

# Friedrich Nietzsche: An Introduction to his Thought, Life, and Work

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Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) exerted an extraordinary influence on twentieth-century thought and continues to be a major source of inspiration for work being done today in all the branches of philosophical inquiry. Nietzsche was first and foremost an intellectual revolutionary who sought to change the way we think about existence and how we actually live. To this end he constructed new tasks and projects and put forward new ways of interpreting and evaluating existence.

Nietzsche's philosophical legacy, however, is a complex one. Nietzsche aptly characterized his manner of doing philosophy when, in a letter to a friend, he spoke of his "whole *philosophical heterodoxy*."<sup>1</sup> Most of his texts are aphoristic in style, his meaning is deliberately enigmatic, and he plays all kinds of tricks on his readers. One commentator, Eugen Fink, has argued that the metaphors and images that abound in Nietzsche's writings must be translated into *thoughts* if we are not to hear in them only an opulent, overloaded, and loquacious voice.<sup>2</sup> In spite of his heterodoxy and the difficulties presented by his philosophical style, Nietzsche's influence on modern trajectories of thought has been enormous and he continues to be utilized for important philosophical ends. His ideas exerted an influence on almost every important intellectual movement of the last century, including existentialism, structuralism, and post-structuralism. Aspects of his thought have had an influence on major philosophical figures in both North America and Great Britain, including Stanley Cavell, Richard Rorty, and Bernard Williams. Today he is the subject of a wide array of philosophical treatments, having been adopted by philosophers both of so-called "analytical" persuasions and so-called "continental" ones. Philosophical appreciation of Nietzsche has perhaps never been in a healthier state. Today there are lively debates over every aspect of his thinking, and sophisticated academic studies of his ideas are published on a regular basis.

This volume showcases the full range of work currently being done in the area of Nietzsche studies and appreciation. This includes close textual analysis and exegesis, the treatment of *Nachlass* material, clarification of aspects of his core doctrines and concepts, including some of the most difficult aspects, the consideration of Nietzsche's ideas in relation to fundamental philosophical problems that continue to occupy the attention of philosophers, and critical engagement with these ideas. The volume profiles contemporary thinking on Nietzsche's unpublished material and published texts

and reflects trends in recent scholarship, such as the renewed focus on Nietzsche's naturalism and interest in his philosophy of time, of nature, and of life. There are instructive treatments of Nietzsche in relation to both established philosophical projects, such as phenomenology, and new ones, such as geophilosophy. The aim of the volume is essentially twofold: to illuminate core aspects of Nietzsche's thinking and to show the continuing relevance for philosophy of many of his ideas and projects and tasks. By way of an introduction to the essays that follow I wish to offer a synoptic guide to Nietzsche's thought, life, and work.<sup>3</sup>

## Early Life and Thought

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was born on October 15, 1844 in Röcken, a tiny village near Lützen in Saxony. His father was a Lutheran pastor and was to die only five years after Nietzsche's birth as a result of softening of the brain. The experience of death, of its brute eruption into life and the violent separations it effects, took place early in Nietzsche's life, and the deaths of both his father and his brother Joseph (who was to die before his second birthday) continued to deeply affect Nietzsche throughout the course of his adolescent life and into maturity.

On the death of his father Nietzsche's family, which included his mother, his sister Elisabeth, and two unmarried aunts, relocated to Naumburg. Nietzsche began learning to play the piano and composed his first philosophical essay, "On the Origin of Evil." In 1858 he entered Pforta school in the Saale valley and was a student at this famous boarding school for six years. During this formative period of his youth he developed a love of various writers and poets, including Friedrich Hölderlin and Lord Byron. It is also during this period that he composed his first essay in classical philology and isolated pieces of philosophical reflection, such as "Fate and History."

On his fifteenth birthday Nietzsche declared that he had been "seized" and taken over by an "inordinate desire for knowledge and universal enlightenment." In an autobiographical fragment dated 1868/9 he reveals it was only in the final stages of his education at Pforta that he abandoned his artistic plans to be a musician and moved into the field of classical philology. He was motivated by a desire to have a counterweight to his changeable and restless inclinations. The science of philology on which he chose to focus his labors was one he could pursue with "cool impartiality, with cold logic, with regular work, without its results touching me at all deeply" (Nietzsche's mature approach to the matter of knowledge could not be more different!).<sup>4</sup> When he got to university Nietzsche realized that although he had been "well taught" at school he was also "badly educated"; he could think for himself but did not have the skills to express himself and he had "learned nothing of the educative influence of women."<sup>5</sup>

In October 1864 Nietzsche commenced his undergraduate studies in theology and classical philology at Bonn University. He attended the lectures of the classicist Friedrich Ritschl, who was later to play an influential role in securing Nietzsche's professorship at Basel. In his first year of university life he underwent the rite of passage offered by a duel and began his journey of alienation from his mother and sister by refusing to take communion. In 1865 he moved university to study just classical philology, following

his teacher Ritschl to Leipzig. He speaks of his move from Bonn to Leipzig in a letter to his sister Elisabeth dated June 11, 1865, where he states that if a person wishes to achieve peace of mind and happiness then they should acquire faith, but if they want to be a disciple of truth, which can be “frightening and ugly,” then they need to search. In his second year of university he discovered Schopenhauer, who suited his melancholic disposition at the time, and in 1866 he found a veritable “treasure-chest” of riches in Friedrich Albert Lange’s magisterial study *History of Materialism*. In 1867 Leipzig University awarded him a prize for his study of Diogenes Laertius and he spent the third year of his university studies in military service.

In early 1869 Nietzsche, who had recently begun to feel disaffected with his chosen subject of study and research, was appointed to Basel University as Extraordinary Professor of Classical Philology (he was to apply for the Chair in Philosophy a few years later when it became vacant, but was not successful). Nietzsche assumed the role and duties of a professor at the age of 24 without completing his dissertation or postgraduate thesis.

Although Nietzsche often criticized the discipline of philology he had been trained in for its scholasticism and pedantry, the importance it places on the arts of reading and interpretation deeply informed his work. He repeatedly stresses the importance of knowing how to read well. He presents himself in untimely or unfashionable terms as a friend of slowness (*lento*) and as the teacher of slow reading. The contemporary age is an age of quickness; it no longer values slowness but seeks to hurry everything. Philology can be viewed as a venerable art that demands that its practitioners take time so as to become still and slow. More than anything it is an art that teaches one how to read well, which consists in reading slowly and deeply, and with the aid of which one looks and sees in a certain and specific manner: cautiously, observantly, “with doors left open” and “with delicate eyes and fingers” (*D*, preface, 5). Nietzsche believes that reading should be an art, for which rumination is required. He stresses that an aphorism has not been deciphered just because it has been read out; rather, an art of interpretation or exegesis needs to come into play. On Nietzsche’s specific art of the aphorism see the essay by Jill Marsden (chapter 2).

Nietzsche had made the personal acquaintance of Wagner in November 1868 in Leipzig, and he made his first visit to the composer and his mistress (later wife) Cosima von Bülow at their house “Tribtschen” near Lucerne not long after his arrival in Basel in April 1869. Between 1869 and 1872 Nietzsche would make over 20 visits to Tribtschen. Nietzsche became a devotee of Wagner and considered himself to be in the presence of genius. This devotion did not last, and in his later writings he approaches Wagner as a case study that offers instructive lessons in how to read the signs and symptoms of pathological modernity (*CW*, preface).

