European Nihilism and the Meaning of the European Idea: A Study of Nietzsche's 'Good Europeanism' in Response to the Debate in the Post-Cold War Era

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THESIS ABSTRACT

One of the novel aspects of the European debate in the post-Cold War era is the deliberate attempt by scholars and policy-makers to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe. Such an idea, it is hoped, would enhance the legitimacy of the European Union and could provide the basis for a European identity capable of mitigating against the rise of nationalist and racist violence in Europe. After more than a decade, however, a compelling vision of Europe that would fulfil these aspirations is still widely deemed to be lacking. The question that arises, therefore, is why, in fact, it is proving so difficult to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era, and how, concomitantly, this difficulty might be addressed. In response to this question, the present thesis offers a detailed analysis of the largely unexplored European thought advanced by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche towards the end of the nineteenth century. For, the thesis argues, Nietzsche's thinking about Europe can still significantly illuminate our understanding of the current impasse by contextualising the latter within the larger problem of European nihilism, or meaninglessness, resident in the cultural configuration of European modernity. On the basis of this understanding, moreover, the thesis subsequently turns towards a consideration of Nietzsche's own idea of the 'good European' which he developed in response to the experience of meaninglessness in modern European culture. This idea of what it means to be a 'good European,' the thesis concludes, can assist contemporary scholars of European affairs in delineating a response to the current impasse which neither posits an essentialist idea of Europe, nor falls back onto a technical and functional approach to European governance.

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In a word – and it should be our word of honour! – we are *good Europeans*, Europe's heirs, the rich, superabundant, but also abundantly obligated heirs of two millennia of the European spirit....

– Friedrich Nietzsche (1886)[1]

[I]t is necessary to make ourselves the guardians of an idea of Europe *but* of a Europe that consists precisely in not closing itself off in its own identity and in advancing itself in an exemplary way toward what it is not, toward the other heading or the heading of the other, indeed – and this is perhaps something else altogether – toward the other *of* the heading, which would be the beyond of this modern tradition, another border structure, another shore.

– Jacques Derrida (1992)[2]

A guest, the most 'unheimlich' of all, the most disturbing because the most familiar (and the *least known*), is standing at the door: nihilism. He is already there; he has entered even before having knocked. ... it is thanks to its exclusion, its annihilation, that, like a fantom [*sic*], it can cross the most closed off walls of an intimate interior, or of a nation (and even a 'Europe') that we believe to be very much our own, cemented, like before, by a Wall.

– Marc Froment-Meurice (1998)[3]

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974, 377, p. 340.
[2] Jacques Derrida. *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 29.
[3] Marc Froment-Meurice. *That is to Say: Heidegger's Poetics*. Trans. Jan Plug. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 129.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE MEANING OF EUROPE

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Over two thousand years ago, Plato once raised the important question of whether it would be possible to imagine a city where the idea of a city was no longer recognisable at all.[1] Similarly, the question that has been confronting European policy-makers over the course of the past decade, is whether a peaceful and united European community can be brought about without the articulation of an underlying idea of Europe. What is more, a plethora of scholars and policy-makers have recently chosen to answer this question in the negative, expressing their doubts as to whether the political project of Europe can advance in the absence of such an idea. As a result, the idea of Europe has also once again become the subject of considerable public debate and academic discourse. Indeed, as one scholar of European affairs has noted in this regard "[a]t no time in history have people talked more about 'Europe' than today."[2] Yet another concurs, observing that "[n]ot since the end of the last 'World' War has the notion of Europe *in its totality* been so incessantly interrogated."[3] Importantly, then, the debate on Europe is no longer confined solely to the technical, legal and economic aspects of European integration that have traditionally tended to dominate the domain. Rather, in the course of the 1990s, many scholars and policy-makers alike have consciously sought to shift the debate on Europe into the cultural realm by debating the meaning of the European idea itself.[4] This growing engagement with the 'idea of Europe,' moreover, can be said to constitute one of the most significant and novel developments of contemporary European affairs.[5] By way of introduction, it is worth considering in greater detail both the motivations which underlie the emergence of this literature, as well as the reasons why an analysis of Nietzsche's European thought is pertinent within this context.

