

# The Cultural Crisis of Modernity and its Remedy According to Nietzsche

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Boston College

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Department of Political Science

THE CULTURAL CRISIS OF MODERNITY AND ITS REMEDY ACCORDING TO  
NIETZSCHE

a dissertation

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Dissertation Adviser: Nasser Behnegar

### **The Cultural Crisis of Modernity and its Remedy According to Nietzsche**

This study traces Nietzsche's understanding of the meaning of culture through his first three *Untimely Observations*. Its goal is to show that culture [*Kultur*] occupies a central place in these essays because Nietzsche thinks that the cultivation [*Bildung*] of humanity within enclosed and humanly created spiritual horizons can prevent the spiritual degeneration of mankind in modern times. The source of this degeneration lies in modern natural science and the scientific study of history. Taken together these two pillars of modern pedagogy erode human moral foundations and paralyze practical ambitions by teaching relativism in the form of what Nietzsche calls: "the doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types, and species, [and] of the lack of any cardinal difference between human and animal." Since Nietzsche explicitly affirms the theoretical "truth" of these doctrines despite holding them to be "deadly" for mankind, the study focuses primarily on the cultural solution he proposes to the practical problem that relativism poses to the flourishing of a great people. Although this solution is a complex one which Nietzsche went on to refine and develop in almost all of his subsequent writings, its core consists of the cultivation, emergence, and activity of a rare type of individual he calls the "genius," the "true human being," and the "redeeming human being" in the *Untimely Observations*, and who is dubbed a "Caesarian breeder and cultural dynamo [*Gewaltmenschen der Cultur*]" in *Beyond Good and Evil*. This exceptional individual creates self-inspired works of philosophy and art that raise insulating walls around the collective mind of his people, restraining their longing for

scientific and historical knowledge by satisfying or cultivating it [*Bildung*] with self-created metaphysical “truths” and “images [*Bild*]” of their past, future, and even of nature itself. When these truths and images are embraced by a people a spiritual horizon is established around them which they consider it bad taste to transcend, and inside this horizon lies a world of “creative morality [*schöpferischen Moral*]” and “metaphysical meaningfulness” that, under the best circumstances, cultivates healthy human life.

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## **Abbreviations**

### **The Untimely Observations**

DS	David Strauss the Confessor and the Writer
UH	The Use and Abuse of History For Life
SE	Schopenhauer as Educator
RWB	Richard Wagner in Bayreuth

### **Other Writings**

BGE	Beyond Good and Evil
BT	The Birth of Tragedy
D	Dawn
EH	Ecce Homo
EI	Lectures on the Future of our Educational Institutions
GS	The Gay Science
GM	Toward a Genealogy of Morals
HA I	Human, All Too Human (Volume I)
HA II	Human, All Too Human (Volume II)
TI	Twilight of the Idols
UPW	Unpublished Writings from the Period of the Untimely Observations
Z	Thus Spoke Zarathustra

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## Introduction

### Nietzsche contra Bismarck: *Kulturkampf*

*The Unification of Germany and the Aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War: 1870-1871*

On January 18, 1871 Otto von Bismarck stood in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles and lived the hour of his greatest achievement. A crowd of royal personages from all over Germany had gathered to celebrate the founding of a second German Reich that would unite the North German Federation with the South German Kingdoms under the Imperial Crown of Kaiser Wilhelm I. According to the diary of the Kaiser's son, the Emperor gave a short address to the assembly at the conclusion of which:

Count Bismarck came forward, looking in the grimmest of humors, and read out in an expressionless business-like way and without any trace of warmth or feeling for the occasion, the address 'to the German people.' [...] Then the Grand Duke of Baden came forward with unaffected, quiet dignity that is so peculiarly his and with uplifted hand cried in a loud voice: 'Long live His Imperial Majesty the Emperor William!' A thundering hurrah at least six times repeated shook the room, while the flags and standards waved over the head of the new Emperor of Germany and 'Heil Dir im Siegerkranz' rang out.<sup>1</sup>

Beneath the lavish ceilings of the Hall of Mirrors the era of the modern nation state had officially dawned. The social reforms enacted in Germany during Bismarck's twenty-eight year Chancellorship transformed the government he created into a prototype of the modern state and one which would shape the domestic agendas of the leading countries of the West into their present day forms. The Constitution of the German Empire (drafted by Bismarck himself) borrowed a bicameral legislature, universal male suffrage, and a vibrant party system from British and American models of governance, but Bismarck's most progressive legislative innovation was to combine these with the comprehensive social welfare package he pushed through Reichstag between 1883 and

1889, fifty years before the election of Franklin Roosevelt and almost 30 years before similar laws were passed in England. Bismarck's social security laws guaranteed working class Germans medical insurance, old age and disability pensions, accident insurance, and unemployment insurance.<sup>2</sup> With the passage of these laws Bismarck had succeeded in making the citizens of the new Reich more loyal to their government—and more dependent upon it for their worldly happiness—than any other people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the time he left office in 1890 the German state played an unprecedented role in the daily lives of its citizens and one that almost every modern state in the West would assume over course of the next century. No longer was the state a mere guardian against foreign oppression and domestic injustice, it was also a guarantor against the malevolence of chance, the vicissitudes of nature, and the cruel fact of human mortality. In these and similar ways, the modern state crafted by Otto von Bismarck during his almost thirty years in power resembled a provident God.

While Bismarck was working to lay the political foundations for the first true welfare state in the winter of 1871, the man who would go on to affect the moral development of the West as profoundly as Bismarck affected its political development lay in bed recovering from an illness he contracted as a volunteer medical orderly on the front lines of the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>3</sup> A year before the official founding of the Second Reich a twenty- six year old Friedrich Nietzsche took leave from his newly awarded professorship in Switzerland to come to the aid of his fatherland. Although he was born a Prussian citizen in Saxony in 1844, the Swiss university at which he taught had made his employment conditional upon the renunciation of his Prussian citizenship in hopes of preventing him from joining the Prussian army in the event of a war.<sup>4</sup> In the

summer of 1870, he spurned his commitment to the university and joined the Prussian army anyway, serving in a volunteer capacity at the Battle of Wörth and the Siege of Metz. Ironically, the man who would one day become one of the modern state's fiercest critics remained legally stateless for the rest of his life.<sup>5</sup> Although Nietzsche would declare in 1874 that "anyone who has the *furor philosophicus* will have no time whatsoever for the *furor politicus*," he qualified this statement by adding in the same breath that even a philosopher "will not hesitate for a single moment to take up his position if his fatherland is threatened by a real danger."<sup>6</sup> The question of why Nietzsche made this important qualification will be confronted again in the chapters that follow.

On January 28<sup>th</sup> 1871, ten days after the establishment of the Second Reich, the French government accepted the German terms of surrender and an official peace was signed the following month at Versailles. The Prussian victory at the battle of Sedan in September of 1870 had destroyed the Empire of Napoleon III and led to the capture of the Emperor himself, leaving the administrative arm of the French government in shambles. Though republican revolutionaries in Paris made a spirited attempt to continue the war after the disastrous events at Sedan, the French never fully recovered from the setbacks they incurred in their battle with German iron and blood.

The defeat of the French by the Germans had political reverberations all over Europe, and perhaps none were more immediately felt than the capture of Rome by the Kingdom of Italy on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1870. In August of that same year Napoleon III had recalled the French garrison he stationed in Rome in 1849 as a gesture to his Catholic supporters there. The war with Germany had taken a severe toll on the French troops, and reinforcements would be needed if the French hoped to maintain their ground against

an overwhelming German advance. Making matters worse was the fact that French diplomats had reason to believe that Bismarck was using the presence of French troops in Rome as a pretext to persuade Italy to ally with the Germans. Although the Italians ultimately chose to remain a neutral party in Bismarck's war, they decided to attack Papal forces in Rome after the French had withdrawn their garrison, resulting in the end of the reign of Pope Pius IX and the unification of the Italian peninsula under a single King.<sup>7</sup> No sooner had Pius IX ceded his temporal power, however, than he reaffirmed his supreme place in European politics by issuing one of the greatest extensions of papal spiritual power in the history of the Catholic Church. The Declaration of Infallibility became clerical law in July of 1870, and its chief function was to preserve the Papacy from the possibility of erring when declaring by definitive act certain teachings concerning faith and morals. Since roughly one third of the new Prussian Protestant Reich was made up of Catholics, a cultural clash (*Kulturkampf*) soon erupted between Bismarck and the Pope that would go a long way toward determining the course of German politics—and the thoughts of the young Friedrich Nietzsche—for decades to come.

#### *Kulturkampf: 1871-1872*

In the winter of 1871 the Catholic Centre Party of the Prussian lower house sent a message to the German Emperor asking for his support in restoring political power to the Pope in Rome. The Emperor responded by declaring in a speech from the throne that the German state would not intrude into Roman affairs, a sentiment that was swiftly reinforced by the rest of the Landtag.<sup>8</sup> Although Germany's decision not to defend the papacy was an ostensibly practical one, the fact that the moral teachings of the Catholic

Church posed a serious threat to the liberal ideals upon which the new state had been founded was undoubtedly a crucial factor. The Reich's commitments to free speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, separation of church and state, freedom of scientific inquiry, secular education, and civil divorce were all at odds with the Catholic vision of a moral life. A German vow to defend the Pope, then, would have amounted to a moral indictment of the modern state by the torchbearer of modern statism itself. On the other hand, by taking a position hostile to the Pope the Reich had effectively and publically questioned the very compatibility of Catholicism with liberalism. As Jonathan Steinburg has written in his lucid portrait of the period:

In any country with a substantial Catholic population, [there were questions about] what sort of schools, what sort of hospitals, what sort of poor relief, what marriage ceremony and divorce provisions, what charitable status for churches and convents, in short, the whole apparatus of daily life for the Catholic faithful became the subject of intense debate. The Roman Church and all its traditional pastoral and ecclesiastical activities challenged the growing power, competence, and intrusiveness of the modern state. The *Kulturkampf* represented the most serious challenge to Bismarck's authority during the rest of his career [...]"<sup>9</sup>

Since the anti-Catholic liberal intellectuals in the German Landtag formed a vital part of Bismarck's political coalition he decided to fire the first shot in the *Kulturkampf* by organizing a negative press campaign in June of 1871 that attacked the Catholic Centre party as unpatriotic, and that marked the official beginning of the seven year war between Germanism and Catholicism. In notebook entries from the same summer, Bismarck's *Kulturminister* Heinrich von Mühler wrote that Bismarck's privately stated goals for the *Kulturkampf* were: "[a] battle with the ultramontane party, in particular in the Polish territories West of Prussia, Posen, and Upper Silesia; separation of church and state, [and] separation of church and school completely; transfer of school inspection to lay inspectors [instead of clergy]; [and] removal of religious instruction from the schools, not only from gymnasia but also from the primary school."<sup>10</sup> According to von

Mühler Bismarck knew the Kaiser would oppose some of his intentions, “but if you don’t stir him up,” Bismarck said, “I shall lead [the Kaiser] nevertheless where I want.”<sup>11</sup>

By January of 1872 the *Kulturkampf* had become what Bismarck’s wars—whether political or otherwise—always became: a raw, personal, and seemingly unprincipled struggle for victory at all costs. Six months after the *Kulturkampf* began Heinrich von Mühler resigned as Bismarck’s *Kulturminister*, citing among his reasons the fact that Bismarck’s approach to the *Kulturkampf* could not be explained on the basis sound political principles, but only according to:

the entirely realistic—dare I say?—materialistic understanding which lies at the root of his entire political life. Bismarck despises all spiritual and moral levers in politics. Blood and iron—materialistic means of power—these are the factions with which he reckons. He would prefer to ban the church and religious ideas from public life and turn them into private matters. Separation of church and state, removal of the church from the school system and the school from religious instruction, these are very familiar views of his, as are the many steps he has taken and many public and private utterances in this direction, for which I have proof, make clear. He shows clearly a characteristic feature that, if not decisively anti-Christian, is at least anti-clerical and separationist and which borders on a middle ground between delusion and enmity. And on top of that comes his overly large ambition which tolerates no opposition and no longer even respects the personal convictions of the Kaiser.<sup>12</sup>

With von Mühler no longer moderating him Bismarck joined forces with the liberal lawyer Adalbert Falk who immediately made it a criminal offense for clergy to issue inflammatory political statements from the pulpit.<sup>13</sup> Embracing the full scope of his powers as *Kulturminister* Falk would go on to craft the infamous May Laws of 1873 which stipulated that future clergymen of all denominations must be German natives educated in German gymnasia and universities, and that any church-levied punishments for clergymen found guilty of wrongdoing would be subject to review by provincial governors and state courts. The controversy caused by the May Laws brought the *Kulturkampf* to a crescendo and drove large numbers of German Catholics to the polls.



In 1874 the Catholic coalition managed to double the number of votes their party received in the previous election, making Bismarck's legislative intrigues much more difficult to engineer and forcing an unlikely alliance between the Iron Chancellor and his onetime foes.

*Nietzsche contra Bismarck: The Battle over German Schools*

Although the Reich gradually and begrudgingly made a place for Catholics in German social and political life the cultural and spiritual frenzy that engulfed Germany in the early 1870's would continue to animate the pens of German intellectuals well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The very fact that the *Kulturkampf* was in the air for so long in Germany meant that the character and identity of German culture could not be taken for granted in the age of liberalism, and indeed that the cultural character and identity of the new Germany had yet to be determined. Who the German people would become under the influence of their new form of government and what their victory over France meant for the future of European culture were the questions that animated the political philosophy of the day. "Since the last war with France many things in Germany have changed or shifted," Nietzsche wrote in 1874, "and it is obvious that we have also brought home with us some new wishes with regard to German culture."<sup>14</sup>

Of paramount importance to the young Professor Nietzsche was the question of how the newly established German state would oversee its educational institutions, and it is on this point that much of his early philosophical writing intersects with Bismarck's political scheme for the *Kulturkampf*. In the early months of 1872 a battle was brewing in the Landtag over a new School Supervisory Law (*Schulaufsichtsgesetz*) that would subject all of Germany's public and private educational institutions to the supervision of

state administrators. According to the law's political opponents, its passage threatened to lower the quality of German education by unjustly doing away with the sorts of innovative and independent school supervisors "who [had] the audacity to say to the state: 'you have no right to prescribe for me in what way I supervise the school.'"<sup>15</sup> Moreover, by eliminating clerical supervision in Protestant and Catholic schools alike, it was argued that the new School Supervisory Law would "open the gates through which the turbulent waters of unbelief in time will flood from the de-Christianized State over the schools."<sup>16</sup>

Bismarck's policies had once again provoked a cultural and spiritual identity crisis in Germany, but this time his propositions had garnered the opposition not only of Catholics but also of his conservative Protestant base. At stake was the fundamental question of whether the demands for citizenship in the new liberal state could be compatible with the demands for salvation in the Kingdom of Heaven. By opening a public inquiry into the kinds of citizens that the Reich's schools ought to produce and by prohibiting the dissemination of certain moral and spiritual teachings, Bismarck hoped to diminish the political influence of the church over time and elevate the state to the level of supreme cultural institution. As Nietzsche described the situation in an essay in 1874: "the state wants people to worship in it the very same idols they previously worshipped in the church. With what degree of success? This is something we have yet to find out."<sup>17</sup>

During the same three month period in early 1872 that the School Supervisory Law was being hotly debated in the Landtag the young Professor Nietzsche delivered a series of five public lectures at the University of Basel under the title *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*.<sup>18</sup> Written as a dialogue between an old philosopher, his

mature pupil, and two young university students, Nietzsche announced that his lectures were written for people who “are still not swept up in the dizzying haste of our rolling age and who still do not feel an idolatrous pleasure in being crushed by its wheels—that is, for few human beings!”<sup>19</sup> The lectures are reported to have been attended by crowds of around three hundred people, and among the more prominent listeners were cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt and, at the second lecture, Richard and Cosima Wagner.<sup>20</sup>

In his introductory remarks to the first lecture Nietzsche was careful to specify that when he used the phrase “*our* educational institutions” he did not mean the specific institutions at Basel, “[but] rather I mean *German institutions* [...], i.e. the future of the German Volksschule, of the German Realschule, of the German Gymnasium, of the German university.”<sup>a21</sup> The timing of his lectures could not have been more telling: his assessment of the future of the German educational system amounted to an open confrontation with Bismarck and his School Supervisory Law, something all of Nietzsche’s listeners would have realized since the debate over the law was front page news during the five week period that the lectures were delivered. Although he was nothing more than an obscure classical philology professor with a single critically panned book to his name<sup>b</sup>, Nietzsche had the political ambition—or gall—to engage in an indirect but public debate with the greatest statesman of his time on the question of how the future citizens of the Reich should be shaped by their educational system. Three days after giving the first lecture to a packed auditorium in Basel, Nietzsche wrote a letter to

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<sup>a</sup> Emphasis is Nietzsche’s unless otherwise noted. In this dissertation, references that bear directly on the discussion are located in footnotes denoted by a letter. Secondary references and other points of interest have been placed in numbered endnotes (found at the end of the dissertation) in order to conserve space at the bottom of each page.

<sup>b</sup> *The Birth of Tragedy*

his friend Erwin Rhode which he said was “wholly to be kept secret and urging to secrecy,” and in which he revealed that he was preparing:

a promemoria on the University of Strassburg, as an interpellation at the Reichsrat<sup>a</sup> for Bismarck’s hands: wherein I want to show how disgracefully one has neglected a monstrous moment to found a really German educational institution, for the regeneration of the German spirit and for the annihilation of the up till now, so-called “culture.”<sup>22</sup>

In the wake of the Franco-Prussian war the Germans had annexed the Alsace region of northeastern France and along with it they took control of the capital city of Strassburg and its flagship university. Their intention was to transform Strassburg into a so-called “*Neue Stadt*” (New City) that would serve as a German cultural center, and to refound Strassburg University as *Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität*: a new college that was to become the crown jewel of the German educational system. Much to Nietzsche’s dismay, however, the Germans had not availed themselves of the opportunity to use the occasion of the new university’s founding to establish a new direction for German pedagogy or to inaugurate publically a new era in German culture. Instead, the new university was erected along traditional pedagogical lines and Nietzsche wanted to suggest to Bismarck that there was still enough time to capitalize on this potentially “monstrous moment” in German cultural history.

Although it is not clear whether Nietzsche ever actually sent his promemoria to Bismarck (which would have arrived in the Chancellor’s hands just in time for the School Supervisory debate), his letter to Rhode demonstrates that the writing of his five lectures on education (and perhaps even of the culturally charged *Birth of Tragedy* and the pedagogically centered *Untimely Observations*) were inspired by his reflections on the political events of his day. Despite the fact that many scholars consider him to be an

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<sup>a</sup> Imperial council.

unpolitical or even anti-political thinker, the early Nietzsche appears to have been the type of politically active person who today would write his Congressman to express his views—to say nothing of his willingness to deliver well-attended public lectures on hot political topics.<sup>a</sup> For a man who would later deem himself the most untimely thinker of his generation Nietzsche's five lectures on the future of the German educational institutions were a remarkably current affair. He concluded his letter to Rhode with the enthusiastic declaration that in matters of culture one must "Battle with the knife! Or with cannons!," and instead of ending with his usual valediction he signed the letter: "The mounted artillerist with the heaviest gun."<sup>23</sup> By taking aim at German educational institutions Nietzsche had declared a culture war on Germany's transformation into a modern state and had publically condemned the spiritual implications of that transformation. His cultural critique amounted to a political critique because at the heart of his inquiry lay a deep skepticism about whether German culture could achieve its full potential under the educational regimen prescribed by the Iron Chancellor and his government.

### *Kulturstaat*

Nietzsche's broad intention in his lecture series was to present his listeners with a third alternative to the two cultural paths proposed by the dueling parties of the *Kulturkampf*. In opposition to Bismarck's modern statism and the Catholics' religious dogmatism, Nietzsche recommended a pedagogical revival of the study of philosophy whose purpose would be to fuse the spirit of the ancient Greeks to the soul of modern

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<sup>a</sup> For fruitful discussions of Nietzsche as anti-political thinker, see Ansell-Pearson (1994); Appel (1999); Bergmann (1987); Brobjer (1998); Conway (1997); Cominos (2008), Detwiler (1990, 4-5, 37-67); Hunt (1985); Kaufman (1974, 412-414); Nussbaum (1997); Shaw (2007); Strong (1975, 186-189); Thiele (1990); Warren (1991).

Germany, and thereby to reinvigorate Germany's once strong philosophical, musical, and literary traditions.<sup>24</sup> Using the philosophical protagonist of his dialectical lectures as his mouthpiece, Nietzsche argued that German gymnasiums and universities had the potential to do much more than simply indoctrinate students to the duties demanded of them by church and state. German educational institutions, he said, should assume the supreme task of serving the German people as "living monuments of significant cultural movements, [and] in some instances even 'the household effects of our ancestral fathers.'"<sup>25</sup> If German gymnasiums and universities would use the philosophical and artistic achievements of the ancient Greeks as a blueprint for the development of a renewed German culture, "classical education" could act as a counterpoison to the sham universalism of modernity and provide a remedy for "that glittering phantom that now lets itself be called 'culture' [*Kultur*] and 'cultivation' [*Bildung*]."<sup>26</sup> As the old philosopher in Nietzsche's lecture series put it:

Not before the noblest need of the true German spirit snatches after the hand of the Greek genius as after a firm support in the stream of barbarity, not before a consuming longing after the Greeks breaks forth out of this German spirit, not before the laboriously obtained distant view into the Greek homeland in which Schiller and Goethe restored themselves has become a place of pilgrimage of the best and most gifted human beings, will the ideal of classical education, without support, flutter to and fro in the air.<sup>27</sup>

On February 27<sup>th</sup> 1872, two weeks to the day after the School Supervisory Law passed in the Landtag and gave control of the German educational system to state administrators, Nietzsche delivered a lecture accusing the state of contriving to sabotage the German spirit by attempting to establish a so-called "culture-state [*Kulturstaat*]" whose aim was the misuse of culture for the sake of unduly venerating the Reich.<sup>28</sup> Once again putting his criticisms into the mouth of the old philosopher who starred in his lecture-dialogue, Nietzsche objected to the state's promotion of itself as the supreme

goal of culture and the peak of human existence—a promotion whose roots he traced back to Prussia’s appropriation of “the practical, usable heirloom of the Hegelian philosophy.”<sup>29</sup> Far from endorsing Hegel’s understanding of the modern state as the institutional arrangement toward which all of humanity’s spiritual energies should aim, Nietzsche asserted that the state was only a means to (and servant of) a higher spiritual goal: namely, the production of genuine culture and the genius. Precisely what Nietzsche thought culture and genius were and why he accorded them the highest place among human ends is a question that will be addressed in subsequent chapters, but the question of whether the preservation of the city is the highest aim of human life, or whether the city is merely a means for some higher human activity, seems to have animated much of Nietzsche’s early thinking about politics.<sup>30</sup>

According to Nietzsche one of the most dangerous and spiritually degrading features of 19<sup>th</sup> century political life was the modern state’s presentation of itself as “a mystagogue of culture” that “advances its purposes, [and] compels each of its servants to appear before it with the torch of universal state education in their hands: [and] in whose restless light they are supposed to recognize [the state] itself again as the highest goal, as the reward of all their educational exertions.”<sup>31</sup> By prohibiting all forms of pedagogy that are not useful for state purposes the modern state inculcates the false belief that modern political life is the highest expression of human existence and that citizenship (and not philosophy) is the highest form of cultural activity. Unlike the ancient Greek state whose citizens Nietzsche called “the political human beings as such” and whose political life he believed consisted of wars waged to promote the “shining blossoms of the genius,” Nietzsche rejected political life in the modern state because he thought it hindered the

development of rare and unusual human types like Wagner and Schopenhauer whose artistic and philosophical expressions constituted the essence of what he called true culture.<sup>a</sup> “Precisely by the most powerful modern state, by Prussia,” Nietzsche wrote, “[the] right to the highest leadership in education and school has been taken so seriously, that, with the boldness that is characteristic of this political system, the dubious principle adopted by it receives a significance [that can be] understood as universally threatening and dangerous for the true German spirit.”<sup>32</sup> Instead of fostering the development of a genuine culture by seeking to cultivate those characteristics that made past generations of Germans so distinctive, Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf* promoted the state at the expense of distinction because distinctive human types threatened to challenge the Iron Chancellor’s vision of a modern, bureaucratic, and well-ordered Germany. Far from being a war between the two conflicting cultures of Catholicism and Germanism as the popular press portrayed it, Nietzsche understood the *Kulturkampf* to be a war waged by Bismarck on German culture itself: “a common war on all that is rare, strange, privileged, the higher man, the higher soul, the higher duty, the higher responsibility, and the abundance of creative power and masterfulness.”<sup>33</sup> As he put the problem in 1888 in his late book

*Twilight of the Idols:*

The Germans now are bored with the mind, the Germans now distrust the mind; politics swallows up all their ability to take really intellectual things seriously—‘Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles,’ I am afraid that was the end of German philosophy... ‘Are there any German philosophers? Are there any German poets? Are there any *good* German books?’ people ask me when I am abroad. I blush, but with the bravery which is mine even in desperate situations, I answer: ‘Yes, *Bismarck!*’<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> See BGE aph 213. Also see Strong (1988, 157-171) for an account of the development of these political-aesthetic expressions in Nietzsche’s thought as they relate to his studies of Schopenhauer, Wagner, Burkhart, Bismarck, and Emerson.



That Nietzsche understood the *Kulturkampf* to be a war for the soul of modern Germany is clear from the foregoing historical outline, but what remains unclear and what we must turn to his writings to discover are the problems he addresses and the solutions he proposes in his discussion of the cultural crisis of the West. Although later and more well-known books like *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Twilight of the Idols* have given Nietzsche a reputation for being, as he put it: “the *destroyer* par excellence” of the western tradition, he claims in these same writings to be “the opposite of a no-saying spirit” and “an *evangelist* the like of which there has never been.”<sup>35</sup> “Only after me,” Nietzsche once wrote, “are there hopes, tasks, and paths to prescribe to culture once again.”<sup>36</sup> In the remaining chapters of this study my intention is to explore what these hopes, tasks, and paths are and hence to clarify what the young Nietzsche thought should be done to “cultivate [*Bildung*]” humanity so it could reach or exceed its natural potential and stave off decline into what he called “cultivated philistinism.”<sup>a</sup>

Since the young Nietzsche’s diagnosis of, and solution to, the cultural crisis of modernity are inextricably tied to the problem of education, my account of his philosophic *Kulturkampf* takes its bearings from a reading of his second book, *The Untimely Observations*, which is explicitly addressed to the German youth and takes up the problem of education and cultivation from a variety of thematic perspectives.<sup>b</sup> Beginning with *David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer* in 1873, moving through *The Use and Abuse of History for Life* and *Schopenhauer as Educator* in 1874, and concluding with *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* in 1876, *The Untimely Observations*

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<sup>a</sup> See Jurist (2000, 58-68) for a detailed analysis of Nietzsche’s usage of *Bildung*.

<sup>b</sup> See UH and SE in particular for Nietzsche’s appeal to the youth.

constitute Nietzsche's first sustained attempt to diagnose and cure the cultural ills of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by analyzing trends in 19<sup>th</sup> century thought.<sup>a</sup> The first two essays on Strauss and Hegel constitute the *destructive* half of the book in which Nietzsche traces the decline of modern culture by critiquing two of its most salient pedagogical cornerstones: modern science and historicism<sup>b</sup>. The last two essays on Schopenhauer and Wagner constitute the book's *constructive* half, and here Nietzsche sketches a picture of an exceedingly rare type of educator—a “new philosopher” perhaps—whose creative and “horizon-forming” interpretation of the world he thinks could help revive modern culture and save humanity from spiritual decay. “Individually and collectively,” says Nietzsche scholar Daniel Breazeale, “the four ‘untimely meditations’ are unquestionably among Nietzsche’s most widely neglected works.”<sup>c</sup>

In the first two chapters of the dissertation I take up Nietzsche's critique of theologian David Strauss' book *The Old and New Faith* in which Strauss argues that the old faith in the Christian God should be replaced in modern times with a new faith in science's power to guide human affairs. In Karl Barth's view Strauss was “probably the best known and most influential theologian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in non-theological and non-church circles,” yet he “lacked the thinker's ability to build up [thoughts] consecutively, to construct, and to synthesize,” and this made it “too easy” for Nietzsche to destroy his reputation. Indeed, Nietzsche's vehement and at times tasteless attack on

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<sup>a</sup> Nietzsche began wrestling with the problem of culture in *The Birth of Tragedy*, but it was only in *The Untimely Observations* that he confronted modern culture in a modern context as a modern “problem.” To be sure, *The Birth of Tragedy* contains the seeds of *The Untimely Observations*, but where the former work is concerned with “Hellenism and pessimism,” the latter (with essays on Strauss, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Wagner) is situated firmly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>b</sup> Modern science and history often seem to collapse into a single discipline in Nietzsche's writing. See Richardson (2007, 99) who notes that Nietzsche's “critique of ‘history’ becomes a critique of all science, and his critique of ‘memory’ becomes a critique of all self-reflection.”

<sup>c</sup> Breazeale (2012, 67).

Strauss seems to have been motivated by his fear that second-tier thinkers were beginning to replace men like Goethe, Schopenhauer, and Wagner as models of German genius whose works could serve as edifying sources for the cultural enrichment of the German people.<sup>a</sup> After giving an overview of Strauss' *The Old and New Faith* in chapter one which shows why Nietzsche thought the book (or the religion of science it advocated) was turning Germany into a nation of "cultivated philistines," I turn in chapter two to an account of Nietzsche's criticisms of Strauss' moral and metaphysical doctrines. In contrast to Nietzsche who intends in *The Untimely Observations* to erect the sorts of anti-scientific but life-promoting illusions he thinks foster human flourishing, Strauss judges humanity to be imperiled by any ethical or metaphysical teachings that take their bearings from something other than scientific research.

In addition to having been an ardent proponent of modern science David Strauss was also a devoted student of Hegelian philosophy in his youth, and his turn away from Christianity to a more scientific "faith" was motivated by what Barth calls: "the problem which will remain unforgettably connected [to Strauss], [i.e.] the problem of God's revelation in history."<sup>b</sup> Although Nietzsche never explicitly discusses Strauss' early book *The Life of Jesus: Critically Examined* in which Strauss aimed to show that Jesus' miracles could be explained on rational grounds by historical science, he doubtless had this book in mind when he chose his essay on Strauss as the introduction to the critique of Hegelian historicism featured in his second Untimely Observation *The Use and Abuse of History for Life*.<sup>c</sup> In chapters three and four of the dissertation I take up Nietzsche's

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<sup>a</sup> Barth (1959, p.364-5).

<sup>b</sup> Ibid.

<sup>c</sup> But see Massey (1977) who claims that although Strauss believed he had "fulfilled [Hegel's] promise in *The Life of Jesus*, his fellow Hegelians judged him to have "betrayed it."

critique of historical science in *The Use and Abuse of History* and pay particular attention to his apparent critique of Hegel whose philosophy (taught widely in German schools) he thinks paved the way for a deadly relativism of moral values among the German youth. According to Leo Strauss relativism “came to Nietzsche’s attention in the form of historicism—more precisely, in the form of a decayed Hegelianism,” and Nietzsche is “*the* philosopher of relativism [insofar as he is] the first thinker who faced the problem of relativism in its full extent and pointed to the way in which relativism can be overcome.”<sup>a</sup> In chapter three I thus explain the three fundamental disagreements Nietzsche has with Hegel’s characterization of what history is in order to show how he became acquainted with the problem of historical relativism through a confrontation with the academic influence exerted by Hegel’s less philosophic followers. After stating where Nietzsche thinks Hegel or his “decayed” progeny went wrong in their analysis of history and arguing that he arrived at the crossroads of the problem of relativism by rejecting Hegel’s declaration of an “absolute moment,” I give an account in chapter four of the challenges Nietzsche’s disagreements with Hegel pose for his own philosophic thought and outline his historical “solution” to the problem that historical relativism poses to healthy human life. Far from concluding that Nietzsche and Hegel disagree with one another, however, or that Nietzsche was “right” and Hegel was “wrong,” I conclude that despite their divergent views of the meaning of history their thought bears a striking similarity necessitated by their mutual avowal of it as *the* means by which man should orient himself philosophically.

In the fifth and sixth chapters of the dissertation I analyze the third Untimely Observation *Schopenhauer as Educator* and explore why Nietzsche thinks the creative

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<sup>a</sup> Strauss (1989, 24-5).

works of great individuals can “solve” the problem of relativism outlined in *The Use and Abuse*. Having affirmed relativism (i.e. “the fluidity of all concepts, types, and species”) as “true but deadly” in his essay on history, he effects a shift of the foundations of knowledge in *Schopenhauer* from absolute sources like reason and nature to relative or arbitrary ones like art and the self. In chapter five I take up Nietzsche’s claim that his teacher Arthur Schopenhauer was a rare type of creative self whose works cultivated Nietzsche by erecting a philosophic horizon around him that remedied in his own soul the “disquiet [and] confusion” that characterizes modern souls in the age of relativism. In Schopenhauer the man, Nietzsche says, he found a teacher and a metaphysical philosophy that justified the cruelties of the world and made life more attractive by imbuing it with a significance whose source lay in the “image” of the human being it presented.

Universalizing the intellectual transformation he underwent as a pupil of Schopenhauer and applying it to humanity as a whole, Nietzsche concludes that modernity can be saved from its impending spiritual collapse by rare types of educators or law-givers whose formal model he discovered in his relationship to Schopenhauer and whose extraordinary intellectual and creative capacities enable them to cultivate [*Bildung*] new “images [*Bild*]” of the world and man. Yet because he judges that the types of human beings who can create these “images” are unknown in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he devotes large sections of *Schopenhauer* to convincing his readers that they must acquire self-knowledge so that each can see his own personal shortcomings and hence his need for the type of educator Nietzsche has in mind. “Culture [*Kultur*],” Nietzsche says, is “the child of every individual’s self-knowledge,” and once this self-knowledge is acquired it “charges each

of us with one single task: *to foster the production of philosophers, artists, and saints within and around us, and thereby to work toward the perfection of nature.*”<sup>a</sup>

Since deciphering the meaning of the aforementioned statement is crucial for seeing why Nietzsche wrote the *Untimely Observations* in the first place, I turn in the final chapter of the dissertation to the difficult question of how he understood the term “nature” in his early writings in order to see what bringing about the “perfection of nature” would entail. According to Nietzsche nature’s perfection is bound up with the transition of the human species to an even higher and more refined species, and humanity can perfect nature by cultivating it, i.e. clearing away the obstacles that prevent it from reaching its evolutionary goal and creating the political conditions under which higher types of human beings will be more likely to emerge and thrive. Among the greatest obstacles to the production of these high types Nietzsche cites the modern state and its educational institutions which, as we have already seen, were the foremost topics on his mind during the “*kulturkampf*” years that followed the Franco-Prussian War. In the aftermath of Hegelianism Nietzsche thought that the modern state had begun to understand itself—and not culture or the genius—as “the highest aim of humanity,” and in the final section of *Schopenhauer* he argues that revolutionary measures must be taken to Platonize the state and insure that its highest aim is the cultivation of philosophers.

Although I briefly discuss the fourth essay in the book, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, at various places in the chapters that follow, I forgo a comprehensive analysis of it to reflect more deeply on questions that arise from my interpretation of the first three essays. While *David Strauss*, *The Use and Abuse*, and *Schopenhauer* were all written

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<sup>a</sup> SE 5. Compare this definition of culture to the one Nietzsche gives in DS 1: “Above all else, culture is a unity of artistic style that manifests itself throughout all the expressions of life of a people.”

within a two year span *Wagner in Bayreuth* was written almost two years *after* its three prequels and seems in many ways to mark the beginning of a new and more “scientific” stage in Nietzsche’s thought. According to Paul Franco Nietzsche “clearly struggled” to write the essay which was meant to celebrate the opening of the Bayreuth Festival in 1876, and his notebooks from the period indicate that he had already begun the scientific transformation that would lead him to reject many of the positions he advocated in his earlier works.<sup>a</sup> Rather than weighing in on the status of *Wagner in Bayreuth* which would require comparing it to Nietzsche’s middle period writings as Franco has done, I conclude the dissertation by expressing my skepticism about the feasibility of Nietzsche’s early project to institutionalize the production of great individuals and outline his own skepticism about that project as he articulated it in the sequel to the *Untimely Observations: Human, All Too Human*. Be this skepticism as it may it is worth noting from the beginning of our study that Nietzsche made at least a partial return to the fundamental thesis of the *Untimely Observations* thirteen years later in *Beyond Good and Evil*, arguing there that philosophers can rule human beings through culture and calling them “Caesarian breeders” and “cultural dynamos” whose “‘knowing’ is creating [and whose] creating is a legislation.”<sup>b</sup> Since Nietzsche’s confidence in the political power of philosophy understood *creatively* is perhaps the most consistent feature of his early and late writings alike, those interested in his final political and philosophic positions would do well to acquaint themselves with the early book he said was the first to reveal “how I understand the philosopher as a terrible concept which puts everything in danger.”<sup>c</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Franco (2011, p. 8-9). Also see Schaberg (1995, p.46). Franco argues that this departure may have begun as early as *Schopenhauer as Educator*.

<sup>b</sup> See BGE 211, 203, 61.

<sup>c</sup> EH, Books, *Untimelies*, sec. 3.

## **Part One**

### **David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer**



## Chapter 1: David Strauss and the “Cultivated Philistine”

### I. Who is David Strauss?

#### *Why David Strauss?*

As the first in a series of four *Untimely Observations* and the first of three which Nietzsche admits contain some of his earliest philosophic observations, *David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer* occupies a unique place in the Nietzschean oeuvre. The essay is by Nietzsche’s own account the first expression of his well-known dissatisfaction with modern culture.<sup>a</sup> It is also the first writing in a series of four which, I shall argue, amount to a sustained articulation of—and solution to—a problem at the heart of Nietzsche’s thought: the problem that modern culture poses for the cultivation of healthy human life and the dangerous complacency such culture engenders in the modern soul. “The German amasses around himself all of the forms, colors, products, and curiosities of all ages and places,” Nietzsche writes at the beginning of the essay, “and thereby produces that modern carnival motley which his scholars then can explore and define as ‘the modern as such.’”<sup>1</sup> Despite appearing at first glance to be a narrow critique of a relatively obscure German intellectual, then, Nietzsche’s criticisms of Strauss actually extend much further to the “carnival motley” of modern humanity itself.<sup>b</sup> Although Nietzsche treats Strauss harshly and even contemptuously on every page of the essay, the piece should not be read as a mere book review but rather as an analysis of the spiritual state of the nation and people who had sunk so low as to hail Strauss and his book *The Old and New Faith* as redeemers of their culture. In his reflections on the essay in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche indicates how *David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer* should be read when he says that although he is a warlike thinker by nature:

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<sup>a</sup> See the second preface to *Human, All Too Human*.

<sup>b</sup> See Golder (1990, 5-6, 8-9).

I never attack persons; I merely avail myself of the person as of a strong magnifying glass that allows one to make visible a general but creeping and elusive calamity. Thus I attacked David Strauss—more precisely the success of [his] senile book with the ‘cultured’ people in Germany: I caught this culture red-handed.”<sup>2</sup>

Before beginning our interpretation of Nietzsche’s essay on Strauss it would be useful to say a few words about who Strauss was and what his intention was in the book that provoked Nietzsche to criticize him. Born in 1808 in Ludwigsburg Strauss was 36 years older than his young adversary and much more well-known to the German public. A disillusioned student of Schleiermacher and Hegel whose expansive thinking never fit into narrow academic categories, Strauss established a reputation as a controversial theologian at the age of twenty-seven by writing what was perhaps the most sensational book of his time: *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835). Moving through the Gospels and pointing out almost every contradiction and inconsistency among them, Strauss concluded on the basis of “historical science” that the accounts of Jesus’ life presented in scripture were not firsthand historical accounts but rather “mythical” tales invented long after Jesus’ death in order to give him the appearance of the Messiah alluded to in Old Testament prophecy. Since Isaiah had spoken of the advent of the Messiah as a time when the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf would be opened, Strauss argued that the life of Jesus was embellished by his followers into an unbroken chain of miracles meant to cement Jesus’ place as the true redeemer of mankind. Subjecting each of Jesus’ miracles to rational and scientific scrutiny Strauss argued in *The Life of Jesus* that every seemingly supernatural occurrence in Jesus’ life could be explained by rational or natural means. “The numerous stories of miracles in the Bible and especially the Gospels,” Strauss said, “are founded not on fraud but on misconception [and] natural occurrences,” and “we have here not matter of actual history, but only concoctions with special reference to the expectations entertained respecting the Messiah.”<sup>3</sup> The pious Earl of Shaftsbury who read *The Life of Jesus* shortly after it was written called it “the most pestilential book ever vomited out of the jaws of

hell.” Ultimately, the book cost Strauss his chair in theology at the University of Zurich and led his friends to abandon him.

After the controversy surrounding *The Life of Jesus* subsided Strauss led a relatively subdued literary life for the next three decades until his last book *The Old and New Faith* appeared in 1872. According to Nietzsche *The Old and New Faith* was unanimously admired among Germans as: “a masterpiece of freedom and subtlety of thought (even style!),” and its status as a new German classic was confirmed by the fact that it had already gone through six editions by the time Nietzsche wrote his critical review of it shortly after it was published.<sup>4</sup> The book consists of four main parts entitled “Are We Still Christians?,” “Have We Still a Religion?,” “What is Our Conception of the Universe?,” and “How Do We Regulate Our Lives?” Two appendices in which Strauss assesses classical works of German literature and music round out the volume and lend it the air of having been written by a cultural authority. According to the preface of the fourth edition of the book *The Old and New Faith* is meant to be a “confession” of Strauss’ deepest thoughts on the timeliest questions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the fields of art, philosophy, theology, biology, and politics.

