished writings too exhibit his philosophical thinking, and indeed contain much more of his expressed thinking on certain important matters than do his finished works. Restricting attention to the latter alone, therefore, would have been both artificial and impoverishing. In any event, what this book is a study of is the philosophical thinking expressed in the things he wrote, including manuscripts and notes he left as well as works he completed. One may always question the commitment of a writer to things he writes but does not publish; but this is a worry of which too much can be made. And it is doubly desirable not to make too much of it in the case of someone like Nietzsche whose productive life ended abruptly and quite early, with major projects under way and in the offing, material for which he was accumulating in the notebooks from his later years. One cannot know what use he might have made of this material; but this, in my opinion, is no reason to ignore it.

My decision to draw upon it, however, has been conjoined with another: to confine my citations and explicit attention largely to works Nietzsche completed, together with his unpublished early essay *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, and the extensive and reasonably well organized selection of material from his notebooks from the last decade of his productive life published under the title of *The Will to Power*. The former essay is too important and interesting to be ignored; and the latter collection is sufficiently representative of the mass of material in his notebooks to serve my purposes. Although a more extensive selection from them has long been available in German in Karl Schlechta's three-volume edition of his writings, and the complete contents of these notebooks are now available in the definitive Colli-Montinari *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, their utter lack of organization presents



enormous difficulties, for which the collection entitled *The Will to Power* provides a partial remedy. It more than suffices to reveal the nature and substance of the philosophical thinking expressed in the notebooks, as I believe anyone who expends the time and effort to investigate their fuller contents will discover.

I have sought to direct the attention of readers to texts indicative of his philosophical thinking which they might reasonably be expected to have read or to be able to read themselves. I take *The Will to Power* to be such a text (or collection of texts). I leave to others with more narrowly scholarly interests the labor of considering what refinements of interpretation might be suggested by other material in his notebooks (and also in his correspondence). I have given quite enough prominence to his unpublished notes in this study; to have dealt with them more comprehensively would have been to accord them more significance than is their due in relation to his other writings. While those not to be found in *The Will to Power* are not explicitly utilized here, however, I have sought to interpret Nietzsche in a manner consonant with what I have found in them.

Nor is this the last limitation of the present study requiring to be acknowledged. While I have at various points (especially in the last two chapters) taken notice of things Nietzsche has to say in writings antedating *The Gay Science*, I have concentrated my attention upon his philosophical efforts in the second half of his productive life, beginning with this work. It is his thinking in this period of his philosophical maturity which interests me most, and to which I believe the greatest value for philosophers today attaches. It is only occasionally in his earlier writings that he shows the kind of philosophical power, insight and sensitivity characteristic of so much of his later work; and indeed it is only occasionally that he even addresses himself to significant philosophical issues and tasks in them. Prior to *The Gay Science* he was only on the way to becoming the important philosopher he came to be. It is for the most part only as certain of his earlier discussions are germane to positions he later developed, therefore, that I have made reference to them.

I also have largely passed over his literary-philosophical efforts, written though they for the most part were in this later period — including not only his many epigrams, 'songs' and poems, but also his most famous work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. I have found it useful and illuminating at various points to refer to certain things he says and themes he develops in the latter work, and consider familiarity with it to be essential to the understanding of him. It does not readily lend itself, however, to the sort of analysis



undertaken here; and since there is little of a philosophical nature in it that Nietzsche does not elsewhere work out in a more straightforwardly (or prosaically) philosophical manner, I have preferred to concentrate upon his other ways of putting his points, calling Zarathustra in to give evidence only on occasion.

In a systematic study of Nietzsche's works, *Zarathustra* would of course require extensive discussion — as would the books he published prior to *The Gay Science*, in their entirety and for what they are, no less than would the others he wrote (not all of which, or all parts of which, are of a philosophical nature). The present volume, however, is no such study, and is organized quite differently. Each chapter in it is devoted to one of his major philosophical concerns, and draws upon material to be found in many different things he wrote which is pertinent to his treatment of the issues these concerns subsume. It is only if one takes account of the various things he has to say about them in his widely scattered discussions of them that one can do something approaching justice to his thinking with respect to them, which is in many cases much more subtle and complex than one might gather if one considered only the remarks he makes in some one place. He does not devote separate works to the systematic treatment of each of the matters he deals with, but rather touches upon them and returns to them on many different occasions, seldom if ever setting down anything that might be considered his definitive position concerning any of them; and so it is incumbent upon one who would understand him to draw together the many strands of his dispersed and unsystematic reflections upon each of them, and to attempt to discern what they add up to.

I have been guided in my interpretation of Nietzsche not only by these considerations, but also by the further conviction that although he was not a systematic thinker, his thought is fundamentally coherent, both with respect to particular issues and in general; and that what he says on some occasions is best construed in the light of what he says on others, rather than in a manner that would saddle him with numerous basic inconsistencies (as many commentators and interpreters, both unsympathetic and sympathetic to him, have been all too quick and happy to do). It was undeniably part of his method to approach problems and issues from a variety of different angles, and to experiment with different formulations (often of a one-sided or over-simplified nature) in dealing with them, even though this might result in at least the appearance of confusion and even contradiction. I would contend, however, that it is both a legitimate way of reading him, and also a very fruitful one, to take him thus to have been working

toward and working out a set of interconnected positions which his various remarks and reflections collectively serve to indicate and elaborate, qualifying and complementing each other.