In 1870 and 1871 Nietzsche lectured on topics, such as Socrates and tragedy and the “Dionysian world-view,” that would form the basis of his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. He had the intimation that he was about to give birth to a “centaur” with art, philosophy, and scholarship all growing together inside him. In the Franco-Prussian War Nietzsche served for a few weeks as a medical orderly, but was invalidated out when he contracted dysentery and diphtheria himself; on his return to Basel he began to suffer from insomnia, and he was to suffer from serious bouts of ill health and migraine attacks throughout the rest of his life. He wrote most of *The Birth of Tragedy*

while on convalescent leave from his university, in 1871, and it was published at the beginning of 1872. Upon its publication Nietzsche's book met with vehement rejection by the philological community, and after being rejected by his mentor, Ritschl, Nietzsche had to admit that he had fallen from grace and was now ostracized from the guild of philologists. In 1873 Nietzsche worked on various projects, such as "Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks," the essay "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense," and his *Untimely Meditations*. Nietzsche planned several dozen of these but only four actually materialized, and he regarded the whole exercise of writing them as a way of extracting everything he saw as negative in himself.

*The Birth of Tragedy* begins by defining two competing but also complementary impulses in Greek culture, the duality of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. The first takes its name from Apollo, the god of light (*der Scheinende*, the shining one), dream, and prophecy, while the second takes its name from Dionysus, the god of intoxication and rapture (*Rausch*). While Apollo is associated with visible form, comprehensible knowledge, and moderation, Dionysus is linked with formless flux, mystical intuition, and excess. Furthermore, while the Apollonian world is one of distinct individuals, the Dionysian world is one where these separate individual identities have been dissolved and human beings find themselves reconciled with the elemental energies of nature. Through Dionysian rapture we become part of a single, living being with whose joy in eternal creation we are fused. In artistic terms, Apollo is the god of the plastic or representational arts (painting and sculpture) and has a strong association with architecture, while Dionysus is the god of the non-representational art of music. One of the innovative aspects of Nietzsche's argument in the book is the way it contests the idealized image of the Greeks which had been handed down and which depicted ancient Greek culture as a culture of serenity and calm grandeur. Nietzsche seeks to show that the calm Apollonian surface of Greek art and culture is the product of a long and complex wrestling with the tragic insights afforded by the Dionysian state. In Nietzsche's argument the monumental achievement of the Attic tragedy of the fifth century BC, contained in the work of tragedians like Aeschylus and Sophocles, amounts to a fusion of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Nietzsche's book is a search for an adequate knowledge of the union between the two artistic powers (a union he calls a "mystery") and of the origin (*Ursprung*) of Greek tragedy.

Nietzsche's first book was a striking debut. Although it has several core ideas, the most fundamental thesis of the book is that "only as an aesthetic phenomenon are the world and existence eternally justified." But just how is this "aestheticist" conception of the world to be heard and understood? What kind of "justification" is intended? The essay by Daniel Came seeks to clarify the status of the unorthodox insight at the heart of the book. Came takes issue with the charge often leveled against Nietzsche's position that it rests on a radical immoralism by arguing that, in fact, it has no moral implications. Furthermore, the "justification" of existence that is sought is epistemically neutral in the sense that it does not claim that existence is *actually* justified through aesthetic affirmation. Nietzsche affirms art because it embraces the need for illusion and semblance, as opposed to morality that seeks to deny the necessity of the perspectival and of interpretation, as well as its own implication in appearance and semblance (see *BT*, "Self-Criticism," 5). An aesthetic affirmation of existence is only a problem for the moral view of the world that shuns all forms of illusion. From the

“dangerous” perspective of the moral view of the world an artistic metaphysics is to be judged as something arbitrary, idle, and fantastic (“Self-Criticism,” 5).

Another important issue about Nietzsche’s first book concerns the nature and extent of Schopenhauer’s influence on it. In recent years Nietzsche studies in the English-speaking world has begun to develop a more scholarly appreciation of this issue, with the result that the questions are now posed and considered in a much more incisive and nuanced manner. Schopenhauer’s metaphysics rest on dividing the world into two fundamental dimensions: will and representation. He borrows the expression *principium individuationis* (principle of individuation) from scholastic thinking and uses it to denote the phenomenal world of time and space as that which gives us a plurality of coexistent and successive things (this is the world of representation and of individual things). By contrast, the will is the thing-in-itself and outside the order of time and space (this is to name the world’s real or genuine character). Because it also lies outside the province of the principle of sufficient reason (that which explains why something is what it is at a specific time and place), the will is equally groundless and can be said to be primordially “one” (not simply one as either an object or a concept). In their coming to be and perishing away individuals exist only as phenomena of the will (conceived as a “blind, irresistible urge”). Schopenhauer, in *The World as Will and Representation* (vol. 1, section 28), views the expression of the will in phenomena in Platonic terms: “the will is indivisible and wholly present in every phenomenon, although the degrees of its objectification [ . . . ] are very different”. Schopenhauer goes on to talk of the crystal, the plant, the animal, and man as examples of objectified will. Each species of life and every original force of inorganic nature has an empirical character, but this character is nothing more than the phenomenon (manifestation) of an underlying intelligible character, namely, an indivisible will that is outside time.<sup>6</sup>

Although Nietzsche’s argument in *Birth of Tragedy* relies heavily on the terms of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics it does not simply replicate them. Apollo is conceived as the “transfiguring genius” of the *principium individuationis* through whom “redemption in appearance” (*Schein*) can be attained. Dionysus, by contrast, stands for the bursting apart of the spell of this *principium* that provides the path to the innermost being of things. Nietzsche finds something “sublime” in the way the pleasure to be had from the “beauty of appearance” can be experienced through the Apollonian (*BT* 1). A different kind of sublime is opened up, however, through the Dionysian and the breakdown of cognitive forms it inaugurates (it is the sublime of “horror”). The play between the two opposing forces gives rise in Nietzsche’s text to a series of tensions between the one and the multiple, the sub-phenomenal and the phenomenal (the intelligible and the empirical realms), the desire for eternal life and the heroic trials of individuals. But Nietzsche gives equal weight to the two forces or powers, and he does not follow Schopenhauer in simply arguing for a mystical suppression of the will; rather, in the text we find Nietzsche attempting a justification of the plane of appearance and semblance (*Schein*) itself.

The essay by Nuno Nabais (chapter 5) contains valuable insight into Nietzsche’s early “Schopenhauerianism” and traces his attempt to break free of it. Nabais provides a highly original interpretation of Nietzsche’s thinking on the individual and seeks to account for the philosophical reasons informing his eventual positing of the will to power. Elaine P. Miller has made a notable contribution within English-speaking

commentary to the appreciation of the problematic of individuation in Nietzsche, and in her essay (chapter 4) she utilizes her recent research in an effort to illuminate the problem for the reader, including appreciation of the will to power. Miller is concerned with the nature of Nietzsche's interest in a fundamental problem he encountered in Schopenhauer's metaphysics, that of individuation. This encompasses a number of issues that the essays by Nabais and Miller explore, including the character and status of the individual in Nietzsche's thinking. Miller draws attention to the importance of Nietzsche's sketches and outlines for key philosophical work prior to *Birth of Tragedy*, including his dissertation outline of 1868 on teleology and the problem of the organic since Kant and, also from this time, the unpublished essay entitled "On Schopenhauer." In addition she seeks to show the importance of Kant and Goethe for a full appreciation of Nietzsche's thinking on individuation.