Strauss explicitly addressed his book to the most modern and progressive of Germans: those who, after the founding of Bismarck’s Reich and the turmoil engulfing the Catholic and Protestant churches, had come to see that a spiritual conflict was brewing in which the old ways of living and thinking were rapidly giving way to new modes and orders founded on the insights of modern natural, social, and historical science.<sup>a</sup> “On every side people are at least stirring, speaking out, preparing for conflict” Strauss wrote, “[and] only *we*, it seems remain silent and look on with folded arms. –But who is this ‘*We*’?”<sup>5</sup> According to Strauss the modern “We” to

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<sup>a</sup> See my introduction *Nietzsche contra Bismarck* for an outline of the political, religious, and cultural conflicts stirring in Germany in the 1870’s.

whom his book is addressed are those thousands of increasingly sophisticated Germans who constitute much more than the intellectual class:

*we* are members of the most various professions, and by no means exclusively consist of scholars or artists, but of military men and civil employees, of merchants and landed proprietors, nor is the female sex underrepresented among us [...]. In recent years we have taken a vivid interest in the great national war, and the reconstruction of the German state, and each after his manner has participated in it, and we have been greatly exalted by the unexpected and glorious course which events have taken for our much tried nation. To the end of forming just conclusions in these things, we study history, which has now been made easy even to the unlearned by a number of attractively and popularly written works; at the same time we endeavor to enlarge our knowledge of the natural sciences, where there is no lack of sources of information; and lastly, in the writings of our great poets, in the performances of our great musicians, we find satisfying stimulus for the intellect and the heart, and for fancy in her deepest or most sportive moods. Thus *we* live and go our way in bliss.<sup>6</sup>

Among these thousands of ordinary Germans who could lay claim to being the cultured and historically enlightened citizenry of one of the world's few modern nation-states, Strauss says that his book should be of special interest to that "innumerable multitude" of hyper-progressive individuals who are "no longer satisfied with the old faith and the old church, both Protestant and Catholic," and who dimly apprehend or distinctively perceive the "contradiction into which both [denominations] are forced more and more with knowledge [...] of the social and political growths of the present age, and who regard a change, a modification, as an urgent necessity."<sup>7</sup> By Strauss' account, then, the most intellectually courageous Germans are beginning to see what their peers have yet to apprehend: that there is, as Nietzsche put it in *Beyond Good and Evil*, a fight brewing in Europe against the "Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia" which has "created in Europe a magnificent tension of the spirit the like of which has never yet existed on earth."<sup>8</sup> Those who have thought through the implications of the rise of Bismarck's modern state see that the tension in the European spirit (generated by a conflict between modern scientific progressivism and religious dogmatism) cannot be released by half-hearted compromises between old and new ways of thinking. "If you admit a distinctive difference between clergy and laity," Strauss writes, "if you admit a need inherent in mankind of always obtaining infallible

teaching in religion and morals from an authority instituted by God himself through Christ, you must likewise be prepared to give your adherence [not to the laws of the modern state but] to the dogma of an infallible Pope as one equally required by this need.”<sup>9</sup> In addition to rejecting the need for a Pope Strauss argues that modern laypeople have already begun to drift away from Christian moral teachings because modern historical science has mounted compelling evidence for its claim that Jesus was not the actual Son of God. Modern man’s rejection of the authority of the Pope and of Christ, Strauss concluded, was beginning to have a profound impact on the political and social mores of the entire West, and a growing minority were already questioning whether “a distinct society like the church [needs to exist] by the side of the state and the school.”<sup>10</sup> The growing minority of Germans who are adopting these opinions are: “the *We* in whose name I undertake to speak,” Strauss declared, and whose “new faith” in science’s capacity to guide human affairs he set out to elaborate in his final book.<sup>11</sup>

Strauss’ stated intention in *The Old and New Faith* was thus both theoretical and practical. On one hand, he aimed to erect a theoretical polestar around which his “We” could gather and acquire “knowledge of each other’s convictions,” but this theoretical polestar would also provide his followers with concrete instructions about how to “act according to these convictions with a united strength.”<sup>12</sup> Although Strauss’ remarks may occasionally give the impression that his highest aim is to establish a new kind of church that will institutionalize the tenants of his new faith, he argues that because the modern state and modern science demonstrate “the inutility of a church” his followers must not establish something “which would itself be a sort of church.”<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, Strauss maintains that the “We” to whom his book is addressed “would and should come to a sort of mutual understanding” about their convictions, and since this understanding will not be effected through an institution like the church he proposes that it

be effected through “the inspiring power of free speech,” namely public speaking, and above all through the press.<sup>14</sup> On a practical level, then, *The Old and New Faith* can be said to be Strauss’ attempt to use the power of publication to gather together a group of progressive like-minded Germans so that he can “come to an understanding with the rest of those I call *We*,” especially concerning moral and scientific matters.<sup>a</sup> To put his intention another way: Strauss’ book is meant to clarify his theoretical position for followers who can then disseminate that position and “exert our influence so that a new growth should in the future develop of itself from the inevitable dissolution of the old.”<sup>15</sup> “Our concern for the moment,” Strauss tells his readers, is not with creating an external institution but rather “with an inward preparation of those who feel themselves no longer satisfied with the old, no longer appeased by half measures.”<sup>16</sup>

Before summarizing briefly the apparently firmer theoretical and religious ground Strauss tills for his followers in *The Old and New Faith* it is worth taking a moment to highlight the striking similarity between Strauss’ and Nietzsche’s respective views of—and responses to—the spiritual crisis confronting Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>b</sup> Just as Strauss declares that the old faith’s religious and moral structures are undergoing an “inevitable dissolution” throughout Europe, Nietzsche is known for having proclaimed that “the greatest recent event—that ‘God is dead,’—is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe,” and that “much must collapse now that this faith has been undermined, [...] for example, the whole of our European morality.”<sup>17</sup> On the question of whether the old faith was decaying and whether its decline was bringing about “a magnificent tension of the spirit” in Europe, then, Strauss and Nietzsche emphatically agree. Both wonder what the result of this tension will be and what will come of

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<sup>a</sup> Introduction, 2. Cf. Nietzsche’s claim in SE 7 that his intention in writing the work is to “gather together” free spirits.

<sup>b</sup> See Löwith (1964, 185): This attack [against David Strauss] is directed against the “new faith” of Strauss; but, at the same time, it is a considerable step along the road to that liberation which Strauss had himself produced in the general consciousness of the age through his early writings against the old belief. Not even Nietzsche denies his respect for the young Strauss, who was basically ‘a man of strong and profound scholarly and critical character.’”

European man as the old faith and its corresponding moral structures continue to erode. The *Untimely Observations* as a whole, I argue, and especially its first and second essays, contain the young Nietzsche's first sustained articulation of this problem.

Even more surprising than their mutual recognition of the spiritual crisis confronting Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, is the fact that Strauss and Nietzsche both agree about the opportunity this crisis affords enterprising thinkers to change the course of European man's development by disseminating new philosophic teachings to close-knit groups of followers (what Strauss and Nietzsche both refer to as their "We"). Both writers, in other words, indicate that the time is ripe to harness the energy generated by the spiritual tension engulfing Europe and use it to create a new type of man, and both write their books to go "fishing," as it were, for followers who can help them deploy—on a supranational scale—their respective visions of who this new type of man ought to be.<sup>a</sup> Just as Strauss announces that in light of the spiritual tension in Europe "a new growth should in the future develop of itself from the inevitable dissolution of the old" and that "a change, a modification, [is] an urgent necessity," Nietzsche declares in his later writings that "with so tense a bow" as the European spiritual crisis provides, "we can now shoot for the most distant goals" because "we good Europeans and free, *very* free spirits—we still feel it, the whole need of the spirit and the whole tension of its bow."<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, just as the addressees of Strauss' books are his "*We* in whose name I undertake to speak" and with whose help he hopes to forge a new path for European man, so Nietzsche addresses his *Untimely Observations* to "we [who] have our task and our sphere of duties" and "we [who] know what culture is."<sup>19</sup> In *Human, All Too Human* and *The Gay Science* this same Nietzschean "We" becomes "we philosophers and 'free spirits' [who] feel, when we hear the news that 'the old God is dead,' as if a new dawn shone on us," and in *Beyond Good and Evil* they are "we *whose task is*

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<sup>a</sup> See chapters 5-6 of this dissertation for an account of Nietzsche's vision.

wakefulness itself,” “we good Europeans and free, very free spirits,” “we opposite men,” “we [who] have a different faith,” and “we [who] sail right *over* morality, we crush, we destroy perhaps the remains of our own morality by daring to make our voyage there—but what matter are we!”<sup>20</sup> In my chapters on *Schopenhauer as Educator* I argue that Nietzsche takes his first steps toward gathering together the young “We” whose help he solicits in his early, middle, and late period writings alike to help him solve the crisis of modern culture.<sup>a</sup> By providing the “we” he addresses in the *Untimely Observations* with a teaching about the future of modern culture that was opposed to the one Strauss provided his followers in *The Old and New Faith*, Nietzsche meant to instruct his “we” to declare war on the “unreason” that characterizes the modern age Strauss so enthusiastically praises.

#### *Strauss’ Teaching in The Old and New Faith: Chapters 1-2*

Although Nietzsche and Strauss can both be said to have written their books to effect “an inward preparation” of those who are no longer satisfied with the old ways the similarities

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<sup>a</sup> It is tempting to infer that Nietzsche borrowed his plan to address his writings to a group of “free-spirits” or a “We” from David Strauss, especially since free spirits are not mentioned in *The Birth of Tragedy* (the only philosophic book Nietzsche published prior to reading Strauss). There is evidence, however, that Nietzsche flirted with the idea of gathering together a Nietzschean “we” at least a year before he read about Strauss’ “we” in *The Old and New Faith*. In his lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* delivered in Basel in March of 1872, Nietzsche discusses and praises the *Burschenschaft* student associations that formed in the German universities in the wake of the Wars of Liberation. These associations took the form of secret societies whose aim was to revivify the German spirit, and Nietzsche laments that these associations “did not find the leader they needed” and that “there was in all of them a lack of overshadowing genius in their midst.” This lack of leadership, says Nietzsche, ultimately led the *Burschenschaft* societies to perish from a lack of purpose and organization (EI, 114-117). As I show in my interpretations of *The Use and Abuse of History for Life* and *Schopenhauer as Educator*, the young Nietzsche seems to have fancied establishing himself as the intellectual leader of a group of ambitious youths with similar longings to those that found their expression the *Burschenschaft* societies, and his lectures on the German educational institutions (written well before the essay on David Strauss) represent his first attempt to invite these youths to consider his philosophic ideas. Since Nietzsche’s letters indicate that he did not read David Strauss’ book until February of 1873 (nearly a year after the education lectures were delivered in the spring of 1872) he does not appear to have borrowed the idea of establishing himself as the leader of a “we” from Strauss. If anything, Nietzsche wanted his “we” to counteract Strauss’ for fear of what Germany might become under the influence of Strauss and his followers. It is also worth noting that it was Richard Wagner who first persuaded Nietzsche to read Strauss, and that Wagner harbored his own well-known ambitions to establish a cultural cult or “we” at Bayreuth. Although Wagner and Strauss’ respective plans to gather their followers together must certainly have influenced the young Nietzsche, he seems to have had his own project in mind long before he decided to discuss or critique theirs in the first and fourth *Untimely Observations*.



between the two would seem initially to end here. Nietzsche takes great pains to show that Strauss has a deeply flawed understanding of what it means to be in possession of a culture that can “cultivate” [*Bildung*] a truly great people like the Greeks, and he accuses Strauss of having grossly overestimated the capacity of modern science to satisfy humanity’s deepest spiritual and cultural longings. Whereas Strauss and his followers sought to hasten the spread of theories in modern biology, astronomy, and political science because they believed these theories could bring rich cultural development and “abundant sources of intellectual and moral invigoration” to the German people, Nietzsche asserted that German culture could be characterized above all by the rampant spiritual decay embodied by its scientists.<sup>21</sup> According to Nietzsche Strauss’ hope that a modern cultural utopia would spring from a Germany that embraced Darwin’s theory of evolution, Kant’s theory of the heavens, and Bismarck’s view of the modern state betrayed: “nothing but a phlegmatic insensitivity to culture” from a type of man who “fancied himself to be a son of the muses and a cultured person [in] an incomprehensible delusion.”<sup>22</sup> “Another couple of centuries may have to pass,” Nietzsche believed, “before our countrymen will have absorbed sufficient spirit and higher culture for one to be able to say of them: it has been a long time *since they were barbarians*.”<sup>23</sup>

By composing *The Old and New Faith* in the form of what Nietzsche called a “catechism of ‘modern ideas’” Strauss was under the impression that he was building a bridge to the future that would carry European man and his culture to even greater heights than they had already attained.<sup>24</sup> The four chapters of his book were meant to persuade his readers that recent scientific discoveries in the fields of biology, astronomy, and politics could be brought together to form the tenets of a “new faith” that could guide human affairs much more prudently than the old faith could.<sup>25</sup> To provide a theoretical basis for his claims Strauss sought to edify his readers

in what he called “the modern Cosmic conception [of the world],” the foundation of which he said was “painfully educed from continued scientific and historical research, as contrasted with that [conception of the world] from Christian theology.”<sup>26</sup> Although Strauss admits in his introduction to his book that *The Old and New Faith* represents his first attempt to prove that his scientific conception of the world is “possessed of a firm basis,” he is confident that the position he outlines will prepare his readers to “judge on which side there exist more obscurities and insufficiencies unavoidable in human speculation: the side of the ancient orthodoxy or on that of modern science.”<sup>27</sup>

The first chapter of *The Old and New Faith* is entitled “Are We Still Christians?” and here Strauss’ aim is to clarify why, given recent discoveries in modern natural science and the implications of his own investigation of Jesus’ deeds, “we must acknowledge that we are no longer Christians if we would speak as honest, upright men.”<sup>28</sup> Because so many essential facts of the life of Jesus appear to be mythical and because Strauss says that every morally serious person “must have a distinct, definite conception of him in whom I am to believe and imitate as an exemplar of moral excellence,” he concludes that modern man must increasingly come to view Jesus not as a spiritual Redeemer but as a “problem for scientific investigation” which cannot be an object of worship or a “pattern by which to shape our lives.”<sup>29</sup> Despite the fact that he and his “We” are no longer Christians, however, Strauss emphasizes that “we are in the habit of regarding the capacity for religion as a prerogative of human nature,” and thus he holds that it is possible to have “severed oneself from Christianity yet still be religious.”<sup>30</sup> The second chapter of his book is therefore titled: “Have We Still a Religion?,” and here he sets himself the two-fold task of articulating the “essence” of religion and demonstrating that his new scientific conception of the world conforms with this essence despite the fact that it bears none of the

marks of a conventional religious teaching.<sup>a</sup> Since many of the phenomena which spurred the religious sentiment of man in lower stages of civilization are now understood in their “orderly natural sequence,” Strauss argues that “he who has a clear cosmological conception, in harmony with the present standpoint of astronomy” can no longer believe in a deity enthroned in heaven who wields thunder and lightning.<sup>31</sup> Because the longings for providence expressed by primitive man through prayer have been shown to be “a delusion whose abolishment ought to be the endeavor of every man whose eyes are open to truth,” Strauss says that a new conception of religion is needed for a modern world in which the God of the old faith has lost “every attribute of personal existence and action.”<sup>32</sup>

Since Strauss and his followers are apparently no longer attached to the idea of a personal God or even to the possibility of an afterlife “it would seem,” he says, “that the question with which we have prefaced [our second] chapter—i.e. whether we still have a religion—must be answered in the negative.”<sup>33</sup> Contrary to first appearances, however, Strauss argues that the old faith’s conception of what counts as a religion is outmoded, and that according to newer definitions of religion a scientific conception of the world *does* qualify as a religious conception because the true essence of religion does not consist in the recognition of a personal God but rather in what Schleiermacher called “our consciousness of absolute dependence, and the Whereon of this dependence.”<sup>34</sup> Tracing the source of the dependence that remains in his new religion of the cosmos to modern science’s claim that unchanging laws govern the world, Strauss concludes that modern men are compelled to admit that their ever-changing world is not at all a hostile place but rather a “good and reasonable” place that exhibits intelligible laws on which we depend for our intellectual and spiritual orientation.<sup>35</sup> “We feel ourselves absolutely dependent

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<sup>a</sup> Nietzsche takes up this task in the third main part of *Beyond Good and Evil*, entitled “The Religious Essence.” See Strauss’ discussion of Schleiermacher in sec. 2.39.

on this world,” he says, and “we are compelled to conceive of it [...] as being also the primary source of all that is reasonable and good.” The Cosmos upon which Strauss and his followers base their religion, therefore, is by no means merely a “rude power to which we bow” but rather “order and law, reason and goodness, to which we surrender ourselves in loving trust.” It must always be remembered, Strauss concludes, “that you and everything you behold within and around yourself, all that befalls you and others, is no disjointed fragment, no wild chaos of atoms or causalities, but that it all springs, according to eternal laws, from one primal source of all life, all reason, and all good.”<sup>36</sup>

*Strauss’ Teaching in The Old and New Faith: Chapters 3-4*

After demonstrating or asserting that he and his followers are still entitled to call themselves religious despite their apparent (but clearly problematic) rejection of the concept of a caring God, Strauss’ task in the later chapters of his book is to provide a more thorough account of the scientific conception of the world that serves as the basis for the cosmological religion he alleges to have founded. “By our previous investigations we have severed ourselves from the cosmic conception of ancient Christianity,” he says, and “now the question is what we propose to put in its vacant place.”<sup>37</sup> The penultimate chapter of *The Old and New Faith* is thus entitled “What is Our Conception of the Universe?,” and in it Strauss summarizes the landmark discoveries in the history of western astronomy and biology in order to show that “the ultimate fact beyond which we cannot proceed” is not a provident God, but rather a scientific conception of the cosmos that consists of: “the more definite shape of matter infinitely agitated, which, by differentiation and integration, developed itself into ever higher forms and functions, and

described an everlasting circle by evolution, dissolution, then fresh evolution.”<sup>a</sup> Arguing that science has finally solved the mystery behind the generation of life from non-life without having to resort to a miraculous explanation, Strauss declares that if scientists hope to liberate themselves from the miraculous once and for all then they must expand on the discoveries of Charles Darwin whose book *The Origin of Species* appeared in its sixth edition the same year *The Old and New Faith* was published. By Strauss’ account Darwin’s theory of evolution had made it such that a “happier coming race [could] finally cast out miracles,” and his work as a whole represented “the first truly scientific attempt” to disprove Revelation.<sup>38</sup> Not only would Darwin’s theory be instrumental in banishing all notions of the miraculous from the minds of biological scientists, however, but in time Strauss judged that it would be equally instrumental in eroding the Christian faith of laypeople and he insists that one day “everyone who knows what miracles imply will praise [Darwin] as one of the greatest benefactors of the human race.”<sup>39</sup> From Strauss’ point of view, then, human happiness increases in proportion to our *liberation* from belief in the mythical, and Darwin’s discoveries pave the way for the development of a new type of cultured man whose refinement consists in the fact that he is free from the sorts of life-promoting illusions Nietzsche says are necessary for humanity in *The Use and Abuse of History*.<sup>b</sup>

Near the end of his summary of the various scientific theories that underlie his conception of the cosmos Strauss confesses that the crux of his teaching amounts to a “pure unmitigated materialism” which draws its ultimate consequence at every moment in a vast and purposeless universe.<sup>40</sup> Although this purposelessness is essential to any conception of the world that does not incorporate the notion of divine will, Strauss acknowledges that the human mind seems

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<sup>a</sup> Compare to my account of Nietzsche’s view of nature in Chapter 6. Strauss elaborates this definition as follows: “The general deduction from the existence of the universe appears to us to be, as a whole, the most varied motion, or the greatest abundance of life; this motion or life specialized as one developing itself morally as well as physically, struggling outwards and upwards, and even in the decline of the individual only preparing a new uprising.”

<sup>b</sup> See UH 1 and chs. 3-4.

hardwired to imbue the world with a purpose and he declares this purpose to be the development of the particular nature of each individual being.<sup>41</sup> Far from following the old faith's path and conceiving of the "goal" of existence in terms of moral redemption or metaphysical transcendence, then, Strauss and his "We" conceive of all life in terms of the development and maturation of individual organisms which when "subjected to different rules of action" can manifest themselves in an infinite variety of forms.<sup>42</sup> For Strauss, in other words, the most fascinating fact about the universe is that the seemingly permanent forms that members of a given species take are not as permanent as they first appear, and all living beings can be altered or *cultivated* by "different rules of action" to produce new types of beings and natures from old molds. When Nietzsche calls for the cultivation of a higher type of human being in the central sections of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, he may well be responding to—and borrowing heavily from—Strauss' view of the process and "goal" of natural life.<sup>a</sup>

After sketching a view of nature and the universe that is similar in many ways to the one Nietzsche outlines in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Strauss takes the evolutionary position he articulated in the third chapter of *The Old and New Faith* as a foundation for a chapter on the cultivation of mankind entitled: "How Do We Regulate Our Lives?" "What the result of the development of [mankind] ought to be and is," he says, "we hope will become plain to us if we endeavor to answer [this question]."<sup>43</sup> Since the way we choose to live or "regulate" our lives determines much about the kind of people we either are or aspire to become, a discussion of the regulations that ought to govern our lives amounts in practice to a discussion of how we ought to go about *cultivating* ourselves—and this discussion produces in turn a broad prescription about the kind of *culture* we should aspire to have. Because the Nietzsche of the *Untimely Observations* is concerned above all with recovering what he calls "the pure concept of culture,"

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<sup>a</sup> See Chapters 5 and 6 and SE secs. 5-6.

many of the most forceful critiques he levels at Strauss are aimed at the “philistine culture” he says Strauss’ religion of science engenders. Although Strauss maintains that his goal in investigating the question of how we ought to live is to determine whether his scientific conception of the world is “more or less adapted to serve as a basis on which to erect the structure of a life that is truly human,” Nietzsche shows in due course that Strauss’ new faith establishes no such basis and even erodes whatever basis for a “truly human” life might have remained in the wake of the spiritual crisis sweeping through Europe.<sup>44</sup> While this latter point does not become fully clear until Nietzsche’s second Untimely Observation whose aim is to show how scientific knowledge destroys healthy life, the animating core of the *Untimely Observations* as a whole could be said to lie in his intense aversion to Strauss’ account of what is required for humanity to thrive and fulfill the full potential of the species.<sup>a</sup> Despite their clear differences with respect to the question of whether science is good or bad for human life, however, a reading of *Schopenhauer as Educator* will show that the differences between them on the question of what science demonstrates about the malleability of that life are much less pronounced.

Strauss’ account of the changeability, regulation, and cultivation of human life begins with a quote from German natural scientist Moritz Wagner who claims that: “the most important general result which comparative geology and paleontology reveal to us is the great law of progress pervading all nature.”<sup>b</sup> The most salient feature of earth’s history, Strauss says, is “the appearance of more highly-developed beings than the past had to show,” and his claim that nature aims at an “unceasingly progressive improvement and refinement of organic forms” resembles Nietzsche’s claim in *Schopenhauer* that the goal of every species is to evolve to “that

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<sup>a</sup> See Chapters 5 and 6 .

<sup>b</sup> Ibid 4.71. Cf. Nietzsche’s view of nature in SE 5-6.

point at which it reaches its limit and begins the transition to a higher species.”<sup>a</sup> Because Strauss believes that earth’s evolutionary progress culminates in the development of the human being, moreover, he holds that nature “cannot go higher [than the human]” and hence must “go inwards”—to the moral and spiritual things—if it hopes to continue to refine man.<sup>45</sup> Although Strauss does not harbor ambitions for the same thoroughgoing revision or transformation of human nature that Nietzsche calls for throughout his corpus their agreement about the possibility of making improvements to man’s nature leads each thinker to conclude that, in Strauss’ words, mankind “must not be merely an animal repeated; [but] must be something more, something better.”<sup>b</sup> Rather than living a life of hedonism and thereby returning to a lower and more animalistic state of spiritual development, Strauss argues (again with striking similarity to Nietzsche) that man must “interpenetrate and rule the animal in him by his higher faculties, by the qualities which distinguish him from the brute.”<sup>46</sup> Although man may never be able to rid himself entirely of his wild and savage impulses because he will always be “a mere product of nature,” Strauss says that in leaving the state of nature for civil society man discovered a way to enhance his higher faculties, ennoble his savageness, and “in regard to his fellow-men, mitigate it, especially by the consciousness of their kindred and the mutual obligation of race.”<sup>47</sup> According to both Nietzsche and Strauss, then, it is man’s capacity to cultivate his moral qualities that separates him from the animal, and according to Strauss these qualities are most efficiently cultivated through “customs, then laws, and at last a code of duties.”<sup>c</sup>

Since it is by means of customs, laws, and duties that mankind cultivates itself to new spiritual heights Strauss next sets himself the task of devising a moral principle in whose image modern society can shape its laws to foster human enrichment. Although the old faith’s

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<sup>a</sup> See SE 6.

<sup>b</sup> 4.71. See SE 5 and chapters 5 and 6 for Nietzsche’s account of what it would mean for man to cease being an animal

<sup>c</sup> Ibid. Compare to my account of the emphasis Nietzsche places of the importance of Greek *Sittlichkeit* in chapter 5.



lawgivers like Moses and Jesus could claim that their laws were “given by God” and were therefore binding on men, Strauss says that humanity can no longer flourish on the basis of such myths because “the mythical supports [of the old law] have decayed” in the hands of science. In contradistinction to Nietzsche, then, whose broad intention in his early writings is to erect *new* mythical supports for the laws and to promote human flourishing thereby, Strauss judges humanity to be imperiled by any account of the world that takes its bearings from something other than scientific research.<sup>a</sup> The fundamental Straussian premise to which Nietzsche seems to object in *The Old and New Faith* is thus that science can guide human life, and to lend this premise a measure of credibility against detractors like Nietzsche Strauss attempts to ground it in the rational or “scientific” moral philosophy of the Stoics and Kant. Any moral theory that guides humanity, Strauss argues, must be derived from universal laws of reason so that “the dictate of your will may always pass as a principle of general legislation.”<sup>48</sup> When Kant’s concern for validating the dictates of the individual will through universal reason is combined with the Stoics’ concern for cultivating human life according to its highest natural possibility, the starting point for new moral legislation for man is said by Strauss to be “the relation of man to the *idea* of his kind, which in part he endeavors to realize in himself, and in part recognizes and seeks to promote in others.”<sup>49</sup> All that human beings call morality in Strauss’ view thus issues from the fact that men (unlike other species) have the rational capacity to erect an *ideal* for themselves which determines what they should endeavor to become, and on this score he and Nietzsche are again quite similar despite the fact that they appear to arrive at this conclusion from the opposing standpoints of science and poetry. “To bring himself as an individual into abiding concord with the idea and the destiny of mankind,” Strauss argues, “is the essence of the duties to which man owes himself,” just as Nietzsche says in *Schopenhauer as Educator* that

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<sup>a</sup> Ibid. See Chapter 4. Also consider BT sec. 15.

ordinary people can “get in touch” with the “goal” of humanity by performing cultural “duties” that will help them cultivate [*Bildung*] a new “image [*Bild*]” of mankind.<sup>a</sup> For Nietzsche and Strauss alike, then, the capacity to erect a conception or “image” of man through moral and cultural norms is what ensures mankind their “position on the summit of nature,” yet Nietzsche will go to great (if problematic) lengths in *Schopenhauer* to show that the source of this image lies not in the conclusions of modern science but in the creative “selves” of artists and philosophers.<sup>b</sup> In contradistinction to Nietzsche, moreover, who argues in *Schopenhauer* that philosophers and artists are so superior to ordinary men that an aristocratic society should be organized to promote their emergence, Strauss says that it is only by means of moral and political equality that man can “maintain himself at his present height and develop himself still further,” for despite their biological differences “all men are the same, having the same needs and claims.”<sup>50</sup>

In the remaining sections of *The Old and New Faith* Strauss explains in detail the new German nationalism required to sustain his doctrine of equality and this nationalism marks yet another clear departure from Nietzsche. According to Strauss it is from a people’s nation that they receive their “language and the entire culture connected with language and literature,” and it should be the business of the German nation-state to foster German culture through cultural policies.<sup>51</sup> For the sake of our nation, Strauss says, “we must be ready to consecrate our best energies and if need be our lives,” whereas Nietzsche argues that sacrifices demanded by the state lead to the deterioration of culture because culture and politics have different ends that draw

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<sup>a</sup> Ibid 4.70. See SE 5. See Franco (2007) for a compelling account of the shortcomings of Nietzsche’s view of culture in his early works. Franco argues that in *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche rejects the idea prevalent in his early works that it is “impossible to build a culture upon knowledge.” In HA Nietzsche argues that “the ‘higher culture’ of the future will be based on knowledge and ‘science’ rather than on religion, art, and metaphysical philosophy.” (Franco 2007, 218).

<sup>b</sup> Ibid 4.72. See SE 4 and chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation.

from the same finite source of spiritual energy.<sup>a</sup> In light of Strauss' argument that the state plays a crucial role in creating culture he concludes his book with two appendices in which he reviews the merits and defects of the German state's greatest writers and composers to remind the German people of their national greatness and prepare them for an even richer future. Because the poetry of writers like Goethe and the music of composers like Beethoven "exerts the most direct influence on our inner lives," Strauss says that the Germans must rely heavily on the models of humanity featured in the works of their artistic geniuses if they hope to cultivate themselves into something higher. Although all four of Nietzsche's *Untimely Observations* feature prominent discussions of literature, music, and philosophy that corroborate his agreement with Strauss on the importance of the genius for the cultivation of a people, he derides Strauss' claim that the modern nation state is conducive to cultural enrichment and argues instead that the true source of culture lies in the unique "selves" of creative individuals which exist *in spite* of the modern state and not because of it.<sup>b</sup> Whereas Strauss praises "the great [Franco-Prussian] war" and the reconstruction of the German State under Bismarck for putting the German spirit back on a "glorious course," Nietzsche says that Germany's newfound military prowess and political unification represent "*the defeat—indeed, the extirpation of the German spirit for the sake of the 'German Reich.'*"<sup>52</sup> There is "no more pernicious understanding," Nietzsche once wrote, "than to think that the Germans' great military success—let alone its victory over France—provided any evidence at all in favor of [German] cultivation."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Ibid and SE 8. See chapters 2 and 6. Also see TI, *What the Germans Lack*, sec. 4.

<sup>b</sup> See SE 8 and chapter 6.

## II. The Decline of German Culture and the Rise of the “Cultivated Philistine”

### *The Problem of German Culture*

Looking back on *David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer* some fifteen years after its original publication Nietzsche characterized the essay as an untimely attack on an unduly proud German cultivation [*Bildung*] that had “no point, no substance, no goal,” and whose spirit was impoverished by the tastes of ““public opinion.””<sup>54</sup> In light of this tepid evaluation of public opinion’s power to sustain genuine culture, it is fitting that the first words of his exposé on German culture are “public opinion.”<sup>a</sup> When these first words are contrasted with the essay’s last ones—“the truth”—a frame appears around the piece which depicts an ascent from the popular rhetoric that harms and degrades culture to the truths that foster and promote it.<sup>55</sup> By speaking the truth about German culture or evaluating that culture in light of true standards, the young Nietzsche’s intention in his essay on David Strauss was to lend a measure of sobriety to a people whose writers and rulers had flattered them into believing that they were one of history’s greatest nations. “Public opinion in Germany,” he begins:

appears almost to forbid one to speak of the deleterious and dangerous consequences of war, especially of a war that ends in victory; as a result, the populace at present is all the more willing to listen to those writers who know of no opinion that is more important than public opinion, and who consequently compete with one another in their zeal to exalt the war and to inquire jubilantly into the powerful phenomenon of its influence on morality, culture [*Kultur*], and art.

When Nietzsche published *David Strauss* a year after the last shot was fired in the Franco-Prussian war the Germans believed they were at the height of their spiritual power. By beginning the essay with an untimely critique of Germany’s most recent military victory, however, he intends to show that a great military conquest can often mark the beginning of an even greater spiritual decline. Although Nietzsche does not explain why he thinks the victory and decline of a people go hand in hand one need look no further than Thucydides and his

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations from this section appear in DS 1 unless otherwise noted.

Athenians.<sup>a</sup> Although their decisive victories in the early battles of the Peloponnesian War were a testament to Athens' great strength, the intoxication they felt in the wake of their victories threatened to plunge them back into subjugation by fostering an inflated sense of superiority that inhibited their capacity to fight well and prudentially. The virtues required for winning, in other words, seem to foster vices like complacency and arrogance if they are not tempered with humility, especially when winning lulls winners into seeing the world in a rosier light than they would if their backs were against the wall.

The German victory in the Franco-Prussian War was of questionable value for Nietzsche because it foreshadowed a steep decline of the German spirit and the corresponding culture that attended it. "Of all the deleterious consequences of the recently fought war with France," he says, "the worst is perhaps one widely held, even universal error: the erroneous idea harbored by public opinion and all public opinionators that in this struggle German culture also came away victorious." According to Nietzsche the idea that German culture won a victory over French culture by military means is an "extremely pernicious" delusion, yet the pernicious character of this delusion cannot be derived from its delusory character alone. In the most telling aside in the essay Nietzsche remarks in passing that he does not object to a people being under the influence of certain kinds of delusions since some are "of the most salutary and blessed nature." Although he does not elaborate further the meaning of this striking aside, it is worth noting that the second *Untimely Observation* features lengthy discussions of the sorts of delusions—both historical and otherwise—that promote healthy human life. Letting his remark on the salutary character of delusion go unexplained for now Nietzsche declares that the Germans' delusion that their

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<sup>a</sup> See TI, Ancients, sec. 2. Consider the fate of the Athenians as portrayed in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, especially as it relates to the Sicilian expedition: "So thoroughly had the present prosperity persuaded the Athenians that nothing could withstand them, and that they could achieve what was possible and what was impracticable alike, with means ample or inadequate it mattered not. The reason for this was their general extraordinary success, which made them confuse their strengths with their hopes" (4.65.3, *The Landmark Thucydides*).

military power is the measure of their cultural potency threatens to transform their recent victory into “a total defeat: *into the defeat—indeed, the extirpation—of the German spirit for the sake of the ‘German Reich.’*” By spending their limited store of spiritual energy pursuing political goals instead of cultural ones the postwar Germans compromised the cultural “Germaneness” their political and military institutions were established to preserve.<sup>a</sup> Whereas the political regimes of great peoples like the Greeks often changed and their militaries stood and fell, Nietzsche argues that a great people’s *culture* is what leaves a lasting mark on humanity because it provides a pathway to long-term spiritual rule that the more transitory power of politics cannot match.<sup>b</sup> Convinced that the “finest seeds of culture” have been sown, however, and that the seeds of German genius are now “pushing up their green shoots or even standing in full flower,” the German people are blind to the fact that their culture played “no part whatsoever” in their military successes, and hence that their claim to being a great people is a questionable one.

#### *The “Cultivated Philistine” as Precursor to the “Last Man”*

The Germans live under the illusion of being a cultivated people when they are actually cultural barbarians because they have permitted the type of man that David Strauss represents to ascend to the seat of cultural power.<sup>c</sup> “What *species* of human being must have risen to power in Germany,” Nietzsche asks, “that they are able to forbid, or at least prevent the expression of [German culture’s defects]? Let me call this power, this species of human being, by its name—they are the *cultivated philistines* [*Bildungsphilister*].” Cultivated philistines are the closest approximation in Nietzsche’s early writings to what his Zarathustra famously calls the “last

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<sup>a</sup> See TI, Germans, Sec. 4.

<sup>b</sup> When the older Nietzsche predicted in *Ecce Homo* that “the notion of politics” would one day “completely dissolve into a spiritual war,” he seems to have had in mind the sorts of spiritual or cultural conflicts he is concerned with in his essay on Strauss (EH, Destiny, sec. 1). Also see Abbey (1998, 92-95).

<sup>c</sup> All quotations in this section are from DS 2 unless otherwise noted.

man” in the fifth section of the prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In section two of *David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer* Nietzsche’s intention is to lay bare the soul of the cultivated philistine in order to foster contempt for it, thereby taking his first steps toward the establishment of a Nietzschean “we” whose task it will be to challenge the philistine “we” featured in Strauss’ book and help bring about a renewal of German culture.<sup>a</sup>

Nietzsche begins his discussion of the cultivated philistine by noting that the word “philistine” has long been a slang term used by university students to signify “in a wider but wholly popular sense” the *opposite* of a genuinely cultivated person. In contradistinction to the typical or traditional philistine, however, the *cultivated* philistine whose confessions “we must listen to if he offers them” is more contemptible because his cultural delusions are pernicious. What separates the classical philistine from his “cultivated” counterpart is that the classical philistine *admits* his philistinism whereas a cultivated philistine “fancies himself to be a son of the muses and a cultured person [in] an incomprehensible delusion that makes evident he does not even know the difference between the philistine and its opposite.” The cultivated philistine, in other words, denies the fact that he is a philistine at all.<sup>b</sup> In the same way that Zarathustra’s last men “have something of which they are proud” called “culture” which is said to be worthy of the contempt of truly cultivated men, the cultivated philistine is proud of his apparently high state of culture even though it is really what Nietzsche calls a “phlegmatic insensitivity to culture.”<sup>56</sup> Like Zarathustra’s last man, moreover, the cultivated philistine exhibits a “total lack of self-knowledge” and he is convinced that he is the embodiment of a genuine culture because “everywhere he encounters cultured people of this same type.” All institutions for schooling,

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<sup>a</sup> See chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>b</sup> This statement reinforces Nietzsche’s remark in part one that although delusions “can be of the most salutary and blessed nature” because they make a certain sort of cultivation possible, they can also be harmful to cultivation. To put the problem another way: not all delusions can be said to be life-promoting because delusions about one’s culture (that which is responsible for producing life-promoting delusions among a people) are life denying.

cultivation, and art in Germany are said by Nietzsche to turn youths into cultivated philistines, and these youths carry around wherever they go “the triumphant feeling of being worthy representative[s] of present-day German culture, making [their] demands and laying [their] claims as a consequence.”

According to Nietzsche the stylistic contortions and theoretical contradictions that these cultivated philistines must maintain in order to claim that their degraded culture is estimable are appalling to those who know what true culture is. Since true culture always presupposes a “unity of artistic style” and since even a bad and degenerate culture “cannot be conceived other than as a diversity brought together in the harmony of a single style,” the cultivated philistine deludes himself into believing that he possesses true culture because he sees “everywhere people cast from the same mold as himself, [and] he infers from this uniformity of all ‘cultivated persons’ the stylistic unity of German cultivation.” Making matters worse is the fact that the most outspoken among the philistine elite have taken to writing books like Strauss’ *The Old and New Faith* in which they laud their own way of thinking in order to attract followers. For this reason the bond of a “silent convention” about matters such as religion and art is said by Nietzsche to embrace the philistine faithful wherever they go, and the false sense of uniformity their writers give them seduces them into believing that their culture is unified even though it subsists only on the basis of the “exclusion and negation” of the demands of a true culture. Far from possessing culture, then, what cultivated philistines actually possess is a “barbarism built to last,” or a “stylized barbarism” which mistakes for unity of style the exclusion of all styles and bears a “negatively uniform stamp.” Because cultivated philistines actively avoid all actions and tastes that are in accord with a true uniformity of style, moreover, they recoil at Nietzsche’s suggestion that a stylistic unity must be restored to Germany through the works of philosophers like



Schopenhauer or artists like Wagner. Just as Zarathustra's last men stand in the way of the coming into being of the overman and all that this superior type represents, cultivated philistines are said to stand in the way of the coming into being of those who are "powerful and creative" and whose potential to create culture will be explored in *Schopenhauer as Educator*.

Although Nietzsche vehemently criticizes the trend of cultivated philistinism he sees spreading through Germany and insists that German culture will wither away if it ever succumbs fully to philistine tastes, he also adopts a surprising *sympathy* for cultivated philistinism when he acknowledges in passing that a people's philistine descent can remedy the spiritual exhaustion that sometimes arises as a consequence of cultural overexertion. According to Nietzsche the philistine's cultural laziness and indifference "made a certain sense" in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when so much "confused seeking, experimenting, destroying, promising, surmising, and hoping began and got so muddled that the intellectual middle class [in Germany] was justified in fearing for itself." After the death of Kant in 1804 and the publication of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in 1807, he implies, an array of "fantastic and language-perverting philosophies" and a "fanatical-purposive view of history" found their way onto the German spiritual stage that justified the German middle class's inclination to "reject with a shrug of [their] shoulders" the cultural "debauchery" that resulted from their philosophers' attempts to establish the German spirit anew. By approving and even applauding the philistine's dismissal of early 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophy Nietzsche tacitly acknowledges that the very cultural activity he hopes to rekindle by means of philosophy has the dangerous potential to lose control of itself and produce a jumble of warring philosophies that can alienate a people from the true concerns of culture. In circumstances such as these he indicates that "philistine" authors like David Strauss are *beneficial* for culture because their declaration of its flourishing (however false it may be)

halts the spiritual chaos that results from a people's search for their cultural identity. Despite the fact that declaring the false arrival of a cultural golden age plunges a people into a state of artistic and intellectual stasis, in other words, it also provides them with a much needed period of spiritual respite. If such respite is utilized properly it staves off further cultural decay, allowing a people to catch their spiritual breath and bringing them to a self-conscious crossroads at which they must choose to awaken and break free from their philistinism or to embrace it as "genuine" culture and decay into a satiated barbarism. Because German culture had been catching its cultural breath for over half a century by the time Nietzsche wrote his essay on Strauss in 1873, his intention in the first *Untimely Observations* seems to have been to attack brutally cultivated philistinism and its most prominent leader in order to show Germany that it had arrived at the moment of a self-conscious crossroads. While he acknowledges in passing his gratitude to philistine thought for putting a stop to the confusion that arose in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he indicates that the time has come to expose the philistine's spiritual crudity before he acquires once and for all "the seat of supreme judge over all German cultural problems." If left unchecked philistine culture could do irreversible damage to the German spirit, and Nietzsche takes a noticeably harsh tone in his essay on Strauss because he wanted it to send shockwaves through German academic circles.<sup>a</sup> "The uproar [that the first Untimely Observation] prompted was in every sense magnificent," he wrote in *Ecce Homo*, and "the response came from all sides and by no means just from the old friends of David Strauss."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> See EH, Books, *Untimelies*, sec. 1, for Nietzsche's account of the uproar the essay caused in Germany.