To be sure, the later Nietzsche unquestionably abandoned some of the views he advances in his earlier writings and modified others, as shall be observed in due course; and it would not seem to be possible to read him in this way in all cases even if attention is confined to his writings from the latter half of his productive life. But in most cases this can be done; and the results may be argued both to do him a greater measure of justice than is done him otherwise, and to be of considerable interest. I leave the final assessment of these results in both respects to my readers, however, and mean to do no more at the moment than to announce my interpretive strategy.

I also have chosen simply to pass over Nietzsche's frequent rhetorical excesses, and the ill-considered shots he so often takes at various targets which catch his eye along his way. I do so not because I do not find them annoying, offensive, or embarrassing, and not because I do not deem him deserving of criticism for indulging himself in them, but rather because I feel that dwelling upon them gets in the way of coming to terms with the substance of his philosophical thought. They blemish and mar its surface; but one must school oneself to look past them, filtering them out as so much unfortunate static, if one is to be able to get down to matters of philosophical moment. It is almost as though Nietzsche wished to give readers all the excuses they could wish to be put off by him, in order that only those large-minded enough not to be would stay with him long enough to see what he was really driving at; and indeed he frequently suggests as much. But there is no denying that his own shortcomings and all-too-human tendencies are often on display here as well. Still, while much can be (and has been, and no doubt will continue to be) made of them, I consider it the better course — at least for my purposes — to cut through them and focus upon that in his thought which can and should be taken seriously, and which neither stands nor falls with them and the expressions he gives them.

In sum, I have written one kind of book on Nietzsche's philosophical thinking, which should at least have its uses. It is intended both to serve as a counterweight to certain common and inadequate construals of him (among which I number not only those echoing Russell's, but also those advanced and inspired by certain recent French writers, of which Allison's collection *The New Nietzsche* contains a fair sampling), and to give new impetus to the attempt to gain for him the attention he deserves in our

part of the contemporary philosophical world. In any event, it is one philosopher's interpretation and analysis of a substantial slice of Nietzsche — a sustained and extensively developed examination of what is surely the most philosophical part of the writing he did. This examination is carried out in a spirit reflecting extensive exposure to philosophical currents of the past several centuries on both sides of the English Channel. I would hope that it will not be found idiosyncratic, and have cited Nietzsche extensively in an attempt to show that this is not the case.

I would also hope that today, a century after the initial publication of *The Gay Science*, the time has arrived when a sober assessment of the philosophical enterprise Nietzsche launched in earnest in it can begin to be made by heirs of both traditions, with the aid of studies of this kind. Indeed, it might not even be too much to hope for something more. Philosophy today is again — or perhaps still — in something like the condition Nietzsche discerned a century ago, as he reflected both upon it and upon our culture more generally; and he could well prove helpful in our attempt to reorient our thinking, with some version of his 'gay science' serving as our compass. For anything like this to become a real possibility, however, or even for him to have a more modestly fruitful impact upon current and future philosophical endeavor, Nietzsche the philosopher must be brought into focus. This is what I have attempted to do; and the limits, organization, and procedure of this book all flow directly from this intention.

On a much more mundane plane, a word about my citations from Nietzsche's writings and their identification is required here. Important and useful as Kaufmann's book on Nietzsche has been and continues to be, his greatest and most enduring contribution to Nietzsche studies in the English-speaking world may in the long run turn out to be his generally excellent translations of many of Nietzsche's writings, including not only all of his completed works from *The Gay Science* onward, but also *The Birth of Tragedy* and the collection of notes published as *The Will to Power*. Certain other translations of some of these works exist, and continue to be made; but it would seem fair to say that his are the standard ones, and deserve to be accorded this status (although those that have been made by his sometime collaborator R. J. Hollingdale stand out from the rest, and may generally be relied upon). For this reason, and also because I have seldom found that I could improve significantly upon Kaufmann's renderings, I have for the most part followed them in my citations from works he translated. I have considered this advisable in view of their reliability, their remarkable closeness to the spirit of Nietzsche's own language, their

general availability, and the desirability of enabling readers to locate things I cite easily in the passages from which they are taken. In the cases of writings Kaufmann did not translate, on the other hand, I view the existing translations differently; and my citations from them accordingly are my own versions.

Nearly all of Nietzsche's writings cited are divided into numbered sections (usually of only modest length), and in some cases into larger parts (chapters or divisions) as well. In a few instances these sections and parts do not bear numbers, but may easily be supplied with them along obvious lines. Rather than giving page numbers referring to the location of passages cited in particular German or English editions, therefore, it has seemed to me to be far preferable to follow what is fairly standard practice, and to identify my citations wherever possible by means of these numberings. (To have supplied the page numbers in various volumes of the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, for example, would have been quite unhelpful to most readers; although in a few instances I have had no recourse but to do this.)