In looking back on *The Birth of Tragedy* from the perspective of 1886, Nietzsche locates a "strange voice" at work in the text (an indication that the voice is not straightforwardly a Schopenhauerian one), the voice of a disciple of a still "unknown god"<sup>7</sup> concealed under the hood of the scholar, the dialectical ill humor of the German, and the bad manners of the Wagnerian. At work in it is a "spirit of memory," one that is bursting forth with questions, experiences, concealed things, and question marks. It is a work which "stammers" its attempt to comprehend the Greeks through the question "What is Dionysian?" Tragedy, for Nietzsche, concerns affirmation and not resignation; it inspires an affirmation of the pains of growth rather than simply reproducing the sufferings of individuation. As he puts it in his self-criticism of 1886, and as a question designed to challenge psychiatry, are there such things as healthy neuroses? Nietzsche continued to remain attached to the Dionysian as a fundamental philosophy of life and he returns to it in the texts of his late period, such as *Beyond Good and Evil* (especially 295) and *Twilight of the Idols*. The Dionysian mysteries symbolize for Nietzsche the primacy of a life-drive, one that he will link with his own doctrines such as the eternal recurrence. In "What I Owe the Ancients" in *TI* he presents the Dionysian as a "faith" in which "the most profound instinct of life," namely, the instinct for its future and eternity, is felt in a religious manner. In the Dionysian mysteries and in the psychological state of the Dionysian the Hellene secures for himself "the eternal return of life" in which the future is consecrated in the past and there is a triumphant "yea-saying" to life over and above death and change. The essays by Laurence Lampert and Christoph Cox focus, albeit in different ways, on the role the figure of Dionysus and the Dionysian play in Nietzsche's philosophy (see chapters 8 and 27).

## The Middle Period

1878 proved to be a decisive year in Nietzsche's life with the publication of the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*, a work that is remarkably different in tone and outlook from his previous published writings. With it Nietzsche announces his intellectual independence and his break from both Schopenhauer and Wagner. Wagner was repulsed by Nietzsche's new philosophical outlook and offended by the book's dedication to Voltaire, a figure he reviled for his anti-Christian outlook and whom his wife Cosima held to be a "demon of perversity." In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche

had attacked theoretical optimism and the Socratic faith in knowledge, as well as all forms of realism and naturalism in art (where the emphasis is on environmental and biological determinism and on the exclusion of any dimension beyond the factual and the material). Now, he was inviting his readers to value “little, unpretentious truths,” to celebrate the science of physics for its “modest” and “insignificant” explanations, and to lose faith in all inspiration and in any knowledge acquired by miraculous means.

In early 1879 deteriorating health forced Nietzsche to resign from his position at Basel University, which granted him an annual pension. In the course of the next ten years Nietzsche became a veritable European traveler and tourist with periods of residence in Venice, Genoa, St. Moritz and Sils-Maria, Rome, Sorrento, and Nice (where he was to witness an earthquake in 1887).

Nietzsche often likes to present himself as a “good European” unrestricted by established territories, be they geographical or spiritual, and who looks “beyond all merely locally, merely nationally conditioned perspectives” (EH, “Why I Am So Wise,” 3). He writes as “the last *anti-political* German” and as a trans-national philosopher who wishes to see a “great politics” come into existence that will triumph over the prevailing small or petty politics of the time, which is a politics centered on race, nation, and state. In her contribution, “Nietzsche and National Identity” (chapter 25), Diane Morgan takes this aspect of Nietzsche’s thought seriously, but also seeks to redefine the terms in which questions of nationalism and the trans-national are posed, both with regard to Nietzsche’s own position on this issue and with regard to contemporary positionings. To date insufficient attention has been paid in the literature to the fertile character of Nietzsche’s invocation of a new earth and new peoples to come (see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*). Gary Shapiro (chapter 26) proposes we read Nietzsche as a “geophilosopher” who maps the possibilities of human thought in terms of territories and spaces, and argues that for Nietzsche the earth is a “text” that we must learn to “read.”

Nietzsche’s intellectual output in the ten-year period 1878–88 was prolific and his life was ruled by writing. In the summer of 1881 he made his first trip to Sils-Maria in the Upper Engadine, which was to become his regular summer residence. It is at this time that he has the experience and inspiration of eternal recurrence, “6,000 feet beyond man and time,” as he was later to express it in *Ecce Homo*. In a letter to Peter Gast from this time Nietzsche speaks of leading an extremely perilous life (intellectually speaking) and of being “one of those machines that can explode.” The intensity of his feelings, he confided, made him shudder and laugh, weeping not sentimental tears but tears of joy. Nietzsche would now oscillate between states of euphoria and depression.

It was in the summer of 1881 that Nietzsche also discovered a precursor in Spinoza, to whom he was brought, he said, through the guidance of instinct. The affinity he felt with Spinoza, as he perceived it, was one of a shared set of doctrines (he mentions the denial of free will, of purposes, of a moral world order, and of evil), and the fundamental tendency to make knowledge the most powerful passion.

*Daybreak* was published in July 1881 and *The Gay Science* followed in 1882. It is in these texts that Nietzsche practices his “cheerful” and transfigurative “philosophy of the morning” and conceives of life experimentally as a means to knowledge. It is in

a famous section of the latter work that he has a madman declare that “God is dead. And we have killed him” (section 125). In one section of the book Nietzsche suggests replacing churches with botanical gardens in our busy towns and cities as places of reflection where the godless can go to give expression to the sublimity of their thoughts and see themselves translated into stones and plants (GS 280). In 1882 he met Lou Andreas-Salomé and proposed to her, unsuccessfully, twice. In the early part of 1883 he began work on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and was affected by the death of Wagner. Nietzsche would hold alternating views on *Zarathustra*, having serious doubts about it yet regarding it as an epochal work. During all this time Nietzsche’s relationship with his sister had been extremely tense and in 1884 he spoke of her anti-Semitism as the cause of a “radical break.”

The central teaching of Nietzsche’s from his middle period is that of the eternal recurrence (or return) of the same. It is a teaching that has perplexed generations of commentators and readers. It has been extensively treated in the literature in terms of its cosmological, existential, and quasi-ethical aspects. For new insights into the cosmology of eternal recurrence see the essay by Robin Small (chapter 11). Commentators do not agree over the precise significance of the thought or on what role it is playing in his thinking. For some it has tremendous transformational effects; for others, it is simply a means to reveal the type of being that one is and has no such effects (our response to the thought, it is claimed on this reading, is predetermined). In its first published formulation in GS 341 the thought is designed to provide nothing other and nothing less than a shock to our thinking about existence. In this well-known and widely studied aphorism the three principal aspects of the thought appear to be in evidence: the disclosure by the demon of our cosmological eternal recurrence, which we can greet with indifference; the quasi-ethical and practical import of the doctrine, “Do you want to do this again and again?” which is an invitation to become the creator, judge, and avenger of one’s own law, and which we cannot be indifferent towards if our desire is to become the one that we are (see GS 335); and the existential test of affirmation, which necessitates becoming well-disposed towards ourselves and life so as to want nothing more fervently than the ultimate eternal confirmation and seal afforded by eternal recurrence. The essay by Paul S. Loeb provides a set of new insights into eternal recurrence and the well-known aphorism 341 of *The Gay Science* (see chapter 10). In his later writings Nietzsche construes eternal return working primarily in terms of a principle of selection. As a new means of cultural discipline and breeding it serves to contest the law of gregariousness that he holds has dominated evolution (natural selection) and history (the will to power of the weakest) to date. The very first sketch Nietzsche wrote of what he called his “thought of thoughts” was for a book in five parts on the return of the same. Ansell Pearson provides a partial translation of this first sketch in his contribution (chapter 13). The teaching addresses us moderns in our singularity: although our piece of human history will eternally repeat itself it is necessary to ignore this insight so as to focus on what is our singular task, namely, to “outweigh” the whole past of previous humanity. Nietzsche states that for us to be equal to this task “indifference” needs to have worked its way deep inside us, and even the misery of a future humanity cannot concern us. The question for we moderns who are experimenting with truth and knowledge is whether “we still want to live: and how!”



In his contribution John Richardson (chapter 12) also offers fresh insights into eternal recurrence based on a careful working through of Nietzsche's thinking on time and becoming, which is widely recognized to be one of the most important but also one of the most perplexing aspects of his philosophy – perplexing simply because Nietzsche appears to hold contradictory, or at the very least inconsistent, positions and it is extremely difficult to develop a coherent sense of his thinking on this core topic. Richardson attempts to do just this.