According to Nietzsche the true character of the cultivated philistine comes to light only in those rare moments when he confesses his weakness in writing, and “the more often and more cynically he admits it the more clearly he betrays his sense of self-importance and superiority.”<sup>a</sup> When writers like Strauss confess their opinions in the open for all to see Nietzsche says that those interested in the spiritual sickness that afflicts modern times should listen carefully, for such confessions amount in practice to an account of the inner life of modern philistinism straight from the source. Since the Germany of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century represents what Nietzsche calls the “age of cynical philistine confessions” and since David Strauss has recently made his cynical confession in a book, Nietzsche devotes sections four through nine of *David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer* to a critical examination of the “cynical confession” contained in *The Old and New Faith*. Such an examination, he says, promises to provide a clearer picture of who the cultivated philistine is by giving a more concrete account of his longings, beliefs, and tastes, and this account in turn will evince the violence done to human nature by the mixture of impoverished nationalism and scientific enthusiasm that characterized the spiritual life of 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany. “The long and serious study of the *average* man constitutes a necessary part of the life-history of every philosopher,” Nietzsche wrote in *Beyond Good and Evil*, “and perhaps the most disagreeable, odious, and disappointing part.” Philosophers who are fortunate, however, come across cynics whose confessions serve as “suitable shortcuts and helps” for their study of average men. In David Strauss the confessor the young Nietzsche thought he had found precisely the cynical “shortcut” he needed to study the average man, for he had found a rare type of human being who possessed “that degree of spirituality and that itch” that compelled him to confess his mediocrity before witnesses and in writing.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> DS 2.

Before analyzing Strauss' writings in the later sections of the essay, however, Nietzsche pauses in section three to reflect on the question of what Strauss' eagerness to transform his own beliefs into new cultural standards indicates about his opinion of himself.<sup>a</sup> "The fact alone that [Strauss] lets himself make public confessions about his beliefs already constitutes a confession," Nietzsche says, and Strauss must hold himself in high esteem if he judges his own beliefs to be worthy of adoption by thousands of Germans. Although Nietzsche says that anyone who has reached his fortieth birthday has the right to compose an autobiography since even an "insignificant person" can have interesting experiences, confessing one's *beliefs* is an incomparably vainer task because it presupposes that the confessor ascribes value not only to what he knows but especially to what he has opined. Countless scholars and historians far superior to Strauss have not overstepped their bounds and "entertain[ed] us with their beliefs rather than with their scholarly knowledge," Nietzsche observes, yet Strauss considers even what he has "half dreamily thought up" to be material worthy of public consumption. Given Strauss' surprising willingness to write books on subjects he admits in his introduction he has not understood, Nietzsche wonders what kind of nature Strauss understands himself to possess if he judges his mere "beliefs" worthy of being studied in all corners of Germany.<sup>b</sup> "The last thing a true thinker will wish to know from natures such as Strauss' is the kind of beliefs they tolerate," Nietzsche remarks, especially since "absolutely no intelligent spirit would speak in this manner, least of all a true genius."

Strauss' eagerness to legislate his personal beliefs as cultural standards can be explained by the fact that he does not conceive of himself as a cultivated philistine but rather as Germany's next great thinker. In notebook entries from the period in which the Strauss essay was written

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations in this section appear in DS 3 unless otherwise noted.

<sup>b</sup> See Golder (1990, 8-9).

Nietzsche expresses a keen interest in a future project investigating “the way in which the entire life of a people reflects [...] the image [*Bild*] offered by their highest geniuses,” and his fear that the life of the Germans was beginning to reflect the “image” of David Strauss seems to have been what motivated him to write his critique in the first place.<sup>59</sup> Arguing in *Schopenhauer as Educator* that Rousseau, Goethe, and Schopenhauer are examples of profound thinkers who devoted their lives to cultivating (*Bildung*) new images (*Bild*) of humanity in their works, Nietzsche feared that David Strauss would soon infuse the Germans—and perhaps the Europe over which they ruled—with his own philistine image if he was not exposed by a superior mind as a fraud.<sup>a</sup> Precisely because Nietzsche dreads the effect that the popular imitation of Strauss’ “image” could have on Germany, then, he takes pains in his essay to portray Strauss as a thinker whose books have “no effect” and who is “taken by no one to be a philosopher.”<sup>b</sup> “Imitation,” he wrote in his notebooks, “is a means employed by all culture, and by this means instinct is gradually produced. [...] Thus arise types which strictly imitate the first, merely similar specimens, i.e., what are copied are the greatest most powerful specimens.”<sup>60</sup> If David Strauss (instead of geniuses like Rousseau and Schopenhauer) became modern Germany’s most “powerful specimen,” philistine culture would do irreversible damage to the German people on the deepest instinctual level.<sup>c</sup>

Because Nietzsche dreaded the thought that Strauss’ so-called “genius” might inspire imitation and accelerate the spread of cultivated philistinism his rhetorical strategy in *David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer* is to mock Strauss as a narcissist who hopes to found a new religion. Although Strauss’ readers come to him in search of a teacher and philosopher

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<sup>a</sup> SE 4. See Chapter 5 for an explanation of this mechanic.

<sup>b</sup> See the final sentences of section 3 on Strauss’ effect. At first Nietzsche simply declares that Strauss’ writings have no effect, but then he immediately prescribes a regimen for reading Strauss’ latest book in order to insure that it has no effect. The regimen confirms Nietzsche’s fear that Strauss’ writings will have a catastrophic effect if they go unopposed.

<sup>c</sup> See Chapter 5.

Nietzsche argues that they only find an evangelical who “wants to be a new believer and is proud of his ‘new faith.’” By calling his book a “catechism of modern ideas” and “the sole universal avenue of the future,” Strauss exhibits the “proud sound characteristic of [all] founders of religions” and reveals his ambition to “found the religion of the future.”<sup>a</sup> Although Strauss maintains that “the time does not yet appear to me to be ripe [to found a new religion]” and that “it has not even crossed my mind to seek to destroy any church,” Nietzsche insists that his affected modesty is merely a rhetorical device employed by every “coquettish religion founder” who secretly longs for disciples.<sup>b</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> DS 4.

<sup>b</sup> Consider Nietzsche’s claim in *Ecce Homo* that: “there is nothing in me of a founder of religions—religions are for the rabble; I need to wash my hands after contact with religious people...I don’t *want* any ‘disciples’: I think I am too malicious to believe in myself; I never address crowds...I have a terrible fear of being declared *holy* one day [...]” (EH, *Destiny*, sec.1) At the very least this statement gives some indication of the character of the “we” that the late Nietzsche, at any rate, sought to gather together in books like BGE.

## Chapter 2: Nietzsche's Critique of Strauss' "New Faith" in Modern Science

### I. The Optimism of David Strauss

#### *The Philistine's Conception of Heaven as Easygoing Enlightenment*

To prevent his contemporaries from being seduced by David Strauss and the empty charms of his new religion, Nietzsche begins his critical analysis of *The Old and New Faith* by urging his readers to "preserve a certain degree of caution" when confronted with Strauss' fanaticism.<sup>a</sup> Citing Strauss' own discussion of the spiritual dangers posed by men like Jesus in the chapter of the book on religion, Nietzsche accuses Strauss of being suspiciously well-versed in the ways of "noble, intelligent fanatics" who know how to "stimulate, elevate, and even have a historically enduring influence." Although Strauss' own work goes to great lengths to warn against the influence of intelligent "fanatics" like Jesus because their zeal can "lead us astray if we fail to place [their] influence under the control of reason," Nietzsche is much more concerned with the influence of what he calls "unintelligent fanatics"—men like David Strauss—who "do not stimulate, do not elevate, and [nevertheless] hold out the prospect of [...] dominating the future." When we encounter unintelligent fanatics like Strauss, Nietzsche says, we must "place their fanaticism [*Schwärmerei*] under the control of reason" so that it is prevented from having an effect on the general public. Since Strauss numbers among those "truly dangerous people" who can rapidly destroy a culture if their "unintelligent" influence is left unchecked, Nietzsche proposes to devote the rest of his essay to submitting Strauss' new faith to the authority of "controlling reason" in order to defuse its spiritual potential. Despite criticizing science in the opening section of *David Strauss*

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations in this section can be found in DS 4-5.

for having a destructive effect on artistic culture, Nietzsche now intends to use it (or its rational control) to destroy the blossoming philistine culture he despises. By examining Strauss' scientific religion under the microscope of scientific reason, one could say, he turns science against science and uses it as a weapon to debunk Strauss' scientific worldview and save Germany from further decline into scientism.<sup>a</sup>

By submitting *The Old and New Faith* to rational analysis Nietzsche's intention is to seek "an honest answer" to three lines of inquiry.<sup>b</sup> First, he will investigate how believers in the Strauss' new faith conceive of their heaven since "the manner in which a religion depicts its heaven" exposes the deepest longings of its adherents and is thus a pathway to their souls. After providing his readers with a sketch of the philistine's conception of heaven and showing what this conception reveals about the philistine's hopes for the world, he will turn to a second line of inquiry in which he will investigate the nature of the courage the new faith promises to cultivate in its believers.<sup>c</sup> Because the new faith's metaphysics and ethics do not provide its believers with a conception of the world that adequately prepares them to face the hardships of human life, Nietzsche concludes that Strauss' claim that his doctrine is for those who are tough-minded, honest, and coldly scientific is entirely unsubstantiated.<sup>d</sup> Once he has demonstrated that those to whom the new faith appeals are cowards who fear or hate human life and are incapable of stomaching the terrifying conclusions of true science, Nietzsche concludes with a third line of inquiry (treated in the appendix to this dissertation) which examines how Strauss

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<sup>a</sup> In the *Use and Disadvantage of History for Life* Nietzsche takes a similar approach and argues that the Germans must use history to save German culture from further decline into historicism. See chapter 4.

<sup>b</sup> When reading Nietzsche's critique of *The Old and New Faith* it is worth considering whether his attack on Strauss' new faith means that he understands himself to be a defender of the old ones (he indicates in section 9 that there are multiple old faiths). To what degree does Nietzsche present himself as a defender of Christianity in this essay? To what degree is he open to the position of faith or revelation more generally?

<sup>c</sup> See DS 6 and 7.

<sup>d</sup> See Golder (1990) 8-14 for an account similar to the one I present.



writes his books, who his audience is, and what the popularity of bad writing foreshadows about the future of German culture.<sup>a</sup> “Strauss the confessor will answer the first and second questions [on heaven and courage],” Nietzsche says, “and Strauss the writer the third.”

After laying out his plan Nietzsche immediately begins his analysis of the new faith’s conception of heaven. Since Strauss’ scientific critique of Christianity rules out the existence of an otherworldly afterlife Nietzsche advises those searching for a description of the new faith’s heaven to scour Strauss’ book for hints about what “heaven on earth” might be like. The single “paradisiacal page” in *The Old and New Faith* and the only one in which Strauss explicitly describes his understanding of “bliss” appears in the book’s introduction. In this passage (quoted in full in chapter 1 above) Strauss says that the greatest pleasure available to a believer in modern science’s capacity to guide human affairs is the casual reading of “generally comprehensible study aids” and “historical studies” in the fields of politics, natural science, literature, and music. In these sorts of studies Strauss and his “we” find “satisfying stimuli for the intellect and the heart [...], and thus we live and go our way in bliss.” When cultivated philistines read these words Nietzsche says they cheer because “this is really how we live and how we spend our days.” Heavenly bliss for members of the new faith, then, consists in the freedom to pursue an intellectual universality which appears at first glance to produce genuinely cultivated human beings but which actually produces a culture of last men whose bliss consists in their entertainment by means of what Strauss calls the “sportive” pursuit of knowledge.<sup>b</sup> According to Nietzsche the “historical studies” Strauss says his audience

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<sup>a</sup> See DS 8 through 12 and my appendix.

<sup>b</sup> See Leo Strauss, (1988, 236; 1989, 5).

engages in are euphemisms for their coffee drinking and newspaper reading, while their participation in what Strauss calls “the establishment of the German state” is merely a polite way of describing their many “visits to the beer hall.” The “generally comprehensible” study aids that help them understand nature are said by Nietzsche to be sophisticated ways of describing their weekend “strolls through the zoo,” while their so-called “study” of music is but a romanticizing of what they do at popular concerts. The cultivated philistine’s “heaven on earth,” therefore, consists primarily in a tasteless appreciation and indiscriminate consumption of popular culture.

To reinforce the fact that cultivated philistines lack taste Nietzsche turns to a brief examination of the two appendices to Strauss’ book entitled “On Our Great Poets” and “On Our Great Musicians” in which Strauss claims that the casual study of art and music can “purge and wash away” one’s blemishes and free one from the “crude reality and the constraints of [modern] life.” In his appendices on art Nietzsche says that Strauss gives his readers an inside look at the way cultivated philistines “edify” themselves in their “private little art rooms,” moving effortlessly between shallow discussions of Goethe, Beethoven, Schiller, and Mozart. A philistine confident enough to give his opinions on matters of high culture like these, says Nietzsche, represents “the purest specimen of the philistine type,” and his writings must be studied with care because they expose the corrupt tastes of the typical philistine mind. When discussing the works of Goethe, for example, Strauss makes the claim that he had “no dramatic talent” because his plays did not make use of the “drastic, thrilling devices” needed to satisfy modern man’s hunger for stimulation. In his remarks on Beethoven, moreover, Strauss calls the quartets candy store “confections” and says that many of Beethoven’s greatest symphonies sound

uninspired.<sup>1</sup> “The composers of whom Strauss speaks seem to us, as long as he speaks of them, to be falsely identified,” Nietzsche says,” and “we are forced to believe that he must be talking about other composers—if, in fact, he is not simply describing some droll apparitions.” Worst of all is the fact that Strauss constantly portrays *himself* (and not men like Beethoven or Goethe) as “the darling of the muses,” and these muses seem to tell him that “they accompanied Beethoven only a short distance [...], but they take *him*—the famous writer—by the hand [...] where they [will] remain unflinchingly at his side.”<sup>2a</sup>

The fact that the German public raises no objections and even goes so far as to cheer when “the most wretched philistinism makes such a spectacle of itself” indicates clearly enough for Nietzsche how far their taste has fallen in recent years. Embracing as the genius of their time an “inartistic minimaestro” who sanctifies himself before the “greatest and purest products of Germanic genius as if they were Godless obscenities,” they derive their sense of cultural superiority from a sham universality which inflames the heart with vanity and withers the mind. Although Nietzsche says that the German public sometimes experience “fits of doubt” about philistine culture and secretly wonder whether it might be possible for a “domineering genius” to overturn it, they are disturbingly unmoved by the fact that such true geniuses no longer exist.<sup>b</sup> Despite their reverence for the minds of great men like Lessing who (unbeknownst to them) would be capable of enriching German culture if his writings were taken seriously and studied with care, they praise only what they call Lessing’s intellectual “universality” and are completely oblivious to the fact this universality only arose in opposition to the cultivated

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<sup>a</sup> Nietzsche’s criticisms of Strauss’ musical taste appear in section 5 of the essay. This quotation and those at the beginning of the next paragraph appear in this section. All quotations on Lessing come from section 4.

<sup>b</sup> This is the primary theme of *Schopenhauer as Educator*. See SE sec. 7, cf. BGE aph. 203.

philistines who besieged on all sides his attempt to affect a spiritual restoration of Germany. It was “precisely your numbing effect,” Nietzsche says, “the struggle against your ridiculous clods and Gods, the deplorable state of your theaters, your scholars, your theologians, that destroyed [Lessing] before he could dare even once that eternal flight which was his purpose in life.” After showing that the type of human being produced by Strauss’ new religion is a type whose blasé dilettantism inhibits the flourishing and works of great philosophic men like Lessing, Nietzsche further criticizes the cultivated philistines for inhibiting even the work of capable artists like Friedrich Schiller who was “such a glorious and divine plaything [which] you [philistines] broke.” In sum, says Nietzsche says in a preview of themes addressed in the next three *Untimely Observations*:

you [cultivated philistines] have done nothing to further the life’s work of your geniuses, and now you want to derive from this the dogma that no one’s work should be furthered any longer? But for each of them you were that ‘opposition of the numbing world’ [...], for each of them you were the sullenly dull, or jealously narrow-minded, or maliciously selfish opponents. In spite of you they created their works; against you they directed their attacks; and thanks to you they went under too soon, leaving their days’ work undone, broken, or stunned by struggles.

#### *David Strauss’ Uncourageous Optimism*

At the beginning of section six of *David Strauss* Nietzsche gives a blunt answer to the question of how Strauss and his followers conceive of their heaven. Never one to shy away from harsh metaphors, Nietzsche concludes that they conceive of it as a place where they can: “dwell in the works of our great poets and composers like maggots that live by destroying, admire by consuming, and worship by digesting.”<sup>a</sup> Just as a maggot “imagines heaven to be a fat carcass” the cultivated philistine imagines it to be a quiet

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations in this section appear in DS 6.

room in which he casually enlightens himself by “gnawing at the entrails” of the greatest German geniuses without the seriousness they demand or the solemnness they deserve.

Now that the inquiry concerning the new faith’s conception of heaven is complete Nietzsche turns his attention to the second question he proposed to answer about Straussian religion: how much courage does the new faith inspire in its believers and how well does it prepare them to cope with the vagaries and vicissitudes of human life? While the bulk of Nietzsche’s critique of the new faith’s capacity to inspire courage does not appear until he analyzes Straussian ethics and metaphysics in section seven of the essay, section six serves as a preparation for this analysis by arguing that Strauss’ entire worldview rests on a groundless theoretical optimism which is easily mistaken for courage but which is actually a byproduct of his cowardice and immodesty. Only if “courage and immodesty were one and the same thing” could Strauss be called courageous, Nietzsche argues, and whatever appears courageous in his disposition is really only his cowardice masquerading in the confidence engendered by his literary success.<sup>a</sup> Amply indulging in the “impudence to which every triumphant hero believes himself entitled” Strauss’ literary success has caused him to suffer from the victor’s delusion (common in Germany after the Franco-Prussian war) that the world is a welcoming place in which “every flower grows for him” and him alone.

To begin his critique of Straussian optimism Nietzsche observes that Strauss frequently retreats from the more sobering conclusions of modern science in a way that lends his apparently hard-nosed scientism a tinge of intellectual softness. When outlining his scientific conception of the cosmos, for example, Strauss characterizes it as a terrifying and indifferent “machine made of iron toothed cogs, heavy pistons, and rods,”

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations from this section appear in DS 6.

yet he immediately appends to his description the comforting reminder that “it consists not merely in the movement of these pitiless cogs, but it also gushes *soothing oil*.” While this industrial metaphor was doubtless intended to comfort Strauss’ followers by portraying the cosmos as a hospitable place for humanity despite its mechanical indifference, the fact that Strauss does not provide any evidence for his soothing positivity suggests that he lacks the courage to confront the bleaker side of modern science’s conclusions.

If the preceding metaphor does not sufficiently expose the fact that an ungrounded optimism underlies Strauss’ worldview Nietzsche says the procedure Strauss employs “to establish the nature of his own attitude toward the cosmos” provides what is perhaps the clearest example of the naiveté characteristic of Straussian doctrine.

Throughout Strauss’ supposedly scientific account of the cosmos Nietzsche says that the question posed by Faust’s lover about whether he truly loves her is always in the back of Strauss’ mind: “he loves me—he loves me not—he loves me—he loves me not?” While Strauss does not pluck the petals off a flower to determine whether the cosmos loves him, his procedure for determining its status as a generous caregiver in whose arms we should “surrender ourselves in loving trust” is no less arbitrary because it is just as irrational.

According to Strauss the easiest way to see that the cosmos loves human beings is to examine the old pessimist Schopenhauer, who “takes advantage of every opportunity to slap our idea [of a loving cosmos] in the face.”<sup>a</sup> Unable to bear the grim picture that pessimism paints of man’s situation in the world Nietzsche says that Strauss’ procedure for proving the legitimacy of his optimistic worldview is to punish himself with Schopenhauerian pessimism before anesthetizing his pain with joyful optimism.

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<sup>a</sup> Nietzsche’s words.

Although this procedure makes Strauss appear courageous to his readers because it appears to involve a sort of refutation of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche says that it really consists of the following masochistic steps:

[1] Strauss slaps open Schopenhauer—to be sure, he even slaps him *around*—whereupon Schopenhauer takes the opportunity to slap Strauss in the face. [2] To this, Strauss ‘reacts religiously,’ which means that he beats up some more on Schopenhauer, reviles him, accuses him of absurdities, blasphemies, and infamies, and even pronounces the judgment that Schopenhauer is out of his mind. [3] The upshot of this mugging [is Strauss’ claim that]: ‘we demand for our universe the same piety as the devout of the old school demanded for their God’—in short: that he love me!

It is only by causing himself tremendous spiritual pain, in other words, that Strauss is able to arrive at the Christian-sounding conclusion that the entire world (despite scientific evidence to the contrary) is love.

According to Nietzsche the most egregious example of the aforementioned procedure appears in the fourth chapter of Strauss’ book when he tries to prove that the cosmos must be benevolently disposed toward man because Schopenhauer’s claim that the cosmos is malevolent is technically unthinkable. “If [what Schopenhauer says] is true and things would be better off if the world did not exist,” Strauss argues, then:

philosophical thought, which forms a part of this world, would be better off if it did not think. It does not occur to the pessimistic philosopher that, more than anything else, his thought that declares the world to be bad also declares itself to be bad; but if thought that declares the world to be bad is bad thought, then the world, in fact, is good. Optimism may as a rule make things too easy on itself, and for that reason Schopenhauer’s demonstrations of the powerful role that pain and misfortune play in the world are entirely in order; but every true philosophy is necessarily optimistic since otherwise it denies its own right to exist.<sup>2</sup>

Admitting here that optimism “may as a rule make things too easy on itself” Strauss nonetheless maintains that optimistic philosophy is the only legitimate kind because it is the only kind whose positive judgment of the world justifies the activity of philosophizing. From Nietzsche’s point of view, however, Strauss’ so-called argument on behalf of optimism amounts to using “the most untenable sophisms” because it does

not consist of a real argument. Although Nietzsche never explicitly states his objections to Strauss' position these objections would seem to take their bearings from the fact that Strauss never considers whether it would be possible to maintain philosophy's goodness without maintaining at the same time the unqualified goodness of the entire world. A world which allows for the possibility of philosophy, for example, could still be judged good even if the insights philosophy provides into the human situation are not always joyful, and this position is not far from the one Nietzsche himself takes in his later writings. The most glaring weakness of Strauss' optimistic account of the world, then, is that he never explains (but only asserts) that any philosophy that concludes that the world is inhospitable to man necessarily compromises philosophy's goodness and legitimacy with its conclusions. While the thought that man may not be able to obtain comprehensive happiness in this world is certainly painful, there is no reason to conclude from this thought (as Strauss does) that in order for *any* philosophy to be true it must come to optimistic conclusions about the human situation.<sup>3</sup>

*David Strauss' Uncourageous Ethics and Metaphysics*

Section seven of *David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer* continues the investigation of the timidity that is peculiar to the "classical philistine" he represents. Turning from a critique of Strauss' optimism in section six to a more focused critique of his ethical and metaphysical doctrines, Nietzsche's remarks in section seven expose Strauss as a man of harsh words but soft deeds who delights in making scientific assertions whose expression "requires courage" but who "never manages to carry out an



aggressive act.”<sup>a</sup> When Strauss condemns Christianity, sanctifies Darwin, and affirms the mechanistic and improvident character of the cosmos he uses “words that are as insulting as possible [to the old faith],” yet once his words fade away he proves himself to be “more cowardly than someone who has never dared to speak.” Although he rejects on scientific grounds the old faith’s embrace of the religious “illusions” that beautify the world, Nietzsche says that he is not courageous enough to think through science’s harsh conclusions about man’s actual worldly situation. Stuck in the gray area between a religion that inspires hope and a science that demands sobriety, believers in Strauss’ new faith are neither spirited enough to bear the disappointments of life nor hardened enough to stare them in the face.

According to Nietzsche it is Strauss’ attempt to marry modern science to Christian morality that exposes him as a “hero in words alone” and compels him to shun every occasion to turn words into deeds. Although Strauss praises Darwinian science for discovering the principle of the “right of the stronger” Nietzsche says that he “frivolously jumps over” this principle in his ethical theory which teaches that there is no such thing as a “stronger” class of human beings because all men are equal and have “identical needs and claims.”<sup>4</sup> Despite rejecting Christianity in the first chapter of his book on the grounds that modern science refutes the existence of the Christian God, then, Nietzsche argues that Strauss is too timid to come to terms with the fact that this very rejection evinces the groundlessness of his great moral insight that all men deserve equal treatment. If (as Strauss maintains in the early chapters of his book) the human being’s “entire evolution [...] depends on the [scientific] law of individual differences,” then he must explain why the ethical theory outlined in later chapters commands that all men “act

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations in this section appear in DS 7 unless otherwise noted.

as though there were no individual differences.”<sup>a</sup> Rather than offering such an explanation, however, Strauss only “flees the task of explanation by making leaps into imperative diction,” and according to Nietzsche the unfinished task that stands before Strauss is to derive from his own Darwinistic premises the “human kindness, compassion, love, and self-denial” that his ethical theory requires.

Foreshadowing the early stages of the aristocratic morality that would become the hallmark of his later writings, Nietzsche notes in passing that if Strauss were a more courageous thinker he could have used the popularity of his book to establish “a moral code for life” instead of rejecting the Darwinian right of the strong for pity and equality. To establish a true Darwinian moral code that promoted the flourishing of the highest human types, however, Nietzsche says that Strauss would have needed an “inwardly undaunted sensibility like that of Hobbes” so that he could deduce from the *bellum omnium contra omnes* a morality which affirmed individual differences and recognized an order of rank among men. “Here,” Nietzsche says, “was a real opportunity to exhibit natural courage,” yet in order to seize it Strauss would have had to turn his back on the masses to whom his book is addressed. Whereas Strauss was ultimately unwilling to relegate the many and embrace a morality whose justice consisted in acknowledging the superiority of the few, Nietzsche implies by critique that his mission in the sequels to *David Strauss* is to restore the rule of the spiritually strong by affecting a shift in European morals toward greater valuation of extraordinary types.<sup>b</sup> Although Strauss appears to harbor similar ambitions when he instructs his followers to live in accord with the “*idea of the species*” and to bring themselves into “abiding concord with the destiny

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<sup>a</sup> This is Nietzsche speaking, not Strauss.

<sup>b</sup> See chapters 5-6 and *Schopenhauer as Educator* secs. 7-10.

of mankind,” his project is ultimately directionless because he never clarifies what the idea of the species and the destiny of mankind should be.<sup>a</sup> Under the concept of the human being “one can yoke together the most diverse and manifold things, from the Patagonian savage to Master Strauss [himself],” Nietzsche writes, “and no one will dare to say with equal justification: ‘live like a Patagonian savage!’ and ‘live like Master Strauss!’”

After finding the new faith’s moral doctrine unfit to cultivate a spiritually strong and courageous people Nietzsche next turns to an examination of Straussian religion and discovers that here too “courage reverts to its opposite.”<sup>b</sup> He begins by observing the peculiar fact that Strauss never adequately treats the existence of evil in his description of the new faith, choosing instead to downplay the existence of evil to provide his followers with a picture of a world that is rational, harmonious, and benevolent. According to Strauss’ new faith in modern science the cosmos is a “laboratory of the reasonable and good,” and all that is in it exists in accordance with “eternal laws from One primal source of all life, of all reason, and of all goodness.”<sup>5</sup> By failing to acknowledge that “all ruin, all unreason, and all evil” also spring from this so-called “primal source,” however, Nietzsche says that Strauss actively denies nature’s ugly and destructive side in order to preserve his view that the cosmos is worthy of “religious veneration” and of being addressed by the name “God.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, by conceiving of the cosmos as a venerable “God,” a “he,” and a “power” to whom “we should surrender ourselves in loving trust,” Strauss contradicts his earlier claim that his scientific sophistication prevents him from forming a conception of God as a “personality.”<sup>7</sup> Despite his argument that the new faith

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<sup>a</sup> See SE secs. 4-7 for Nietzsche’s account of the idea of the species and the destiny of mankind.

<sup>b</sup> All quotations in this section appear in DS 7 unless otherwise noted.

liberates its adherents from the expectation of obtaining something from a God who requires their worship, then, Nietzsche's criticisms of Strauss' show that he has not yet made good on the promise to "sever [himself] from the cosmic conception of ancient Christianity."<sup>8</sup>

Lacking the scientific courage to acknowledge and think through his longings for a provident God yet revering scientific rigor all the while, Strauss' greatest metaphysical blunder is that he has created a religion that claims to be scientifically neutral but whose moralism violates the laws of scientific objectivity upon which it purports to be founded. According to Strauss science can now demonstrate that chance is an "unreasonable master of the world" and that "the chain of causation manifest in the world is reason and necessity itself."<sup>a</sup> Since he never explains how this demonstration works, however, but merely asserts it as truth, Nietzsche treats Strauss' claim as a moral prejudice whose source lies in his hope that there is such a thing as a rational cosmic justice. Because Strauss asserts that the world is ordered in an "absolutely reasonable and purposive manner and hence that it embodies a revelation of eternal goodness itself," he concludes that those (like Nietzsche and Schopenhauer) who fault nature for being irrational are bad people who will the world's destruction because they question its laws.<sup>b</sup> By assigning malicious motives to those who question nature's good intentions, however, Strauss' religious fervor leads him outside the boundaries of what Nietzsche calls an "honest natural scientist" whose aim should be to demonstrate universal scientific laws without making "any assertions whatsoever" about their ethical claims.

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<sup>a</sup> Nietzsche also associates this position with Hegel's philosophy.

<sup>b</sup> See SE secs. 5 and 7 and BGE aph. 203 where Nietzsche does precisely what Strauss prohibits and criticizes nature for being clumsy and thus unable to accomplish its own goals.

Because Strauss maintains that the world is ordered in a purposive manner and is a revelation of “eternal goodness,” his new faith in modern science is in the difficult philosophic position of needing what Nietzsche calls “a complete cosmodicy” that justifies the goodness of every event and refutes the cosmological skepticism of thinkers like Schopenhauer. Once Strauss has realized that he has reached this “embarrassing juncture” he ventures what Nietzsche calls the “thinnest yet most gout-swollen metaphysical hypothesis imaginable” which parodies a statement once made by Lessing. To defend the goodness of the world against Schopenhauer’s claim that it is “wretched” because it was created by an “ill-advised God” who “lacked anything better to do,” Strauss invokes Lessing’s famous remark that if God offered him a choice between the *possession* of absolute truth on one hand or the perpetual *yearning* for it on the other he would choose the yearning rather than the possession. “This statement,” Strauss writes, “has always had such a special impact on me because I perceived behind its subjective meaning the resonance of an objective meaning that is of infinite consequence.”<sup>9</sup> This “infinite consequence,” Strauss says, derives from the fact that Lessing’s remark can be taken out of context and applied to God himself in order to prove that the world is fundamentally good. When one comes to see that the “creator himself” shares Lessing’s opinion about knowledge and prefers “striving after truth over the peaceful possession of it,” Strauss alleges that the goodness of the world becomes manifest because one sees that God is not a bored deity who entertains himself by making men miserable but rather a gaily inquisitive scientist who “reserves for himself *perpetual error* yet retains the striving for truth.”<sup>a</sup> In Strauss’ view, then, God finds the very activity of being a God

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<sup>a</sup> Strauss’ perpetually searching God is thus identical to the perpetually seeking cultural genius described by Nietzsche in part two, and both men use Lessing as their examples. The cultivated philistine’s defining

*entertaining*, and since he is fascinated by the world instead of bored by it he has blessed it as worthwhile place for Gods and men alike to spend their time. Despite going to great lengths in his treatment of the cosmos to refute the existence of a creative God with a personality, Strauss' justification of the goodness of the world contradicts this refutation and turns God into a cultivated philistine whose favorite pastime involves curing his boredom with casual intellectual pursuits.

*Conclusion: Prelude to Nietzsche's New Science*

After completing his summary of the "truly amusing spectacle" performed by Strauss in his role as "metaphysical master-builder" Nietzsche rounds out his criticism of the new faith's ethical and metaphysical doctrines by returning to the question with which he began: how much courage does the Straussian fusion of science and religion inspire in its believers? In light of the foregoing examination he concludes that it inspires none, for although Strauss comes close to mustering intellectual courage when he describes the universe in scientific terms, the grimmer conclusions of modern science upset his "good humor" and he resorts to that "sorceress [called] metaphysics" for the sake of intellectual comfort.<sup>a</sup> Posing as a sober-minded scientist yet unable to liberate himself from a compassionate and merciful God, Strauss' botched attempt to fuse together science and religion results in the corruption of both and the production of a spiritually weak and "philistinic" type of human being.

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characteristic may be that he is content with his truth, but Strauss' remark betrays the God of the cultivated philistine is not content. One could say that the cultivated philistine unwittingly longs for the emergence of the type of human being whose nature Nietzsche is at pains to describe and bring into being in his essays on Schopenhauer and Wagner.

<sup>a</sup> DS 7.

Yet for all his criticisms of Strauss' failed attempt to fuse modern science with metaphysics it is worth noting that Nietzsche himself will attempt a similar fusion in the *Untimely Observations* that follow.<sup>a</sup> In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, for example, he argues that nature needs philosophers—the highest type of scientific men—for a “metaphysical purpose,” namely to interpret nature “in its metaphysical meaningfulness” so that human life acquires a “sense and significance” it lacks in the absence of the philosophic transfiguration of the world.<sup>b</sup> In *The Use and Abuse of History for Life*, moreover, he concludes that modern science's attempt to understand the world “objectively” does great harm to human beings because human life requires precisely the kinds of illusions he had earlier accused David Strauss of being unable to free himself from. As the chapters that follow will show, Nietzsche's primary intention in the later *Untimely Observations* is to sketch the outlines of a new type of philosophy or science that is subjective and creative in character instead of objective like Strauss', and this new science will fuse together parts of philosophy, art, and religion.<sup>c</sup> What Nietzsche objects to most in the writings of David Strauss, it would seem, is not the marriage of science and religion as such but rather a marriage of them which (as he says in section ten of the essay) never asks itself “what a preoccupation with science bodes for the culture at large.”<sup>d</sup> Instead of making human beings better by helping them understand and cope with their highest concerns, the modern scientific religion advocated by Strauss encourages them to behave like “the proudest idler[s] upon whom fortune has ever smiled” and flee the most important questions for “questions whose answers could be

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<sup>a</sup> See Löwith (1964, 186): “Nietzsche's ‘athiesm’ also underwent readjustment and finally proclaimed a new faith.”

<sup>b</sup> See SE 5 and Chs. 5-6.

<sup>c</sup> See UH 6-10 and my discussion of the “redeeming human being” as philosopher, artist, and saint in chapters 5-6.

<sup>d</sup> DS 10.

important only to someone already certain of eternal life.”<sup>a</sup> In contradistinction to the new conception of philosophy fleshed out in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, then, which Nietzsche says is “capable of drawing entire nations along behind [it],” modern science’s dearth of “original insight into what is human” leaves it in no position to cultivate, guide, or lead a people in the manner that David Strauss suggests.<sup>b</sup> Hinting in passing in section eight of the Strauss essay that a new type of human being is on the horizon whose “science” could “*pave the way* for culture” instead of inhibiting it, Nietzsche invites his readers to track his reconceptualization of science and philosophy through *The Use and Abuse of History* and *Schopenhauer as Educator* where his intention will be to establish the parameters of the “knowable” anew.

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<sup>a</sup> See Nietzsche’s description of scientific men in DS 10.

<sup>b</sup> SE, sec. 3, beginning. Nietzsche argues that this new conception of philosophy is actually quite old.



## **Part Two**

### **The Use and Abuse of History for Life**

## Chapter 3: Nietzsche's Critique of Hegel

### I. Nietzsche's View of Hegel

#### *Nietzsche as Hegelian?*

In aphorism 211 of *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche makes a bold claim: Hegel was not a philosopher. Rather than being a true philosopher whose task is to create values, forge cultures, and set goals for mankind, Hegel was a “philosophic laborer” whose vital (but essentially scholarly) work consisted in arranging the decayed values of past civilizations into encyclopedic formulae so that philosophers of the future could easily consult world history in their projects of culture creation. While Hegel’s task of arranging history is said by Nietzsche to be “tremendous,” “wondrous,” and suitable only for those with powerful minds who possess tenacious wills, it is apparently not a philosophic task in the highest sense because it does not reach toward the future and shape humanity or culture in any decisive way.<sup>1</sup>

However just seven aphorisms before demoting Hegel from the rank of philosophic giant to that of laborer in the service of the true giants of philosophy Nietzsche had given a much higher assessment of his influence. Lamenting the fact that young German scholars are becoming more and more averse to studying the discipline of philosophy in universities, he traces the source of their aversion to the bad influence of their philosophic mentors. At the time in a young person’s life when he has high hopes for what philosophy can teach him Nietzsche says that it is likely that he will attach himself to a teacher like Schopenhauer whose diatribes against his fellow philosophers will tarnish the youth’s opinion of philosophy long after he has broken from his mentor’s teaching.<sup>2</sup> Along these lines, Nietzsche adds that it was Schopenhauer’s “unintelligent

wrath” towards the philosophy of Hegel that succeeded in wrenching a whole generation of young Germans out of their attachment to a German culture which represented an “elevation and divinatory refinement of the *historical sense*.”<sup>a</sup> Not only does Nietzsche seem to imply here that Hegel was a philosopher after all whose work is worth defending, he also implies that Hegel was a philosopher who could claim to have created a culture that shaped modern man by bestowing upon him what Nietzsche later calls one of modern man’s few “great” virtues: the historical sense.<sup>3</sup> Like the philosophers whose bad influence he criticizes for diminishing philosophy’s reputation among the young, then, Nietzsche initially dismisses Hegel as a philosophic laborer to help clear a path for his own thought. Yet at several places in *Beyond Good and Evil* and in subsequent writings, he makes a concerted effort to restore Hegel’s reputation so as not to harm the reputation of the historical sense for which Hegel was responsible and of which Nietzsche was an ardent proponent.<sup>b</sup> Just 41 aphorisms after calling Hegel a philosophic laborer Nietzsche dubs him a genius of philosophy, and in *Twilight of the Idols* he calls Hegel’s thought a “European event” and baptizes him one of the few thinkers who truly “counts for Europe.”<sup>4</sup>

Looking back on his early writings in the autobiographical sections of *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche urged his readers to consider carefully Hegel’s influence on his philosophic development. *The Birth of Tragedy* in particular, he tells us, was an “offensively Hegelian” book because it posited the Dionysian-Apollonian duality as the spirit of Greek

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<sup>a</sup> See Löwith (1964, 181): “Nietzsche’s final assessment of Hegel, in spite of all his criticism of historical meaning, is not least determined by his opposition to Schopenhauer’s unhistorical background.