I have identified all works cited by the acronyms of their English titles (e.g.: GS = *The Gay Science*). A key to the acronyms I employ, as well as other pertinent information, is provided following the Acknowledgments. In the cases of works in which sections are supplied with numbers running consecutively from beginning to end, I have given only these numbers (e.g.: GS 353 = *The Gay Science*, section 353). In the cases of works in which the section numberings supplied begin again in each part of the work, on the other hand, I have given both part numbers (in Roman numerals) and section numbers (e.g.: GM II:24 = *On the Genealogy of Morals*, essay II, section 24). I have done the same thing in the case of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which the numbers of the sections of each of the four major parts have had to be provided. In the identification of some citations the letter 'P' appears; it indicates that the sections designated are to be found in the Preface (or, in the case of *Zarathustra*, the Prologue) to the work specified. In the few cases in which page numbers have had to be given, they refer to pages in the volumes of the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* as indicated in the Reference Key. This description of my practice may seem confusing; but the practice itself should be found quite transparent, and is much more convenient than any other that might have been followed. It allows readers to locate the passages cited quickly, whatever English or German (or other) editions they might happen to use; and it is also very economical in terms of the space it requires. Should some readers have preferred a different practice, I beg their indulgence of mine.

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To the Hegeler Institute and Eugene Freeman, editor of *The Monist*, for permission to use a revised version of my paper 'Nietzsche's Second Thoughts About Art,' which was first published in *The Monist*. It is reprinted (as revised) from *The Monist*, volume 64, number 2 (April 1981), pp. 231–246, with the permission of the publisher. Copyright © 1981 by the Hegeler Institute.

To Viking Penguin Inc., and Shelley Slater, permissions editor, for permission to make use of the Walter Kaufmann translations of the writings of Nietzsche published in the volume *The Portable*

*Nietzsche*, in my citations from these writings. Copyright © 1954 by The Viking Press, Inc. Excerpts from the writings published in that volume are reprinted by permission of Viking Penguin Inc.

To Random House, Inc., and Gerald Summer, permissions department manager, for permission to make use of the Walter Kaufmann translations of the writings of Nietzsche published by Random House (Vintage Books), in my citations from these writings. The volumes in question are the following:

*Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966). Copyright ©1966 by Random House, Inc.

*The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Case of Wagner*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967). Copyright ©1967 by Random House, Inc.

*On the Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, and *Ecce Homo*, translated by Walter Kaufmann; edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967). Copyright ©1967 by Random House, Inc.

*The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974). Copyright ©1974 by Random House, Inc.

*The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale; edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1968). Copyright ©1967 by Walter Kaufmann. Courtesy of Random House, Inc.

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# Reference Key

		Published	GA Volume
BT	= <i>The Birth of Tragedy (Die Geburt der Tragödie)</i>	1872	III:1
TL	= <i>On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense (Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinn)</i>	(written 1870-3)	III:2
PTA	= <i>Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks (Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen)</i>	(written 1870-3)	III:2
UAH	= <i>On the Use and Abuse of History for Life (Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben)</i>	1874	III:1
SE	= <i>Schopenhauer as Educator (Schopenhauer als Erzieher)</i>	1874	III:1
HH	= <i>Human, All-Too-Human (Menschliches, Allzumenschliches)</i>		
	Volume I	1878	IV:2
	Volume II	1879	IV:3
WS	= <i>The Wanderer and his Shadow (Der Wanderer und sein Schatten)</i>	1880	IV:3
D	= <i>Dawn (Morgenröthe)</i>	1881	V:1
GS	= <i>The Gay Science (Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft)</i>		
	Books I-IV	1882	V:2
	Book V	1887	

# REFERENCE KEY

Z	= <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> (Also <i>Sprach Zarathustra</i> )		VI:1
	Parts I—II	1883	
	Part III	1884	
	Part IV	1885	
BGE	= <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> ( <i>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</i> )	1886	VI:2
GM	= <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> ( <i>Zur Genealogie der Moral</i> )	1887	VI:2
CW	= <i>The Case of Wagner</i> ( <i>Der Fall Wagner</i> )	1888	VI:3
TI	= <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> ( <i>Die Götzen-Dämmerung</i> )	1889	VI:3
A	= <i>The Antichrist</i> ( <i>Der Antichrist</i> )	1895*	VI:3
NCW	= <i>Nietzsche contra Wagner</i> ( <i>Nietzsche contra Wagner</i> )	1895*	VI:3
EH	= <i>Ecce Homo</i> ( <i>Ecce Homo</i> )	1908*	VI:3
WP	= <i>The Will to Power</i> ( <i>Der Wille zur Macht</i> )	(notes from 1883–8)	VII:1,2,3 VIII:1,2,3

\* Works completed by Nietzsche but published after his collapse.

Citations from *TL*, *PTA*, *UAH*, *SE*, *HH*, *WS*, and *D* are my own translations. Citations from the rest follow Kaufmann's renderings.

My translations are based on the Colli-Montinari *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Where citations are identified by page numbers, they refer to the volumes in the *Gesamtausgabe* in which the writings in question appear (indicated at the right above).