Although science is crucially important to Nietzsche's project it is not a question for him of philosophical thinking and questioning being completely subsumed within its ambit. In his early writings we find Nietzsche arguing that although science can probe the processes of nature it can never "command" human beings: "science knows nothing of taste, love, pleasure, displeasure, exaltation, or exhaustion. Man must in some way *interpret*, and thereby evaluate, what he lives through and experiences."<sup>8</sup> The mature Nietzsche comes to the view that science must now inform what constitutes the matter of interpretation and evaluation. However, the disciplines of interpretation and evaluation also require an education in a superior empiricism that knows how to discriminate between noble and base ways of thinking and is able to determine the question of value. Nietzsche writes: "*All sciences must, from now on, prepare the way for the future work of the philosopher: this work being understood to mean that the philosopher has to solve the *problem of values* and that he has to decide on the *hierarchy of values*" (GM I. 17 "Note"). A core issue in Nietzsche interpretation concerns just how the placement or positioning of questions of value is to be understood, and a concern with this issue informs many of the contributions to this volume. This topic informs, in part, Richard Schacht's contribution (chapter 7) and is at the center of the probing inquiry to be found in the essay by Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, which aims to secure some precise insight into the relation between the "will to truth" and the "will to value" (chapter 9; see also Came, chapter 3, Janaway, chapter 18 and Higgins, chapter 22).*

Nietzsche has, in fact, his own specific and novel conception of science, what he calls the "gay" science. As Babette E. Babich seeks to demonstrate in her contribution (chapter 6), it is vitally important that we develop an adequate understanding of the sense that science has for Nietzsche and how he seeks to put it to work. The German word Nietzsche uses, *Wissenschaft*, has a quite specific set of meanings and is a much richer term than the English word. The gay science is intended by Nietzsche to mark a new stage in the history of our becoming-human, in which humankind has become mature enough to ask of the world and of itself the most challenging and demanding questions. It seeks to show us that the intellect does not have to be a "clumsy, gloomy, creaking machine" (GS 327). The specific "gravity" of this new gay science stems from that fact that there now takes place a return of the fundamental questions, but staged and encountered in new-found conditions and circumstances: How do we now live? And what do we love? In his notebooks of the 1880s the two projects of "the gay science" and thinking "beyond good and evil" become entwined and subsumed within the more general and wider project of preparing the ground for a "philosophy of the future." In a deep sense, Nietzsche is appealing to something that can be called *overhuman*. Typically, we conceive of the overhuman in fantastical terms. However, an adequate understanding of its "fantastical" character requires an appreciation of

the various tasks that Nietzsche associates with the coming into being of a new and superior mode of existence that will put the measure of the human to the test. This is the concern of the essay by Ansell Pearson (chapter 13; see also Shapiro, chapter 26).

In his writings Nietzsche seeks to combat what he saw as the timid reduction of philosophy to the “theory of knowledge” (BGE 204). He draws attention to what he regards as the debasement of the concept of philosophy at the hands of certain “Engländer” – he names Hobbes, Hume, Locke, Carlyle, Darwin, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer (BGE 252–3). He speaks of philosophy as entailing “spiritual perception” or vision of “real depth” (BGE 252), and argues that true and genuine philosophers are “commanders and lawgivers” (BGE 211). Moreover, the philosopher is “*necessarily* a man of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow” who exists in conflict with his “today” and must, therefore, assume the guise of an untimely figure (BGE 212). Furthermore, science has its own prejudice, on which Nietzsche comments in GS 373. Here he takes to task what he calls the “faith” of “materialistic natural scientists,” which rests on the supposition that the world can find an equivalence and measure in human thought and valuations, such as a “‘world of truth’.”

Nietzsche mainly has in mind here a mechanistic interpretation of the world, one that “permits counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching,” and he argues that such an interpretation amounts to “a crudity and naïveté” and might be “one of the *most stupid* of all possible interpretations of the world” as it would be “one of the poorest in meaning”: “an essentially mechanical world would be an essentially *meaningless* [*sinnlose*] world.” Nietzsche has to be read carefully when he makes this criticism. There are places in his writings where he recognizes the achievement of scientific mechanism; it wins an important victory over the teleological view of the world that would see final or ultimate purposes everywhere. The new science becomes stupid, however, when it seeks to take over and dominate all questions that can be asked of existence. He is keen to protect what he calls the “*rich ambiguity*” of existence, and calls attention to “ambiguity” as a “dictate of good taste [ . . . ] the taste of reverence for everything that lies beyond your horizon.”

This aphorism (GS 373) occupies the attention of two explorations in this volume, the essays by Clark and Dudrick and by Cox (see chapters 9 and 27). Cox places its insights and claims in the service of a novel appreciation of the ontology of music, whilst Clark and Dudrick examine the aphorism in the context of its surrounding aphorisms in effort to develop a full appreciation of the complex nature of Nietzsche’s empiricism. *Sinn* is an important word in Nietzsche’s vocabulary and its philosophical richness has not been fully appreciated in the English-speaking reception of his work. In addition to the essays by Cox and by Clark and Dudrick, those by Volker Gerhardt and Shapiro aim to enrich our appreciation of its significance in Nietzsche’s thinking (see chapters 15 and 26).

When we consider the relation between art and science in Nietzsche we also need to take stock of the account of his thinking found in the 1886 self-criticism he prepared for the new edition of *BT*. There Nietzsche speaks of his attempt to grapple with a *new* problem, a “problem with horns,” namely “the *problem of science* itself,” science grasped as something “problematic” and “questionable” (*BT*, “Self-Criticism,” 2). Strikingly, Nietzsche insists that “the problem of science cannot be recognized on its own ground” and proposes, daringly, that the task is to view science “*through the optic of the artist*,

and art through the optic of life" ("Self-Criticism," 2; see Babich in chapter 6 below for further insight as well as Cox, chapter 27).

It is customary to divide Nietzsche's corpus into three distinct periods: an early first period of 1872–6 (*Birth of Tragedy* and the four *Untimely Meditations*), a second, middle, period of 1878–82 (the free spirit trilogy comprising *Human, All Too Human*, *Daybreak*, and *Gay Science*) and 1883–5 (*Zarathustra*), and a late, final period of 1886–8 (*Beyond Good and Evil* and onwards). Many of the ideas that appear in *Human, All Too Human* had been germinating in Nietzsche's mind since 1875/6. Where the first edition of *Birth of Tragedy* was dedicated to Wagner and brought out by Wagner's publisher, taking up the Romantic cause against modern Enlightenment and opposing indigenous German culture to superficial French civilization, the first edition of *HH*, published in 1878, is dedicated to Voltaire and takes up the cause of the Enlightenment against revolutionary romanticism.

However, it is mistaken to suppose that the move from *Birth of Tragedy* to *Human, All Too Human* amounts to a straightforward shift in his thinking, from a concern with art and metaphysics to a new privileging of science over both. Of the three texts from the so-called middle period, *Gay Science* represents Nietzsche's most mature philosophical position, in which art is praised for teaching us about the "good will to appearance" (GS 107). Art always has a wider significance for Nietzsche than is commonly accorded to it. In short, an understanding of art is necessary to a fuller appreciation of the nature and activity of knowing, and GS contains many important lessons in how we are to negotiate both the surfaces and the depths of things, the field of appearance and apparentness and the depths sought by scientific knowledge (see the essays by Babich, Acampora, and Cox, chapters 6, 17, and 27).