<sup>b</sup> Also see GS 357: “We Germans are Hegelians even if there never had been any Hegel, insofar as we (unlike all Latins) instinctively attribute a deeper meaning and greater value to becoming and development than to what ‘is’ [...]” See Jurist (200, 26-7), Löwith (1964, 180-181). Also see Pippin’s argument (1996, 252-278) that Nietzsche and Hegel reject and reform “the great problem of all post-Cartesian or modern philosophy” (i.e. the problem of the adoption of a rigorous method).

culture that had worked itself out dialectically through Greek history and resolved itself in Greek tragedy.<sup>5</sup> Although the more overtly “Hegelian” aspects of Hegel’s thought played a less prominent role in Nietzsche’s later writings, Hegel’s view that opposites share a common origin, that a master-slave dialectic played a significant role in human spiritual development, and that a philosophic investigation of human history is the pathway to solving the problem of human nature remained prominent themes for Nietzsche throughout his career.<sup>6</sup> In the first aphorism of *Human, All Too Human*, for example, Nietzsche gave a nod to Hegelian historical philosophy by arguing that it had become so influential as to be on par with (and perhaps even identical to) modern natural science. Since historical philosophy had recently proven that all opposite moral valuations are really “sublimations” of the same fundamental impulses, Nietzsche concluded that historical philosophers should now set their sights on elaborating a “chemistry” of man’s moral and religious sensations that dissolved them into their constitutive physiological and instinctive elements.<sup>7</sup> Just as Hegel had argued that the soul of modern man must be reexamined in light of the spiritual sedimentation built up by the great moral, political, and religious movements of world history, Nietzsche argued in *Human, All Too Human* that the “original failing of all philosophers” is that they begin their investigations of man by examining present-day human beings and proceed from there in what he calls “an essentially unhistorical manner.”<sup>8</sup> The concept “man,” he said, does not “hover before our eyes” like an *aeterna veritas* but rather “humanity has come into being” over the course of a long historical development.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Following Hegel’s teaching that 19<sup>th</sup> century man stood atop a peak from which he could trace his spiritual development through the religion, customs, and laws of past nations, Nietzsche declared in *Beyond Good and Evil* that the capacity to “quickly guess the order of rank of value judgments according to which a people, society, or human being has lived,” i.e. the “divinatory instinct” for relating a past people’s valuations to its

Since Nietzsche appears to credit Hegel with bringing historical philosophy to its highest refinement at the same time that he casts doubt on Hegel's true rank as a thinker, it is useful for understanding his relationship to Hegel to clarify the similarities and differences between their respective accounts of the meaning of history for human life. If Nietzsche disagrees with Hegel in crucial respects about the ways in which humanity should make use of and understand history then what are the grounds of his disagreement? Since he also appears to admire Hegel for being the founder and most vocal advocate of historical philosophy, where do his agreements with Hegel lie and what similarities do their respective analyses of history share? Hegel summarized the role he thought history played in human life in the introduction to his lecture course *The Philosophy of History*, and Nietzsche gave a summary of the same theme in his second untimely meditation *The Use and Abuse of History for Life*. Tellingly, Nietzsche's notebooks from the period in which he wrote *The Use and Abuse* contain reflections on Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, and Nietzsche even begins the essay by elaborating three different approaches to history (the monumental, antiquarian, and critical) that loosely resemble and may even be intended to revise the three approaches Hegel had outlined in the opening sessions of his lecture course (the original, reflective, and philosophic).<sup>a</sup>

Given the striking similarity of major themes in these two works a comparison of their highpoints may shed light on the complex link between their authors, and to this end our

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deeds, was the dangerous intellectual trait that distinguishes the modern man from his forbears. Cf. IPH p.77, BGE 224, HA I.2, GM 1.1.

<sup>a</sup>Abbreviations used for Hegel's Works: IPH - *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Page numbers refer to the Hackett edition translated by Leo Rauch). PR - *Philosophy of Right* (numbers refer to Hegel's section numbers). Nietzsche quotes the introduction to the *Philosophy of History* in the ninth part of *The Use and Abuse of History* when he introduces his critique of Eduard von Hartmann. For the relevant notebook entries, see UPW p. 225-6; 29 [72-3]. My chapters also address from a more theoretical standpoint the question Emden (2004, 3-4) poses when he questions when the "crisis of historicism" began and whether Nietzsche's writings belong to the period of this crisis.

investigation will begin with a summary of the three fundamental disagreements Nietzsche has with Hegel's characterization of what history is and means for mankind.<sup>a</sup> Once we understand more clearly where Nietzsche thinks Hegel went wrong in his analysis of history we will proceed in chapter four with an account of the challenges Nietzsche's disagreements with Hegel pose for his own philosophic thought, paying particular attention to his confrontation with the problem of historical relativism and his critique of objective historical science. After stating Nietzsche's provisional solution to the problem of historical relativism as he presents it in *The Use and Abuse of History*, we will explore why that solution compelled him to revise or replace Hegel's scientific methods of historical analysis with his own creative or artistic ones. To conclude, we will briefly consider why—despite their divergent views of the significance of history for humanity—the philosophies of Nietzsche and Hegel bear a striking *structural* similarity that is necessitated by their mutual avowal of history as *the* means of understanding man's intellectual orientation.<sup>b</sup>

## II. Nietzsche's Critique of Hegelian History

### *History's Completion*

Nietzsche disagrees with Hegel's characterization of history in three ways in *The Use and Abuse of History*—all of which take their bearings from his overarching concern for healthy human life. First, Nietzsche does not agree with Hegel's claim that there is

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<sup>a</sup> Since I am by no means a Hegel scholar I have relied heavily on Steven Smith's book *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism* for my understanding of Hegel, especially the seventh chapter entitled "Reason in History" (Smith, 1989).

<sup>b</sup> I am grateful to my dissertation advisor for providing me with a copy of Leo Strauss' 1956 lecture course "Historicism and Modern Relativism" which laid the foundation for the thoughts contained in my chapters on *The Use and Abuse*. I have also consulted the course Strauss gave on Hegel at the University of Chicago in 1965 which is available on the Leo Strauss Center's website. For Strauss' published statements on the problem I confront here, see Strauss (1989b, 24-26).

such a thing as a so-called historical process that reached its completion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nor does he think that history should ever be considered finished since an end of history in Hegel's sense would mean that humanity had no more great tasks left to accomplish and thus no reason to continue living and growing. Second, Nietzsche disagrees with Hegel's argument that history unfolds *rationally*, claiming instead that Hegel's philosophy is immoral because it tries to rationalize or justify the fact that history has been a series of injustices, irrationalities, and accidents that have done grave damage to humanity and its greatest cultures. Third, Nietzsche thinks that Hegel is wrong to claim that because history is rational it can also lay claim to being a hard or empirical science, arguing on the contrary that history rightly understood is more creative than scientific because it should care more about promoting life than pursuing truth.<sup>a</sup> All three of these disagreements are stated by Nietzsche in the crucial eighth section of his essay when he addresses Hegel by name and they are elaborated and clarified in various places throughout the work. Maintaining the position he would take in his later writings that — for better or worse—Hegel was a cultural and intellectual event in Europe, he says in the eighth section that: “I do not believe that there was any more dangerous deviation or turn in German cultivation in this century which did not become more dangerous due to the enormous and still spreading influence of this philosophy—Hegelian philosophy.”<sup>9</sup>

The first reason Nietzsche gives for condemning Hegel's philosophy as “dangerous” is that it nurtures the belief that modern man is the lateborn and sterile son

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<sup>a</sup> What Nietzsche says about the impossibility and undesirability of a scientific history in *The Use and Abuse of History* would appear to contradict his claim in the first aphorism of *Human, All Too Human* that history “can no longer be considered separate from natural science.” Consider, however, his claim in the second aphorism of *Human, All Too Human* that a historical science would have to be a *modest* science since there are no eternal truths or permanent facts. In the works of his middle period part of Nietzsche's intention was to reconceive what science could claim to be and to know. The same intention is present in his essay on history. Cf. IPH, p.12, UH 9. Also see the section *History as Science* below.

of prior and more fertile ages and then proceeds to deify this barren creature as “the true meaning and purpose” of a history that has reached its completion. When Hegel says that the “*final goal of the world*” is spirit’s consciousness of freedom and declares that this freedom has finally become an “objective fact” through the actuality of reason in the modern state, Nietzsche accuses him of identifying the completion of history with his own existence in Berlin and reducing all subsequent events and forms of life to a “musical coda of the world-historical rondo.”<sup>10</sup> In Hegel’s philosophy the type of human being Nietzsche judges to be of low moral and spiritual worth comes to sight as the “meaning and solution of each and every riddle,” “the ripest fruit on the tree of knowledge,” and a being who stands proudly atop the pyramid of history and calls out to nature: “we have reached our goal; we are the goal; we are nature perfected.”<sup>11</sup> Contrary to Hegel’s view that modern man’s consciousness of the completed historical process represents the perfection of his nature because comprehensive knowledge of this process amounts to comprehensive knowledge of nature, Nietzsche argues that “knowledge does not perfect nature but only kills your own nature”—a fact which he says is proven by measuring the wealth of modern man’s knowledge against the poverty of his abilities.<sup>12</sup>

Although Hegel’s claim that humanity has attained its perfection is the most serious crime he commits according to Nietzsche, the implication this crime carries with it that the opportunity has passed for modern man to accomplish great tasks is deserving of similar reproach. In Nietzsche’s view the belief that one is the lateborn offspring of past heroes with no reason to long for heroism oneself breeds a dangerous passivity that destroys life because it attacks it in its most vulnerable yet fertile stage: youth. With a



shrug of their shoulders the gray-haired Hegelian youth of the 19<sup>th</sup> century view every great movement set on *creating* history instead of simply *knowing* it with an ironic skepticism, the source of which lies in the fact that their education is primarily reflective instead of active in character and is thus devoted to preoccupations of the aged such as retrospection, tallying accounts, and seeking comfort in past memories.<sup>13</sup> Forced to reflect in their philosophy classes on the “worthlessness of all occurrences” the ambition for great deeds characteristic of typical youths has transformed itself into an ironic awareness in German students that it is good to know all one can about history since it is too late to make history oneself.<sup>14</sup> Although the historicized youth of the 19<sup>th</sup> century appear to be satiated for the moment with their glut of historical knowledge and lack of ambition and longing, Nietzsche says that he has begun to sense a “haunting inkling” among them that the end of history is no cause for happiness and jubilation.<sup>15</sup> As the belief in the old age of humanity takes its toll on the ambitious dreams that animate every young soul, the likelihood increases that the German youth will roar back against their age and liberate themselves from the shackles of the end of history by means of “assaults, demands, and life drives” whose eruptions could be unpredictable or even violent.<sup>16</sup> Ever a provoker of rebellious passions Nietzsche encourages his geriatric young readers to cast off their walkers and canes, imploring them to question what it is about “a couple of millennia” or “the time period of 34 consecutive human lives at 60 years apiece” that permits Hegel to speak of humanity’s ‘youth’ at the beginning of a period and of its ‘old age’ at what he arbitrarily claims is the end.

The second disagreement Nietzsche has with Hegel's characterization of history concerns Hegel's claim that history is rational. For Hegel the fundamental insight of historical philosophy and the one out of which all its subsequent insights grow is the insight that "world history has been rational in its course" and thus that "reason rules the world."<sup>a</sup> Although Hegel admits that the rule of reason in history is only a "presupposition" until it is proven through a philosophic consideration of historical events, he says that he will assume from the outset that reason is both the matter and mode of historical development so that he can commence the investigation required to prove his presupposition.<sup>17</sup> Since philosophy "does not have the sort of understanding" that prevails among purely empirical sciences, Hegel insists that it must be permitted to import *a priori* the notion of the rational development of freedom into its historical analysis so that it can more easily identify which historical events mark the advancement of spirit.<sup>18</sup> For Nietzsche by contrast (who is skeptical of all attempts to philosophize using *a priori* methods) world history does not unfold rationally but rather through human creation and will which are animated by the drives, affects, and instincts that constitute all that is irrational in man.<sup>b</sup> What we mean by the term "history," he says in *Beyond Good and Evil*, is really the "gruesome dominion of nonsense and accident" whose correction can only come about by teaching man "the future of man as his *will*, as dependent on a human will" and by preparing "over-all attempts of discipline and

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<sup>a</sup> IPH 12. I agree with Stephen Smith's claim that: "in describing his philosophy as knowledge of the absolute, Hegel is not making the preposterous claim that he possesses knowledge of everything that is. [...] What Hegel claims to possess is a knowledge of the general structuring principles or patterns that make history into an intelligible whole rather than a haphazard series of events. It is not the totality of all properties or aspects of history, but only those properties or aspects that make it an organized structure" (Smith, 1989, 217-18). Nietzsche gives the impression in *The Use and Abuse* that he does not agree with this statement.

<sup>b</sup> cf. BGE 16, 203. Hegel responds to objections like Nietzsche's on IPH, p.68.

culture.”<sup>19</sup> Since the matter and animating power of the world is not reason in Nietzsche’s philosophy but rather the “will to power and nothing besides,” any account of world history he endorsed would also need to take its bearings from human will or creation.<sup>a</sup>

Before examining more carefully the objections Nietzsche raises to the supposed rationality of history in *The Use and Abuse of History* it would be helpful to contextualize these objections by stating more precisely what Hegel means when he asserts that history is a rational process. In the *Philosophy of History* he explains that reason is the means spirit employs on a universal scale to actualize freedom in the world, and history can be said to be rational insofar as a rational or dialectical progression toward freedom is observable in historical events dating from the earliest oriental empires to modern times. In opposition to Nietzsche’s argument that world history’s irrationality is the result of the interplay of our unconscious drives and affects, Hegel traces the source of reason’s actualization in the world to the very drives and affects Nietzsche blames for history’s grisliness. Anticipating Nietzsche’s argument that history is a gruesome theater of the passions in which nothing but chance holds sway, Hegel acknowledges that the “mainsprings of action” in the world *do* appear at first to be the passions instead of reason, but he argues in addition that the sum total of passions expressed in world history is something other than what historical actors aimed at, “something other than what they immediately know and will.”<sup>20</sup> Although historical actors and even entire peoples in history have gone about fulfilling the aims of their passions without giving thought to

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<sup>a</sup> BGE 36. Philosophy in other words, would have to be “the most spiritual will to power, to the ‘creation of the world’” as Nietzsche describes it in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and historical philosophy or historiography would require “great artistic power” and a “creative floating above things” as he says it does in *The Use and Abuse of History for Life*. BGE 9; UH 8.

their rationality, Hegel avers that in every particular instance of world historical action a universal reason was “inwardly involved” with what the actors did or wanted. Whereas the will for Nietzsche amounts to a bundle of unconscious *irrationalities* each of which take their turn dominating and expressing themselves in the lives of individuals and peoples, the will for Hegel amounts to a bundle of unconscious *rationalities* whose rational affects are not immediately visible to historical actors themselves. Regardless of the moral questionability of certain human passions, then, and irrespective of any apparent absurdity or selfishness of their aims, Hegel maintains that reason is always implicit in historical events when history is viewed from a universal point of view.

Although Hegel’s claim that history is rational appears on its face to be more philosophic than Nietzsche’s because it understands what Nietzsche thinks is particular and irrational in the light of what is universal and reasonable, it is not without difficulties which call its philosophic soundness and moral sensitivity into question. The first of these difficulties Hegel openly admits: namely, that in order to make world history appear rational his philosophy must euphemize and gloss over history’s ugly, immoral, and tragic aspects in a manner that appears morally indifferent.<sup>21</sup> When the drama of human passions is examined from the perspective of ordinary moral decency, Hegel concedes that it strikes our moral sentiments as a senseless string of violence and injustice instead of a rational process whose aim is to benefit man.<sup>22</sup> Yet while he sympathizes with those like Nietzsche whose hearts are filled with “moral outrage” when they look back on all that has gone awry in history, he warns that when we contemplate whether history is truly the “slaughter-bench” upon which human happiness, wisdom, and virtue have been sacrificed we must not allow our indignation to eclipse the ultimate goal for which all

these sacrifices were made. Regardless of the apparent immorality evinced by historical events when they are examined from the point of view of moral decency, moral claims in Hegel's view "must not be raised against world-historical acts and those who do them" because morality does not apply to history when viewed in the light of universal reason.<sup>23</sup> On the contrary, world history moves on a higher plane than that on which ordinary morality exists, and whatever spirit's end goal demands transcends the obligations and duties that fall upon individuals in regard to their ethical conduct.<sup>24</sup>

Where Hegel sympathizes with the concerns of ordinary morality but ultimately casts them aside for the sake of a higher historical aim, Nietzsche takes the position in *The Use and Abuse of History* of embracing the point of view of moral decency and objecting to Hegelian historical philosophy on moral grounds.<sup>a</sup> According to Nietzsche Hegel's account of the rational character of history blindly overlooks the fact that history is essentially a "compendium of factual immorality" meant to teach later generations what "thou shalt not" do.<sup>25</sup> To this end, history for Nietzsche is always a moral teacher (and not merely a scientific one) because it places before our eyes both noble and base lives whose past we should learn from so that we can do what is noble.<sup>26</sup> Instead of allowing history to own up to its moral mistakes, present its moral teaching, and enhance future life with its moral wisdom, however, Nietzsche accuses Hegel and his students of playing the role of "apologists of the factual" because their insistence that history is

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<sup>a</sup> Nietzsche's objection to Hegelian historicism on moral grounds appears to contradict his concession in section 9 that relativism is a "true but deadly" doctrine. How could there be a morality on whose basis he could raise objections to Hegel if historical science has shown that there are no moral absolutes? Far from celebrating the relativistic conclusion of historical science, however, Nietzsche laments the demise of morality or moral "horizons" throughout *The Use and Abuse of History* and hopes to pave the way for a situation in which a horizon of moral absolutes can guide man again. Despite the fact that he acknowledges the transitory character of all moralities, then, he takes the position that a healthy morality is necessary for healthy human life and he becomes a defender of morality as a consequence. See the section "Nietzsche's Transformation of History" below. Also see his claim in the last sentence of the essay that it was "the higher power of *moral* nature that made the Greeks' victory over other cultures possible."

rational forces them to “come to history’s defense” and justify as good a variety of immoral historical acts. By turning every event’s success into a rational fact Hegel and his followers become what Nietzsche calls “devil’s advocates” who fail to see that “the fact is always stupid and has at all times looked more like a calf than a god.”<sup>27</sup> To claim that it must be a fact that the modern human being represents the best that humanity has to offer because he happens to be the result of world history up to now is an “incorrigible stupidity” according to Nietzsche, and a “tactless ‘that’s just the way it is’ as opposed to morality that says: ‘It should *not* be this way.’”<sup>a</sup> To make matters worse, Hegel’s claim that the world and man are always “as they ought to be” instills in those generations who believe him a slavish admiration for the “power of history” that worships all practical successes (even those that are immoral) as rational necessities.<sup>28</sup> According to Nietzsche anyone who is willing to “kneel down and bow his head” before the power of history as rational process will eventually grow accustomed to nodding ‘yes’ to governments, public opinions, and numerical majorities regardless of whether they are just or wise.<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, Hegel’s philosophy leads to what Nietzsche calls a “total surrender of the personality to the world process” because it encourages us to enslave our judgments, preferences, and instincts to whatever corrupt power claims to have reason and history on its side.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Ibid. Hegel anticipates Nietzsche’s objection when he says in the introduction to *The Philosophy of History* that “this restless succession of individuals and peoples that are here for a time and then disappear suggests one general thought, one category above all, that of universally prevalent *change*. And what leads us to apprehend this change in its negative aspect is the sight of the ruins of some vanished splendor. What traveler, amidst the ruins of Carthage, Palmyra, Persepolis, or Rome, has not been led to contemplate the transiency of empires and of men, and to sorrow at a once vigorous and rich life that is now gone? This is not a sorrow that swells upon personal losses and the transiency of one’s own aims; instead, it is a disinterested sorrow at the decline of a radiant and cultured life” (IPH 76).

The last of Nietzsche's three major disagreements with Hegel over the character of history concerns the question of whether history is a science in the modern scientific sense of the term.<sup>a</sup> Since understanding their divergence on this score is crucial for identifying not only the philosophic implications of the previous two disagreements but also the fundamental difference between their views of history more broadly, the topic is worth considering in detail. Perhaps the most noticeable rhetorical difference between Hegel's account of history and Nietzsche's is that Hegel often refers to history as "the science of history" or "our science" whereas Nietzsche does so only once when he calls history "the science of universal becoming" in order to indicate that it does not fulfill fully the promise of science because it does not provide absolute knowledge of permanent beings.<sup>31</sup> Far from embracing history as a scientific discipline like Hegel and his followers and detractors did, Nietzsche goes to great lengths to show that "history, conceived as a pure science and accorded sovereignty" would be a "conclusion to life" for humanity because it would treat the past as an organism fit for dissection instead of an object worthy of reverence and capable of inspiring future life.<sup>32</sup> All living things, Nietzsche argues, become "healthy, strong, and fruitful only within a defined horizon," but when scientific history goes out in search of historical facts it destroys the horizon of illusions, falsehoods, and misconceptions that surround historical actors and make them exude auras of inspirational greatness.<sup>33</sup>

To understand what modern humanity loses when it permits science to "take control of life" Nietzsche says that we need only picture an inhabitant of an isolated alpine valley.<sup>34</sup> Such a person's restricted access to the outside world and his limited

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<sup>a</sup> See Berkowitz (1995, 34-35).

historical knowledge would lead him to form judgments and opinions that would strike scientific historians as inaccurate and unjust. Unaware of deeds, values, or facts about the history of any civilization but his own, the alpine man is invigorated by the *ahistorical* belief that he and his people are unique in all of world history and hence that they are great. Standing proudly in the center of a horizon characterized by an almost complete ignorance of human history, Nietzsche says that the alpine man is “vigorously healthy, robust, and a joy to look at” despite or because of his lack of worldliness, dearth of historical knowledge, and ability to forget any knowledge that could compromise his cheerfulness. Place beside him another more educated person whose study of history has made him keenly aware of past civilizations and their deeds, and Nietzsche says that such a person appears sickly and impotent next to his ahistorical alpine counterpart because the lines of the horizon that constitute his life are redrawn again and again with every new advance of his historical knowledge.<sup>35</sup> Aware of the delusion, coarseness, and inhumanity that are part and parcel of every great people’s past, the great men and events which inspired the historically educated man when he was young would be nothing more than objects of scholarly curiosity once his education in historical facts was complete.<sup>a</sup> By studying history and comparing his culture’s values to those of other civilizations he is overtaken by a paralyzing historical relativism which shows him that his assumptions about what is noble and good are as arbitrary and transitory as those of any other bygone age. Captivated by the deeds of history’s greatest cultures yet unable to *make* history because his own culture consists only in knowledge of past cultures, the historically educated man lives in a state of ironic and impotent self-consciousness in which he abides by the motto: “let there be truth though life may perish.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> UH 7. Also see Berkowitz (1995, 30-31).



Now just as Nietzsche speaks of history as a series of *horizons* in which life is promoted or cultivated by belief in absolutes, it is worth noting that Hegel too speaks of what appear to be historical horizons in his *Philosophy of History*, calling them “folk-minds [*Volkgeist*]” which embody the “entire reality” of a people as expressed in the “shared stamp” of its religion, political system, customs, arts, and sciences.<sup>37</sup> Where Hegel departs from Nietzsche on the question of the meaning of historical horizons, however, and what ultimately gives his philosophy of history the character of a science in contrast to Nietzsche’s, is that he does not conclude (as Nietzsche does) that the scientific destruction of historical horizons causes man’s intellectual orientation to slip into a deadly relativism. Since history in Hegel’s view is rational, purposive, and finishable the destruction of historical horizons is *salutary* instead of deadly because every horizon’s destruction marks an advance along the path of enlightenment toward *the* final horizon of absolute knowledge. When “reflective understanding [or science] attacks everything holy and profound that has been naively embedded in the religion, the laws, and customs of a people,” he says, “it flattens and dissipates everything into abstract and godless generalities” at the same time that “thought is driven to become thinking reason and to attempt the restoration of substantial truth in its own element out of the corruption that has been brought.”<sup>38</sup> In order to get around the problem of historical relativism, in other words, and to imbue with optimism a process of intellectual enlightenment or corruption that Nietzsche dreads, Hegel argues that the destruction of historical horizons and the attendant crisis of values such destructions engender is merely part of a larger rational process that culminates in absolute knowledge instead of a constantly shifting relativism. Whereas history “neither could nor should become a pure science on the order of

mathematics” according to Nietzsche because there is no permanent historical truth other than the deadly truth that men live in horizons whose destruction reveals the transitory character of knowledge, history in Hegel’s sense can and *should* be treated as a pure science because all historical shifts occur in the service of a stable moment in history from whose peak we can look down and see the rational, purposive, and hence anything but arbitrary character of our present understanding.<sup>39</sup>

If the problem that separates the historicism of Nietzsche from that of Hegel is recast in a more Nietzschean light, Nietzsche’s understanding of what historical philosophy is could be said both to presuppose the insights of Hegelian historical science and to “radicalize” those insights in a characteristically Nietzschean way.<sup>a</sup> In the first aphorism of *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche presupposes Hegel’s conclusions about the power of history when he declares that historical philosophy can no longer be thought of as separate from natural science or the science of evolution, and for a moment he appears to agree with Hegel’s claim that history is hard science in the modern sense of the term. In the second aphorism of the same book, however, Nietzsche announces his departure from—and hence his radicalization of—what Hegel took science to be when he says that historical philosophy’s insight that the human things are always in flux leads to the conclusion that “there are *no eternal facts*: just as there are no absolute truths.” From now on the virtue of modesty must go hand in hand with science, Nietzsche says, presumably because science will no longer be able to boast as it did under Hegel that it has access to an absolute horizon in which permanent truths are knowable.<sup>40</sup> Making the

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<sup>a</sup> I tend to disagree with the use of the term “radical” to describe Nietzsche’s thought, primarily because Nietzsche’s loud or extreme sounding rhetoric is often employed in the name of a kind of philosophic or epistemological conservatism. Consider, for example, the first book of BGE where Nietzsche encourages philosophers to rein in their claims about what can be honestly and soberly called truth, and HA I.2 where he says that the defining feature of historical philosophy is its modesty.

same argument from the perspective of his concern for life in *The Use and Abuse of History*, he says that he holds to be “true but deadly” the “doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types, and species, and of the lack of any cardinal difference between human and animal.”<sup>41</sup> While the enterprise of historical science is thus not entirely spurious for Nietzsche because it *does* appear to provide at least one permanent truth when it asserts the impermanent character of all other truths except for the truth of relativism, the fact that it lacks the ability to see what conclusions should be drawn from humanity’s relativistic situation and what these conclusions imply about both human life and the possibility of acquiring accurate historical knowledge means that historical science in its current iteration is grossly defective.

## Chapter 4: Nietzsche, Hegel, and the Problem of History

### I. Nietzsche's Transformation of History

#### *A "Solution" to the Problem of Historical Relativism?*

According to Nietzsche's characterization of Hegelian philosophy in *The Use and Abuse of History for Life* the effect of the Hegel's teaching and its corruption in the hands of his less perspicacious followers was twofold.<sup>a</sup> On one hand, post-Hegelian Germans believed that they stood atop the pyramid of world history as its highest and most refined exemplars: the lateborn offspring of mankind in whom self-conscious freedom and absolute knowledge had become flesh and blood.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of this pride and jubilation, however, a cloud of suspicion was beginning to form over the younger set in Germany who held that the peak of history had not come, or if it had come then it was no better—and in fact much worse—than past epochs because despite all their knowledge no life remained for modern men to live. The spiritual byproduct of this peculiar combination of confidence in the possibility of knowledge on one hand and skepticism about the goodness of knowledge on the other was a deadly relativism that was endorsed by the scientific historians of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century despite Hegel's rejection of it, and Nietzsche was the first to avow this relativism openly and think it through to its dreadful conclusion.<sup>2</sup> If the doctrine of sovereign becoming and of the fluidity of all concepts, types, and species is "flung at the people for one more generation in the craze for education," he wrote, "then no one should be surprised if that people perishes of petty egoism and wretchedness, of ossification and selfishness, after first falling apart and ceasing to be a people at all."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> See Nietzsche's criticisms of Hegel in DS 2. Also see Emden (2004, 4, 7-8).

Given Nietzsche's diagnosis of historical relativism as the deadliest ailment of modern times, his embrace of this same relativism as true, and his rejection of Hegel's declaration of the end of history as the cure for this relativism, the most urgent question that confronts him in the wake of his critique of Hegel is *what now?* How can human life save itself from the fact that historical philosophy has shown that the only truth that is knowable by human beings is also toxic to them?<sup>a</sup> Although a fully satisfying answer to this question seems to have eluded Nietzsche for many years and could be said to be the impetus behind his theories of the will to power, the eternal return, and the philosophy of the future in the works of the 1880's, the provisional answer he proposed in 1874 in *The Use and Abuse of History* serves as an introduction to these later doctrines because it responds openly and concisely to the same philosophic problem—the problem of the character and desirability of knowledge—that they were all meant to address. To put his 1874 answer to the problem of relativism in simple terms: historical relativism can only be overcome if historical philosophy's insight into the truth of relativism is itself shown to be the transitory insight of a particular historical era. The very origin of historical cultivation, Nietzsche announces: “*must* itself, in turn, be understood historically, history itself *must* solve the problem of history, knowledge *must* turn the knife upon itself.”<sup>4</sup> The thought that all knowledge is relativistic, interpretive, and impermanent, in other words, must itself be understood to be relativistic, interpretive, and impermanent.<sup>b</sup> Historical science must reassess and moderate its epistemological ambitions by owning up to the problematic character of its own highest insight—the insight of the relativity of

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<sup>a</sup> See Emden (2004, 2): “In contrast to the widely held view of Nietzsche as a thoroughly “untimely” thinker, Nietzsche himself favors what we might term a “critical historicism” that seeks to protect the critical value of historical knowledge without falling into the trap of either metaphysical speculation or philosophical relativism.”

<sup>b</sup> CF. BGE 22. Also see Strauss (1989a, 25-6)

all knowledge.<sup>a</sup> Furthermore, it must incorporate this insight into itself in such a way that it no longer considers its own conclusions immune to the corrosive effects of relativism, thereby changing the work of historical science from pursuing knowledge of historical facts to coping with the slippery character of an intellectual framework in which there are no historical facts but only historical values. As the only science privy to (and inoculated against) the historically relative character of all knowledge, a moderated or chastened historical science must play the role of epistemological hygienist for human life and prevent it from perishing from acute historical paralysis. The highest task of Nietzschean history, therefore, is to devise and implement what he calls a “*hygiene of life*” whose preventative measures are intended to help humanity surmount the obstacle that relativism poses to a truly satisfying human happiness.<sup>5</sup> The guiding principle of this new historical hygiene is that the *ahistorical* (“the art and power to be able to *forget* and to enclose oneself in a limited horizon”) and the *suprahistorical* (the power to use art and religion to “divert one’s gaze from what is in the process of becoming” to what is stable and eternal) are the proper antidotes to historical relativism because they are the only powers that can persuade the human mind to forget about the fluidity of all concepts and types.<sup>6</sup>

According to Nietzsche the first generation of human beings to confront the problem of historical relativism and ingest its antidotes will “suffer simultaneously from the illness and the cure,” and in return for their suffering they will receive only a “promising inkling” of the happiness due to humanity once it overcomes its historical disease.<sup>7</sup> Compelled by their relativistic paralysis to embrace ahistorical and suprahistorical “absolutes” whose arbitrary character they (as children of scientific

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<sup>a</sup> See HA I.I.2.

history) are conscious of, their primary task will be to declare war on the scientific history that has cultivated their minds to understand the absolute as transitory.<sup>8</sup>

Condemned to live tormented lives in which they must continually imbibe spiritual medicines that their intellects cannot help but reject, they find consolation in the fact that although the spirit of their time has cheated them out of a cultural horizon it has not robbed them of their ability to construct one for future generations.<sup>9</sup> To cement their legacy as founders of the cultural horizon of the future Nietzsche says that they must educate themselves against themselves to acquire “new habits and a new nature,” leaving their “old habits and first nature behind” and fostering “better health and even a more natural nature” in the generations that succeed them.<sup>a</sup> Like the “critical” mode of history he described at the beginning of his essay whose task is to “shatter and dissolve the past” when it inhibits new life, the first generation of historical hygienists must turn the knife on their scientific historical upbringing by giving themselves “*a posteriori* a new past from which [they] would prefer to be descended.”<sup>b</sup> Through a long spiritual struggle their goal is to cultivate within themselves what Nietzsche calls a “second nature” so that their first nature withers away, for their study of history has taught them that the problem of nature and the problem of history are identical because “every first nature was once a second nature” and “every victorious second nature will become a first nature.”<sup>c</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> UH 10. Cf. TI, *Reconnaissance Raids*, 48: “Even I speak of a ‘return to nature,’ although it is actually not a going back but a *coming up*—into high, free, even fearful nature and naturalness, the kind which plays—is *entitled* to play with great tasks;” GS 110: When may we begin to “*naturalize*” humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?” Also consider Nietzsche’s claim in DS 1 that “it is more difficult for human nature to endure victory than to endure defeat.” Lastly and most importantly, see the final paragraph of UH 10 where Nietzsche identifies the concept of culture with “a new and improved *physis*.”

<sup>b</sup> UH 3. See UH 9: “But just ask yourself why you, as an individual, exist; and if no one can tell you, then just try to justify the meaning of your life *a posteriori*, as it were, by setting yourself a purpose, a goal, a reason why, a lofty and noble reason why. Go ahead and perish in the attempt—I know of no better purpose in life than perishing in the attempt to accomplish something great and impossible *animae magnae prodigus*.”

<sup>c</sup> UH 10. Also see the last paragraph of UH 8 where Nietzsche says that “fighters against history” are driven onward not by the burial of their own generation but by the “founding of a new one.” Although such fighters

In part six of *The Use and Abuse of History* Nietzsche outlines and initiates the critique of scientific history he encourages his first generation of historical hygienists to take up.<sup>a</sup> Arguing that the methods of interpretation employed by scientific historians are flawed because they mischaracterize the nature of objective analysis, his intention is to show that the theoretical or relativistic conclusion affirmed by recent scientific history is not a full or final statement of the true meaning of history for human life. Since scientific historians strive above all to be passive or objective observers of history who stand outside its activity instead of participating in it, Nietzsche argues they are unable to sympathize with and hence to understand the inmost motivations of great historical actors. While objective historians “echo in kindred tones the sounds of the most diverse ages and persons of the past,” he says, “it seems to me that only the harmonics, as it were, of that original historical note remain audible, and the harshness and power of the original can no longer be divined in the thin and shrill sound of the lyre strings.”<sup>b</sup> By removing themselves from the course of history in order to make what they claim are more accurate historical observations, objective historians *dehistoricize* themselves and thereby limit their access to—and thus their understanding of—that part of history which consists of more than empirical fact checking.<sup>c</sup> Far from agreeing with scientific

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may be “lateborn offspring” he says that they must not forget that “there is a way to live that makes up for this” and that will make “coming generations know them only as firstborn.” What Nietzsche calls “the concept of culture” in the penultimate sentence of his essay is in these lines disclosed as the “new and improved *physis*” that is also referred to there.

<sup>a</sup> See Babich (2007, 207-227) for a fuller account of Nietzsche’s critique of science in his early writings, especially B.T. Babich argues that “Nietzsche’s most arresting claim is his equation of science and art, similar to Heidegger’s alliance of *techne* and *poiesis* which I take to be a non-attributed Nietzschean echo in Heidegger’s thought.”

<sup>b</sup> UH 6, See Sinclair (2004, 2).

<sup>c</sup> This in contrast to Berkowitz (1995, 27): “Nietzsche’s primary quarrel is not with claims about the possibility of objective historical knowledge [...] University professors misuse history, not because they wrongly presume that they can acquire objective historical knowledge...”



history's view that a passive observational objectivity is a desirable or even possible means by which to analyze the past, Nietzsche argues that an "illusion" always creeps into the meaning of the word 'objectivity' whenever we try to achieve it and that proper objective observation requires the observer to admit and embrace his *subjective* faculties instead of trying to silence them. In attempting to erase the subjective and personal from historiography objective historians fail to see that objective observation in its highest form involves a personal "aesthetic" activity in which the observer becomes so immersed in his material that he describes it according to his own "inner picture."<sup>10</sup> It is a "superstition," Nietzsche says, "that the image that things produce in such an aesthetically attuned person reproduces the empirical essence of these things," and in *The Philosophy of History* Hegel concurs with Nietzsche's critique of empirical history when he notes that the "average historian" who claims to be a mere receptacle of history is "not passive in his thinking," but instead "he brings his categories along with him and sees his data through them."<sup>11</sup>

For Nietzsche and Hegel alike, then, historical events do not etch themselves into our consciousness by means of objective observation but rather they are mixed with the character of the historian who narrates them so that his own personality and intentions shape the history he writes. Yet where Hegel argues that historians should shape history using their *rational* faculty because "to him who looks at the world rationally the world looks rational in return," Nietzsche concludes that history is not subject to rational analysis and that it should be shaped only by the "rarest individuals" who write for future generations and whose hopes have not been paralyzed or relativized by the scientific demand to examine history impartially. "*Only from the highest power of the present can*

*you interpret the past,*” he declares, and “only with the exertion of your noblest qualities will you divine what in the past is great and worth knowing and preserving.”<sup>12</sup> More than the voice of a past generation meant to remind us where we have come from, history in Nietzsche’s view is “always the voice of an oracle” which is audible only to those among the living who are “architects of the future” and who themselves strive to create an image of the present to which the future will one day conform.<sup>a</sup>

## II. Nietzsche’s Revision of the Introduction to *The Philosophy of History*

### *History as Art*

After showing the historical hygienists of the present that the overthrow of scientific history must begin with a criticism of its supposed objectivity, Nietzsche suggests that the discipline of scientific history as a whole should be replaced with a new kind of history that is more artistic than empirical in character, and whose purpose is to *use* the past to serve life instead of simply documenting it for posterity’s sake.<sup>b</sup> Although scientific history treats art as its antithesis because artistic beautification hinders empirical observation, Nietzsche says that history must “allow itself to be transformed into a work of art, into a pure aesthetic structure” if human life is to flourish beneath a historical horizon again.<sup>13</sup> Admitting that the historiography produced by such an artistic history would “run wholly counter to the analytical and unartistic temper of our age” and may not contain “a single drop of common empirical truth,” Nietzsche maintains that it could nonetheless “lay claim in a high degree to the predicate of ‘objectivity’” because

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<sup>a</sup> Ibid. See SE sec. 4 where Nietzsche asks “who will erect the *image* [Bild] *of the human being* at a time when all others sense in themselves only the selfish worm and a bovine fear, and have for this reason fallen from that image into bestiality or even into robotic automatism.”

<sup>b</sup> See Sinclair (2004, 3): “Historical study is shown to be always a question of interpretation and thus creation.” Also see Berkowitz (1995, 28, 36-43): “Good history also depends upon creativity, or the free reshaping of the past to suit the needs of the present.”

artistic historiographers would be “dramatists” who are so immersed in the past that their presentations of it would be more accurate than coldly empirical accounts of the same events.<sup>14</sup> Instead of aiming to describe events precisely as they unfolded the artistic historian’s task would be to “elevate a well-known, perhaps commonplace theme [...] into a comprehensive symbol, thereby intimating in the original theme a whole world of profundity, power, and beauty.”<sup>15</sup> While Nietzsche says that such a task would doubtless require the scientific historian’s “loving immersion in the empirical data,” he emphasizes that it would also require “a creative floating above things” and “a poetic elaboration of given types” of the kind one finds in the histories of Plutarch and Thucydides.<sup>a</sup>

To get a better sense of the artistic transformation of empirical history suggested by Nietzsche at the end of his essay it is useful to turn back to the beginning and compare the three types of history outlined there to the three types Hegel outlines at the beginning of *The Philosophy of History*. According to Hegel the discipline of history should be conceived in terms of three basic methods of “dealing with” or “writing” history: the original, the reflexive, and the philosophic.<sup>16</sup> For Nietzsche, on the other hand, conceiving of history in methodological terms gives it the character of a science concerned with the dead instead of an art concerned with the living, and he suggests that we reconceive history along more aesthetic lines according to its monumental, antiquarian, and critical capacities to “render service” to those in need of spiritual assistance.<sup>17</sup> Whereas Hegel distinguishes between his three approaches to history on the basis of the different temporal and spiritual perspectives from which each analyzes past

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<sup>a</sup> UH 8. Also consider Nietzsche’s remarks in UH 10 on the noble lie featured in Plato’s *Republic*. See Berkowitz (1995, 28): “Nietzsche’s master or ‘genuine historian’ is both philosopher and artist: he writes edifying historical poetry based on knowledge of metaphysics and human nature for the education of higher human beings.”

events, Nietzsche distinguishes between his on the basis of the effect they have on those who use them to enhance (or abuse them to inhibit) human life.<sup>a</sup>

### *Original History and Monumental History*

Hegel's three part analysis of history begins with an account of what he calls the "original" method in which authors like Herodotus and generals like Thucydides and Caesar describe (but do not reflect on) the particulars of events they witnessed in their lifetimes. Their histories are *original* in character because "the spirit of the author and the actions he tells of are one in the same," and original historians are always present for (and frequently take part in) the events they describe. In antiquity Hegel observes that original historians were usually "great captains and statesmen," and although this has changed in modern times with the professionalization of history he cites Frederick the Great (and we might add Winston Churchill) as the model of a modern original historian whose works stand out among those of his more scholarly peers.<sup>18</sup> Just as "the poet works up the stuff of his own sensation into images for our minds" Hegel says that the task of both ancient and modern original historians is to "translate" past events into "the realm of mental representation" to lend them an aura of immortality. In this respect, Hegel's account of the original method of history resembles and could perhaps be said to have inspired the more broadly creative vision of history Nietzsche articulated fifty years later in *The Use and Abuse*.<sup>19</sup> When Nietzsche says that "history can be written only by the experienced and superior person" whose experiences are "greater and superior to the experiences of all other people," he echoes the guiding principle of Hegelian original history that it is

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<sup>a</sup> For a lucid and helpful summary of the highpoints of Nietzsche's three types of history, see Berkowitz (1995, 32-42).

“only from a superior position [such as that of a captain or statesman] that one can truly see things for what they are and see everything.”<sup>20</sup>

Whereas original history occupies the first place in Hegel’s three part historical scheme because it is the method closest in time to the events it describes and that offers writers the least opportunity for abstract reflection, *monumental* history occupies the first place in Nietzsche’s scheme because “history pertains above all to the active and powerful human being” whom the monumental is meant to addresses. Although a complete account of why Nietzsche replaces the original method of history with the monumental would require more space than the present context allows, the broader features of his intention become visible when we observe that monumental history seems to modify its original counterpart by assimilating into it Nietzsche’s demand that history become an art that enhances life instead of a science that simply rationalizes it.<sup>a</sup> Like Hegel’s original history the monumental emanates from the souls of the superior men who live and write it, however the task of these great men in Nietzsche’s scheme is not only to record the events of their times but also to serve as “exemplars, teachers, and comforters” to the active men of future times who are unable to find guides among their contemporaries.<sup>21</sup> The “fundamental thought” of the type of person who writes and reads monumental history is thus that “the great moments in the struggles of individuals form links in a single chain,” and these links combine to create what Nietzsche calls a “mountain range of humankind” whose highest points are still “alive, bright and great” in

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<sup>a</sup> It is worth noting that Polybius is said by Hegel to be an original historian in *The Philosophy of History* whereas Nietzsche indicates that Polybius is a monumental historian in *The Use and Abuse*. Polybius is the only author whose name is featured in both works and it occupies the same place in both works as an example of the first kind of history each thinker elaborates. If Nietzsche’s intention was to revise or replace Hegel’s three approaches to history with his own, the fact that he recasts Polybius’ mode of historicizing as monumental instead of original may be an indication of this intention. See IPH p. 7 and UH 2.

the minds of those who employ monumental history as their moral and political teacher.<sup>a</sup> The very fact that greatness was possible at one time inspires students of the monumental to believe that it “will probably be possible once again,” and their hearts are filled with courage when they hear about past heroes blazing new trails. In striving to capture the essence of this heroic past monumental historians follow their original counterparts in poeticizing events to bring them to life, yet where original historians seem to hold themselves to a standard of historical accuracy monumental ones take so many artistic liberties that their works often approach “pure fiction” and give rise to ages in which men are “entirely incapable of distinguishing between a monumental past and a mythical fiction.”<sup>b</sup> Thus where Hegel prohibits “legends, folksongs, and traditions” from counting as works of original history because they are the “obscure modes of memory” of preliterate peoples, Nietzsche counts precisely these as monumental history because its highest concern is the enhancement of life instead of the accuracy of thought.

### *Reflective History and Antiquarian History*

In contrast to the original method of history in which events are recorded by superior individuals who were present for (and in many cases involved in) the affairs they describe, the second method of history Hegel elaborates goes “well beyond the present in spirit and does not refer to the historian’s own time.”<sup>22</sup> Since the spirit that animates a historian who did not live through the events he describes is different from the spirit that animated the events themselves, Hegel says that histories are *reflective* in character when they look back on the past from a later viewpoint and utilize the distance to make

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<sup>a</sup> Ibid. Consider Thucydides’ claim in his *History of the Peloponnesian War* that his book is a “possession for all time.”

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. Consider the age of the Homeric Greeks and the status of Homer’s epics in the minds of men like Glaucon in Plato’s *Republic*.

conceptual observations that were obscured when the events were still fresh.<sup>a</sup>

Delineating four subspecies of reflective history (the universal, pragmatic, critical, and specialized) whose differences stem from the various subjects they address, Hegel indicates that the common feature of each is that all examine history abstractly and from a later point of view in order to synthesize it into universalized concepts.<sup>b</sup> Of the four subspecies of reflective history the one most relevant to our discussion of Hegel and Nietzsche is the *pragmatic*, for pragmatic history is said by Hegel to undertake the task Nietzsche assigns to the discipline of history more broadly of abstracting lessons from the past that edify and inspire the men of the future.<sup>23</sup> If Nietzsche's transformation of history into a life promoting art fits anywhere in Hegel's scheme, it is within the category of pragmatic reflective history which according to Hegel comprises "the moral reflections and moral instruction" to be gained from studying history for the sake of the present.<sup>24</sup> However where Nietzsche embraces historical reflection for pragmatic ends and encourages his readers to "immerse yourselves in the history of great men" because "political history is the proper preparation for governing a state," Hegel asserts that studying history pragmatically is of limited value for men and nations because it only shows them that "each era has such particular circumstances, such individual situations, that decisions can only be made from within the era itself."<sup>25</sup> When an active person is involved in the press of world events Hegel argues that "there is no help to be had from general principles, nor from the memory of similar conditions in former times" because what happened in the past has no purchase in the "vitality and freedom" of the present.

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<sup>a</sup> One could argue that the philosophic character of Thucydides' history poses a challenge to Hegel's claim that thoughtful reflection does not or cannot occur when an historian is present for the events he narrates.

<sup>b</sup> Since they aim to draw conclusions from historical material instead of working directly with it reflective histories are said by Hegel to "give up the individual presentation of particular reality" found in original history and to "make do with summaries and abridgements."

In contradistinction to Nietzsche, therefore, who urges his readers to study the Greeks because “the Greeks found themselves threatened by a danger similar to the one we face today,” Hegel’s maintains that “nothing is more trite than the repeated appeal to Greek and Roman examples” because “no difference could be greater than that between the nature of those ancient peoples and our own time.”<sup>26</sup> Not only does Nietzsche’s entire project of using history to promote present and future life seem to strike Hegel as a miscalculation of history’s power, he also seems to conclude (and not altogether wrongly) that such a project effectively makes untimely the souls of timely men.

Taking the place of Hegel’s reflective history in Nietzsche’s historical scheme is a type of history Nietzsche calls the *antiquarian* which (like monumental history before it) loosely resembles the Hegelian method it supplants. In the same way that Hegel’s reflective historians *look back* from the present to a prior time Nietzsche’s antiquarian historians are said to “look back with loyalty and love” to their origins. However instead of analyzing the inferior spirit of the past from the superior perspective of the present like reflective historians do, antiquarian historians invert the task of their reflective counterparts and infuse the inferior spirit of the present with the superior spirit of the past. In accord with Nietzsche’s intention to transform history into a discipline that renders aesthetic service to life instead of simply recording it, he says that antiquarian history pertains to the person whose aim is to venerate and beautify his past in hopes of “preserving for those who will emerge after him the conditions under which he himself has come into being.”<sup>27</sup> At the point in a people’s life when they grow restless and long for new conquests and lands, a well-crafted horizon of antiquarian history provides them with a “simple sense of joy and satisfaction” which binds them to their native land,



depicting it as a noble and divine place in which only a chosen people like themselves and their forefathers deserve to live.<sup>28</sup>

Fostering a belief similar in character to Hegel's teaching that modern man is "the ripest fruit" of history's rational development, the primary aim of every antiquarian history is to convince its hearers that their existence is "not formed arbitrarily and by chance" but rather that it "grows as the blossom and the fruit of a past that is its inheritance."<sup>29</sup> Just as Nietzsche's artistic history resembled the "pragmatic" reflective history Hegel both outlined and disapproved of in the second part of his analysis of historical method, Hegel's rationalization of history and his claim that modern life is the product of a spiritual inheritance resembles the antiquarian history featured in the second part of Nietzsche's analysis and whose corruption in modern times he critiques at length.<sup>a</sup> Despite Hegel's earnest interest in acquiring absolute knowledge Nietzsche will later conclude that his philosophy of the world process was but another life promoting illusion that was antiquarian in character and that looked back on history to create a livable horizon in which the problem of historical relativism could be solved. "For certain types of historical human beings," Nietzsche says in a later part of the essay in which he invokes Hegel's teaching without mentioning him by name, "a glance into the past drives them on toward the future, inflames their courage to go on living, kindles their hope that justice will come, that happiness is waiting just the other side of the mountain they are approaching."<sup>30</sup> While these human beings believe in their antiquarian hearts that "the meaning of existence will come ever more to light in the course of a *process*," Nietzsche argues that they have "no idea how ahistorically they think and act despite all their

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<sup>a</sup> In UH 8 Nietzsche calls the generation of Germans who have been influenced by Hegel "antiquarian lateborn offspring." Hegelian history for Nietzsche thus appears to be an offshoot or species of antiquarian history.

history, nor that their concern with history stands in the service not of pure knowledge, but of life.”<sup>31</sup>

*Philosophic History and Critical History*

The third and final method of history outlined in Hegel’s introduction to *The Philosophy of History* is the method he endorses and which he devotes the rest of the work to: the *philosophic* method. Although the philosophic method is a nuanced one whose principles and implications Hegel elaborated over many years in his lecture courses and books, the simplest way to understand the method in the context of his introduction to it is to compare it to the two methods of history he addressed previously and observe how (in the manner of his logic) it synthesizes them into one. Just as original historians were said to be concerned with grasping the spirit of their particular historical epochs instead of abstracting general concepts from past epochs by means of a later spirit, so philosophic historians concern themselves with grasping the spirit of the particular historical epochs they study by means of the original spirit that animated them. Because the philosophic method brings with it the thought that the spirit that animated the past is the *same* spirit that animates present times only advanced along its rational course, it can rightfully claim to follow original history in identifying its own spirit with the spirit of the times it examines. For philosophic historians, in other words, world history amounts to the “working out of the explicit knowledge of what it is potentially,” and just as the seed of a tree carries within itself the plant’s entire nature, so the philosophic method of history operates on the principle that “the first traces of spirit contain virtually all history” and that the spirit of the past *is* the spirit of the present.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to sharing original history's concern with grasping the spirit of particular historical epochs as it was grasped in the epochs themselves, the philosophic method of history also shares the reflective method's concern with drawing out universalized concepts from historical study. However unlike the reflective method of history which approaches the past as historical material from which universal insights into subjects like politics and morality can be gleaned, the philosophic method of history approaches the past with the intention of gleaning insights into the nature of history itself. The phrase "philosophy of history" according to Hegel signifies nothing other than the "thoughtful consideration of history," for since philosophy has "thoughts of its own brought forth by speculation from within itself" then dealing with history philosophically means dealing with it as raw material that is "not to be left as it is but to be construed according to thoughts, *a priori*."<sup>33</sup> Because philosophic reflection has shown that reason is "for itself the *infinite material* of all natural and spiritual life" as well as its "*infinite form*," the philosophy of history's reflective task is to demonstrate *a priori* the actualization of reason's form in original historical content.<sup>34</sup> A philosophic analyses of world history properly understood, therefore, utilizes parts of both the original (particular) and reflective (abstract) methods of history to show that history has followed the rational and necessary course of a single world spirit whose nature is "always one and the same" and is only gradually revealed in reality.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast to Hegel's philosophic method of history which aims to justify the past by rationalizing it, Nietzsche's critical history has the inverse aim of doing injustice to the past by destroying it. Where philosophic history *synthesized* the work of its reflective and original counterparts into a new method of history, critical history *dissolves* the work

of its monumental and antiquarian counterparts when their work goes awry, paving the way for the creation of a new historical horizon that can foster healthier life. When a people shaped by monumental history becomes so enamored with past greatness that they begin to oppose the emergence of new great men, they degenerate into connoisseurs of the great who are unable to produce the very greatness they admire.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, when a people shaped by antiquarian history become so absorbed in venerating past deeds that they lose their sense for what is venerable about the present, they honor what is old for the sake of its agedness alone and degenerate into preservers of life who cannot create it. In circumstances such as these when artistic history becomes *abusive* to life instead of conducive to it Nietzsche says that the historical horizon beneath which an ailing people lives must be brought before—and condemned by—the tribunal of “that dark, driving, insatiable power” called life whose verdict is “always merciless and always unjust because it has never flowed from the pure fountain of knowledge.”<sup>37</sup> Where the task of philosophic history was to analyze history through the lens of reason and in so doing to redeem the past, the inverse task of critical history is to analyze history through the lens of the irrational drives and passions and expose it as an error whose crimes against life condemn it to die. Although Nietzsche affirms that *every* past eventually reaches the point when it is worthy of such condemnation because “this is simply how it is with human affairs” when violence and weakness play such a powerful role in them, he warns that these condemnations must always be undertaken cautiously since a people risks losing its sense of itself as a people and dissolving itself as a state if it carries its critique of the past too far too quickly.

Just as Hegel embraced the third method of history he presented at the beginning of *The Philosophy of History* and devoted the rest of his book to its elaboration, our previous investigation of Nietzsche's intention indicates that he too embraced the third method of history he presents at the beginning of *The Use and Abuse* and goes on to elaborate in its subsequent sections.<sup>a</sup> Echoing his account of critical history's task to "shatter and dissolve" the past and "trample on all forms of piety" in part three of the essay, he notes in passing in part ten that the imperative of those to whom his essay is addressed is to "shatter the conceptions that this present age has of 'health' and 'cultivation,'" and to arouse "scorn and hatred" in their more pious peers."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, just as Nietzsche had said in his description of critical history that its positive or artistic task is to clear the way for the *a posteriori* creation of "a new past from which we would prefer to be descended," he tells his readers near the end of his essay to "justify the meaning of your existence *a posteriori*, as it were, by setting yourself a purpose, a goal, a reason why."<sup>39</sup> In the last analysis it seems that *The Use and Abuse of History* as a whole is itself meant to be a piece of critical history, the writing of which supplants or revises Hegel's account of the significance of history for human life at the same time that it serves as a prelude to the history of the future.

#### *Conclusion: Nietzsche, Hegel, and the Problem of Philosophy*

Hegel's philosophy of history represented both the culmination and the downfall of antiquarian history in modern times because it sanctioned as scientific knowledge the antiquarian illusion that the present was "not formed arbitrarily and by chance" but had grown as the "blossom and fruit of a past that is its inheritance."<sup>40</sup> For a short time

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<sup>a</sup> See Emden (2004, 30): "In any case, far from rejecting the value of historical knowledge and historical consciousness, Nietzsche [...] thus adopts a position of critical historicism."

during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, then, Hegel appeared to have “solved” the problem of historical relativism because he had demonstrated both the rational necessity of the decayed horizons of the past and the absolute status of the horizon that coincided with his own existence in Berlin. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, Nietzsche sensed that a scientific intensification or perversion of Hegel’s thought (prepared by the steps Hegel himself took to make history philosophic) had led to a relativistic corruption of the absolute horizon established in *The Philosophy of History*, and this led him to conclude in turn that despite its short-term salutary benefits there was no “more dangerous” philosophy in modern times than Hegelian philosophy.<sup>a</sup> Although Hegel’s method of historicizing was originally an antiquarian one whose backward looking orientation worked in the service of a life promoting absolute moment, Nietzsche observes that the emphasis Hegel placed on the importance of studying history scientifically led to an outbreak of what he calls the “scholarly habits” that mark the decline of every antiquarian horizon: specifically “the blind mania to collect,” an “insatiable curiosity and all-encompassing desire for what is old,” and the desire to “devour with gusto the dust of bibliographical minutiae” that were prominent characteristics of 19<sup>th</sup> century German youths.<sup>b</sup>

The transformation of Hegel’s thought from a philosophy which declared the possibility of absolute knowledge into a science which all but denied it reached its culmination when those who followed in his wake jettisoned his concept of the absolute moment yet retained his account of the nature of historical horizons. Advocating a

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<sup>a</sup> UH 9. See also Löwith (1964, 181-188).

<sup>b</sup> UH 3, 8. It is not by chance that the only instance in which Nietzsche calls the German youth “late antiquarian offspring” in his essay also occurs in the same paragraph in which he laments the dangers of Hegel’s philosophy.

relativistic doctrine which asserted the “sovereignty of becoming” and which Nietzsche himself asserted was “true but deadly,” the scientific history of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century presented Nietzsche—its most perspicacious son—with the perplexing task of saving human life from the one absolute that could kill it instead of comfort it.<sup>41</sup> Under these circumstances Nietzsche adopted the outlook of critical history and encouraged the historically educated German youth to turn on the very history that nourished them, arguing that the recent historical-scientific insight into the relativity of all horizons demonstrated that it was possible to create new history *a posteriori* by utilizing the ahistorical and suprahistorical to cultivate a new human nature that would supplant the old. To provide the youth with material for the creative task he thought must follow once the critical one was complete, Nietzsche often urges them to read monumental history and tells them to “immerse yourselves in the histories of great men” and to “satisfy your souls by reading Plutarch and dare to believe in yourselves by believing in his heroes.”<sup>42</sup> Far from being an arbitrary historical progression with no discernible trajectory, Nietzsche’s artistic history comes to sight as something of a cycle—perhaps even a “world process”—in which the decay of the antiquarian leads to the need for the critical, in the destructive wake of which the monumental is necessary for inspiring the sorts of great deeds that will one day be preserved by the antiquarian again. Despite his many assertions to the contrary, therefore, there are legitimate grounds for wondering how far Nietzsche’s thought truly strays from Hegel’s claim that history unfolds in a predictable or even rational manner.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> See Strauss (1989, 25-6). Also see Dannhauser (1990, 77): “Closer analysis of *History in the Service and Disservice of Life* reveals that Nietzsche actually bases his criticism of Hegel on a crucial area of agreement with him.”

Be this as it may the fundamental law according to which Nietzsche's new approach to history operates is that life should guide science instead of being guided by it because any science (like modern historical science) whose insights destroy human life simultaneously destroys itself by attacking the very life upon which it depends for its continuation. In this way Nietzsche's philosophy of history could be said to effect a complete reversal of Hegel's: for where Hegel had said that spirit (understood as the sojourn of reason on earth) is the steward of human life, Nietzsche insists that human life must become the steward of reason.

Yet for all of the substantive differences and inversions that characterize Nietzsche and Hegel's respective accounts of the relationship between history and life it is worth noting how much the *form* of their two philosophies have in common despite their differences in content. Since both thinkers embrace the study of history as *the* means for discovering the truth about the nature of man both are compelled to confront and overcome the problem of historical relativism which goes hand in hand with any attempt to ground one's thinking in that which is always in flux.<sup>a</sup> For Hegel, the moment at which man can overcome historical relativism is the moment at which he attains self-consciousness of the fact that actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its "completed state" in modern times.<sup>43</sup> Although Nietzsche rejects categorically Hegel's solution to the problem of relativism as one that is based on an inadequate understanding of what history truly is, he too is compelled or obliged to

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<sup>a</sup> See Dannhauser (1990, 80): "With such arguments Nietzsche manages to score some points against Hegel, but he can hardly be said to have refuted historicism...At its core historicism declares the overwhelming importance of history, the essential determination of human life and thought by history, and the impossibility of transcending the historical process. Now, for the most part, Nietzsche accepts this core avowal, and his assertion as well as his acceptance indicate a crucial degree of agreement with Hegel." But Deleuze (1983, 156-59) argues that "we must see [Nietzsche's] philosophy of history and religion as a revival or even a caricature of Hegel's views."



declare an “absolute moment” of sorts in order to overcome relativism’s paralyzing effects. The absolute moment in Nietzsche’s historical philosophy arrives when man becomes conscious of the fact that *he* (and not reason, nature, or god) is the origin of all values because he is the creator of all historical horizons: the “architect of the future” as he puts it in *The Use and Abuse of History*.<sup>a</sup> For both thinkers alike, then, a historical moment of self-consciousness signifies the arrival of the possibility of true wisdom about man’s situation in the world, although precisely *when* this moment arrives in the story of humanity’s overall development remains a subject of their disagreement. In Hegel’s view philosophy always arrives on the scene at dusk when it “paints its grey in grey and the shape of life has grown old and cannot be rejuvenated.”<sup>b</sup> Owing to this late arrival philosophy as Hegel understands it lacks the capacity to “tell the world how it ought to be,” and permits only what he calls the “scientific and objective treatment” of what is given. Since philosophy for Nietzsche, on the other hand, arrives not at dusk but at what he calls “noon; the moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; pinnacle of humanity,” it arrives just in time to tell the world “this is how it should be!,” and to fulfill the task not only of observing the world—but also of creating it.<sup>c</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> See Strauss (1989b, 26).

<sup>b</sup> PR, Preface. See Smith (1989, 226): The land of Minerva’s Owl would be for Nietzsche nothing so much as the world of the ‘last man,’ the one great herd without a shepherd.”

<sup>c</sup>TI, “How the Real World Finally Became Fable”; UH 8, cf. BGE 9.

**Part Three**  
**Schopenhauer as Educator**

## Chapter 5: The Redeeming Self as Cultivator of Modernity

### I. The Relationship between *The Use and Abuse of History* and *Schopenhauer as Educator*

#### *An Historical Parable*

The final section of *The Use and Abuse of History for Life* concludes with a parable whose meaning Nietzsche does not explain. The parable addresses directly the youth whom he had earlier tasked with “shattering” modernity’s historicized conception of culture so that the way can be paved for a new conception of culture that will cultivate a new human nature.<sup>1</sup> According to Nietzsche the intention of the parable is to relate the “course and progress” of a cure to the historical sickness so that the German youth can become “*human beings*” again instead of remaining “humanlike aggregates” molded by historical education.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that the parable is meant to help cure the historical sickness it is explicitly historical in character. It features an account of how the classical Greeks overcame their own historical malady and turned themselves into “the model for all future cultured peoples.” Since the parable Nietzsche supplies to cure the historical sickness is itself a piece of history, it would seem that the historical poison that causes modern man’s historical affliction is also its most powerful antidote. Indeed, Nietzsche says, the parable should serve as a model of the “personal history” that each young person fighting against the historicism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century should make his *own* history. History must solve the problem of history.<sup>a</sup> What the Greeks of antiquity did to overcome their historical sickness “every individual among us” today must also do.

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<sup>a</sup> UH 8.

It is not immediately evident why Nietzsche calls the parable at the end of *The Use and Abuse of History* a parable. It begins by recalling the centuries in which the Greeks were still a fledgling people who found themselves threatened by a danger “similar” to the one the Germans now face: the danger of perishing in a flood of things “alien and past.” Long before the bloom of philosophic, dramatic, and political genius that marked the pinnacle of late Greek culture, Nietzsche says that early Greek culture was a “chaos” of Semitic, Babylonian, Lydian, and Egyptian forms and concepts whose disorder resembled the disorder characteristic of culture in modern Germany. Unlike the Germans, however, who *embrace* the fact that their culture has evolved into an “aggregate” of the cultures they have consumed in wars and read about in history books, the Greeks sought to *rid* themselves of the influence of foreign cultures by heeding the God at Delphi’s command to “know themselves” both as individuals and as a people. The result of their search for self-knowledge, Nietzsche argues, was that the early Greeks learned how to “*organize the chaos*” that stirred inside them by discerning their “genuine needs,” thereby dispensing with the “pseudo-needs” imposed on them by foreigners and discovering themselves anew in accord with their own inmost longings. By “taking possession of themselves again” by means of what Nietzsche calls their “practical interpretation” of Apollo’s advice, the Greeks shed their identity as the “glutted heirs and epigones of the orient” and created a rich cultural horizon out of which emerged an inordinately high number of the greatest poets and philosophers in human history.<sup>3</sup>

The story Nietzsche tells of the Greeks’ recovery from their own unique strain of the historical sickness is meant to serve as a blueprint for the convalescence of the Germans. If the “hopeful individuals” to whom *The Use and Abuse* is addressed pursue

Apollo's directive to know themselves and concentrate on the fulfillment of their genuine needs, they too can free themselves from the deluge of historical influences that prohibit them from acquiring a genuine culture. It is this directive to identify and organize their genuine needs that Nietzsche explicitly identifies as "a parable for every individual" among the Germans, adding that the Greek concept of culture as a "new and improved *physis* [or nature]" will be disclosed to anyone who discovers these needs for himself. In contrast to modernity's conception of culture as mere "*decoration of life*" and refinement of expensive taste, the early Greeks thought culture properly pursued had the power to cultivate and perhaps even alter a people's *physis* in the same way that agriculture improves the natural characteristics of the land. The key to the Germans' recovery from the historical sickness thus lies in their capacity to unravel the "parable" of Greek self-discovery, adopt the Greek concept of culture that results from this self-discovery, and use this older concept of culture to expose the dissimulation and inauthenticity characteristic of modern historical culture. A properly cultivated human nature like the one possessed by the Greeks, Nietzsche indicates, exhibits a harmony of "life, thought, appearance, and will" which reflects the unity of a people's cultural and moral horizon, and it is only by cultivating a "second nature" within themselves that will one day become the "first nature" of their posterity that the Germans can harmonize their chaotic inner lives.<sup>4</sup>

After explaining or at least alluding to the potential of culture rightly understood to make "new and improved" the natures of both individuals and peoples, Nietzsche concludes the parable in *The Use and Abuse* by addressing the German youth. Once they grasp culture's power to alter nature, he says, they will also come to see that it was the

“higher power of *ethical* nature [*sittlichen Natur*]” that made the Greeks’ victory over foreign cultures possible. While the essay ends abruptly and Nietzsche never specifies what he understands the content of the Greek’s *sittlichen Natur* to be, he may well have in mind a return to the Greek *Sittlichkeit* described by Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right* which consisted of the social practices, political institutions, and cultural norms that formed the spiritual horizon of the ancient *polis* and gave the Greek citizen his identity.<sup>a</sup> Yet where Hegel maintains in *The Philosophy of Right* that Greek *Sittlichkeit* was not a fully self-conscious realization of ethical life because it did not allow for subjective particularity and individual freedom, Nietzsche concludes *The Use and Abuse* by hinting that a form of German life modeled on the very horizon of Greek *Sittlichkeit* Hegel rejects is the cure for the historical illness for which Hegel’s philosophy is responsible.<sup>b</sup>

*Schopenhauer as Educator: Interpretive Guide to the Parable in The Use and Abuse*

The parable that concludes Nietzsche’s essay on history is “parabolic” in two major ways. First, like the parables in the Bible it relays an ethical lesson whose deeper meaning is obscure but promises to offer a path to “redemption” (in this case from the historical sickness) when properly understood. Second, just as the teachings of biblical

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<sup>a</sup> See Luther (2004, 152): “[it is only by] sacrificing their particularity, abandoning any conception of themselves as individuals apart from their cultural identity, and subordinating their separate and particular interests to the shared [spiritual] interests of the community that members of ancient *Sittlichkeit* come to see themselves as the kind of beings they are—individual instantiations of the shared spirit of their community.”

<sup>b</sup> See *Philosophy of Right*, Part II, Section 124: “The right of the subject’s particularity, his right to be satisfied, or in other words, the right of subjective freedom, is the pivot and center of the difference between antiquity and modern times. This right in its infinity is given expression in Christianity and it has become the universal effective principle of a new form of civilization. Amongst the primary shapes which this right assumes are love, romanticism, the quest for the eternal salvation of the individual [. . .], next come moral convictions and conscience; and, finally, the other forms, some of which come into prominence in what follows as the principle of civil society.” See Church (2011, 57-63) for a helpful interpretation of what Hegel meant by *Sittlichkeit*, and Church (2011, 154-169) for an account of how Nietzsche thinks human beings become individuals through ethical activity.

parables are often so ambiguous as to have the initial effect of confounding rather than edifying, Nietzsche's parable raises many more questions than it answers and leaves his readers at a loss about what its teaching to seek self-knowledge is meant to convey in practice. What does Nietzsche mean when he says that the Greeks' "practical interpretation [*praktische Auslegung*]" of Apollo's exhortation to seek self-knowledge transformed them into the "first" cultured people? More precisely, what would it mean to interpret "practically" an exhortation which seems on its face to be concerned with the purely theoretical, inner, or spiritual matter of self-knowledge? Furthermore, if the Greeks found their "genuine needs" in their quest for self-knowledge then how did their concentration on these needs free them from foreign influences and enable them to make use of "the higher power of ethical nature [*sittliche Natur*]"? Lastly, when Nietzsche says that the concept of culture as a "new and improved *physis*" will be disclosed to those who organize their lives in accord with their genuine needs, does he mean that nature is so malleable that it is possible to acquire a "new" nature (human or otherwise) through the work of prudent cultivation or education? Although these questions vary in scope and theme Nietzsche indicates that they can be grouped together under the rubric of an inquiry into the conditions necessary for producing a horizon of meaning that could stabilize the spiritual chaos engendered by historical relativism. In the pages that follow I will argue that the outline of these conditions (and hence of the Greeks' "practical interpretation" of Apollo's directive) is contained in the history essay's sequel *Schopenhauer as Educator*, and I will suggest that *Schopenhauer* should be read as an interpretation of the parable that concludes *The Use and Abuse*.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> See Zuckert (1976) for a similar claim. Also see Berkowitz, (1995, 40-41): "Nietzsche insists that modern man must do as the Greeks did: each must organize the chaos within him by thinking back to his real needs."

Since *Schopenhauer as Educator* is perhaps the most confusingly organized of Nietzsche's four *Untimely Observations* it may be useful to summarize our path through the text before embarking. My interpretation of *Schopenhauer* begins with a series of observations meant to show how the opening sections of the essay continue Nietzsche's exploration of the two most prominent themes of the parable in *The Use and Abuse*: the theme of acquiring self-knowledge and the theme of enriching human nature by using culture to improve *physis*. The discussion of these two themes sets the stage for a subsequent discussion of Nietzsche's account of his admiration of Arthur Schopenhauer the man, and here I analyze Nietzsche's claim that Schopenhauer made a "physiological" impression on him that made him feel more "natural," that made his existence seem more meaningful, and that ultimately remedied in his own soul the "disquiet [and] confusion" that characterizes modern souls and "condemns them to be unfruitful and joyless."<sup>a</sup> I understand the sickness of the soul Nietzsche is describing here to be identical to the one whose cause he attributed to historical relativism in *The Use and Abuse*, and whose chief symptoms were said there to be the practical paralysis, unfruitfulness, and "weak personality" of a people—and especially their youth.<sup>5</sup>

Once we have a clearer understanding of the Schopenhauerian remedy Nietzsche applied to his own soul in order to cure it of its historical malady, we will turn our attention to an analysis of his universalization of this remedy for European man. According to Nietzsche modernity can be saved from its impending spiritual collapse by a very rare type of person whose formal model he found in men like Rousseau, Goethe,

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Berkowitz reads Nietzsche's essay on history as I do, but he concludes that Nietzsche: "does not clarify the difficulty involved in treating *physis*, which is by definition above and untouched by human will, as the subject of human will; and [Nietzsche] leaves uncertain how a higher moral nature can serve as the foundation of a culture where culture is understood as the creation of a new nature." In the chapters that follow I argue that Nietzsche does explain these matters, only he does so in *Schopenhauer as Educator* and not *The Use and Abuse*.

<sup>a</sup> SE 2. Also See Schacht (1995 164-5).



and Schopenhauer whose extraordinary intellectual and creative capacities permitted them to cultivate [*Bildung*] new “images [*Bild*]” of what human beings should strive to become in the future. In the later sections of the essay Nietzsche calls this rare type of cultivator “the redeeming human being” and “the true human being” because his existence redeems nature as a force or entity capable of creating much more than mere animals. Indeed, Nietzsche argues, nature is capable of creating almost godlike human beings whose own creations furnish the people among whom they live with a horizon of meaning and ethical (or *sittliche*) nature.<sup>a</sup> The “redeeming human being” featured in *Schopenhauer*, I contend, is the most needful of the “genuine needs” the early Greeks’ were said to have discovered on their quest for self-knowledge in *The Use and Abuse*, and once they organized their lives around his production they began cultivating philosophic and poetic geniuses at an unprecedented rate whose works imbued the Greek identity with meaning.<sup>b</sup> Although it is tempting to suspect that Nietzsche thought Schopenhauer and Wagner were living examples of the “redeeming” types he describes in the essays bearing their names, he emphasized in *Ecce Homo* that the third and fourth *Untimely Observations* were not portraits of Schopenhauer and Wagner but rather that he had “seized two famous and still utterly undetermined types with both hands [...] in order to express something [new], and to have a few more formulations, signs, linguistic means at hand [...] the same way Plato used Socrates.”<sup>6</sup> Far from being about Schopenhauer Nietzsche implies in *Ecce Homo* that *he* is the type of man he had in mind when he envisioned the redeeming human being in his early essays. The third *Untimely*

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<sup>a</sup> SE 5 and 6 beginning. The “redeeming human being” also seems to make an appearance in *Beyond Good and Evil* 207 where Nietzsche refers to his conception of the philosopher as “the complimentary human being in whom the rest of existence is justified.” It is also fruitful to compare Nietzsche’s “redeeming men” to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “representative men.”

<sup>b</sup> Cf. Nietzsche remarks on Empedocles near the end of SE 3. Also consider his early essay *The Greek State*.

*Observation* “speaks basically only of me,” he claimed, and it is not ““Schopenhauer as Educator”” who speaks here but rather ““Nietzsche as Educator.””<sup>a</sup> “In the third and fourth *Untimelies*, as hints toward a *higher* conception of ‘culture,’ two images [*Bild*] of the harshest *egoism* [and] *self-discipline* are set up: [...]—Schopenhauer and Wagner *or*, in one word, Nietzsche.”<sup>7</sup>

After elaborating the character and task of the redeeming type and showing that the new “image [*Bild*] of the human being” supposedly presented in Schopenhauer’s philosophy is actually quite Nietzschean in character, we will turn to Nietzsche’s account of the painful process of self-discovery his readers must undergo in order to transform themselves into the sorts of people who can create the conditions necessary for the emergence of redeeming human beings in Europe. According to sections five and six of *Schopenhauer* the creation of these conditions requires those who are not redeeming men to acquire knowledge of their defective natures, to despise themselves and their lack of intelligence, and to devote their lives to “paving the way for and promoting” the production of higher types by discovering all that is “hostile to [their] development and sweeping it aside.”<sup>b</sup> “Culture [*Kultur*],” Nietzsche concludes in these sections, is “the child of every individual’s self-knowledge,” and once this self-knowledge is acquired it “charges each of us with one single task: *to foster the production of philosophers, artists, and saints* [i.e. redeeming human beings] *within and around us, and thereby to work*

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<sup>a</sup> EH, Books, *Untimelies* sec. 3. Also see Nietzsche’s letter to Paul Deussen in 1877: “Already, when I wrote my essay on Sch[openhauer], I no longer held fast to any of the dogmatic points. I still believe now, as I did then, that it is of the highest importance [...] to go through Schopenhauer and use him as an educator. I only do not believe any longer that he should educate to Schopenhauerian philosophy” (*Samliche Briefe* 5: 265).

<sup>b</sup> The remarks Nietzsche makes in these sections bear a striking resemblance to Zarathustra’s teaching that the greatest event a man can experience is the “hour of [his] great despising” when he acknowledges his inferiority to the superman, and a strong case could be made that the “redeeming human being” featured in *Schopenhauer* is an early but more explicitly fleshed out version of the “superman” of the later works. See Z, Prologue, sec. 3.

toward the perfection of nature.”<sup>a</sup> Deciphering the meaning of this extraordinary statement is crucial for understanding Nietzsche’s intention in the *Untimely Observations*, and much of my interpretation of *Schopenhauer as Educator* revolves around this task.

Following my account in chapter five of the connection between Nietzsche’s exhortation to search for self-knowledge and his claim that culture is at once the “child of every individual’s self-knowledge” and the “perfection of nature,” I turn in chapter six to the difficult question of how Nietzsche understands the term “nature” in his early works. My intention in approaching this complex question is by no means to settle it once and for all, but rather to shed light on what Nietzsche means when he says that redeeming human beings are “bound to and bound up with nature” and that the task of culture is to perfect nature by fostering their production.<sup>b</sup> Although nature sought by producing the redeeming man “to make existence intelligible and meaningful for [all] human beings,” Nietzsche says that because nature’s goals far exceed its capacities it must be “cultivated” if it wants to overcome the “ineptitude” it commonly evinces in its utilization of the human geniuses it has labored for millennia to evolve.<sup>8</sup> In the concluding sections of my interpretation, therefore, I investigate the conditions Nietzsche thinks his readers must cultivate and the obstacles he thinks they must remove from modern life to insure that the emergence of redeeming types—and especially philosophic types—becomes more frequent. Chief among these obstacles are the modern state and its educational institutions which (as the introduction to this dissertation shows) were the foremost topics on Nietzsche’s mind during the “*kultur-kampf*” years that followed the Franco-Prussian

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<sup>a</sup> SE 5. Compare this definition of culture to the one Nietzsche gave in DS 1: “Above all else, culture is a unity of artistic style that manifests itself throughout all the expressions of life of a people.”

<sup>b</sup> SE 5.

War. Taken together the two chapters I have written on *Schopenhauer as Educator* thus constitute my attempt to understand the essay as a response to—and a remedy for—the decline of modern culture Nietzsche outlined in its prequels on David Strauss and cultivated philistinism, and Hegel and historical relativism.

## II. Finding Oneself with the Help of an Educator and Cultivator

### *How One Discovers What One Is*

*Schopenhauer as Educator* opens with the provocative claim that the single characteristic “common to all of humanity” is laziness.<sup>a</sup> Although Nietzsche puts this insight into the mouth of an anonymous traveler who is said to have discovered it on his journeys to various lands, he judges the traveler’s insight to be “right” and adds that fear is the most frequent consequence of the laziness the traveler describes. In particular, it is fear of “those hardships that unconditional honesty and nakedness” foist upon us that compel us to “think and act like a part of a herd” instead of taking pleasure in being ourselves. For the most part, all human beings hide their true selves behind conventions and opinions that are alien to who they really are, talking with the words of others, thinking with the thoughts of others, and never encountering the world on their own terms. Like the Greeks in *The Use and Abuse* whose identity as a people was once threatened by a “flood of things alien,” the German people have lost themselves—or have never known themselves at all—and they must follow the path of their Greek counterparts and search for self-knowledge if they are to cure themselves of their debilitating historical sickness. “How can we find ourselves again? How can the human being get to know himself” Nietzsche asks near the beginning of *Schopenhauer*. By

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<sup>a</sup> All citations from this section are from SE 1 unless otherwise noted.

prodding his readers with such questions he signals his intention to play the role of the Delphic Oracle for modern times.

In an age in which human beings are “mass produced commodities” who think and act like a part of a herd instead of being themselves, desperate measures are required to recover the concept of the self from the obscurity into which it has fallen through adherence to modern convention. On the very first page of *Schopenhauer* Nietzsche gives his readers a sense of what he means by the term “self” by appealing to their vanity. “At bottom,” he says, “every human being knows [...] that no coincidence, regardless of how strange, will ever for a second time concoct out of this amazingly variegated diversity the unity that he is.” The self, it would seem, is something unique to the body it occupies, something which determines who we are at bottom and which can only exist once in the world. Furthermore, the distinctive expression of each human being attests to the fact that every self is a “one-of-a-kind miracle,” that each person “down to the movement of his muscles is himself and himself alone,” and that in the “strict consistency of [our] uniqueness [we] are as novel and incredible as every work of nature, and anything but boring.” Although it is not clear whether Nietzsche truly believes that *every* self is beautiful (he attributes this sentiment to a mind that is not his own) the effects his comments are meant to have on the vanity of the “young souls” to whom *Schopenhauer* is addressed is more apparent.

Because the conscience of youth constantly cries out “Be yourself!” and longs to acquire happiness through liberation from the “chains of opinions and fear,” Nietzsche’s remarks on the uniqueness of the self send a signal to his readers that they have found an educator who can show them how to find themselves because he has found and liberated

his own self. “Your educators,” Nietzsche writes, “can be nothing other than your liberators,” and while he admits that there are other ways to go about finding oneself he concludes that he knows “no better way” than to reflect on how Arthur Schopenhauer, his own educator, helped him. His explicit task in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, therefore, is to reflect on the sort of “teacher and taskmaster” Arthur Schopenhauer was, and by reflecting on how a superior self helped him acquire self-knowledge he intends to foster in his own readers a longing for a superior self as educator—i.e. for ‘Nietzsche as Educator’. The secondary effect Nietzsche’s comments on the uniqueness of the self have on his young readers is a corollary to this one. By flattering his audience with remarks about their beauty in the same breath in which he tells them they are lazy, he opens them up not only to accepting him as their teacher but also as their “taskmaster,” provoking them to prove through their deeds that his assumptions about their laziness are wrong. When a “great thinker disdains human beings,” Nietzsche says—leaving us to suspect that *he* is the great thinker he has in mind—“it is their laziness he disdains, for it is laziness that makes them appear to be mass produced commodities, to be indifferent, unworthy of human interchange and instruction.” By challenging his readers to “cease going easy” on themselves and to assume the “dangerous undertaking” of self-discovery to prove they are worthy of being his students, ‘Nietzsche as Educator’ instills within those who are captivated by him a hunger to think through—and perhaps even to carry out—the revolutionary cultural task whose details he elaborates in the second half of the essay.

After gently seducing his young readers into thinking that they possess the most beautiful sorts of selves and then openly challenging them to prove it through their deeds,

Nietzsche turns to an account of the means by which they can begin to uncover their true selves if they should dare. By looking back on their lives and asking themselves the question: “what have you up to now truly loved, what attracted your soul, [and] what dominated it while simultaneously making it happy?,” a series of objects will emerge before their young eyes whose order reveals the “fundamental law” of their “authentic selves” and whose sequence produces a “stepladder” at the top of which their “true being” lies. The question of who or what we are, in other words, is not separable from the question of what we love or long for, and the rank order of our loves provides us with the most penetrating piece of self-knowledge we can acquire. Just as the Greeks’ search for self-knowledge in *The Use and Abuse* was said to consist in the internal organization of their inner chaos which revealed to them their genuine needs, Nietzsche instructs the German youth in *Schopenhauer* to organize their inner chaos, appending the crucial instruction (withheld from the Greek parable) that *love* should serve as the ordering principle.

Although Nietzsche never explicitly identifies the object or need he expects to come out on top once his readers have ranked their loves, the remarks that conclude part one of the essay give his presumption away. If knowing oneself is *the* most important concern for a young soul because the young conscience is beset on all sides by foreign influences, then it stands to reason that the object the young soul will love or long for the most will be the one which can help it acquire the self-knowledge it so desperately desires. Immediately after exhorting his readers to establish the order of their loves, then, Nietzsche asserts without explanation that: “your true educators and cultivators [*Erzieher und Bildner*] can reveal to you the primordial sense and basic stuff of your being,

something that is thoroughly incapable of being educated and cultivated, but something that in any event is bound, paralyzed, and difficult to gain access to.” At the top of a healthy young soul’s ladder of love there stands a longing for a superior self like Nietzsche—a redeeming human being who is their most genuine need because only he can help them accomplish their most pressing task.