In the texts that make up this middle period we find Nietzsche seeking to emancipate himself as a thinker and coming to terms with what he regards as the end of metaphysics, an end which now calls into being a new practice of the love of knowledge. Nietzsche always had sympathies with ancient traditions of materialism and naturalism (Democritus and Empedocles, for example). At the same time, however, he recognized that the tradition of materialism concealed its own metaphysics (Democritus and his atoms, for example)<sup>9</sup> and that, in another sense, metaphysics cannot readily be given up since it constitutes an essential part of the treasure of human tradition and culture. In *HH* 251 he speaks of our health demanding that the two experiences of science and non-science should lie next to each other, self-contained and without confusion: "Illusions, biases, passions must give heat; with the help of scientific knowledge, the pernicious and dangerous consequences of overheating must be prevented" (see also *HH* 222, where he speaks of the scientific man as a further development of the artistic man). A "great culture," he argues, is one in which individuals have the flexibility to pursue knowledge in a rigorous manner while at the same time appreciating the power and beauty of art, religion, and metaphysics (*HH* 278). A higher culture will give the human being a "double brain, two brain chambers [ . . . ], one to experience science, and one to experience nonscience" (*HH* 251).

Nietzsche's position gives rise to tremendous tensions in his thinking, since it is clear that traditional metaphysics cannot survive the interrogation afforded by the new methods of knowledge and inquiry. The way in which we think about knowledge

(epistemology) and being (ontology), as well as our entire understanding of moral concepts and sensations, must undergo a radical transformation.

There are other tensions in Nietzsche's thinking, which run throughout the texts of his middle and late periods, and which center on the role he accords to reason and consciousness in the economy of life, including human life. The essays to be found in part IV, "Philosophy of Mind," illuminate core aspects of Nietzsche's thinking on questions of reason, phenomenal consciousness, and the nature of the subject. Volker Gerhardt (chapter 15) focuses on a well-known and oft-cited formula to be found in a discourse in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where Nietzsche has Zarathustra speak of "the great reason" of the body. Gerhardt aims to show that this reduction of reason to the body is a highly complicated move on Nietzsche's part and cannot be read simply as an instance of his alleged irrationalism. Peter Poellner, who has done seminal work on Nietzsche's relation to phenomenology, seeks to illuminate Nietzsche's thinking on phenomenal consciousness (chapter 16). He shows that, in spite of the widespread depiction of Nietzsche as an irrationalist wedded to a form of psychologism, there are core elements in his thinking on consciousness that anticipate the phenomenological turn in philosophy. Poellner seeks to show just how we can get right the relation between the phenomenological, the scientific, and the metaphysical in Nietzsche's thinking, and our own too. Christa Davis Acampora situates Nietzsche's thinking in relation to the concerns of psychology and the philosophy of mind and seeks to show the complicated character of his naturalism, claiming that it cannot be equated with a scientism (chapter 17; see also Janaway, chapter 18). Acampora's focus is on gaining an adequate comprehension of the "subject" of Nietzsche's moral psychology and in a double sense: just what informs and constitutes Nietzsche's moral psychology? What is the nature of the moral subject presupposed by it?

With *Human, All Too Human* begins Nietzsche's commitment to an examination of the origins of morality, which was now to become a feature of all his work and constitutes one of its most essential tasks. In this text the focus is largely on the origin of moral sensations and on demonstrating the illusory and mythical character of the belief that individuals are free willing centers and originators of actions. Nietzsche endorses as a tenet possessing both frightful and fruitful consequences the insight of his friend Paul Rée that the moral human being is situated no nearer to the metaphysical or intelligible world than the physical man. Nietzsche states that this is an insight that needs to grow hard and sharp with the "hammerblow of historical knowledge" (HH 37).

Several essays in this volume illuminate both core and novel aspects of Nietzsche's thinking about ethics and morality, notably the essays by Paul van Tongeren, Kathleen Marie Higgins, and Robert C. Solomon (chapters 21, 22, and 23). The essays by the contributors in part V, "Philosophy and Genealogy" (Robert Guay and Robert B. Pippin, chapters 19 and 20), as well as the essay on Nietzsche and freedom by Herman Siemens which presents important new research (chapter 24), should also be consulted. Christopher Janaway's essay (chapter 18) seeks to illuminate both the specific character of Nietzsche's naturalism and the fundamental differences in the approaches Rée and Nietzsche adopt to questions concerning the origins of morality and moral feelings.

It is also in *Human, All Too Human* that Nietzsche calls for a mode of "historical philosophizing" as a way of eliminating problems of metaphysics (including the

thing-in-itself). In section 9 he allows for the fact that there could be a “metaphysical world,” but because we cannot chop off our own head all we can ever say of it is that it has a “differentness” that is inaccessible to us. He suggests that the question how our image of the world might be different to the “disclosed essence of the world” is a matter best left to physiology, and what he calls “the ontogeny [*Entwicklungsgeschichte*] of organisms and concepts,” to solve (*HH* 10, 16). Nietzsche reflects on how an “ontogeny of thought” will come to show us that what today we call the world is the result of numerous errors and fantasies and part of the development of organic life. This collection of errors and fantasies also constitutes the treasure of a tradition (the “value” of humanity depends upon it), thus giving rise to a necessary conflict between, on the one hand, our reliance on error and our need for fantasy, and on the other the development of science and of scientific truth. Humankind has inherited so many intellectual errors; the challenge facing it now is whether it can be equal to the task of incorporating truth (on this experiment see Ansell Pearson, chapter 13).

The position Nietzsche adopts on philosophical questions and topics in the opening of *Human, All Too Human* finds an echo in the first section of *Beyond Good and Evil* entitled “On the Prejudices of Philosophers.” In the opening section of *HH* he focuses on the question of how something can originate in its opposite, and sets up a contrast between “metaphysical philosophy” and “historical philosophy.” The former answers the question by appealing to a miraculous source to explain the origin of something held to be of a higher value. The latter, by contrast, which Nietzsche insists can no longer be separated from the natural sciences and which he names as the youngest of all philosophical methods, seeks to show that there are no opposites but that all things arise from and are implicated in a process of sublimation, hence his call for a “chemistry of concepts and sensations.” This historical mode of philosophizing gives rise to a number of provocative ideas that have proved seminal in modern thought: that there are no “unalterable facts of mankind,” that everything that exists is subject to “becoming,” that our faculty of cognition, far from being the transcendental source or originator of our knowledge of the world (the reference is to Kant), has itself become, and that a society’s order of rank concerning what it holds to be good and evil actions is constantly changing (*HH* 2, 107). We do not require certainties with regard to the “first and last things” in order to live a “full and excellent human life” (*WS* 16).

Nietzsche is proposing that a fundamental rupture be effected with regard to customary habits of thinking. Concerning the first and last or ultimate things – What is the purpose of man? What is his fate after death? How can man be reconciled with God? – it should not be felt necessary to develop knowledge against faith; rather, we should practice an *indifference* towards faith and supposed knowledge in the domains of metaphysics, morality, and religion. One of the reasons why Nietzsche takes issue with “philosophical dogmatists” of all persuasions – be they idealists or materialists or realists, he says – is that they seek to force us into taking decisions “in domains where neither faith nor knowledge is needed” (*WS* 16). The “greatest lovers of knowledge” will thus practice knowledge in a different way and remain steadfastly and gaily indifferent to the first and last things. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche teaches the responsibilities of the “dangerous Perhaps” and argues that it is necessary now to wait “for a new category of philosophers” to arrive (*BGE* 2). These “coming” philosophers will be ones who do not accept at face value the belief of the “metaphysicians” in the

“opposition of values.” The taste and inclination of these philosophers will be very different from that which has hitherto guided philosophical inquiry.