### *The Problem of Nature and the Limits of Cultivation*

Before going on in the remaining sections of *Schopenhauer* to explain how the search for self-knowledge under the tutelage of a superior self gives meaning and purpose to human existence, Nietzsche concludes part one of the essay with what he calls “the secret of all cultivation [*Bildung*]” which sets the stage for the lengthy discussions of nature, human nature, and culture that appear in later sections. Instead of providing “artificial limbs, wax noses, or corrective lenses” to the young, the true purpose of their education and cultivation is:

liberation, removal of all weeds, rubble, and vermin that seek to harm the plant’s delicate shoots [...]. It is imitation and adoration of nature where nature displays its maternal and merciful disposition; it is perfection of nature when it prevents nature’s cruel and merciless onslaughts and turns them to good, when it drapes a veil over the expressions of nature’s step-motherly disposition and sad lack of understanding.

Since the foregoing remark touches on the theme not only of the *Schopenhauer* essay but of the *Untimely Observations* as a whole, it is worth considering in some detail. In order to get a better sense of what is at stake in Nietzsche’s discussion of the relationship between culture and nature it is helpful to consult Leo Strauss’ penetrating analysis of the term “culture.” In *Notes on Schmitt’s ‘Concept of the Political’* Strauss observes that culture is always the “*culture of nature*” because the term culture “always presupposes an object”—namely nature—that is to be cultivated.<sup>9</sup> Although the prevailing understanding



of culture in modern society defines it as a “sovereign creation” or “pure product” of the human spirit, Strauss maintains that this understanding is mistaken inasmuch as culture presupposes by definition the existence of a nature whose potential it aims to cultivate, and whose character determines the limits of its the cultivating task.<sup>a</sup>

Turning back to Nietzsche’s remark on culture in part one of *Schopenhauer* it appears that his understanding of it aligns with Strauss’ inasmuch as he claims that culture is the “imitation and adoration of nature” on one hand and the “perfection of nature” on the other. Culture, in other words, is the cultivation of an object (nature) which is by no means a pure product of the spirit and whose character determines the limitations of the cultivating task. What Nietzsche does not say in part one of *Schopenhauer*, however, and what he spends much of the rest of the essay trying to clarify, is whether he understands nature (and especially human nature) to be a permanent order that can be perfected but *not* changed by culture, or whether he understands it to be something impermanent and thus *malleable* by the cultivating action of human beings.<sup>b</sup> It may well be that Nietzsche begins by conceiving of culture as something which (as he said in the parable in *The Use and Abuse*) can improve *physis*, but he hints in this same parable that culture has the potential to transform or transfigure *physis* so dramatically as to make

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<sup>a</sup> The later Nietzsche would seem to be responsible for the understanding of culture as the pure product of the spirit.

<sup>b</sup> Strauss touches on a related point when he points out that: “whether culture is understood as nurture of nature or as a fight with nature depends on how nature is understood: as exemplary order or as disorder to be eliminated.” If I am not mistaken Nietzsche never indicates that he understands culture to be a “fight” against nature the way a thinker like Bacon does, but rather he conceives of it as a nourishing of nature or at most a “transfiguration” of nature (see SE 5). His gentleness toward “nature” is evident from his claim in SE 1 that the “perfection of nature” consists in turning her “cruel and merciless onslaughts” to good and “draping a veil” over her sad lack of understanding, and not in punishing her or using her own laws to conquer her. What is at stake in SE, then, is not whether culture for Nietzsche is a fight or nourishment, but rather whether culture conceived as the nourishing of nature *necessarily* implies that nature is a permanent “exemplary order.” I argue below that Nietzsche thinks nature can be nourished or improved to such a high degree that its order and goals can be altered (see his claim in SE 5 that nature can “unlearn” its goals).

*physis* altogether “new.”<sup>10</sup> At stake in the background of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, then, is the status of Nietzsche’s claim in *The Use and Abuse* that the Greeks’ quest for self-knowledge led them to conceive of culture as a “new [*neun*] and improved [*verbesserten*] *physis*.” Is the *physis* that a sufficiently self-aware culture cultivates said to be “new” because it is a fuller and improved realization of the potential of the old *physis*? Or is it “new” because a self-aware culture can improve and alter *physis* (and especially human *physis*) so dramatically as to make it different from previous instantiations? In the sequel to the *Schopenhauer* essay on Richard Wagner Nietzsche observes that: “the most important question in all of philosophy is the extent to which things possess an unalterable nature and form, [because] once this question has been answered we can with relentless courage set about the *improvement of that aspect of the world recognized as being alterable*.”<sup>a</sup> Conceived in terms of human nature it would seem that Nietzsche *does* think there is such a thing as an unalterable natural structure inasmuch as every human being loves and thus has an order of rank of loves. However if this order of rank is alterable, could a reconfiguration of human nature through culture permit us to speak of a *formal* human nature that lacks a fixed or stable content? Much in Nietzsche’s thought depends on whether and how much human nature can be altered, and in parts two and four of *Schopenhauer* he takes his first steps toward answering this crucial question by tracing the history of the inner life of modern man.

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<sup>a</sup> See RWB sec. 3.

### III. The Sickness of Modern Culture and the Redeeming Human Being as Remedy

#### *The Impoverished Ethical Nature of Modern Man*

In the parable that concluded *The Use and Abuse of History* Nietzsche said that when a person begins to understand the Greek concept of culture as a new and improved *physis* he will also come to see that it was “the higher power of ethical nature [*sittliche Natur*]” that ushered the Greeks into an era of cultural health.<sup>11</sup> The “higher power of ethical nature,” it would seem, played a (or even *the*) key role in curing the Greeks of their historical sickness, yet Nietzsche never discusses this power in *The Use and Abuse* itself. On the contrary, an explanation of the role that a rich ethical nature plays in delivering a person or people from cultural sickness does not appear until the second section of *Schopenhauer* in the context of Nietzsche’s recollection of his own search for a cultivator who was “a true philosopher” that could help him find himself.<sup>a</sup> According to Nietzsche the primary task of such a philosophic cultivator is to “educate a human being to be a human being” because most of us are born as incomplete or imperfect human beings whose natures must be shaped by those with more perfect natures.<sup>b</sup> Among the various obstacles to the formation (*Bildung*) of a human being in the modern age Nietzsche says the most “important” and “dangerous” one is that there are no “ethical models [*sittlichen Vorbilder*, lit. ethical pre-cultivators]” or “visible embodiments of all creative morality [*schöpferischen Moral*] in our midst.”<sup>c</sup> The modern era, in other words, lacks creative philosophers like Empedocles whose teaching and way of living Nietzsche says exerted a cultivating influence by inspiring the early Greeks to adopt a new ethical

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations in this section appear in SE 2 unless otherwise noted.

<sup>b</sup> See SE 5.

<sup>c</sup> It is worth noting that the word “*schöpferischen*” in the phrase “*schöpferischen Moral*” may be a play on Schopenhauer’s name. *Der Schöpfer* [the Creator, the Maker] is a name used for God in the German Bible. Interestingly, the word *Hauer* in German means “hewer” or “worker.” The essay’s title could perhaps be understood to mean “Creation Hewer as Educator.”

orientation.<sup>a</sup> “I attach importance to a philosopher,” Nietzsche writes in *Schopenhauer*, “only to the extent that he is capable of setting an example [which draws] entire nations behind him. The philosopher must supply this example in his visible life [...] through facial expressions, demeanor, clothing, food and custom more than through what they say let alone what they write.”<sup>12</sup> Since modern man lacks ethical models (*Vorbild*) to cultivate (*Bildung*) his moral life, Nietzsche says that moderns no longer take ethical questions [*sittliche Fragen*] seriously and we are now in a situation in which we are living off the “inherited ethical capital [*Capital von Sittlichkeit*] accumulated by our forefathers [...] which we no longer know how to increase” because teachers “simply ignore ethical education [*sittlichen Erziehung*].” Like the Greeks whose creative moral philosophers harnessed the power of *sittliche Natur* to help them overcome their spiritual woes, the Germans need ethical models or “redeeming human beings” whose thoughts and ways of life can cultivate a new ethical nature and redeem their spiritual follies.

In the remainder of the second section of the essay Nietzsche gives an overview of how modern man lost sight of the fact that a powerful ethical nature is a fundamental component of a culture that aspires to cultivate human *physis*. Admitting before he begins that a full account of the ethical decline of the West is difficult to provide, he boils its deterioration down to two factors: the influence of “victorious Christianity on the ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*] of our ancient world” and the “repercussions of declining Christianity” in modern times. By creating a second “Christian” nature so that the first and more ancient one would wither away, Christian morality achieved victory over its ancient counterpart using a means said by Nietzsche in *The Use and Abuse* to be one

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<sup>a</sup> See SE 3. Nietzsche’s unfinished book *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* is invaluable for the clarity with which it expresses the ways in which philosophy can shape the ethical life of a people.

which all critical movements employ.<sup>a</sup> Advocating a new, lofty, and difficult to attain ideal of what human life should consist in and promising eternal life in exchange for attempting to realize this ideal, Christianity began as a powerful force of *sittliche Natur* that sought to destroy and replace the nature cultivated by its classical rivals.<sup>b</sup> Once Christianity had convinced Pre-Christian man to turn the knife on what ancient *Sittlichkeit* had built up in him Nietzsche says that Christianity reached a moral peak in which its purity “so surpassed the moral systems of antiquity and the naturalness equally prevalent in all of them” that Christians became “indifferent to and disgusted by” that naturalness. Christian morality, Nietzsche indicates, aimed *too high* and acted too impetuously when it sought both to rid classical *sittliche Natur* of its baser features and to turn ancient man into a supernatural being who held nature (and his own naturalness) in contempt.<sup>c</sup> Far from successfully carrying out its re-cultivation of ancient man into something supernatural, Christianity accomplished its preliminary goal of fostering “indifference to and disgust with” classical naturalness but failed altogether to make man a purer or more godlike being. By trying to provide “better and loftier things” for ancient man to aspire to it misjudged his potential for moral loftiness, leaving human nature in a worse (because less unified) moral state than that in which it had found it in classical times. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Nietzsche says that modern man has finally given up on the promise of Christianity because he has seen that it is not within his power to become the

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<sup>a</sup> See UH 3, 10, 8, and my account of Nietzsche’s historical hygiene in the previous chapter.

<sup>b</sup> Cf. BGE 51.

<sup>c</sup> When Nietzsche says in *The Use and Abuse* that the founders of the next generation of Germans must aim to foster “better health and even a more natural nature” than the culture out of which they were born, it is perhaps the supernaturalness of Christianity he hopes to leave behind for a partial return to the more moderate “naturalness” of ancient morality. He once described his hope for a “return to nature” as something that was “not a going back but a *coming up*” toward something more real, and he singled out Goethe and Napoleon as exemplars of his concept of naturalness because they were “self-created,” “self-disciplined,” and “convinced realists” who permitted themselves to participate in the entire range of human experiences in the midst of a Christian age “disposed to unreality.” TI, *Reconnaissance Raids*, 48-49. Cf. GS 109.

“better and loftier” being that Christian morality vowed to cultivate him into. In light of this realization modern man is now confronted with a situation in which his nature has been so radically altered by Christianity that he can “no longer return” to the more moderate virtues of antiquity, and he lives in a confusing “vacillation” between two horizons whose principles he is incapable of living by. The “inherited fear of the natural” passed down to him from Christianity, the “renewed fascination for the natural” bestowed on him by his longing for antiquity, and his desire to “find a *firm footing* somewhere” have produced a “disquiet” and “confusion” in his soul which Nietzsche says has left him in a state of unfruitful joylessness.

*Schopenhauer's Cultivation of Nietzsche*

In light of the situation modern man now finds himself in with respect to his *sittliche Natur* Nietzsche says that there has “never been a greater need for ethical educators [*sittliche Erzieher*]” but that there has never been less chance of finding them because physicians are most at risk in times of great epidemics. Alluding to the “genuine needs” of the Greeks he mentioned in the parable in *The Use and Abuse*, he indicates that what modern man now needs are the sort of creative moral teachers the Greeks once had: teachers who stand “solidly and robustly on their feet” while serving as cultivators and “taskmasters” for those whose natures are not as rich.<sup>a</sup> It was with these thoughts in mind and in a state of genuine “need, desire, and distress” that Nietzsche says he first turned to the books of Arthur Schopenhauer: a teacher who he felt understood him so profoundly that it was as if he had written “expressly for me.” Although Nietzsche does not yet call Schopenhauer a redeeming human being and will not use that phrase until much later in

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations in this section appear in SE 2 unless otherwise noted.

the essay, the favorable tenor of his account of his first encounter with him leaves little doubt that Schopenhauer is—as stated in *Ecce Homo*—a “symbol” for a type of man whose existence “hints at a higher conception of culture” because his being renews and cultivates the natures of those around him.

According to Nietzsche Schopenhauer became his educator because he knew from the moment he read his books that he had found a teacher who could help him acquire the *sittliche Natur* he lacked as a soul vacillating between classical naturalness and Christian anti-naturalness. Schopenhauer, he says, is the sort of rare human being whose very *way* of being is contagious, and whose robust personality serves as a model for those among his readers who lack their own distinctive personality but are willing to learn from him by becoming his “sons and disciples.” Much more than Schopenhauer the *thinker*, then, Nietzsche emphasizes the fact that it was Schopenhauer the *self* whom he found most helpful in his search for solid ground upon which to begin his own journey of self-understanding.<sup>a</sup> Like the Indian philosophers Nietzsche praised in section three for drawing “entire nations along behind [them]” by means of the examples they set “not merely in [their] books but in [their] visible lives,” Schopenhauer drew the young Nietzsche behind him because he provided a powerful example of what a cultivated human being should look, act, and think like.<sup>b</sup> Concluding that any philosophy that aims to pave the way for the creation of a culture must be “presented in the way the

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<sup>a</sup> Consider the following passage from Nietzsche’s notebooks: “far from believing that I have understood Schopenhauer correctly; on the contrary, it is only myself that I have come to understand a little better by means of Schopenhauer; that is why I owe him the greatest debt of gratitude. But in general it does not seem very important to me to fathom completely and bring to light, as one does today, the actual teachings, understood comprehensively and rigorously, of any particular philosopher: this kind of knowledge is, at any rate, not suitable for human beings who seek a philosophy for their life, rather than merely a new form of learnedness for their memory: and ultimately it seems to me improbable that something of this sort can ever really be fathomed” (UPW 350). Also see Schacht (1995, 153-5).

<sup>b</sup> SE 3. Compare Nietzsche’s critique of Kant in this section to his claim in *EH, Books, Untimelies*, sec. 3 that the concept of the philosopher he presents in *Schopenhauer* surpasses even a man like Kant.

philosophers of Greece taught: through facial expressions, demeanor, clothing, food, and custom [*Sitte*],” Nietzsche sheds substantial light on the “*sittliche Natur*” said in *The Use and Abuse* to have helped the Greeks overcome their strain of the historical sickness. It was not the advent of the concept of philosophy as the pursuit of pure knowledge that helped them throw off the chains of foreign cultures, but the advent of the concept of philosophy as something which has the power to cultivate human nature by providing a *visible* example of the best way to live. Philosophy in Germany, Nietzsche says, must “gradually forget about being ‘pure knowledge,’” and this is “precisely the example set by Schopenhauer the man.”<sup>a</sup>

In his description of his initial reaction to Schopenhauer’s writings Nietzsche gives his readers a feel for how his new concept of philosophy affects and cultivates. Emphasizing that the honesty and confidence with which Schopenhauer wrote his books made him feel as though he had entered a “highland forest” in which he could “breathe deeply and suddenly have a sense of well-being again,” Nietzsche indicates that Schopenhauer the man was such a powerful force of nature (a highland forest of a man) that it was easy to mistake his writings for the writings of nature herself. Schopenhauer’s thought fashioned the world around him into the world he wanted it to be, and he imbued nature with his distinctive personality and way of life.<sup>b</sup> According to Nietzsche the “inimitable uninhibitedness and naturalness” exuded by Schopenhauer can be attributed to the fact that he was both “at home” in himself and the “master of a very wealthy home”: a rare type of person who was self-knowing enough to flourish as a free “creature

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<sup>a</sup> SE 3. Cf. the first section of Nietzsche’s *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* and his lecture courses on the “Pre-Platonic” philosophers. Also consider this remark in light of Nietzsche’s praise of Empedocles in the last lines of SE4.

<sup>b</sup> Cf. BGE 6 and 9.



of nature” yet self-disciplined enough that he could think through and “conquer the most difficult things” in a way that was entirely unique to him. The effect such a man has on the natures of those around him resembles what Nietzsche calls a “magical outpouring of innermost force from one natural being [*Naturgewächses*, lit. natural plant] to another that results from the first, slightest contact.” In the same way that ivy entangles itself around the trunk of the strongest tree and absorbs its abundance while taking the shape of its host, the young Nietzsche attached himself to Schopenhauer, absorbed his “innermost force,” and shaped his own being to resemble the form or nature of his host and cultivator.<sup>a</sup>

After detailing how Schopenhauer’s books affected him in his younger years and illustrating by example the character of the relationship he seems to want to forge with his own readers, Nietzsche hints at why he thinks the existence of the type of person Schopenhauer represents “redeems” nature and human nature. Reflecting on the cheerfulness and courage with which Schopenhauer approached “the problem of existence” (or the problem of finding meaning in human life), Nietzsche says that his cultivation under Schopenhauer showed him that an ordinary person can “never experience anything better and more joyful” than being around a cultivator who has felt the weight of the most profound philosophic problems, for these superior people “cannot help but love what is alive, and because they are wise, are ultimately disposed to what is

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<sup>a</sup> In notebooks from the period in which he wrote the Schopenhauer essay Nietzsche sheds light on the mechanic he presents here by observing that “the individual, morally outstanding human being radiates a power of imitation” which the philosopher “is supposed to disseminate [because] what is law for the highest specimens must be accepted as universal law: even if only as a barricade against others.” Nietzsche also notes that while every human being is already an “intelligible being” (i.e. a determined nature), the moral powers of humans can be “strengthened by the excitation of certain sensations by means of concepts.” Interestingly, he concludes in his notebooks that “nothing new is created [in the inner life of a human being under the influence of moral concepts], but rather “the creative energy [of the concept] is focused on one side [of the human being’s moral life].” As an example of what he has in mind he points out that “the categorical imperative has greatly strengthened the sensation of unselfish virtue” (UPW p.39, 19 [113]).

beautiful.” Despite downplaying the importance of Schopenhauer’s philosophic thought earlier in the essay in order to stress the importance of the ethical example he set as a living human being, Nietzsche here restores primacy to a type of philosophic thinking whose aim is not pure knowledge but rather the redemption of existence by way of beautification through love. This type of “thinking,” Nietzsche stresses, consists not of an objective analysis of the world but rather of reading oneself or one’s personality *into* the world as Schopenhauer did when he articulated a vision of being that existed in him “even as a child.”<sup>13</sup> A genuine philosopher, Nietzsche says, “serves himself as a likeness and compendium of the entire world,” and he never looks at the world through the opinions of others because he knows that these opinions threaten to obfuscate his sovereign self.<sup>14</sup>

When ordinary people live under the influence of a superior self like Schopenhauer whose unique interpretation of the world makes clearer sense of it than our own minds or selves can, life and existence become more attractive to us because they are imbued with a rich meaning whose source lies in the creative subjectivity of the superior self. A philosopher who is a “redeeming human being,” in other words, does not enlighten us by providing scientific knowledge of the world, but rather he makes us feel so “human and natural” in the world we find ourselves in that we long to cry out: “How magnificent and precious every living thing is! How suited to its condition, how true, how full of being.”<sup>a</sup> Because he is a value-creator the redeeming man’s eye is always “trained on existence,” for it is his particular task to be the “legislator of the measure,

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<sup>a</sup> Nietzsche also singles out Montaigne as a type of human being who is capable of re-naturalizing man and making him feel at home in the world: “Since my first encounter with this freest, most energetic of spirits, I have found it necessary to say of him what he said of Plutarch: ‘As soon as I cast a glance at him, I sprouted another leg or a wing.’ I would take my example from him if I were set the task of making myself feel at home on this earth” (SE2). See GS 109 for the source of my usage of the term “re-naturalization.”

mint, and weight of things.” Indeed, when Schopenhauer confronted the question: “of what value is life at all?”, Nietzsche says that he understood enough about the power of his creative self and the malleability of the “realm of transfigured *physis*” to know that *he* could redeem human life from its ugly and apparently valueless guise by becoming its “advocate and savior.”<sup>15</sup> Schopenhauer’s longing for a “strong nature” and a “healthy and simple humanity” was actually a longing for *himself* and his own works, and upon realizing his significance for humanity Nietzsche says that Schopenhauer was called to join the ranks of the “marvelous and creative” human beings of Pre-Platonic Greece and to decide whether *he*, as the “supreme fruit of life,” could justify life as such.<sup>a</sup>

*Bildung and Bild: The Redeeming Human Being as Cultivator of a New Image of Man*

After accounting for the “vacillation” between Christianity and antiquity in which modern man finds himself and hinting that the emergence of the type of man represented by Schopenhauer can steady this vacillation by making us feel “human and natural again,” Nietzsche details three “images [*Bilder*] of humanity” modern philosophers have set up to imbue human existence with meaning and “spur mortals on to a transfiguration

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<sup>a</sup> SE 3 end. To get a better sense of Nietzsche’s claim at the end of section three that the true genius always gives “the answer given by Empedocles” when confronted with the question of whether his own existence “affirms existence” and entitles him to become its “advocate and savior,” it is helpful to consult the lecture on Empedocles he gave as a part of his course on the Pre-Platonic Greeks at Basel University in the early 1870’s. Although this lecture is far too long to summarize here, it is not far-fetched to suspect that Nietzsche’s study of Empedocles shaped his understanding of what he would later call the “redeeming human being.” In his notebooks from the year he wrote *Schopenhauer* he called Empedocles the “ideal and complete Greek,” and he concluded his lecture on him with the remark that: “Empedocles hovers between poet and rhetorician, between god and man, between scientific man and artist, between statesman and priest, and between Pythagoras and Democritus. He is the motliest figure of older philosophy; he demarcates the age of myth, tragedy, and orgiastics, yet at the same time there appears in him the new Greek, as democratic statesman, orator, enlightenment figure, allegorist, and scientific human being. In him the two time periods wrestle with each other; he is a man of *competition* through and through” (p.119, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*). Also see Heilke’s argument (1998, 83 ff.) that Nietzsche’s study of the Pre-Platonics showed him that “the importance of philosophy did not lie directly in its truth claims,” and that “the life of the philosopher is a work of art intended to edify both himself and others.”

of their own lives.”<sup>a</sup> Before describing the content of these images, however, and claiming the Schopenhauerian image as his own, Nietzsche pauses briefly to describe the “tremendous, but wild, primal, and completely pitiless forces” that threaten to destroy the image of humanity we currently know. Characterizing modern life as a chaos of repressed social and psychological forces whose source lies in our culture’s failure to imbue life with meaning, he says that the most distinctive trait of modern times is the tendency its social structures exhibit to “implode or explode” into “horrible apparitions.” Since the dawn of the French Revolution almost a century before Bismarck’s Chancellorship all of Europe has anticipated “radical upheavals” whose violence the German Kingdoms tried to avert by forming a nation-state meant to regulate explosive political forces and provide a stable social order. Like the Church of the middle ages which Nietzsche says “held together and to some extent assimilated” the inimical religious forces of past European centuries, the nation-state now wants to “organize everything anew out of itself” and aims to construct a bond that will hold all fractious political longings in check. Despite the fact that the state now wants people to worship in it the “very same idols” they once worshipped in the church, however, Nietzsche predicts that the modern state’s lack of concern with moral and spiritual cultivation will bring “nothing but an increase in the general insecurity and apprehension” that is characteristic of modern life. Just as the inimical forces once subdued by the medieval church eventually broke through their bonds and demanded a Reformation in which many social spheres under the church’s jurisdiction were declared “domains in which religion should no longer hold sway,” Nietzsche suspects that the bonds forged by the modern state will also soon be shattered and that a “revolution” or reformation of society into its “smallest

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations in this section can be found in section SE 4 unless otherwise noted.

indivisible elements” will take place. Because the nation-state (the very entity that aims to forge the bonds of society) has been created according to the “crude” and “evil” forces of “moneymakers and military despots,” we find ourselves submerged in a new and more perilous “ice-filled stream of the middle ages” whose social and political solidity is breaking up and rushing toward us with devastating power.

While the inclination of most Europeans in the face of this impending crisis is to act as though they “know nothing of these concerns” and conduct their lives in an unthinking haste whose end is acquisition, Nietzsche argues that the anxiety they evince in the midst of their fast-paced lives demonstrates “just how well aware” they are of the declining spiritual conditions in which they live. Because the fearful anticipation that precedes all great political upheavals tends to *intensify* human lust and greed before bloody revolution moderates them, Nietzsche fears that the human spirit is in much more danger of regression now—in the moments leading up to the European crisis he predicts—than it will be during the crisis itself when unspeakable horrors will still men’s corrupt souls and make them “better and more warm hearted.” In moments like those preceding the outbreak of a great war Nietzsche argues that the “sacred treasures” of the human spirit amassed over many generations of refinement are in danger of being squandered through a regression into “bestiality” and “robotic automatism” provoked by fear. In dark hours like these, he says, what is needed above all else is a “watchman and knight of *humanity*” who can erect an “*image [Bild] of the human being*” whose contemplation will cultivate [*Bildung*] men and effect a “transfiguration of their lives”

that advances or at least preserves the richness of the human spirit.<sup>a</sup> Although modern man may represent a low watermark of culture and human development for Nietzsche it is important to see that he does not deem modernity to have decayed so much that it is no longer worth saving. On the contrary, the modern soul contains great potential to be cultivated into something noble by the right sort of cultivator, and Nietzsche cites Rousseau, Goethe, and Schopenhauer as men who have set up competing images of man “one after the other,” each of which were intended to put the modern human being on course to becoming a higher being.

To begin to understand what Nietzsche means when he uses the phrase “*image* [*Bild*] of humanity” in section four of *Schopenhauer* it is useful to turn back to his praise of Schopenhauer the man in section three. Near the end of a lengthy discussion of Schopenhauer’s greatness he addresses the subject of how philosophy goes about its task of shaping the world and observes that every great philosophy tells its adherents: “‘this is the image [*Bild*] of life; learn from it the meaning of your own life.’”<sup>16</sup> Because the task of a great philosopher is to “‘read [his own] life and understand on the basis of it the hieroglyphs of life in general,’” great philosophies for Nietzsche are ethical (or *sittliche*) tablets upon which philosophers write their own lives into the general concept of humanity, thereby providing it with rich and meaningful “images” or ideals of what human life should aim to become.<sup>b</sup> Keeping these thoughts in mind and turning back to Nietzsche’s discussion of Europe’s need for a “watchman and champion” who can create an “*image of the human being*” that will lead humanity through the impending crisis, it

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<sup>a</sup> See Nietzsche’s assertion in SE3 that “unusual people” who are not themselves redeeming men should “surround [themselves] with the images [*Bilde*] of good courageous fighters of the sort that Schopenhauer himself was.”

<sup>b</sup> Consider Nietzsche’s claims in BGE that philosophy is “the most spiritual will to power” and that every philosophy is essentially the confession of its author. Also see SE 5, beginning.

appears that Rousseau, Goethe, and Schopenhauer are all philosophers Nietzsche thinks have tried to redeem Europe by reading themselves into humanity and painting images [*Bild*] of the type man they hoped to cultivate [*Bildung*] their contemporaries into.<sup>a</sup>

A brief look at the images erected by these three philosopher-redeemers illustrates the formal mechanism by which Nietzsche thinks culture and philosophy interact.<sup>b</sup> It also reveals the dialectical way Nietzsche thinks Rousseau, Goethe, and Schopenhauer relate to one another and the reasons he endorses Schopenhauer's image as his own instead of the other two.<sup>17</sup> The first image of cultivation he presents is that of the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau whose picture of man possesses "the greatest fire and is assured of attaining the greatest popular effect." Tracing the popularity of Rousseau's image to the fact that it encourages Europe's revolutionary tendencies instead of restraining them, Nietzsche indicates that Rousseau harbored such a powerful longing for "holy nature" that he created an image of man meant to volatize the explosive social forces of modern life so that a return to nature could be enacted. For Rousseau in contrast to Goethe, modern life admitted of no "sacred treasures" worth saving because modern man's "fanciest finery" (his enlightenment arts and sciences) had reduced him to something unnatural and inhuman. Although Nietzsche shares Rousseau's longing to make man "human and natural" again he judges Rousseau to have believed that modern Europe had "sunk so deep into the chaos of the unnatural" that it could no longer be redeemed.<sup>c</sup> By erecting a revolutionary ideal of European man which declared: "only nature is good; [and] only the natural human being is human," Nietzsche argues that

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<sup>a</sup> Nietzsche understands such image creation to be a political activity. See Abbey (1998, 92-94): "As the capacity to create and transform includes the ability to work on, shape, order and organize human beings, it is unsurprising that Nietzsche construes politics as an aesthetic activity."

<sup>b</sup> See Zuckert (1976, 74-8) for a compelling alternative to the analysis.

<sup>c</sup> Cf. Nietzsche's earlier description of his first impression of Schopenhauer.

Rousseau prepared Europeans to make “frightful,” “destructive,” yet “noble” decisions about the future of European society by way of the French Revolution. As a revolutionary image of man that is critical of all that came before it, the Rousseauian image of man could be said to be the human analogue of critical history in *The Use and Abuse*, for both harbor longings to “shatter and dissolve the past” in unjust ways for the sake of something new.<sup>18</sup> Just as periods of critical history are dangerous because they often lack a stable standard to guide their negation of the past, Nietzsche warns that Rousseauian man can become “Catilinarian” in character, losing sight of the fact that revolutions should be carried out only for the sake of stability and not for the purpose of the perpetual discord hoped for by the Roman Praetor Catiline.

In contrast to the dangers posed by the Rousseauian image of man Nietzsche says that Goethe’s Faustian image possesses “no such threatening power” and is in a certain sense the “corrective and sedative” for the dangerous excitations to which Rousseau’s human being is prone.<sup>a</sup> Like Rousseau Goethe too “clung to the gospel of the goodness of nature,” however his longing for nature originated not in his sentiments but in his scientific curiosity, and he was not compelled (like Rousseau) to work for the destruction of the very civilization that made possible his beloved arts and sciences. Far from being a world liberator or revolutionary Goethe’s image of man is a Faustian thinker and “world traveler” who hates: “all violence [and] every sudden leap—but that means: every action.” Elevating to the rank of life’s highest goal Goethe’s own desire to “consume insatiably all domains of life and nature, all past ages, all arts, mythologies, and science,” the image of man Goethe erected over modernity valorizes the scientific way of life and

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<sup>a</sup> See Löwith (1964, 176-181) for an analysis of Nietzsche’s view of Goethe.



resonates more with intellectually inclined people than it does with Rousseau's masses. Finding the meaning and richness of life in the act of gathering nourishment from "everything great and memorable that ever existed," the Goethean human being could be said to be the living analogue of antiquarian history in *The Use and Abuse* inasmuch as he aspires to be the knower and curator of a world he does not actively seek to change. Although the Goethean image of man is useful in times of social peril because it promotes a "conserving and conciliatory force" whose intellectual curiosity helps preserve the treasures of human history, Nietzsche warns that Goethean types are also prone to "degenerating into philistines"—perhaps even the "cultivated philistines" described in *David Strauss*—because their all-consuming desire for knowledge leads them to lose sight of the most important human problems. Just as antiquarian history runs the risk of becoming caught up in the "dust of bibliographical minutiae" the Goethean image of man risks cultivating a type of human being who moves from one study to the next without considering the importance of that study for *life*.<sup>19</sup> Since 19<sup>th</sup> century man was shown in *The Use and Abuse* to be antiquarian in character and was said in *David Strauss* to be adopting rapidly the habits of the cultivated philistine, the Goethean image of man is the one whose model Nietzsche seems to think the majority of his contemporaries resemble.

Whereas Goethe's human being is so contemplative that he disdains all action and Rousseau's human being is so active that he never contemplates, the Schopenhauerian image of man synthesizes the Goethean love of thinking with the Rousseauian passion for revolutionary deeds to produce an active, destructive, yet thoughtful ideal from whose image Nietzsche instructs his readers to "draw a new set of duties."<sup>20</sup> Like his

Rousseauian counterpart the Schopenhauerian type is an annihilator of the world around him, yet his motive for negating lies not in the social oppression he feels but in his Goethean love of truth and the promise its possession holds out for providing intellectual “salvation” from the relativism that characterizes his time. Whereas Goethean man approaches truth as though it were a “noble delicacy” meant to satiate his intellectual hunger, the Schopenhauerian type approaches it with a “fierce, consuming fire” meant to steel him against what Nietzsche calls “*the suffering inherent in all truthfulness*.” To be cultivated by Schopenhauer’s image of man means living by the life-promoting principle that absolute truth is attainable, and in order to acquire it one must undertake the painful process of “negating” the falsehood that pervades the world until all that remains is a true world whose absolute status is confirmed by the fact that it “could not possibly be negated.” Living in this free and truthful way, Nietzsche warns, means being “hostile to the human beings whom [one] loves and to the institutions from whose womb [one] has sprung,” and the Schopenhauerian human being must resign himself to the fact that happiness is “impossible” and that he will always appear unjust because the motive for his negation is easily mistaken for malice. Devoting his life to acquiring intellectual freedom and offering up his own attachments and opinions as “the first victim of recognized truth,” there is more than a passing resemblance between the Schopenhauerian image of man and the free spirit of Nietzsche’s later works.<sup>a</sup> As a

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<sup>a</sup> See HA, Preface, secs. 3 and 6. Like the Schopenhauerian man the free spirit is characterized by “a sudden fear and suspicion of what it has loved,” and his “tearing apart of whatever attracts him” and realization that “injustice is inseparable from life” are central to the “awful and painful” experience that constitutes his great spiritual liberation. Interestingly, the first usage of the term “free spirit” in Nietzsche’s published works occurs in *Schopenhauer as Educator* when Nietzsche describes his own task as that of “introducing Schopenhauer to the free spirits and to those who profoundly suffer from this age, and gathering them together and producing by means of them a current strong enough to overcome that ineptitude that nature commonly evinces in its utilization of the philosopher.” See Franco, *Nietzsche’s Enlightenment*, Prologue, for a discussion of the ways in which the Schopenhauerian man prefigures Nietzsche’s turn to rationalism in the middle period works.

combination of Schopenhauerian “no-saying” and the intellectually liberated devotion to truth Nietzsche champions in *Human, All Too Human*, the Schopenhauerian image’s “Nietzscheanism” reveals itself most explicitly in Nietzsche’s account of how his pursuit of self-knowledge (*the Nietzschean virtue*) helps him overcome the problem of intellectual relativism that features prominently in *The Use and Abuse*. Despite the fact that the modern family, state, and university all tell young people that the purpose of their lives is to *become* something more than what they are by seeking success in the politics, business, and scholarship that constitutes the history of their day, Nietzsche says that those cultivated by the Schopenhauerian image do not conceive of themselves as “point[s] of evolution” in the historical life of a state, business, or academic field because doing so hides their authentic selves behind selves that are shaped by becoming and the “history” of the now. Far from identifying himself as a historical being and losing sight of himself in the present’s transition to the past, the Schopenhauerian image of man holds becoming (or history) in contempt because it hides the fact that all men “*are something*” at bottom that can “never become” something else. “The riddle that the human being is supposed to solve can be solved only in being,” Nietzsche says, and specifically “in being what he is [...] and in the immutable.” By resolving to remain his own person and to “destroy all becoming” and history, the Schopenhauerian type lives both ahistorically *and* philosophically, creating a stable horizon of being within which permanent truth is possible on the basis of his unchanging selfhood.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> See UH 4 for Nietzsche’s reference to history as “the science of becoming.” Also See UH 1: “Imagine [...] a human being who does not possess the power to forget, who is damned to see becoming everywhere, such a human being would no longer believe in his own being, would no longer believe in himself, would see everything flow apart into turbulent particles, and would lose himself in this stream of becoming.”

Descending into the depths of his own existence and sacrificing his opinions for “permanent” truths that promise to assuage the sickness caused by the fluidity of all concepts, the Schopenhauerian man is said by Nietzsche to live a “*heroic life*” whose memory is worthy of celebration and emulation by future generations. By giving humanity the gift of philosophy (understood as the pursuit of knowledge of permanent beings) he sets an example of what the human being can strive to know and be that beautifies the entire species. As an exemplar, comforter, and teacher for those involved in the great intellectual struggle with the impermanence of all knowledge, moreover, the Schopenhauerian image of man could be said to be the living analogue of monumental history in *The Use and Abuse*. Like that history his example provides inspiration to future Schopenhauerian types, and in a world characterized by becoming and relativism his demand that human beings concern themselves with being and truth is a monument to the need and value of conceptual permanence for life.<sup>a</sup> The Schopenhauerian image of man, then, is the only one among the three Nietzsche presents that could be said to provide an “image” of the nature of philosophic image creators themselves. It does not aim to cultivate all of Europe, but rather to cultivate the new Rousseaus, Goethes, and Schopenhauers who could save Europe.<sup>b</sup> It is the counter-image to the popular image of the genius embodied by David Strauss and criticized by Nietzsche at great length and with intense heat in the first *Untimely Observation*.<sup>c</sup> To be a Schopenhauerian human being means to be the type of human being Schopenhauer was for the young Nietzsche,

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<sup>a</sup> See my interpretation of the relationship between antiquarian, critical, and monumental histories in chapter 4. Nietzsche judges the 19<sup>th</sup> century to be an antiquarian century, and in the wake of his critical assault on it a monumental ideal will be necessary to provide positive ethical content.

<sup>b</sup> Consider the role of the “new philosopher” and Nietzsche’s paving of the way for him in BGE. Also see Jurist (2000, 58-9).

<sup>c</sup> See Chapters 1 and 2 above.

that Socrates was for the young Plato, and that Nietzsche longs to be for a handful of unnamed—and perhaps still unborn—European youths.

## Chapter 6: The Cultural “Goal” of Nature and the State

“Companions the creator seeks, and fellow harvesters: for all that is with him stands ripe for the harvest. But the hundred sickles are lacking: so he plucks ears of corn and is sorely vexed. Companions the creator seeks, and such that know how to whet their sickles. Destroyers they will be called and despisers of good and evil. But harvesters are they and celebrants too.”

-*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologue sec. 9

### I. Nature, Culture, and Nature’s “Goal”

#### *The Human Animal and the “True Human Being”*

After presenting the three images of man that the modern age has erected to “transfigure” human beings in the face of the spiritual crisis confronting Europe, Nietzsche devotes the rest of *Schopenhauer* to an account of why the Schopenhauerian ideal of man is the “true human being” and what humanity must do to make this ideal a reality.<sup>a</sup> “It is by no means enough for me to paint a picture, and an inadequate one, at that, of that ideal human being who, as his Platonic Idea, holds sway in and around Schopenhauer,” Nietzsche says, “[and] the most difficult task still remains: to describe how we can derive a new set of duties from this ideal and how we can get in touch with such an ambitious goal on the basis of regulated activity.”<sup>b</sup> Far from following Christianity’s example of providing humanity with an intoxicating and unattainable ideal that weakens instead of strengthening it, Nietzsche argues that it *is* possible to “start from” the Schopenhauerian ideal and “impose upon you and me a chain of fulfillable duties” that would lead to the emergence of this ideal in modern times.

In order to get a clearer idea of what these duties entail he says that we must first make a few “preliminary observations” about nature and determine where “we” (the young readers of *Schopenhauer*) stand in the order of rank of members of the human

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<sup>a</sup> See Schacht (1995 160-61).

<sup>b</sup> All quotations in this section appear in SE 5 unless otherwise noted.

species. A genuine search for self-knowledge of the kind outlined in the first part of *Schopenhauer* teaches those courageous enough to undertake it that in all likelihood nature was not generous enough to shape them into Schopenhauerian human beings. By coming to terms with their natural shortcomings, however, Nietzsche says that the youth can transform their longing to *be* such human beings into a passion for performing the practical tasks that will “sweep aside” the obstacles that “prevented us” from becoming them and “robbed *us* of the supreme fulfillment of our existence.”<sup>a</sup> Although he kindly includes himself among his readers when he uses terms like “we” and “us” to describe the injustices nature commits when it fails to make ordinary men like “us” into Schopenhauerian types, he seems also to anticipate that his readers will see that *he*—their educator, cultivator, and taskmaster—is precisely the kind of Schopenhauerian human being they are not. As the first Schopenhauerian human being to acquire self-consciousness of the human need for Schopenhauerian human beings, Nietzsche’s task in the later sections of *Schopenhauer* is thus to transform the disappointment his readers feel on account of their shortcomings into motivation to fight for the emergence of the cultivators he has shown them they need.<sup>1</sup>

In order to see how badly we need Schopenhauerian types as our cultivators Nietzsche says that we must observe and come to terms with the difference in quality between our own average natures and those of superior Schopenhauerian men. Although the true measure of this difference in quality reveals itself only to those who know themselves well enough to see how much their natures lack, we can begin to get a sense

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<sup>a</sup> Like the Greeks in *The Use and Abuse* whose “practical interpretation” of the Delphic imperative revealed the genius as their culture’s most genuine need, the German youth must interpret practically the fruit of their own self-investigation and use it to pave the way for the emergence of the type of human being who could redeem their culture.

for the gap by comparing an animal's view of the world to the view of "human beings of greater profundity [*Die tieferen Menschen*]." Because the life of an animal consists entirely of instinctual desires for objects like food and sex which are scarce in nature, animals are said by Nietzsche to "suffer from life" as a punishment whose cause they are not intelligent enough to understand. Far from knowing *why* they are punished or even *that* they are punished their minds are incapable of grasping the character of their situation in the world, and they live their lives "thirsting with the inanity of a horrible desire" for things whose acquisition provides them only fleeting satisfaction.

In contrast to animals whose gnawing torment is seldom satisfied and whose minds lack the power to grasp or improve their predicament, Nietzsche says that "human beings of greater profundity" like philosophers have always felt compassion with animals because animals suffer from life and do not possess the quality of mind (as philosophers do) to "turn the sting of suffering against themselves and understand their existence metaphysically." In a number of places on earth the teaching has arisen "that the souls of guilt-laden human beings are trapped inside the bodies of animals," and this moral-religious teaching lends the senseless suffering of animals a "sense and significance" by creating a horizon of thought in which their suffering makes sense to humanity on the basis of the existence of divine justice. When nature brings philosophers into being among animals, Nietzsche concludes, its intention is to show that they are "necessary for [nature's] salvation from animal existence," and that in the philosopher existence holds before itself a "mirror in which life no longer appears senseless but appears, rather, in its metaphysical meaningfulness." By reflecting an unjust and irrational world back at itself in a just, rational, and apparently absolute hue, philosophy comes to sight as a



philanthropic, world-assuaging, (and perhaps world-denying) mirror. Philosophic types like Schopenhauer, in other words, improve and redeem *physis* by imbuing it with a metaphysical sense and purpose it lacks in their absence, and their creative interpretations of nature turn the world into a more hospitable (because more rational or providential) place than it would otherwise be. Wherever nature lacks a reason for its ways the Schopenhauerian man *furnishes* it with a reason that is by no means strictly rational, and this furnished or created reason erects a horizon of meaning around those under his influence.<sup>a</sup>

After sketching the relationship that “profound human beings” have to animals whose suffering arouses their “indignation” and compels them to take metaphysical action on behalf of existence, Nietzsche exhorts his readers to reconsider “where the animal ceases and where the human being begins” in order to see more clearly the Schopenhauerian human being’s significance in their own lives. Citing the “tremendous mobility” of human herds across continents, their founding of rival factions, their ceaseless waging of wars, and their “confused mingling and imitation of one another,” Nietzsche says that the vast majority of men *are* animals who cannot escape the world of instinct. Despite the fact that nature worked for millennia to raise humanity from its animal origins, an honest inquiry into the way most of us live our lives yields the unfortunate insight that we are not “true” human beings like Schopenhauer, Rousseau, and Goethe who are the types of beings nature actually sought when it sought to create man.<sup>b</sup> Since it is difficult to heed the painful insights of our own self-knowledge, however, and to own up to the fact we are not the fullest expressions of what it means to

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<sup>a</sup> See Abbey (1998, 111-113) for an account of the educational purpose of what I call the Schopenhauerian type.

<sup>b</sup> Cf. David Strauss’ views on animal and human nature explained in chapter 1.

be human, Nietzsche indicates that we must become courageous and hard if we hope to come to terms with the fact that “we ourselves *are* those animals who seem to suffer senselessly,” and who need philosophers to help us make sense of our situation in the world.

*Self-Consciousness and Self-Despising: Longing for the Schopenhauerian Human Being*

In light of the sobering realization that the spiritual state of ordinary human beings evinces at least a partial failure on the part of nature to overcome the animal and create the “true human beings” it longs for, Nietzsche turns in the central sections of *Schopenhauer* to the question of whether nature could have overestimated its powers when it conceived of humanity and could be pushing man back in the direction of the dark unconsciousness of the animal. In the same breath in which he expresses doubts about humanity’s future, however, he also betrays a suspicion that nature may still have a plan for man’s advancement, and this suspicion is the focus of his remarks in sections five and six of the essay. At the heart of Nietzsche’s suspicion that humanity is on the upswing lies his observation that, unlike animals whom nature prohibits from acquiring self-consciousness, men have been given the unique capacity to become aware of their limitations and to submit themselves to the tutelage of those whose apparent limitlessness represents the fullest expression of nature’s hopes for the species.<sup>a</sup> Although we ordinary human beings resemble animals inasmuch as we suffer from unfulfilled longings we do not fully comprehend, Nietzsche (or his readers) find solace in the fact that there are “moments *when we understand this* and perceive how we, along with all of nature, are

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<sup>a</sup> See Nietzsche’s remark in SE 1 that education is “perfection of nature when it prevents nature’s cruel and merciless onslaughts and turns them to good, when it drapes a veil over the expressions of nature’s step-motherly disposition and sad lack of understanding.”

pressing onward toward the [true] human being as toward something that stands high above us.”

During every moment of our lives Nietzsche says that life itself wants to tell us something about who we are and what we need, yet the animal in us resists life’s message because it knows it is easier to remain blissfully unknowing.<sup>2</sup> In our quiet moments of solitude, however, when self-consciousness breaks through the herd sociability we “drug ourselves” with in our daily lives, we are sometimes overcome with a feeling of astonishment at “the entire dreamlike state of [human] life which seems to dread our awakening.”<sup>3</sup> Since nature deprives most of us of the wherewithal necessary to maintain this state of self-consciousness for long periods of time, however, and since the human situation is dark to us during almost every moment of our lives, Nietzsche argues that nature intends for us to seek out and be “lifted up” by superior natures who understand our situation more thoroughly than we do. Despite the fact that we are not (as these rare natures are) the “human beings toward whom nature presses for its own salvation,” we can nevertheless acquire self-consciousness of the fact that we are flawed by comparing ourselves to those who are not, and this self-consciousness puts us on track to becoming “more natural” human beings than we would otherwise be.<sup>a</sup> It is “our” painful fate, Nietzsche writes, “to have just enough of an inkling of the peculiar definition and blessedness of the philosopher to sense all the definitionlessness and unblessedness of the non-philosopher,” and when we think about everything a person like Schopenhauer must have thought over the course of his life we are driven to lament our own “deaf ears,”

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<sup>a</sup> Cf. TSZ Preface sec. 3: “Behold, I teach you the Superman: it is this sea, in this can your great despising submerge itself. What is the greatest you could experience? It is the hour of the great despising. The hour in which even your happiness disgusts you and likewise your reason and your virtue...” See UH 10 for the reference to a “more natural nature.”

“dull heads,” “flickering rationalities,” and “shriveled hearts.” From deep within the valleys of our own instinctual darkness we cannot help but long for the peaks of superior men from whose summit Nietzsche says “the fundamental nature of things expresses itself, stark and unbending, with unavoidable clarity.” It is this clarity about the “fundamental nature” of things, perhaps, that every people—Greek, German, or otherwise—needs if they are to overcome the deadly relativism outlined in *The Use and Abuse*.

Although Nietzsche emphasizes throughout *Schopenhauer* (and especially in part eight) that the most impressive among these rare cultivating types are philosophers, it is important to note that he also includes artists and saints among the class of “no-longer-animals” whose activities clarify the fundamental nature of things. Just as nature needs philosophers like Schopenhauer to explain or create what Nietzsche calls its “metaphysical purpose,” it also needs artists to present it with a “pure and finished image” of itself which it never has the opportunity to see in the “tumultuousness of its own becoming.”<sup>a</sup> Since nature is a ceaseless process of “experimentation,” moreover, whose results are made known only when an artist divines its intentions and meets it “half-way,” Nietzsche argues in the sequel to *Schopenhauer* that the art of Richard Wagner is a model of the artistic “purification and transformation of nature” because it makes nature more attractive both to herself and to denatured modern souls.<sup>4</sup> Just as

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<sup>a</sup> Thiele (1990, 99-182) provides an extremely helpful account of the importance of the philosopher, artist, and saint (and their fusion into a single type) in Nietzsche’s thought. According to Thiele: “The philosopher, artist and saint may be thought of as the incarnations of the Nietzschean hero. [...] The knower, the creator, and the lover are defined by the quite specific objects of their activity. The philosopher is not merely in search of knowledge, but of wisdom. [...] The artist is no mere fabricator of art. His task is the creation of life-affirmative art, his works being tributes paid to life. As his greatest tribute he transforms his life into an aesthetic phenomenon. The saint is not infatuated with his fellow man; nor does he pity him. His love is a rapture at the pregnancy of being and an active force in the realization of ideals. [...] The solitary and the educator are the two ways of being in the world for one who simultaneously incarnates the philosopher, artist, and saint” (165).

Schopenhauer's books help readers feel more "natural" and at home in a world whose brutal and mysterious ways his philosophy aims to make intelligible, Wagner's operas present an intensified image of nature that seduces listeners to long for a nature that commands them to become "nature again yourselves."<sup>5</sup> Although Nietzsche does not spell out the saint's redeeming role as starkly as that of the artist and philosopher, he indicates that what differentiates the saint from the other redeeming types is that his task is to master, extinguish, and subjugate his ego so that it practically "melts away" and becomes nature itself. Where artists and philosophers read their unique selves *into* nature to make her more intelligible, the saint understands himself to be *one* with nature and goes so far as to identify his will with nature's own in order to express his "love for all living things."<sup>a</sup> Whether artist, philosopher, or saint, however, Nietzsche emphasizes that all true human beings seek to "augment nature with a new living nature" in order to understand it, and never seek to "kill nature" like scientists who greedily dissect it.<sup>b</sup> While the true human being's "understanding" of nature is thus not as objective as that of the scientist, it is nevertheless a more accurate understanding because it acknowledges that the very existence of the concept "nature" depends on the subjective organization and inner life of a world-ordering being like man.<sup>6</sup>

*Nietzsche's View of Nature: New and Improved Physis*

Since questions about Nietzsche's conception of nature arise in almost every section of *Schopenhauer* and since the question of what nature is has been shown to be—at least in Nietzsche's mind—inseparable from the question of *who* the highest type of

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<sup>a</sup> See BGE 51 where Nietzsche says that "the powerful men of the world" have always sensed the will to power in the presence of saints.

<sup>b</sup> SE 6. Also see BGE 9.

human being is, it is fitting that some of the most important remarks on nature in the essay (and arguably in Nietzsche's corpus) occur just after he discusses the true human being in section five. Since Nietzsche addresses openly— if somewhat abstrusely— nature's teleological character in these remarks, a detailed consideration of them will help us acquire not only a better understanding of his view of nature but also (and more importantly for our purposes) a better understanding of what he thinks the limits are to *cultivating* the kind of nature he elaborates. If the term "culture" must signify the cultivation of an object such as nature then the concept of nature must be clarified before the task or meaning of culture can be established. In section five of *Schopenhauer* Nietzsche therefore proposes to undertake what he calls a "preliminary observation" of nature which examines both its method of creation and its practical intention.<sup>a</sup>

At the heart of Nietzsche's teaching about nature lies a claim that appears at first glance to be contradictory. On one hand, he argues that the production of the true or Schopenhauerian human being is the "goal" of nature and thus that nature is *teleological*. In the same breath in which he affirms nature's teleological character, however, he also says that when nature achieves its goal of producing the true human it realizes simultaneously that it must "unlearn" the notion of having goals, implying thereby that nature is actually a *non-teleological* force. "By means" of the appearance of true human beings in the world, Nietzsche writes:

nature, which never leaps, takes its only leap; and it is a leap of joy, for it feels that for the first time it has arrived at its goal, namely at that place where it understands that it must unlearn [*verlernen*] having goals and that it bet [*gespielt*] too much on the game [*Spiel*] of living and becoming.

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations in this section appear in SE 5 unless otherwise noted.

To better understand this extraordinary statement let us go through it line by line. When nature creates a true human being like Rousseau, Goethe, or Schopenhauer Nietzsche says that it makes a “leap.” Such a leap, it would seem, is at once a biological leap from the animals and half-animals nature ordinarily produces to the *true man* it rarely produces, and a metaphorical leap of joy for having attained its long sought after but seldom achieved goal.<sup>a</sup> If the human being is the highest creature nature can create then the genius is the highest of the highest: a being whose extraordinary talents and capacities bear the fruit of millennia of nature’s labors. As the being toward whom the development of all biological life points and from whom the concept “nature” acquires its meaning, the genius is the manifestation of nature’s “goal” in flesh and blood. Viewed from the perspective of Nietzsche’s discussion of the philosopher, artist, and saint nature’s “goal” is to bring into being the sorts of superior minds whose works explain or depict in terms of being the constant becoming that prevents nature from understanding herself and realizing her own potential. In the process of a superior mind’s explanation and clarification of nature, moreover, nature itself is augmented, improved, and made new by being cultivated into a more rational, hospitable, or beautiful phenomenon than it would be in the absence of the superior mind’s activity.<sup>7</sup> As Nietzsche said in part one of *Schopenhauer* nature often exhibits a “step-motherly disposition and sad lack of understanding” in its capacities as nurturer and creator, and the true human being is nature’s goal because his mind *cultivates* nature (and especially human nature) and makes it better than it would be if left to develop or “become” on its own. By explaining nature to his readers in such anthropomorphic language (as a thing that leaps, longs, creates, and

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<sup>a</sup> It is significant that Nietzsche chooses to anthropomorphize nature when he speaks about it. If Nietzsche himself is the type of genius he wants to bring into being, perhaps this is his way of explaining nature to herself.

understands), moreover, Nietzsche may also tacitly indicate that *he* possesses the sort of mind that nature brings into being to explain itself to itself through the creation of a new and improved image of *physis*.

Up to this point in our interpretation Nietzsche's understanding of nature appears to be a *teleological* one whose end is the production of the highest human being, yet the quotation we are analyzing clearly indicates that this teleological view is not the full story. After nature finishes leaping for joy at the realization that it has achieved its goal, Nietzsche says that it sobers up and "understands that it must unlearn [the notion of] having goals, and that it bet too much on the game of living and becoming." Once nature recovers from the elation it feels at producing the true human being and superior mind, in other words, it sees that it can *go beyond* this goal, aim for greater heights, and perhaps—with the help of superior minds like Nietzsche's—create an *even higher* type of being than it had previously thought possible. Far from overestimating itself as Nietzsche began the essay worrying it had done, nature actually *underestimated* itself when it set its sights on—and decided to stop with the production of—the Schopenhauerian type. Through the work of cultivators like Nietzsche who erect new "images" of man for nature to strive toward, nature can "unlearn" the notion of having a finite or definite goal and become a *non-teleological* force that has no set destination. From Nietzsche's point of view, then, nature is something of a garden of living and becoming in which creation by means of human cultivation and imagination is possible. Although such creation is not entirely free because it is limited (at least in the short term) by the starting materials nature provides and the initial trajectory of their developmental course, it is by no means unfree creation because these materials can be shaped, improved, and perhaps even made



new by the superior minds that nature brings into being for its own benefit and enlightenment. For these reasons Nietzsche says that nature was wrong to stake [*gespielt*] the development of the highest type of life on the game [*Spiel*] of chance characterized by natural becoming. The development of the human being should not be left up to chance, for there is no guarantee that nature and its “sad lack of understanding” can navigate the chaotic waters of becoming and insure that the development of humanity stays on the upward trend. In modern times unpredictable threats like Christianity have arisen to the development of the human being which nature has proven itself unable to contend with alone. Nature must therefore be *cultivated* by human beings to produce a better nature and ever higher types of human beings whose task is always to cultivate, improve, and make new the natural materials they are given. By means of this recognition Nietzsche says that “nature is transfigured, and a gentle weariness of evening—what human beings call ‘beauty’—spreads across its face.” What nature’s beautiful face acknowledges in such moments is that it has achieved “*enlightenment about existence*,” and the “supreme wish” Nietzsche says his readers can wish is to “participate constantly” in this enlightenment. Such participation, he reveals, constitutes the “fundamental idea of culture” which commands each individual to: “*foster the production of philosophers, artists, and saints within us and around us, and thereby to work toward the perfection of nature*.” Culture understood in this light thus demands revolutionary action: namely, that we “fight” for the proper cultivation of nature and “oppose those influences, habits, laws, and institutions” that stand in the way of its production of the genius.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> SE 6.

## II. Nietzsche's Cultural Revolution

### *Nietzsche's Cultural Teaching as a Political Problem*

In the concluding sections of *Schopenhauer as Educator* Nietzsche argues that his diagnosis of the sickness of the modern soul, his account of that soul's need of a cultivator, and his insight into nature's evolutionary ambition all combine to yield the practical imperative that: "humanity should work ceaselessly toward producing great individuals." Having already hinted in section five that nature is capable of producing an even greater type of individual than the true or "Schopenhauerian" human being is, he explicitly states his hope in section six that the human species will evolve to "that point at which it reaches its limit and begins the transition to a higher species."<sup>a</sup> Taking this goal-less "goal" for humanity as the basis for his remarks in rest of the essay, he hints in passing that contemporary political arrangements must be reorganized to aid nature in the development of—and transition to—new high types.<sup>b</sup> Because nature has given humanity the unique capacity to "acquire consciousness of its aim" Nietzsche exhorts his readers to "search out and create" the favorable social conditions in which redeeming human beings and their descendants can come into being.<sup>c</sup> Having claimed in his account of the Schopenhauerian man that "starting with that ideal image it is possible to impose upon you and me a chain of fulfillable duties" that will make his appearance more common, Nietzsche's appeal to his readers to create the social, political, and educational

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations in this paragraph are found in SE 6. Cf. Nietzsche's remark in BGE 277: "A people is a detour of nature to get six or seven great men. Yes, and then to get around them." Also See Abbey (1998, 111-113).

<sup>b</sup> See Nietzsche's early essay *The Greek State*.

<sup>c</sup> See SE 6: How gladly we would apply to society and its aims a lesson that can be derived from the observation of every single species of animal and plant life, namely, that the only thing that matters is the superior individual specimen..."

conditions that would facilitate the emergence of geniuses provides the first hint of what these duties might entail.<sup>a</sup>

At the beginning of section six Nietzsche admits that his call to organize society around the production of the highest human types will be “hard” for his contemporaries to swallow. Having become convinced in recent years that the “ultimate aim” of modern politics lies in ensuring the well-being of all instead of a select few, Europe is trending away from Nietzsche’s political ideology even as he deems “absurd” the founding of a state for the sake of the “happiness of all or the majority.” Whereas the “common man [Biedermann]” measures the quality of human life according to the degree of its comfort and happiness, Nietzsche says that the true measure of a life can only be determined by asking the question whether it is well-lived or wasted. “How can your life, the life of the individual, obtain the highest value, the deepest significance, and how is it least wasted,” he asks his readers? “Surely only by living for the benefit of the rarest and most valuable specimens, and not for the benefit of the majority, that is, for the benefit of those who, taken as individuals, are the least valuable specimens.” In the closing sections of *Schopenhauer*, then, the anti-democratic sentiments that made Nietzsche infamous after his death rear their heads for the first time in his published work, punctuated by the assertion that: “all states in which people other than politicians must concern themselves with politics are badly organized.”

Although it would take another chapter—and perhaps a whole book—to address the troubling kinship between the view of greatness propounded in *Schopenhauer* as

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<sup>a</sup> See previous footnote. Also see BGE 203 where Nietzsche discusses his intention to “teach man the future of humanity as his *will*, as depending on human will” and describes “the conditions which one would partly have to create and partly exploit” for the genesis of the new philosopher. The quote about “regulated activity” appears in SE 5.

*Educator* and the view of greatness of German fascism, it suffices for now to point out that a powerful alternative to Nietzsche's view of greatness exists which argues that greatness is not only compatible with—but even *flourishes* in—the types of liberal democratic regimes he despises.<sup>a</sup> Whereas Tocqueville stated in 1840 that humanity would still produce “great artists, illustrious poets, and celebrated writers” even if a “democratic social state and institutions once came to prevail over all the earth,” Nietzsche argued in 1886 that “the democratic movement is not only a form of the decay of political organization but a form of the decay of man,” and he feared that “extraordinary human beings” might “fail to appear, or that they might turn out badly or degenerate” in a predominantly democratic Europe.<sup>b</sup> Although it is perhaps too early to say which of these two great psychologists will be proven right in his assessment of the fate of greatness in the democratic west, it is important to remember that the hints Nietzsche drops about the aristocratic or even fascist political conditions necessary for the emergence of greatness are worthy of serious doubts, and one would do well to turn to writers like Aristotle and Tocqueville for alternative points of view.

Adding an additional wrinkle to Nietzsche's claim that an undemocratic and even cruel political order is necessary for the production of great human beings is the fact that the concept of nature upon which his demand for this order rests is (by his own admission) philanthropic and concerned above all with the well-being of the “demos.” Just twenty pages after claiming that nature's goal for a species is never the well-being of the majority or the health of the common man, Nietzsche makes the striking declaration

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<sup>a</sup> See Robert Faulkner's *The Case for Greatness*, chs. 7-8. Consider also the names that line the table of contents of Winston Churchill's *Great Contemporaries*.

<sup>b</sup> *Democracy In America*, Vol II, Part I, ch. 9. BGE aph. 203. This theme will be the subject of my future research.

that: “nature always seeks to work for the common good but does not know how to find the best and most skillful ways and means of accomplishing this process.”<sup>a</sup> Far from claiming that nature’s “goal” is the production or ceaseless transition to higher types, then, Nietzsche appears to contradict himself in the later sections of *Schopenhauer* by claiming that these types are (when measured by their capacity to create horizons of knowledge) merely *means* for the creation of a spiritual “common good.” In aiming to produce philosophers and artists he argues that nature “sought to make existence intelligible and meaningful” to *all* men, yet he is frustrated by the fact that “nature’s procedure seems to be wasteful” because the structure of political life does not permit philosophers and artists to have a palpable effect.<sup>b</sup> As a consequence of his frustration with the fact that political life is not organized in such a way as to carry out nature’s philanthropic aim of ensuring the common good, Nietzsche paradoxically suggests that a society which *ignores* the common good should be set up to guarantee the emergence of the highest types whose task is to work for nature *on behalf* of the common good he dismisses elsewhere. If society should be organized around the production of the highest types, however, whom Nietzsche himself admits nature makes for the sake of the common good, does this not then mean that the primary beneficiary of Nietzsche’s undemocratic political system (not to mention the primary concern of nature) is the very “demos” he holds in contempt and whom he says is the least of nature’s concerns?<sup>8</sup> Despite the fact that Nietzsche’s campaign on behalf of the genius has a clearly anti-majoritarian tone, in other words, it may well be that it is undertaken out of a concern for

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<sup>a</sup> All quotations in this paragraph can be found in SE 7.

<sup>b</sup> Ever a critic of the nature whose “inexperience” provides the basis for his view of culture, Nietzsche remarks that nature is “just as wasteful in the realm of culture as it is in the realm of planting and sowing” because in both realms it accomplishes its purposes in an “inefficient manner by expending too much energy.”

the very majority whose needs and demands (especially as they relate to politics) he thinks stand in the way of the genius' emergence.<sup>a</sup>

*Nietzsche's "Platonic" Critique of the Modern State*

Be these difficulties as they may Nietzsche devotes the last two sections of *Schopenhauer* to devising a revolutionary political plan to address nature's failure to use the genius for the common good. Noting in part seven that the failure of nature on this score is "particularly obvious with regard to its use of the philosopher," the final pages of the essay address what the youth can do to remedy the fact that "most philosophers do not serve the common good" because nature "shoots them like an arrow into the midst of humanity" without first taking aim and insuring they will have a meaningful impact. More than any other place in the essay the closing section of *Schopenhauer* shows Nietzsche acting as "taskmaster" for his readers, particularly in his presentation of the "duties" of culture he hopes they will adopt and carry out.<sup>b</sup> Chief among these duties is the removal or destruction of the "obstacles" he thinks inhibit the emergence of philosophers in modern times, and no obstacle looms larger than the "modern state" which, in the aftermath of Hegelianism, has begun to understand *itself*—and not culture or the genius—as "the highest aim of humanity."<sup>c</sup>

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<sup>a</sup>See Nietzsche's claim near the end of the essay that the philosopher has the right to demand that his city "take care of me, since I have better things to do: namely, taking care of you" (SE 8). Just as cultivation requires nature as its object the philosopher and artist (at least as Nietzsche conceives of them) seems to require an audience of non-philosophers and non-artists whose lives they can enrich. This requirement is discussed at length in the fourth essay in the book *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*.

<sup>b</sup> See SE 1 where Nietzsche refers to Schopenhauer as his "teacher and taskmaster."

<sup>c</sup> SE 6 contains a lengthy outline of other obstacles like scholarship, moneymaking, the perversity of contemporary human nature, the association of culture with expensive taste. Section 8 is devoted almost exclusively to a critique of the modern state on the grounds that it damages philosophy. Also see TI, Germans, sec. 4. Church (2011, 179) argues that Nietzsche "defends a 'weak' understanding of the power the state should wield, that the state should be primarily conservative in nature, preserving the present legal order, rather than

Before beginning the critique of the modern state with which *Schopenhauer* both culminates and concludes, however, Nietzsche observes that there is a precedent for a kind of state—or at least a state in speech—which does *not* understand itself to be the highest aim of humanity but rather conceives of itself as a *means* to the production of humanity’s true highest aim: the philosophic genius. Troubled by the fact that Socrates could be executed by the irrational whims of Athenian patriarchs Nietzsche says that Plato concluded (as Nietzsche himself has) that the existence of the philosopher should not be left up to chance, and decided that: “the establishment of an entirely new state was necessary in order that the emergence of the philosopher not be dependent on the unreason of the fathers.”<sup>a</sup> By Nietzsche’s own account, then, his claim in section six that “humanity should work ceaselessly toward producing great individuals” by organizing society around their production originates in Platonic political philosophy, and just a year before writing *Schopenhauer* he had written a short unpublished essay entitled *The Greek State* whose thesis was that the “authentic goal” of the state was the “ever-renewed generation and preparation of the genius” as that production and generation is presented in the: “*secret teaching of the connection between the state and the genius*” in Plato’s *Republic*.<sup>b</sup> For Nietzsche and his Plato alike, then, the tension between philosophy and the city could be resolved for short periods of time if the right conditions were in place, and the aim of *Schopenhauer* as a whole may well be to renew and revise the “secret teaching” of Plato for an audience of modern Glaucons whom Nietzsche hopes will long to bring about Platonic conditions in their own time.

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engaged in actively transforming human cultural interactions.” Although I agree that this is the position Nietzsche takes in his middle period, Church seems to overlook the revolutionary character of the early works and the significance of Nietzsche’s appeals to the German youth.

<sup>a</sup> All quotations for the rest of the chapter appear in section SE 8 unless otherwise noted.

<sup>b</sup> See Michael Grenke’s translation of *Prefaces to Unwritten Works*, p. 59.

The reason Plato's secret teaching is in need of Nietzsche's assistance is that "historically Plato has been amazingly unfortunate." According to Nietzsche a few states *have* in fact arisen in human history that took seriously Plato's proposal to cultivate philosophers, but these states have always proven to be "ugly changelings" compared to the Platonic original because they either misinterpreted his teaching or outright exploited it for their own selfish ends. Among the states that can lay claim to being partly "Platonic" in character Nietzsche cites the modern state as the one guilty of the gravest perversion of Plato's teaching. While the modern state does not appoint philosophers as its rulers he observes that it *does* give a small number of its citizens—namely university philosophy professors—the "freedom we understand to be the essential condition of the genesis of the philosopher," and this according to Nietzsche makes the modern state appear at first glance to have a Platonic concern with the promotion of philosophy.<sup>a</sup> In order to see whether the modern state takes philosophy as "seriously and sincerely" as Plato did and hence whether the modern alliance between these two entities is good for philosophy, Nietzsche proposes to examine the state by the Platonic standard, "as if it were its supreme task to produce new Platos" and thus to turn the "chance" appearance of the philosopher into necessity. If philosophy is truly an end for the modern state and not merely a means of its legitimation, this attitude should bear itself out not only in the way the modern state treats philosophy but in the way philosophy understands its own task while under the modern state's protection.

According to Nietzsche philosophy makes three major concessions to the modern state when the modern state serves as its promoter and protector, all of which

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<sup>a</sup> It is worth noting that Schopenhauer struggled to maintain his university post.



compromise philosophy's future by robbing it of the "freedom" he understands to be the "essential condition" for the philosopher's genesis. The first concession philosophy makes to the modern state is that it turns over the authority to choose those who are worthy of being called philosophers to officials from state-run universities, thereby permitting non-philosophers to dictate both the types of natures suitable for philosophy and the sorts of answers philosophy is allowed to give to the most important questions. When the modern state turns philosophy into the "breadwinning occupation" of university professors, the state is empowered to hire only those candidates who are friendly to its policies and whose philosophies (like Hegel's) teach that the modern state is the goal of humanity. Just as Plato teaches that philosophy is corrupted when philosophers are paid to teach because their desire for truth becomes entwined with their desire for money, Nietzsche argues that state supported professorships in philosophy solicit natures who care more about feeding their families (and hence about praising the state) than they do about pursuing truth. If a person who "acted as though he wanted to measure everything, including the state, by the standard of truth" were to apply for a philosophy professorship at a state-run university, Nietzsche says that the state would be "justified in banishing such a person and treating him as an enemy" because the state seeks above all to affirm its own existence. Unlike the Platonic state which Nietzsche thinks had a genuine interest in organizing humanity around the goal of the discovery of truth, the modern state is not interested in truth but only in the "half-truths and errors" that are useful to it.

The second concession philosophy makes to the modern state that prohibits the development of true philosophers by putting limits on their freedom is a consequence of

the first. By providing a safe haven for philosophy only insofar as it is it turns itself into a breadwinning occupation that proves itself useful to the state and makes itself worthy of its bread, those who are philosophically inclined are given the impression that they must work for a living, and particularly that they must “teach every day and at fixed hours to each and every student who seeks instruction.” Yet as Nietzsche learned from his own experience in the academy a potential philosopher cannot “commit with a good conscience” to having something to teach on a daily basis, and the demand the state places on the developing philosopher to produce new truths every day makes him dishonest and unphilosophic because it accustoms him to pretending to know more than he actually does. By being forced to discuss important matters with youths, moreover, and to frame his thoughts in a language that is suitable to their level of understanding, Nietzsche says that a potential philosopher’s thinking gradually becomes “emasculated” and he loses the ability to confront and think through matters that he can “only safely discuss with his closest friends.”

The problem of having to come up with new truths every day and of having to present those truths to young minds thus leads to the final concession philosophy makes to the modern state which is that it agrees to transform itself into the *history* of philosophy instead of occupying its rightful place as the discoverer or creator of *new* truths. Because philosophy professors must have new lessons on a daily basis and because genuine philosophizing takes a great deal of time, the task of the university philosopher is to “rethink things” that have already been said so that he has something to say to his students, and under these circumstances philosophy exists “first and foremost as scholarship, and above all as knowledge of the history of philosophy.” Although

Nietzsche by no means opposes the study of history and even considers it a key part of his own philosophic task, he indicates here (just as he had indicated in *The Use and Abuse*) that gorging on history leads to intellectual paralysis instead of productivity, especially for the potential philosopher who, “similar to the poet, views things purely and with love” and is overflowing with creative energy.

After outlining the three concessions the modern state demands of philosophy under the Platonic pretext that its intention is to foster potential philosophers, Nietzsche concludes that the modern state is actually more interested in *killing* philosophy than advancing it, and that by making philosophy academic it has made it into something “ridiculous” and suitable only for “warped heads.” As long as state-sponsored “pseudo-philosophy” remains the standard by which potential philosophers judge themselves, “every great effect of a true philosophy will be thwarted or at least hampered,” and philosophic geniuses will rarely come into being. To rescue philosophy from its current low point and restore to philosophers their status as humanity’s highest aim, Nietzsche declares that it is now a “requirement of culture [*Kultur*]”—and hence a (and perhaps *the*) duty of his readers—to eliminate “every form of state and academic recognition” from philosophy so that non-philosophers no longer have the power to decide (by way of the rewards they dispense) who good philosophers are and what philosophy should be. When the “sham-philosophers” who currently populate German educational institutions are denied honors and payment from the state, Nietzsche predicts that they will “flee the coop” to pursue occupations more suitable to their natures.

Despite the fact that Plato constructed his city in speech to insure the flourishing of philosophers and to prevent their political persecution, Nietzsche concludes that the

modern state has twisted Plato's plan in such a way that the philosophers it currently harbors actually deserve its enmity. Contrary to Plato's aims but with the spirit of his intention in mind, then, Nietzsche states outright that he thinks it would be "better" in modern times to encourage the very "persecution" of philosophers that Plato constructed his perfect city to prevent, for it is only after philosophy is cleansed of imposters that true philosophers can acquire the respect they need to have an effect on their communities.<sup>a</sup> Like a plant that needs the pruning of an able cultivator to reach its greatest height and yield its sweetest fruit, philosophy needs to be pruned by persecution so that only those great and courageous natures remain who are willing to write and philosophize in spite of persecution. Although Nietzsche's teaching on this score appears anti-Platonic insofar as it encourages the conditions under which persecution occurs instead of seeking to prevent these conditions, it is anti-Platonic out of a concern for what he understands to be the restoration of Plato's true intention: the fostering of the philosophic genius who rules by means of the culture he creates.

*Conclusion: Nietzsche's Philosophic Revolution*

Although Nietzsche talks a great deal more about what the alliance between philosophy and the modern state means for philosophy's prospects in modern times the crux of his intention in criticizing this alliance is clear. Philosophy must divorce itself from the modern state and become a powerful force by means of its own arms and virtue, chiefly through the writings of persecuted but legitimate philosophers whose legitimacy

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<sup>a</sup> See SE 8: "Most will be content to shrug their shoulders and say: [...] Would you prefer that the state persecute philosophers instead of salarizing them and taking them into its service?" Without yet answering this last question let me merely add that at present philosophy's concessions to the state are quite extensive." Then a few pages later: "Let philosophers go on proliferating wildly, deny them any hope of employment and assimilation in civil occupations, stop enticing them with salaries. Better still: persecute them, look unfavorably upon them—then you will behold miracles!"

is proven by the fact that they do not leave philosophy behind when it is under siege, and who long so badly to shape and cultivate the world that they write and teach in spite of persecution.<sup>a</sup> If philosophy is to survive the assault of the modern state and carry out its task of guiding culture, Nietzsche argues that philosophy itself must be re-cultivated, pruned, and groomed for future growth. Nietzsche is the self-conscious cultivator of this future philosophy and the eighth section of *Schopenhauer as Educator* is a prelude to the philosophy of the future.

But what role will the new Nietzschean youth—those whose affection and devotion he has tried to win on almost every page of the essay—play in this cultivation? Although Nietzsche only hints at their role in the concluding lines of *Schopenhauer* he spelled it out with disturbing clarity in a series of public lectures he delivered in 1872 under the heading *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*.<sup>b</sup> Limiting ourselves for now to the hints he provides in *Schopenhauer*, however, he says in the penultimate sentence that “true friends” of philosophy must now work to restore its dignity by “proving through their actions that love of truth is something terrible and powerful.” Refusing in this more widely circulated essay to say explicitly what he said in a small lecture hall at the University of Basel the previous year, his intention can nonetheless be inferred from the passing reference to Marcus Brutus whose love of stoic philosophy and its moral imperatives moved him to “murder” his state when he killed Julius Caesar. “Brutus,” Nietzsche says, “provides a better proof of the dignity of philosophy than does Plato; for he lived in an age in which ethics ceased to be a collection of platitudes.” For

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<sup>a</sup> Nietzsche’s published writings and private correspondence alike express a great deal of admiration for Spinoza, Machiavelli, and Socrates.

<sup>b</sup> See especially the final pages of the fifth and final lecture (pp. 114-119 of the Grenke translation) where Nietzsche or his philosophic mouthpiece discusses the “Burschenschaft” student movements that had been forming in the German universities. Also consider the gravity of his references to Schiller’s play *The Robbers* in this same section.

Brutus in contradistinction to Plato, then, philosophy was something for whose sake extreme actions should be taken, and according to whose ethical imperatives *real* states should be founded and overthrown; not just ideal ones constructed in speech with laudable intentions.<sup>a</sup> The young readers of Nietzsche's *Schopenhauer*, it would seem, must come to understand philosophy and truth as Brutus did: as something worth fighting, killing, and dying for—and in this way one could say with Nietzsche's Zarathustra that they learn to will their “going-under.”<sup>b</sup>

Once the youths who are Nietzsche's target audience begin to protest, rebel, and assail their state-run educational institutions whose treatment of philosophy prevents the emergence of the human beings their new teacher has taught them to love, the state will have no choice but to persecute philosophers (and especially philosophy professors) whom it will inevitably hold responsible for acquainting students with what Nietzsche calls “forbidden books.”<sup>c</sup> In the aftermath of this persecution philosophy will be cleansed at last of the academic pseudo-philosophers who bring the “curse of the ridiculous” upon it, and it will become something “terrible” and “*disturbing*” that inspires fear and causes upheavals. With its newfound power Nietzsche says that this revitalized philosophy will command the respect of those who are “destined to seek power,” and especially of

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<sup>a</sup> Cf. GS, aph 198.

<sup>b</sup> See TSZ Prologue, sec. 4. Also see RWB sec 4: “The time is ripe for those who wish to conquer and triumph powerfully; the greatest empires stand waiting, a question mark has been added to the names of the property-holders, insofar as property exists. Thus, for instance, the edifice of education has been found to be rotting, and everywhere we find individuals who have already quietly left the building. If only those who are already profoundly dissatisfied with this edifice could be incited to public declarations and open outrage! If only they could be robbed of their despondency! I know: if we were to subtract the tacit contribution of these natures from the yield produced by our entire education system; this would cause a severe bloodletting, one that perhaps would weaken the system itself.”

<sup>c</sup> See SE 8: “Since the state can have no other interest in the university than having it educate submissive and useful citizens, it should have misgivings about putting this submissiveness, this usefulness, into question by demanding from its young men that they be examined in philosophy. [...] They become acquainted with forbidden books, begin to criticize their teachers, and perhaps eventually even recognize the purpose of university philosophy...”

potential generals and statesmen who will sense the great “streams of heroism” whose source lies within philosophy. Far from having perpetually to prove its value to political men, then, Nietzsche sees a day in philosophy’s future when the tables will be turned and political men will have to prove their worth to philosophers whose control over culture evinces the need for an alliance on philosophy’s terms instead of the state’s. With this observation we return to the subject with which we began our study: the relationship between the philosopher and the statesman or, as stated in our introduction, the relationship between Nietzsche and Bismarck.

## Summary and Conclusion

*Summary: The Cultural Crisis of Modernity and its Remedy According to Nietzsche*

This study has traced Nietzsche's understanding of the meaning of culture through his first three *Untimely Observations*. Its goal has been to show that culture [*Kultur*] occupies a central place in these essays because Nietzsche thinks that the cultivation [*Bildung*] of humanity within enclosed and humanly created spiritual horizons can prevent the spiritual degeneration of mankind in modern times.<sup>a</sup> The source of this degeneration lies in modern natural science and the scientific study of history. Taken together these two pillars of modern pedagogy erode human moral foundations and paralyze practical ambitions by teaching relativism in the form of what Nietzsche calls "the doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types, and species, [and] of the lack of any cardinal difference between human and animal."<sup>b</sup> Since Nietzsche explicitly affirms the theoretical "truth" of these doctrines despite holding them to be "deadly" for mankind, the study has focused primarily on the cultural solution he proposes to the practical problem that relativism poses to the flourishing of a great people and their geniuses.<sup>c</sup>

Although this solution is a complex one which Nietzsche went on to refine and develop in almost all of his subsequent writings, its core lays in the emergence and activity of a rare type of philosophic individual he calls the "genius," the "true human being," and the "redeeming human being" in the *Untimely Observations*, and who is

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<sup>a</sup> Cf. BGE 203. By "spiritual degeneration" I have in mind the symptoms of the "cultivated philistinism" described in DS. One could perhaps substitute Zarathustra's last man.

<sup>b</sup> UH 9.

<sup>c</sup> UH 9.



dubbed a “Caesarian breeder and cultural dynamo [*Gewaltmenschen der Cultur*]” in *Beyond Good and Evil*.<sup>a</sup> This exceptional individual (whose formal model he found in thinkers like Rousseau, Goethe, and Schopenhauer) creates self-inspired works of philosophy and art that erect insulating walls around the collective mind of his people, restraining their longing for scientific and historical knowledge by satisfying or cultivating [*Bildung*] it with self-created metaphysical “truths” and “images [*Bild*]” of their past, future, and even of nature itself. When these truths and images are embraced by a people a spiritual horizon is established around them which they consider it bad taste to transcend, and inside this horizon lies a world of “creative morality [*schöpferischen Moral*]” and “metaphysical meaningfulness” that, under the best circumstances, cultivates healthy human life.<sup>b</sup>

In addition to having shown the beginnings of Nietzsche’s solution to the practical problem that relativism poses for the flourishing of great peoples, I have also suggested that the relativism he embraces as “true” may pose a theoretical problem for his own thought. By affirming as true or absolute a doctrine which by definition states the impossibility of absolute truth, Nietzsche involves himself in a theoretical contradiction whose problematic character he is well aware of. To illustrate this theoretical contradiction and at the same time to begin to overcome it, Nietzsche turns relativism’s claim that all knowledge is relativistic against relativism itself, thereby exposing the doctrine’s own relativistic status. Far from compelling Nietzsche to anchor his

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<sup>a</sup> “Cäsarischen Züchter und Gewaltmenschen der Cultur,” BGE 207. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is the most explicit continuation of the problems and solutions Nietzsche addresses in the *Untimely Observations*. Also consider the eighth main part of BGE “Peoples and Fatherlands.”