Most commentators writing on Nietzsche today, be they of an analytical or a continental persuasion, agree in positioning him as a philosophical naturalist. Nietzsche’s naturalism is evident in the frequent recourse he has to physiology, to psychology, and to the insights of evolutionary theory, as well as in the way he takes to task our habits of thinking for being mythological, including our reliance on imaginary causes and fictions (such as the “cloddish simplicity” of the idea of free will, *BGE* 21) and the anthropomorphic manner in which we conceive existence in terms of intentions and final purposes. However, while Nietzsche’s naturalistic proclivities and commitments have been well established in the literature, the precise character of his naturalism is not so well understood. In the case of a heterodox thinker like Nietzsche it is important we don’t make his ideas and projects neatly fit into pre-established philosophical positions. If we respect, and pay attention to, the intricate and subtle character of his thinking we will be more receptive to the challenges it aims to present to our evolved and conventional modes of thought. On how Nietzsche’s naturalism can best be configured see in particular the essays by Clark and Dudrick, Acampora, Janaway, Higgins, and Solomon (chapters 9, 17, 18, 22, 23).

## The Final Period and Late Writings

In 1888 Nietzsche spent what turned out to be his last summer in Sils-Maria. Earlier in the year he had written to his friend Franz Overbeck that the world should expect no more “beautiful things” from him, just as one should not expect a suffering and starving animal to attack its prey with grace. He confessed to being devoid of a “refreshing and healing human love” and spoke of his “absurd isolation,” which made the residues of a connection with people only something that wounded him. He was becoming fully aware that the philosopher who embarks on a relentless struggle against everything that human beings have hitherto revered will be met with a hostile public reception, one that will condemn him to an icy isolation with his books being judged by the language of pathology and psychiatry.

Nietzsche stayed in the city of Turin in April and May of this year. He returned in September and stayed there up to the point of his mental collapse in January 1889. In it he found not a modern metropolis but, he wrote, a “princely residence of the seventeenth century” and an “aristocratic calm” with no “petty suburbs” and a unity of commanding taste. He especially liked the beautiful cafés, the lovely sidewalks, the organization of trams and buses, and the fact that the streets were clean. *The Case of Wagner* was published, and though it received some vitriolic reviews it was also welcomed enthusiastically by August Strindberg. While in Turin in May Nietzsche came across a French translation (carried out in India) of Manu’s book of laws, which he thought supplemented his views on religion in a “most remarkable way.” In a letter to Carl Fuchs written in Sils in July, Nietzsche says that it is neither necessary nor desirable to argue in his favor, and suggests instead that a more intelligent attitude towards him would be to adopt the pose one would in the presence of a foreign and alien plant, namely, one of curiosity and ironic resistance.

Nietzsche began work on *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* on his birthday, October 15. The text was designed as a way of testing the risks that could be taken with “German ideas of freedom of speech,” Nietzsche said in a letter to Gast, in which he would talk about himself and his writings with “all possible psychological cunning and gay detachment.” The last thing he wanted, he confided, was to be treated as some kind of prophet, and he hoped the book would prevent readers from confusing him with what he was not. In it Nietzsche expresses his preference for French over German culture, including a number of contemporary French writers and novelists that he regards as all “delicate psychologists” (they include Paul Bourget, Anatole France, and Guy de Maupassant, to whom Nietzsche says he feels especially attached). Stendhal, he confides, represents one of the “fairest accidents” of his life. Nietzsche says he prefers this generation of writers over their teachers, such as Hippolyte Taine, whom he regards as having been ruined by German philosophy (*EH*, “Why I Am So Clever,” 3).

In December *Ecce Homo* was sent to the publishers and Nietzsche was observed chanting and dancing naked in his room by his landlady. On the morning of January 3, 1889, as Nietzsche was taking a stroll through Piazza Carlo Alberto in Turin, he witnessed a carriage driver beating a horse. He threw his arms around the horse's neck and then collapsed to the ground, losing consciousness. In the course of the next few days he composed a series of dramatic and disturbing letters. He wrote to Gast announcing that the world had become transfigured. To Georg Brandes, his champion in Copenhagen, he wrote that now he had discovered him the great difficulty was how to lose him. To Cosima Wagner he wrote, famously, “Ariadne, I love you”; to Overbeck that he was having all anti-Semites shot; and to Jacob Burckhardt that he was all the names in history. Burckhardt showed the letter he had received to Overbeck, who then traveled to Turin and brought Nietzsche back to Basel. The diagnosis was “progressive paralysis.” Nietzsche spent a year in a psychiatric clinic in Jena; in 1890 his mother took him to Naumburg, and, upon her death in 1897, his sister Elisabeth brought Nietzsche to the Villa Silberblick in Weimar and inaugurated the Nietzsche cult. Nietzsche died on August 25, 1900.

One of the greatest ironies of Nietzsche's fate is that his mental collapse should have been followed by the rapid establishment of the “Nietzsche legend” and the “Nietzsche industry.” As far as Nietzsche himself was concerned, though, and to speak with Hamlet's last words (one of his favorite quotations), “the rest is silence.” What followed the end of his intellectual career was over a decade of mental and physical degeneration before his eventual death at the dawn of a new century that would finally begin to embark on the task of understanding itself with the aid of his work.

Two main features about Nietzsche's late writings can be noted. The first is that they are written as a philosophy of the future and seek to herald this philosophy as an event. The second is that, in contrast to what he saw as the “yes-saying” part of his task carried out in his previous writings from 1878 onwards, they form part of what Nietzsche called the “no-saying” part, such as demanding a revaluation of values and heralding a great day of decision. From this point on, he says, all his writings are fish-hooks and are looking for fish; in other words, they are attempts to seduce (*amor* comes from *amus*, the Latin word for hook).

What turned out to be the final period of Nietzsche's intellectual output dates from 1886 with the publication of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which bears the subtitle “Prelude

to a Philosophy of the Future.”<sup>10</sup> It is around this time that he began writing a major work that was to consist of four books and to which he gave the working title “Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values.” Nietzsche was never to bring this planned *magnum opus* to fruition, but something of its nature can be found in the texts *Twilight of the Idols* (published in 1889) and *The Anti-Christian* (published in 1895 and regarded by Nietzsche as the first book of the transvaluation of all values). It is also in this year that he composed a set of new prefaces to his back catalog of published texts, and many scholars regard these prefaces as among the finest pieces of philosophical self-reflection Nietzsche ever wrote. In 1887 a new edition of *The Gay Science* was published with an added fifth book which began with a discourse entitled “The Meaning of Our Cheerfulness” and in which Nietzsche elaborated upon the significance of the death of God as a “monstrous event” that heralded a new dawn in which all the daring of the lover of knowledge could once again be permitted. He also read Dostoevsky, composed extensive notes on “European nihilism,” and published *On the Genealogy of Morality* with its three striking inquiries into the spirit of *ressentiment*, the origins of the bad conscience, and the meaning of the ascetic ideal. In a letter written in December of 1887 to the Danish critic Brandes, the first person ever to lecture on his work, Nietzsche responded favorably to his description of his thinking as an “aristocratic radicalism.” However, he regarded it as something of a comic fact that he was beginning to have a subterranean influence among a diverse array of radical parties and circles.

*Beyond Good and Evil* is said by Nietzsche to be “in all essentials” a critique of modernity that includes within its range of attack modern science, modern art, and modern politics. Where the vision of *Zarathustra* was that of distant things, the vision of *BGE* is focused sharply on the modern age, on “what is around us.” However, Nietzsche holds the two projects and tasks to be intimately related: “In every aspect of the book,” he writes in *Ecce Homo*, “above all in its form, one will discover the same *intentional* [*willkürliche*] turning away from the instincts out of which a *Zarathustra* becomes possible.” In a letter to his former Basel colleague Jacob Burckhardt dated September 22, 1886, Nietzsche stresses that *Beyond Good and Evil* says the same things as *Zarathustra* “only in a way that is different – very different.” In this letter he draws attention to the book’s chief preoccupations and mentions the “mysterious conditions of any growth in culture,” the “extremely dubious relation between what is called the ‘improvement’ of man (or even ‘humanization’) and the enlargement of the human type,” and, “above all the contradiction between every moral concept and every scientific concept of *life*.”<sup>11</sup> For two accounts of aspects of *BGE* see the essays by Lampert and by Clark and Dudrick (chapters 8 and 9).