<sup>b</sup> See TI, *Problem of Socrates*, 4-12 for an account of what the corruption of this cultivation (and hence the shattering of a “noble” horizon) might look like.

philosophy on a more absolute theoretical basis, however, his critique of relativism on relativistic grounds seems only to *embolden* his own relativism, affirming in his mind the fact that all “truths” (including the doctrine of relativism he embraces) are humanly created.<sup>a</sup> By emphatically embracing relativism as true in his early works Nietzsche thereby indicates that relativism was not an insoluble “problem” for him at all, and he sets the stage for his famous doctrine of the will to power (devised roughly 10 years later) which argues that all doctrines—including the doctrine of the will to power—are “only interpretation.”<sup>b</sup>

In the concluding chapter of the study I outlined the critique of the modern state that appears at the end of the third Untimely Observation. My intention in this section was to show why Nietzsche thinks the modern state and its educational institutions inhibit the emergence of the philosophic value creators he claims can cultivate humanity into a higher species and save it from scientific or relativistic degeneration. Having begun the study with an historical account of Nietzsche’s relationship to Bismarck, I return in the final pages to the theme of the philosopher’s relationship to the statesman, or as Nietzsche casts it: culture’s relationship to politics. According to Nietzsche the transformation of philosophy into an academic discipline by state funded universities has made it a propaganda tool for political men like Bismarck instead of something that “inspires fear,” “causes upheavals,” and cultivates peoples and fatherlands. To prevent philosophy from suffering further abuse at the hands of the modern state Nietzsche argues that it must again become something respected and feared by “great generals and statesmen,” and he encourages its “true friends” to “prove through their actions that love

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<sup>a</sup> See BGE 22.

<sup>b</sup> See BGE 22 and 36.

of truth is something terrible and powerful.”<sup>a</sup> Philosophers, Nietzsche argues, are capable of producing a “*new degree of culture [which could] instantly revolutionize the entire system of human pursuits,*” and I conclude my interpretation with the argument that the *Untimely Observations* themselves (which are explicitly addressed to the German youth) are meant serve as an example of philosophy’s revolutionary power.<sup>b</sup> Although Nietzsche never gives a precise account of the changes he would make to modern political life in the aftermath of the philosophic revolution he hopes to incite, he indicates that the proper aim of any state that wants to be great culturally is to “translate chance into necessity” as Plato recommended in his *Republic* so that “new Platos” emerge with increased regularity.<sup>c</sup>

#### *Conclusion: Nietzsche’s Turn to Science*

As a political science student who began his study of the *Untimely Observations* in search of evidence for Nietzsche’s claim that philosophic rule is possible when conducted through cultural channels, I conclude this study partly convinced and partly skeptical of what I have found. On one hand, I am compelled by Nietzsche’s argument that philosophers and artists can “cultivate” human beings and influence the way they think about the world by shaping the intellectual “horizons” under which they live. From David Strauss’s effect on Germany’s “cultivated philistines” to Nietzsche’s own account of his personal relationship to Schopenhauer, the *Untimely Observations* show that culture has the power to improve and corrupt human nature on both large and small

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<sup>a</sup> SE 8. Along these lines Nietzsche’s own philosophy is meant to incite rebellion among the youth.

<sup>b</sup> SE 8. Nietzsche is quoting Emerson here.

<sup>c</sup> SE 8. Nietzsche’s understanding of Plato’s political intention is at odds with many of the prevailing interpretations, and especially that of Leo Strauss.

scales. Yet at the same time that I am convinced by Nietzsche's account of what human cultivation is and what the very possibility of such cultivation may indicate about the malleability of human nature, I find his implicit claim that all cultivation is "metaphysical" or purely creative in character to be underdeveloped and unsatisfying.<sup>a</sup> Although I do not quarrel with his argument that all human beings so far have had what he calls a "metaphysical disposition" by means of which the most effective forms of cultivation occur, his insistence in *Schopenhauer* that a metaphysical or creative lens is the *only* one through which life "no longer appears senseless" strikes me as an unsubstantiated abstraction in the midst of an otherwise lucid essay on the nature of education.<sup>b</sup> Despite criticizing David Strauss for being a self-proclaimed believer in modern science who is at the same time a "metaphysical master builder" who never provides scientific proof of his metaphysical views, a similar accusation could perhaps be leveled against Nietzsche. His claim that the doctrines of "sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types, and species, and of the lack of any cardinal difference between human and animal" are "true," for example, seems to presume the absolute validity of the modern science he constantly denigrates in favor of creative metaphysics. By trying so hard to prove that the world of concern to us is the world of our creation, he either overlooks or willfully underemphasizes the fact that a world or a nature with a given (albeit chaotic) character seems to underlie the created world or nature which our metaphysical creations are responses to.

In addition to finding unsatisfying his teaching that philosophic cultivation is metaphysical cultivation (and hence that philosophy *is* creative metaphysics), I do not see

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<sup>a</sup> See SE 5 where Nietzsche says that nature "needs philosophers for a metaphysical purpose."

<sup>b</sup> SE 5.

sufficient grounds for Nietzsche's confidence that a "Platonic" alliance between philosophy and the state is possible, the fruit of which would be the political institutionalization of the type of cultivation he so convincingly elaborates. Not only do the *Untimely Observations* lack a sustained discussion of the real-world laws and practices that would be required to sustain such an alliance, Nietzsche's early works in general exhibit a political ambiguity or naiveté which his detractors would argue led to the cultural abuse of his writings in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by a Germany he would have abhorred. Although his early writings hold up Plato's "perfect city" as the model of a culture-state guided by philosophy, I suspect there is much more to Platonic political philosophy than what Nietzsche called the Republic's "*secret teaching of the connection between the state and the genius.*"<sup>a</sup> By elevating the Platonic city in speech to the height of a realizable ideal he either did not see or did not care to heed Plato's warning that turning philosophy into a political force is likely to lead to the very exploitation of it by the state that both writers hoped to avoid.

However like many of the positions Nietzsche adopted in his early writings there is reason to believe that his metaphysical view of philosophy and his hope for the modern revival of the Platonic Greek state were revised and perhaps even rejected in his middle period works. Far from claiming the Greek polis was a "companion," "comrade," and "friend" of culture as he had in the books of the early 1870's, Nietzsche announced in 1878's *Human, all too Human* that "like every political power the Greek polis resisted and mistrusted the growth of culture" and he said that its "powerful basic impulse

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<sup>a</sup> *The Greek State*, p. 59.

manifested itself almost exclusively in efforts to cripple and obstruct it.”<sup>a</sup> Adding that Plato “did not want things to be any different for his ideal state” and that Greek culture developed “in spite of the polis” and not because of it, Nietzsche’s assessment in *Human, All Too Human* of what the state’s relationship to culture is marks a dramatic shift from his earlier political thought.<sup>b</sup> Although the reasons he rejected the Greek polis as proof of the possibility of a philosophic cultural-state are numerous, the primary impetus behind the change seems to have been his painful break with the man he once thought capable of instituting a metaphysical revival of classical culture in Germany: Richard Wagner. Reflecting on the intellectual state he found himself in during the composition of his early writings Nietzsche confessed in *Human, All Too Human* that he had: “deceived myself about Richard Wagner’s incurable Romanticism, as if it were a beginning and not an end; likewise, about the Greeks, likewise about the Germans and their future.”<sup>c</sup> Although he seems initially to have envisioned Wagner’s Bayreuth retreat as the prototype for a polis enriched by a genius and the culture his works inspired, Nietzsche eventually became disgusted by the idea that a “self-conscious mythologizing of art” could restore a culture to wholeness.<sup>d</sup> Describing his experience at the 1876 Bayreuth Festival in a letter written two years later, he said that the event did not represent the metaphysical culmination of his cultural hopes but rather the “metaphysical

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<sup>a</sup> EI p.76. HA (I) 474. See Church (2011, 171-179) for an account of the development of Nietzsche’s view of the Greek state.

<sup>b</sup> See HA (I), 474.

<sup>c</sup> HA Preface, sec 1.

<sup>d</sup> Franco (2011, p.10).

befogging of all that is true and simple, the pitting of reason *against* reason, which sees every particular as a marvel and an absurdity.”<sup>a</sup>

In the “free spirit” books that followed the *Untimely Observations*, then, the metaphysical fog that hovered over Nietzsche in his early works was lifted and he embraced as authoritative the modern natural and historical sciences he had implicitly relied on but explicitly rejected. Despite his claims in *David Strauss* and *The Use and Abuse* that science should not guide life and his attempts in both essays to reinvent science and history as artistic disciplines, his Lamarckian or Darwinian view of nature and his affirmation of the “truth” of relativism meant that any such reinvention was possible only if he first took for granted the scientific worldview. The *Untimely Observations* as a whole, one could say, consisted of an enlightened critique of the enlightenment whose reliance on enlightenment science Nietzsche admitted fully only after he distanced himself from Richard Wagner and his romantic metaphysical longings.<sup>b</sup> In the very first aphorism of the first book he wrote after the *Untimely Observations* he reinforces this point when he declares that “historical philosophy” and “natural science”—the two intellectual forces he once vigorously opposed—must join forces and refute the “exaggeration of popular metaphysical views” whose utility for life he previously advocated.<sup>c</sup> Just a few pages later in a central aphorism entitled “Metaphysical Explanations,” he chastises an unnamed “young person”—himself perhaps—who embraces metaphysical doctrines that explain away the “unpleasant” and “contemptible” features of human life, accusing this young person of wanting to feel

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<sup>a</sup> *Sämtliche Briefe*, 5:337-38

<sup>b</sup> See Abbey (2000, 88-90 ff.): “Nietzsche’s hope for the spread of a scientific approach to knowledge is connected with a view of history that can be retrieved from the middle period writings.”

<sup>c</sup> HA (I), 1.

himself “irresponsible” for the imperfection he sees in himself and the world around him.<sup>a</sup> After long experience, Nietzsche says, this young person later acquires “mistrust for the whole metaphysical way of explaining things,” and sees that the feeling of irresponsibility he hoped to reach through metaphysics can be reached scientifically, through “physical and historical” explanations of the world that affirm it rather than denying it. By means of this scientific transformation, he concludes, this young person’s interest in “life and its problems” is likely to be kindled even more strongly.

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<sup>a</sup> HA (I), 17.



## Appendix

### Why Does Nietzsche Critique David Strauss' Literary Style?

#### *Strauss the Writer's Illogical and "Scantily Clad" Style*

After accounting for the surprising popularity of *The Old and New Faith* among ordinary Germans and arguing that its success among scholars bodes ill for a renewal of culture, Nietzsche discusses Strauss as “stylist and literary craftsman” in sections nine through 12 of *David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer*. Although these concluding sections consist mainly in stylistic criticisms and grammatical corrections of Strauss’ clumsy writing, a summary of their highpoints may be helpful in elucidating Nietzsche’s intention in the essay as a whole. To see why he wants to criticize Strauss on stylistic grounds after already criticizing him on theoretical ones it is useful to consult a statement about writing made in the second volume of *Human, All Too Human*. In a short aphorism entitled “Improving One’s Thoughts” Nietzsche says that “to improve one’s style means to improve one’s thoughts and nothing else!”<sup>a</sup> Clear and agile writing is the result of clear and agile thinking, and bad writing is typically the product of bad thinking which can be so bad as to be unable to see its own defects. Echoing Schopenhauer’s thesis in his essay *On Authorship and Style* that “style is the physiognomy of the mind and hence more infallible than that of the body,” part of Nietzsche’s intention in criticizing Strauss’ style is to show that the poor quality of his writing evinces the poor quality of his thinking.<sup>b</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> HA, Wanderer, 131.

<sup>b</sup> Schopenhauer, *On Authorship and Style*, sec. 282. Quotations from this section appear in DS 10 unless otherwise noted.

In an effort to trace the intellectual source of Strauss' bad style Nietzsche begins section nine of the essay with a criticism of "Strauss the logician," and proceeds from here to more pointed criticisms of "Strauss the writer" in sections eleven and twelve. Examining whether Strauss has the "artistic power" to construct a complete piece of writing with thematically "sound proportions," Nietzsche finds that "the relationship among the four main questions that form the thematic subdivisions of Strauss' book are not logical. Among the most egregious of Strauss' organizational errors Nietzsche cites the fact that the third part of his book ("What is Our Conception of the Universe?") has "nothing to do" with the second ("Have We Still a Religion?") because an honest and thoroughgoing astronomer would silently pass over questions about religion to avoid tainting his "sense for truth" about the cosmos with religious longings. Furthermore the question "How Do We Regulate Our Lives?" raised in fourth part of Strauss' book has "nothing to do" with the question "What is Our Conception of the Universe?" raised in the third because Strauss discusses topics like marriage, politics, and capital punishment in the fourth part yet gives no explanation of why these topics should follow the Darwinistic theories drawn from the third section "insofar as he pays no further attention to these theories." Perhaps the most glaring organizational fault of all, Nietzsche says, is that the discussions featured in the last three parts of the book are contaminated by the opening section entitled "Are We Still Christians?" By framing questions about religion, the cosmos, and human life (the themes of the last three parts) under the shadow of the Christianity he condemns, Nietzsche says that Strauss "destroys instantly [any] freedom of philosophical observation" and lends his book a "disagreeable theological tinge."

According to Nietzsche the cause of the illogical organization of *The Old and New Faith* can be traced to Strauss' general intellectual confusion about the difference between faith and knowledge. Because Strauss "continually speaks of his so-called 'new faith' and of modern science in one and the same breath" Nietzsche says that he "never ceased to be a Christian theologian and therefore never became a philosopher." Although Strauss promises at the outset of his book to supply his readers with "proofs that form the basis of the modern view of the world," he derives these so-called proofs exclusively from science and thus "entirely adopts the posture of the knower" instead of that of a believer in faith. In truth, Nietzsche concludes, Strauss' so-called "faith" has "less to do with a new faith than it does with modern science," and as such it is "not a religion at all" even though Strauss refuses to give up the idea that a soothing God or cosmos watches over human affairs. If Strauss truly wanted to lay a claim to being religious Nietzsche says that he would have to demonstrate that the grounding principles of the new faith lie "beyond modern science." Since his book nowhere contains such a demonstration, however, and since he never even explains why modern science still needs faith as its guide, Strauss must resort to defending his conception of faith with the dogmatic assertion that "anyone who cannot help himself [see the need for faith in modern times] is simply beyond help and is not yet ripe for our standpoint." Rather than taking the matter of faith seriously, then, Strauss simply abandons faith whenever he "finds it necessary to impress us and himself with his erudition."

Although Nietzsche is convinced that Strauss' inability to think properly is the primary cause of his poor writing style he says near the end of section nine that he is willing to "set Strauss the logician aside" to see whether his book "when viewed

aesthetically, does have a well-conceived form and adhere to the laws of beauty even if it does not adhere to a well-devised argument.” For the remainder of section nine and all of section ten he examines the meaning of Strauss’ claim that *The Old and New Faith* is written in a style that is “intentionally scantily clad,” a peculiar phrase coined by Strauss to describe writing that exhibits “natural simplicity, transparent clarity, lively versatility, and pleasing elegance.” According to Nietzsche Strauss’ pretension to a simple and elegant writing style is a clever ruse that permits him to use the “simplicity” or nakedness of his style as an excuse to gloss over the “serious and horrible” side of complex philosophic problems.<sup>a</sup> Although Strauss’ praise of geniuses like Lessing and Voltaire indicates at the very least that he “understands the virtue of *simplicity of style*,” Nietzsche says that he fails to perceive that a simple style alone neither makes a book into a masterpiece nor transforms an author into a genius. To lay claim to the title of genius one must be an “absolute master of [one’s] material,” says Nietzsche, and one must not communicate one’s teaching with simplicity and precision alone.<sup>b</sup> Indeed, the “excessive power” of the mind of the genius permits him to “play” with his material even if it is “risky and difficult,” and a true genius runs “nimble and with impetuous or graceful leaps” down philosophic paths lined with terrifying abysses that would frighten lesser thinkers. Despite the simple manner of Strauss’ style his readers get “no inkling whatsoever” that he has confronted any true philosophic questions or horrors, and Nietzsche says they should not mistake his shallow theoretical discussions for the profound insights of a true philosopher. Betraying his ambition to be taken for a great man by affecting a simple literary style, Strauss tries too hard to show his readers “just

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<sup>a</sup> The remaining quotations in this paragraph can be found in section 10.

<sup>b</sup> Nietzsche’s reflections on what constitutes good writing are invaluable tools for interpreting his writing.

what he wants to be taken for” and inadvertently exposes his “scantily clad” style for the lack of philosophic thoroughness it actually is.

Perhaps the most disturbing consequence of Strauss’ failure to treat philosophic problems with the gravity and thoroughness they demand is that the intellectuals who praise his book recommend it on the grounds that it *lacks* gravity and thoroughness. In the words of one reviewer the book is a pleasure to read because it “touches on everything without anywhere going into depth,” and readers will especially appreciate “the skill with which disagreeable issues are pushed aside or passed over in silence.”<sup>a</sup> According to Nietzsche, however, the only reason *The Old and New Faith* has been well-received by German reviewers is because they rarely come into contact with good arguments and thus succumb “all the more easily” to Strauss’ “scantily clad arts” of rhetorical seduction. Because Strauss has heard men who claim to have glimpsed truth allege that she is also a “naked” and beautiful Goddess, his rhetorical strategy is to trick people who have never seen her into believing *he* has by imitating her nakedness using a style whose simple sound is easily mistaken for the sound of wisdom. Since the Germans and their scholars are unaccustomed to frank language they immediately ask themselves: “What if this were truth!” when reading Strauss’ writing. Seduced into approaching Strauss more solemnly than they would a more “thoroughly clad writer,” they permit him to wear the mask of the genius among them and to conduct himself as though he were a real classical author.

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<sup>a</sup> This quotation and the following one appear in section 9. Other quotations in this section appear in DS 11-12 unless otherwise noted.

Before publically shaming Strauss in the twelfth and final section of the essay by correcting the nearly 70 grammatical and stylistic errors that appear throughout *The Old and New Faith*, Nietzsche pauses momentarily in section eleven to show his adversary a measure of literary compassion. It turns out that the reproach he leveled against Strauss of being an “extremely bad writer” in sections nine and ten is “mitigated” somewhat by the fact that in Germany: “it is very difficult to become a tolerably mediocre writer and almost impossible to become a good one.” Indeed, says Nietzsche, Strauss could even console himself in the aftermath of the preceding onslaught by telling himself that “today everyone writes as he does, that some people write even more wretchedly than he does, and that in the country of the blind the one eyed man is king.”<sup>a</sup> Although Strauss is an “utterly abominable stylist” Nietzsche judges that he is by no means the worst among the Germans, a dubious honor he reserves for the antagonists of the sequel to the Strauss essay: the “vilest of all corrupters of German, the Hegelians and their crippled progeny.” According to Nietzsche Strauss’ greatest literary handicap is that in his youth he “stammered that Hegelian idiom,” and at this time “something inside him was dislocated, some muscle or other was strained.” As a living victim of the disadvantages for life, thought, and writing that develop in the young soul as a consequence of prolonged exposure to Hegelianism, Strauss’ story is meant to serve as a cautionary tale for the historicized German youth to whom *The Use and Abuse of History* is addressed.<sup>b</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> This is not necessarily a compliment. This quotation and the following one about Hegel appear at the beginning of section 12. All other quotations in this paragraph and the following paragraph are taken from section 11.

<sup>b</sup> See UH 10 and other references to youth throughout the essay.

As bad an influence as Hegelian writing and thinking has proven itself to be in the works of authors like Strauss and Eduard von Hartmann, however, Nietzsche emphasizes the fact that the degraded state of writing and thinking in Germany cannot be blamed on Hegel alone.<sup>a</sup> Rather than being the primary cause of everything bad about German writing Hegel and his progeny are merely the most prominent symptoms of a national illness caused by the Germans' lack of genuine culture and works of stylistic genius. The new Germany, Nietzsche declares, "has not yet developed a distinct national style" and "there is not even recognition of the need for a national style" because Germans "lack a natural soil, an appreciation of aesthetic value, and the occupation with and cultivation of the art of public speaking."<sup>b</sup> German writers of the present have "no unified norm" to which they might adhere because there is nothing distinctly "German" in their language: no strict rules of grammar to standardize syntactical and existential relationships and no shared spiritual experience on which to base a uniquely German worldview. The fact that 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany lacks rigorous rules for language, Nietzsche implies, is yet another indication that despite their recent military victories they have not yet become a *people* in the most important sense of the term. Not only does Bismarck's new nation lack a unified cultural horizon in which to grow and become great, it lacks the most basic linguistic tools for creating such a horizon and for communicating and preserving the uniquely German worldview it would aim to engender.

In Johann Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* the significance of a people's language is said to lie in the fact that "men are formed by language" in such a way that

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<sup>a</sup> For Nietzsche's view of Hartmann, see UH sec. 9.

<sup>b</sup> Cf. HA, *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, aph. 87 for the development or globalization of the nationalistic views Nietzsche articulates here.

they share a common conception of the world when they share a common language, and they resist more easily the influences of foreign cultures when their native language serves as an insulating barrier.<sup>a</sup> Although Nietzsche never explicitly acknowledges his agreement with Fichte on this score he argues throughout section eleven of *David Strauss* that the “boundless dilapidation” of the German language and culture is due in part to the fact that foreign influences are now being exerted on the German tongue from without and within.<sup>b</sup> In the latest German newspapers, he says, it is claimed that “our classical authors are no longer valid models for contemporary style because they employ a large number of words, expressions and syntactical constructions that are lost [or foreign] to us.” Furthermore, the publishers of these newspapers have taught the German people to embrace “every newly coined [or foreign] solecism” as an advance in their language, and these linguistic innovations have plunged the Germans into a stylistic chaos that encourages “unlimited experimentation in language” and dissolves all attempts to forge an “artistically rigorous and cultured style.” If someone were to attempt to write a definitive grammar of “today’s cosmopolitan German style,” Nietzsche says, its rules would be drawn from a variety of foreign influences and solecisms from the books and styles of non-German writers.

The gap in quality between the spiritual life of a people like the Germans whose language is under siege by foreign influences and a people like the early Greeks whose language evinced a brief but palpable stability is perhaps most easily perceived in the disparate degrees of clarity with which each express their respective folk-knowledges.

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<sup>a</sup> Fichte, fourth address, p.55.

<sup>b</sup> To see how Fichte’s ideas may have influenced Nietzsche or at least to get a sense of the theme of the dialogue that the two are engaged in, compare the title of the eighth *Address to the German Nation* to the title of the eighth main part of BGE.



“If we give the name of *people* [Volk] to men whose organs of speech are influenced by the same external conditions,” Fichte said in his fourth *Address*, “men who live together and who develop their language in continuous communication with each other, then we must say that the language of this people has necessarily become just what it is, and in reality this people does not express its knowledge but its knowledge expresses itself out of the mouth of the people.”<sup>a</sup> In contradistinction to the Pre-Platonic Greeks whose poetic, dramatic, and philosophic traditions evince an easily recognizable and beautifully articulated tragic core of knowledge about man’s situation in the world, a people like the Germans whose culture and language are in disarray have no distinctly German way of describing the human situation and thus no folk-knowledge or higher kind of thinking on whose basis they can cultivate a distinctly German spirit. “Anyone who knows the pains the ancients took to learn how to read and write well and how few pains the moderns take,” Nietzsche says, experiences a “true sense of relief” when after reading a German book like Strauss’ he is able to turn his attention to clearer thoughts expressed in a clearer language. Quoting Schopenhauer’s views of the chief difference between Greek and German writers Nietzsche praises “properly fixed” ancient languages with “firmly established and conscientiously observed grammar[s] and orthographies” because they allow readers to devote themselves entirely to the ideas being expressed. In the works of modern German writers one is “constantly distracted by the impudence of the writer who is intent upon establishing along with his knotty insights his own grammatical and orthographical quirks,” and much of German “thinking” is rendered inaccessible as a consequence.

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<sup>a</sup> Fichte, fourth address, p.56.

According to Nietzsche German writers like Strauss and Hegel who have “sinned against the German language” are more guilty than anyone else of “profaning the mystery of all our Germanness,” especially since the German language alone “has been preserved over the entire course of that mixing and changing of nationalities and customs, and with it, as though by means of metaphysical magic, the German spirit.”<sup>a</sup> Although he never explicitly states what his critique of the German language is meant to imply about his own intention to revive the German spirit, Nietzsche’s two-fold attack on Strauss as confessor and writer indicates that only a fixed German language brandished by a true philosophic genius will spur the horizon-forming works of art needed to cultivate the Germans into a true people. To initiate the “twilight” of Strauss’ fame as a German writer, then, and perhaps also to show his own readers that he (and not Strauss) is the type of genius who has mastered the German language in a manner conducive to culture creation, Nietzsche devotes section twelve of the essay to listing (and in many cases correcting) roughly 70 grammatical and stylistic errors that appear throughout *The Old and New Faith*. Although he says that he had originally intended to set up a “special rubric” under which he would catalog the literary merits that Strauss exhibits in the book, he came across so many errors that he was forced to abandon this rubric for a second one that listed “Solecisms, Mixed Metaphors, Obscure Abbreviations, Tastelessness, and Stilted Language.” As the list of literary errors grew larger and the book’s merits were nowhere to be seen, Nietzsche judged that it would be necessary to record Strauss’ “sins” in the “stylistic black book” in order to shame him publically and prevent his linguistic disease from spreading any further. The significance of Nietzsche’s sarcastic and

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<sup>a</sup> This quotation appears in section 12.

stinging list of edits, then, lies less in the corrections themselves and more in what the *deed* of editing signifies about his own willingness to serve as steward of the German language. By editing Strauss' bad writing Nietzsche not only humiliates him before the German public by exposing him as a phony "classical writer," he invites his own readers to infer that *he* is the genius of German language and thought whose necessity he has labored the entire essay to evince.

After filling the twelfth section of the essay with ten full pages of grammatical and stylistic corrections meant to preserve and protect a German language in which "great poets have sung and great thinkers have written," Nietzsche concludes his critique of Strauss with the prediction that philistine culture in Germany will likely "react with indignation" when he speaks of "painted idols where it sees a living God." Where the cultivated philistine finds "healthy flesh" Nietzsche's reading of Strauss has exposed only a "cosmetic veneer," and in "dar[ing] to overturn [philistine culture's] idols" he has shown that it has forgotten "how to distinguish between living and dead, genuine and counterfeit, original and imitation, God and idol, and that it has lost that healthy, virile instinct for what is real and right." In *David Strauss: The Confessor and the Writer*, therefore, a philosophic idol "earns [his] downfall" by showing himself to be oblivious to man's needs as they manifest themselves in the world of concern to him: the cultural or conventional world of language, myth, and life-promoting illusions.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> See BGE aph. 34. See also Leo Strauss, *Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil*, p.177. Also see BGE 226.

## Endnotes

### **Introduction - Nietzsche contra Bismarck: *Kulturkampf***

<sup>1</sup>Frederick III (1927, 272).

<sup>2</sup>Steinberg (2011, 417).

<sup>3</sup>See BT, Attempt sec. 1: “Eventually, in that month of profoundest suspense when the peace treaty was being debated at Versailles, he too attained peace with himself and, slowly convalescing from an illness contracted at the front...” The preliminary peace between Prussian and France was signed at Versailles on February 26, 1871.

<sup>4</sup>Brandes (1972, 81).

<sup>5</sup>Hecker (1987, 1388-1391) and His (1941, 159-186). Also see Blue (2007, 80) and KGB 1-2, 381.

<sup>6</sup>SE, sec. 4 and sec 7. Even as late as the writing of *Beyond Good and Evil* in 1886, Nietzsche still claimed to know hours when he permitted himself “some hearty fatherlandishness, a plop and relapse into old loves and narrownesses, [...] hours of national agitations, patriotic palpitations, and various other sorts of archaizing sentimental inundations.” See BGE, sec. 241.

<sup>7</sup>Steinberg (2011,316).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, 318-319.

<sup>10</sup>Engelberg (1990, 106-107).

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Schoeps (1972, 116-117). See also Steinburg (2011, 319-321).

<sup>13</sup>Steinberg (2011, 321).

<sup>14</sup>SE, sec 6.

<sup>15</sup>Engelberg (1990, 110). See also Steinberg, 322.

<sup>16</sup>Steinberg (2011, 324).

<sup>17</sup>SE, sec. 6.

<sup>18</sup>Nietzsche’s lectures were delivered on Jan. 16, Feb. 6 and 27, and March 5 and 23 of 1872. The debate over the school supervisory law lasted from February to March of the same year. See Steinberg (2011, 323-4) and Grenke (2004, Translator’s Introduction). Cf. BGE, part 8.

<sup>18</sup>See BGE aph. 213.

<sup>18</sup>EI, 74.

<sup>18</sup>BGE, 212.

<sup>18</sup>TI,*Germans*.1 .Introduction, 1.

<sup>19</sup>EI, 19.

<sup>20</sup>Grenke (2004, Translator’s Introduction, 1). See also EI 121.

<sup>21</sup>EI, 14.

<sup>22</sup>EI, 126-7. KSB 3, 278-80. This letter is dated January 18, 1872. The school supervisory law was debated in the Landtag during the first two weeks of February 1872. The *Kulturkampf* as a whole had begun in the spring of 1871, at precisely the time Nietzsche was writing *The Birth of Tragedy* (which was published in 1872).

<sup>23</sup>EI, 126-7. KSB 3, 278-80.

<sup>24</sup>EI, 59-62

<sup>25</sup>EI, 14. See also. EI 60.

<sup>26</sup>EI, 63.

<sup>27</sup>EI, 60.

<sup>28</sup>EI, 74.

<sup>29</sup>EI, 76.

<sup>30</sup>See EI 74-76, and SE, sec. 4.

<sup>31</sup>EI, 75. Cf. BGE, part 8.

<sup>32</sup>EI, 74.

<sup>33</sup>BGE, 212.

<sup>34</sup>TI, *Germans*,.1.

<sup>35</sup>EH, *Destiny*, sec. 1 and 2.

<sup>36</sup>EH, *Idols*, sec. 2.

## **Chapter 1: David Strauss and the “Cultivated Philistine”**

<sup>1</sup> DS sec. 1. References to Nietzsche’s *Untimely Observations* refer to the section number of Richard Gray’s translation. Other translations retain the same section numbers.

<sup>2</sup> EH, *Wise* sec. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Strauss 1872, 1.15, 1.20. (All quotations from Strauss’ *Old and New Faith* are to chapter number followed by section number)

<sup>4</sup> See Letter to Brandeis, Feb.19, 1888.

<sup>5</sup> Strauss 1872, Introduction 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 4.84.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, Introduction 1.

<sup>8</sup> BGE, Preface.

<sup>9</sup> Strauss, Introduction 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, Introduction 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. GS, 343.

<sup>18</sup> BGE, Preface.

<sup>19</sup> Strauss, Introduction, 1. SE sec. 5, p. 214, 28ff.

<sup>20</sup> GS 343. BGE Preface, 44, 203, 23, and the title of the sixth and seventh main parts.

<sup>21</sup> See DS, sec. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Strauss, 4.84. DS sec. 2, p.11, 5-10. See also Strauss, *What is Our Conception of the Universe?*

<sup>23</sup> DS sec.3, p.19, 30-35; sec. 1 p.10, 1-5. Nietzsche quotes Goethe here.

<sup>24</sup> DS sec 3, p.20, 30-35.

<sup>25</sup> Strauss, 2.40.

<sup>26</sup> Strauss, Introduction 2.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 1.31.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 1.28.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 2.32.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 2.34.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 2.40-41.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 2.39.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> The rest of the quotations in my summary of Strauss’ chapter on religion can be found in sec 2.41.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 4.70.

<sup>37</sup> Strauss, 2.41.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 3.49-50.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 3.50.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 3.61 and 3.66.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 3.65-66.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 3.66. Cf. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. For the centrality of this question in Nietzsche’s writings, see my chapters on the second and third *Untimely Observations* as well as aphorism 203 of BGE and the Prologue of TSZ.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, Introduction, section 3.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 4.69.

- <sup>49</sup> Ibid, 4.70. My emphasis.  
<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 4.70.  
<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 4.70  
<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 4.84 and DS sec.1, p.6 20-25.  
<sup>53</sup> EH Books *Untimelies* sec. 1.  
<sup>54</sup> EH Books *Untimelies* sec. 1.  
<sup>55</sup> Cf. DS sec. 1 first sentence to DS sec. 12 last sentence.  
<sup>56</sup> TSZ, Prologue, sec. 5.  
<sup>57</sup> EH, Books, *Untimelies*, sec. 2.  
<sup>58</sup> BGE, aph 26.  
<sup>59</sup> Breazeale, p.3.  
<sup>60</sup> Breazeale p.49, no. 146.

## **Chapter 2: Nietzsche's Critique of Strauss' "New Faith" in Modern Science**

- <sup>1</sup> Strauss agrees with the literary critic Georg Gervinus on this score, whose musical taste Nietzsche had criticized in BT sec. 21 and 22.  
<sup>2</sup> Strauss, 4.41  
<sup>3</sup> In the passages that remain of section 6 Nietzsche invokes the writings of Kant to lend credence to his argument that Strauss has no solid theoretical foundation from which to derive his optimism about the human condition. Citing Strauss' heavy reliance on "the hard won achievement of persistent historical and natural scientific investigations," Nietzsche says that it is "absolutely incredible" that a teaching whose most striking feature is that it "indulges in the crudest sort of realism" does not even recognize "the extent to which [it] might profit from the Kantian *Critique of Pure Reason*." According to Nietzsche Strauss' characterization of his doctrine as a "pure unmitigated materialism" is a blatant attempt to sidestep Kant's insights into "the fundamental antinomies of idealism and the extreme relativity of all knowledge and reason," and it is because he is afraid to face the sobering implications that Kant's philosophy has for science that he tries to "disavow [the new faith] of any philosophical component" that would leave it open to a Kantian assault. For Hegelians like Strauss who are "absolutely dependent" upon the possibility of being able to acquire absolute knowledge in the twilight of history, "it is impossible [...] to understand Kant, [since...] in one's youth one understood—or thought oneself to have understood—Hegel." Strauss' doctrine of the universe as well as "his tendency to regard things *sub specie biennii*, his lack of a backbone where the status quo in Germany is concerned, [and] above all his shameless philistine optimism" can be traced back to his evaluation of Hegel as an "intellectual giant." While the kind of optimism that Hegel and Strauss promote through their confidence in the possibility of knowledge may appear life-promoting at first glance, Nietzsche concludes that it is actually "*a truly invidious form of thought*" because it urges men to be content with a world which is supposedly rational but which is actually filled with folly and suffering.  
<sup>4</sup> Strauss, 4.70.  
<sup>5</sup> Strauss, 2.41.  
<sup>6</sup> Cf. Strauss 2.41: "We perceive in Nature tremendous contrasts, awful struggles; but we discover that these do not disturb the stability and harmony of the whole—that they on the contrary preserve it."  
<sup>7</sup> 2.40-41.  
<sup>8</sup> Strauss, 2.41, end.  
<sup>9</sup> 3.65.

## **Chapter 3: Nietzsche's Critique of Hegel**

- <sup>1</sup> See BGE 210 and EH, *Books*, Wagner, sec. 3 for other critiques of Hegel.  
<sup>2</sup> BGE, 204.  
<sup>3</sup> See BGE, 224 for Nietzsche's description of the historical sense. See BGE 244 and GS 99 for his argument that Hegel's philosophy inspired German culture because it inspired the music of Richard Wagner.  
<sup>4</sup> See BGE 252 and TI, *Reconnaissance Raids* 21 and *What the Germans Lack* 4. Nietzsche's italics.

<sup>5</sup> EH, *Books*, BT sec. 1.

<sup>6</sup> See BGE 2.

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche attempted to elaborate such a “chemistry” in various forms in many of his works. Cf. HA I.1, D 1, BGE 2, and GM P.7, I.1-2.

<sup>8</sup> HA I.2.

<sup>9</sup> UH sec. 8.

<sup>10</sup> See IPH 22; PR sec. 360 and Preface; UH sec. 8. Nietzsche ultimately boils Hegel’s doctrine of the completion of history down to Christian theology disguised as historical philosophy insofar as it contains a belief in “the imminent end of the world” and “the fearfully awaited last Judgment.” He notes that the major difference between Hegel’s philosophy and Christian theology, however, is that in Hegel modern man has been authorized to pass the Last Judgment on the past whereas in Christianity this judgment is passed by the Son of Man. Hegel does not deny that something like this is the case. Cf. UH 8 and IPH p. 15-18.

<sup>11</sup> UH 9.

<sup>12</sup> UH 9.

<sup>13</sup> UH 8.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> See the first paragraphs of UH 10.

<sup>16</sup> UH 10.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> IPH, 68.

<sup>19</sup> BGE 203.

<sup>20</sup> IPH 23, 30.

<sup>21</sup> IPH 23-4, 28.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid 23-4.

<sup>23</sup> IPH 71.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> UH 8.

<sup>26</sup> UH 8. Also consider Nietzsche’s defense of the virtue of justice against modern scientization in UH 6, and the sorrow he seems to express at the decay of religions in modern times in UH 7.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> IPH 39; UH 8.

<sup>29</sup> UH 8.

<sup>30</sup> UH 9. For another critique of rationalism in UH which is connected to the one outlined here but takes its bearings from a slightly different point of view, see Nietzsche’s claim in UH 5 that “anyone who tries to understand, calculate, or comprehend in a moment when he should stand in prolonged awe at the sublime as the incomprehensible might be called rational, but only in the sense in which Schiller speaks of the rationality of rational people: he fails to see some things that even a child sees; he fails to hear some things that even a child hears. And it is precisely these things that are important. Because he does not understand this, his understanding is more childish than a child, more simple than simplemindedness—in spite of the many clever wrinkles in his parchment-like features and the virtuosity of his fingers when it comes to untangling what is entangled. What this means is: he has destroyed and lost his instinct; he can now no longer trust in the ‘divine animal’ and give it free reign when his rationality wavers and his path leads him through deserts.”

<sup>31</sup> See for example IPH p.19, 22, 68. See UH 4 for Nietzsche’s lone reference to history as the science of becoming.

<sup>32</sup> UH 1.

<sup>33</sup> UH 4, UH 1, UH 7. For an example of the kind of scientific history Nietzsche seems to have in mind, see Nassir Ghaemi’s book *A First Rate Madness* (2011).

<sup>34</sup> UH1, UH 7. This remark cannot help but remind one of Rousseau’s *Julie* and its subtitle, and of the theme of the *First Discourse*.

<sup>35</sup> UH 1.

<sup>36</sup> UH 4.

<sup>37</sup> IPH 67.

<sup>38</sup> IPH 73 ff.

<sup>39</sup> UH, sec. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Also consider the third aphorism and which of the two categories of truth Nietzsche outlines would best characterize Hegel's metaphysical-sounding claim to have access to absolute knowledge through spirit.

<sup>41</sup> UH 9.

#### **Chapter 4: Nietzsche, Hegel, and the Problem of History**

<sup>1</sup> UH 8.

<sup>2</sup> UH, Preface.

<sup>3</sup> UH 9.

<sup>4</sup> UH 8.

<sup>5</sup> UH 10. Also see UH 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Berkowitz seems to overlook this meaning of the suprahistorical (1995, 31).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> UH 6, IPH 14.

<sup>12</sup> UH 8.

<sup>13</sup> UH 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid and UH 6.

<sup>15</sup> UH 6.

<sup>16</sup> IPH 3.

<sup>17</sup> UH 2, 4.

<sup>18</sup> IPH, p3-5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid and UH 6.

<sup>21</sup> UH 3.

<sup>22</sup> IPH 6.

<sup>23</sup> IPH 7-9

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid and UH 8, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid and UH 10.

<sup>27</sup> UH 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> UH 3, 9.

<sup>30</sup> UH 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> IPH 21.

<sup>33</sup> IPH 10-11.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> IPH 12.

<sup>36</sup> UH 2 end.

<sup>37</sup> UH 3.

<sup>38</sup> UH 10.

<sup>39</sup> UH 3, 9.

<sup>40</sup> UH 3.

<sup>41</sup> UH 9.

<sup>42</sup> UH 6.

<sup>43</sup> PR Preface.



## **Chapter 5: The Redeeming Self as Cultivator of Modernity**

<sup>1</sup> UH 3, 10.

<sup>2</sup> UH, 10.

<sup>3</sup> DS, 1.

<sup>4</sup> UH, 3 end, 8 end, 9 beginning, 10.

<sup>5</sup> SE 2. UH secs. 4-6.

<sup>6</sup> EH, Books, *Untimelies*, sec. 3. Also see Sara Kofman's illuminating essay "*Accessories (Ecce Homo 'Why I Write Such Good Books,' 'The Untimelies,' 3)*". For a full and nuanced account of Nietzsche's relationship to Schopenhauer and Wagner see Franco, *Nietzsche's Enlightenment*, Prologue.

<sup>7</sup> EH, Ibid sec. 1.

<sup>8</sup> SE, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Strauss, *Notes*, p. 88-90.

<sup>10</sup> UH 10.

<sup>11</sup> UH 10.

<sup>12</sup> SE 3 Beginning.

<sup>13</sup> SE 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> SE 3.

<sup>16</sup> SE 3.

<sup>17</sup> For a fuller interpretation, see Zuckert.

<sup>18</sup> See UH 3 and my interpretation of critical history in chapter 4.

<sup>19</sup> UH 3.

<sup>20</sup> SE 5, beginning.

## **Chapter 6: The Cultural "Goal" of Nature and the State**

<sup>1</sup> Cf. UH 10.

<sup>2</sup> See Nietzsche's remarks in UH 1 on the difference between man and animal as it relates to the capacity of memory. Also recall his remark in SE 1 that the defining characteristic of man is laziness.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Heidegger's discussion of Dasein in its "everydayness" in the first part of *Being and Time*.

<sup>4</sup> RWB, sec. 5.

<sup>5</sup> RWB, sec. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Nietzsche's claim in UH 6 that creative history is more accurate than objective history.

<sup>7</sup> See SE 2 for Nietzsche's reference to Schopenhauer as a "natural being." SE UH10 for his reference to "new and improved physis."

<sup>8</sup> These difficulties are also present, perhaps more self-consciously, in Plato's *Republic* in the discussion of whether a philosopher would or should want to rule.

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