Nietzsche intended *Genealogy of Morality* as a “supplement” to and “clarification” of his previous book, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Although in recent years it has come to be prized as his most important and systematic work, Nietzsche himself conceived it as a “small polemical pamphlet,” one that might help him sell more copies of his earlier writings.<sup>12</sup> It clearly merits, though, the level of attention it receives from commentators and can justifiably be regarded as one of the key texts of European intellectual modernity. It is a disturbing book, and Nietzsche himself was well aware of the book’s character. In *Ecce Homo* he discloses that an “art of surprise” guides each of the three



essays that make up the book and admits that they merit being taken as among the “uncanniest” things ever scripted. He then stresses that his god, Dionysus, is also “the god of darkness” (*EH*, “GM”).

The preface to the book is crucial for understanding Nietzsche’s unique conception of the philosophical project. It begins with the enigmatic statement that we knowers, as we moderns like to think of ourselves, are unknown to ourselves. The preface also makes clear that Nietzsche conceived his project not simply as a contribution to late nineteenth-century naturalism. Nothing less than a “new twist and possible outcome” in the “Dionysian drama on the fate of the ‘soul’” (*GM*, preface, 7) is what is to be meditated upon and chewed over in our exegetical reading of this book.

Nietzsche focuses his critique of morality on an issue he claims previous psychologists have not properly touched upon in constructing their genealogies, namely, morality’s *value* (he singles out for special consideration the question “value for what?”). Rather, they have articulated merely “an erudite form of true *belief* in the prevailing morality,” and, as a result, their inquiries remain “a part of the state of affairs within a particular morality” (*BGE* 186), such as the estimation accorded to unegoistic instincts and the utilitarian principle of the happiness of the greatest number. In opposition to the assumption there is a single morality valid for all he maintains that “there is a *hierarchy* between human and human, and therefore between morality and morality as well” (*BGE* 228). Morality is to be held as the “danger of dangers” because it contributes to a situation in which the present is lived at the expense of the future; if the value of values is taken as given and as factual, “beyond all questioning,” this will prevent the human species from attaining its “*highest potential power and splendour . . .*” (*GM*, preface, 6). For Nietzsche the human animal is one that “has not yet been established” (*BGE* 62), and he desires a new cultivation of it.

In the entry on *Genealogy of Morality* in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche tells us that each of the three essays that make up the book contains a beginning that is calculated to mislead, which intentionally “keeps in suspense,” while at the conclusion of each essay “a *new truth*” becomes “visible between thick clouds.” Each essay begins coolly and scientifically but at the end of each a reckoning is called for, and this demand concerns the future. Several essays in this volume illuminate core aspects of the book, for example, those by Schacht, Acampora, Janaway, Guay, and Pippin (chapters 7, 17, 18, 19, 20). The essay by Higgins (chapter 22) examines some personal aspects of the Nietzschean revaluation of values. Nietzsche is well known for his diagnosis of nihilism to define the modern European condition and for proclaiming himself as the first complete or perfect nihilist. Andreas Urs Sommer (chapter 14) provides an extensive survey of the references to, and definitions of, nihilism to be found in Nietzsche’s corpus, and uncovers the influences and sources that informed Nietzsche’s working through of the nihilism problem.

Since the publication of his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in 1872, Nietzsche had published on average exactly one new book per year. 1888 saw a marked acceleration in output and he completed no fewer than six books. These are all shorter works and they vary greatly in philosophical scope, in form and in tone. *Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo* are both works of considerable ambition, providing relatively disparate but highly condensed overviews of Nietzsche’s preoccupations throughout his career

thus far; *The Case of Wagner* and *The Anti-Christian*, by contrast, are more narrowly focused polemics on specific themes, “through-composed” single arguments of the kind Nietzsche had not produced since the *Untimely Meditations* a decade and a half before. Two works, *Nietzsche contra Wagner* and the *Dionysus Dithyrambs*, are re-edited compilations of earlier material on which Nietzsche worked at the very end of this *annus mirabilis*, in December 1888 and the first days of January 1889, immediately before his definitive collapse into insanity.

With the benefit of hindsight it is easy to view Nietzsche’s works of 1888 as a glorious final flourishing before the descent into darkness, but it should be borne in mind that Nietzsche himself was far from imagining them as any kind of swan-song. On the contrary, he wrote the works of 1888 in high-spirited anticipation of the momentous impact he was shortly to have on the world by publishing a great summation of his philosophical ideas. This *magnum opus* was the project on which he had been working in the background since the time of *Zarathustra* in 1884, amassing a great many preparatory notes towards what he generally referred to as *The Will to Power*. The story of the works of 1888 is intimately bound up with the gradual abandonment of that project – in the course of the year it was retitled and reconceived as *Revaluation of All Values* before being definitively shelved shortly before Nietzsche’s mental collapse – but its prospect haunted him till the end. As he was writing the works of 1888, then, Nietzsche considered them products of an interim period, situated between the “philosophy of the future” pronounced by Zarathustra and its fulfillment in the great work to come.<sup>13</sup>

In a letter of September 14, 1888 to his friend Paul Deussen, for example, Nietzsche describes *The Case of Wagner* and *Twilight of the Idols* as “only recuperations in the midst of an immeasurably difficult and decisive task which, *when it is understood*, will split humanity into two halves.”<sup>14</sup> Similarly, he begins the foreword to *Ecce Homo* with a justification for writing his autobiography on the grounds that “I must shortly approach mankind with the heaviest demand that has ever been made on it.” Janus-faced, though, Nietzsche looked backwards as well: in preparation for the earth-shatteringly affirmative philosophy to come, he was concerned to settle his accounts and draw a line under as many as possible of his philosophical antagonisms, bringing to a conclusion the period of negativity inaugurated by *Beyond Good and Evil*. Not surprisingly, then, the majority of these 1888 works are (like *On the Genealogy of Morality*) polemics, and parodic in intent, less concerned with introducing new themes than with reaching definitive formulations of earlier positions in order to rebuff the staunchest of his philosophical opponents – most notably Wagner, his compatriots the Germans in general, and Christianity.

At an early stage in the composition of *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche decided to hold back the majority of his material on Christianity to form the nucleus of a separate text (*The Anti-Christian*), so that “Morality as Anti-Nature” in *TI* is left as the main attack on Christian morality in this text. Following on from the Third Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Christian morality is here condemned as decadent, anti-instinctual, anti-natural, “inimical to life,” even if “we immoralists and anti-Christians” still deem it necessary to uphold it as an enemy (and, to that extent, respect it). In the section of *TI* entitled “The Four Great Errors” Nietzsche argues that we suffer from a “causal drive” which impels us to explain actions in terms of erroneous “inner facts” such as

“will,” “mind,” and “subject” which are but illusions populating our fabricated “inner world.” Morality and religion thus belong entirely within “the *psychology of error*.” Developing the argument of the Second Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche argues that the mythological idea of “free will” derives from Christian theology’s desire to make people responsible for their actions and thus foster guilt, which in turn derives from the (“slavish”) desire to blame and punish. Instead, he proposes as his own counter-explanation a kind of fatalism: “*No one* is the result of his own intention, his own will, his own purpose.” On Nietzsche’s fatalism see the essay by Robert C. Solomon (chapter 23). Morality is a semiotics (in the original, medical sense of the word), a surface phenomenon requiring meta-level interpretation in accordance with a different, superior set of extra-moral values “beyond good and evil.”

It is in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Genealogy of Morality* that we encounter the two most important presentations of the doctrine of the will to power in Nietzsche’s published writings (BGE 36 and GM II. 12). The teaching first appears in his work in the discourse on “Self-Overcoming” in *Zarathustra*, and hitherto in his work he had spoken only of “the feeling of power” (in *Daybreak* and in GS 13, for example). It is without doubt the doctrine which now generates the most dispute amongst commentators on Nietzsche’s work. Is he propounding with it a new ontology and cosmology of forces and, if so, is he entitled to do so? Some commentators argue that the will to power operates strictly on the level of an empirical psychology, especially human psychology, and are suspicious of treating the will to power as an ontology and cosmology of forces. Others have insisted that the will to power cannot be restricted to the merely empirical or psychological, arguing that it is indeed an ontology and defending Nietzsche’s entitlement to one. Commentators suspicious of treating the doctrine of will to power in terms of an ontology argue that there is little basis in Nietzsche for doing so. How coherent is it, for example, for Nietzsche to draw our attention to the anthropomorphic character of our designations of nature (see GS 109), and then go on to claim that the world in its essence and in all its aspects is will to power? How can we be sure that in this doctrine Nietzsche does not do what he criticizes the Stoics and other modes of thinking for doing, namely, imposing a subterfuge morality or ideal on nature (see BGE 9)? Is the will to power simply a projection of his own evaluative commitments? These are questions that any conscientious reader of Nietzsche must wrestle with, and they continue to exercise the attention of his commentators.

The majority of Nietzsche’s most extensive explorations of the world as will to power are to be found in his *Nachlass* material, selections of which are available in English translation in the volume *The Will to Power*. This is a highly unreliable text put together after Nietzsche’s death by his sister and her supporters.<sup>15</sup> Although Heidegger is often attacked for placing undue emphasis in his interpretation of Nietzsche on the notebooks, this ignores the fact that he was one of the first to cast suspicion on the volume that bears the title *The Will to Power*. He noted that the WP edition gives us a book falsely ascribed to Nietzsche and that it is little more than an arbitrary selection of the notes which predetermines our conception of Nietzsche’s philosophy during the period 1883–8.<sup>16</sup>

It might be proposed that the most prudent approach to adopt with respect to the doctrine of will to power is to pay careful and close attention to what Nietzsche says in his published texts about it, and then allow the notebooks from the 1880s to be used

only on the basis of connections one can plausibly make between them and the published texts. However, adopting such a transparently sensible approach as this is not without problems, especially when the complex character of Nietzsche's presentation of his philosophy is taken into account. In his 1971 study the eminent German scholar Wolfgang Müller-Lauter drew attention to those places where Nietzsche complicates the issue of how we are to receive his writings, including a note from 1887 in which he says that he does not write for readers but takes notes only for himself. It is on the basis of such disclosures, which can also be found in the published material, that Müller-Lauter defends Heidegger's contentious view that the "real philosophy" of Nietzsche is not to be found in the published texts, which are merely "foreground," but rather in what he leaves behind as his posthumous legacy.<sup>17</sup>

The main questions the student of Nietzsche needs to focus on in engaging with the teaching or doctrine (*Lehre*) of the will to power include: What is its precise status in his thinking? What philosophical work is it doing in his critical thinking? Can it fulfill all the operational and critical tasks Nietzsche assigns to it?

The essays in the final section of this volume will greatly aid the reader and student in gaining a critical purchase on the most salient issues surrounding Nietzsche's "theory" and doctrine of the will to power (see also the contributions by Miller and Nabais, chapters 4 and 5). Recent scholarship has drawn on the pioneering insights of Müller-Lauter, which succeeded in showing the extent to which Nietzsche's doctrine is also bound up with his readings in biology and evolutionary theory (in *BGE* 23 Nietzsche presents the will to power in terms of "morphology and evolutionary theory"). Gregory Moore has done important research on this aspect of Nietzsche's work, and his essay seeks to illuminate some core issues for the reader (chapter 28). In his essay (chapter 29) Daniel W. Conway focuses on a core doctrine of Nietzsche's but one that is also inadequately understood and in fact very hard to get the full measure of. This is Nietzsche's well-known claim that self-overcoming is the very "law of life" (*GM* III. 27), which is also significant for our understanding of the doctrine of the will to power. James Porter wrestles with the most important thorny philosophical issues surrounding Nietzsche's conscientious commitment to the doctrine (chapter 30). Finally, Henry Staten offers a critical engagement with Nietzsche's conception of life as will to power by drawing attention to the way in which his thinking, in his view, overlooks questions concerning *techné* and the social construction of our drives (chapter 31).

Nietzsche bequeaths to us moderns – defined curiously and uncannily as knowers not known to themselves (*GM*, preface, 1) – a unique set of philosophical tasks and projects. Getting the measure of them, and understanding and engaging with the work that they are seeking to do, is the most fundamental task facing the reader of Nietzsche's texts. In the foreword to *The Anti-Christian* Nietzsche tells us what he wishes in the way of his future readers. They include: "new ears for new music," "new eyes for the most distant things," a "new conscience for truths that have hitherto remained dumb," the ability to keep one's energy and enthusiasm in bounds, "reverence for oneself," and "unconditional freedom with respect to oneself." Nietzsche wants his readers to wrestle with his doctrines and thought-experiments and subject them to various tests. He also wants his readers to think for themselves and come to know and appreciate what it means to think.

## Notes

- 1 Letter to Paul Deussen, Sils-Maria, September 14, 1888, in *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Christopher Middleton (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1996), pp. 310–11.
- 2 Eugen Fink, *Nietzsche's Philosophy*, trans. Goetz Richter (London and New York: Continuum Press, 2003), p. 91.
- 3 Some of the material of that follows is taken from the various introductions that feature in *The Nietzsche Reader* edited by myself and Duncan Large (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2006) and from my *How to Read Nietzsche* (London: Granta Books, 2005; New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).
- 4 See *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 47.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- 6 Further insight into Schopenhauer's metaphysics can be found in *The Nietzsche Reader*, ed. Ansell Pearson and Large.
- 7 The "unknown god" is from Acts of the Apostles 17: 23.
- 8 Nietzsche, "The Struggle Between Science and Wisdom" (1875), in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870s*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), p. 141.
- 9 See *TI*, "'Reason' in Philosophy," section 5. Nietzsche is attacking what he sees as a Parmenidean bias in Western metaphysics, which he locates in Democritus' teaching in which each atom embodies the properties of Being on a small scale (being unitary, indivisible, unchanging, etc.). See also *GS* 112 and *BGE* 12.
- 10 Nietzsche had been experimenting with the idea of a philosophy of the future as early as 1872 in his "Philosophers' Book," no doubt inspired by Wagner's conception of his art as "music of the future" (*Zukunftsmusik*), which in turn took its inspiration from Feuerbach's "principles of the philosophy of the future."
- 11 This letter can be found in Middleton's edition of the *Selected Letters*, p. 255.
- 12 Letter to Peter Gast, July 18, 1887, *ibid.*, p. 269.
- 13 In *TI* Nietzsche writes: "I have given humanity the most profound book it possesses, my *Zarathustra*: I shall shortly give it the most independent one. –"
- 14 *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 311.
- 15 *The Will to Power* was compiled from Nietzsche's notebooks by a group of editors working under Elisabeth's controlling influence. A first edition composed of 483 aphorisms appeared in 1901 and a second edition of 1,067 aphorisms in 1906 (this is the volume we are familiar with in English translation).
- 16 M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 2: *The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), pp. 152–3. See also the remarks of Maurice Blanchot in his *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 137ff.
- 17 W. Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of his Philosophy*, trans. David J. Parent (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), pp. 125ff.