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[1] See, for example, Hans Georg Gadamer. "The Idea of the University – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow" in David Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson (ed.) *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*. Trans. Lawrence Schmidt and Monica Reuss. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 54.

[2] Gerard Delanty. *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*. London: Macmillan, 1995, p. 145.

[3] J. Peter Burgess. "On the Necessity and the Impossibility of a European Cultural Identity" in J. Peter Burgess (ed.) *Cultural Politics and Political Culture in Postmodern Europe*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997, p. 19.

[4] See, for example, Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson (eds.) *The Question of Europe*. London: Verso, 1997, p. ix.

[5] Victoria A. Goddard, Joseph R. Llobera and Cris Shore "Introduction: The Anthropology of Europe" in Victoria A. Goddard, Joseph R. Llobera and Cris Shore (eds.) *The Anthropology of Europe: Identity and Boundaries in Conflict*. Oxford: Berg, 1994, p. 26.

1. The Legitimacy of the European Union

The recent wave of interest in the idea of Europe derives, in the first instance, from the pragmatic consideration on behalf of European policy-makers that a more compelling vision of Europe is needed in order to ensure the continued legitimacy of the institutions of the European Union. As early as 1989, Francois Mitterand had already argued in a press conference that "[t]he Europe of the Community will not work, in the short-term, if it doesn't have a vision, a perspective."[6] The European Union, in this account, needs to articulate a compelling and visionary idea of Europe if the project of European integration is ultimately to prevail over those who, in Mitterand's words, "grumble, put the brakes on, and pull up in front of any obstacle, however, small" because they are not in favour of political union.[7] The wager underlying this conviction is that the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe will endow the European institutions with a greater sense of direction and purpose and will thereby also enhance their public legitimacy and political influence. Long-term vision, it is hoped, will help to ensure short-term policy success.

That the institutions of the European Union can indeed benefit from a greater sense of public legitimacy emerged particularly clearly during the debates following the signing of the Maastricht treaty. These debates did much to expose the underlying fragility of the prospects for uniting Europe in the 1990s and often drew attention to grave fears of technocratic domination and the democratic deficit inherent in the chosen approach to European integration. During these Maastricht debates Europeanists were, of course, quite willing to inform their respective populations about the detailed aspects of the treaty, including the merits of creating a central European bank and maintaining limited public deficits. Nevertheless, they faced great difficulty in convincing their constituents of the benefits of the European Union on

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[6] Cited in Alan Clark "Francois Mitterand and the Idea of Europe" in Brian Nelson, David Roberts, and Walter Veit (eds.) *The Idea of Europe: Problems of National and Transnational Identity*. Oxford: Berg, 1992, p. 156.

[7] Clark, "Francois Mitterand and the Idea of Europe," p. 156.

these grounds alone.[8] For, as one scholar insisted, how can one possibly "ask millions of citizens to think in European terms, to give up the usual national state framework and to adopt a new entity with a symbolic value reduced to rules, regulations and quotas?"[9] More meaningful representations of Europe were largely seen to be lacking in the Maastricht provisions and supporters of the European cause had to learn the value of a more symbolic and meaningful representation of the European project from first hand experience.

Not surprisingly, then, the Maastricht treaty has also been retrospectively reproached for its inability to engage the imagination of the European publics.[10] The treaty is now frequently seen as having exposed the limits of a solely functional approach to European integration. Joseph Weiler, for example, has expressed his concern about the current status of the institutional project of Europe, noting that the disillusionment surrounding the Maastricht treaty might extend much deeper than the mere content of the treaty. Indeed, he notes, "[t]he Europe of Maastricht suffers from a crisis of ideals. The Member States of the European Community are being swept by an electorate which is increasingly frustrated, alienated and angry with politics as usual. And '*Europe*,' once avant-garde, has, it seems, become just that – politics as usual."[11] Nor is Weiler alone is voicing his scepticism about the functional approach to European integration. Michael Brenner has similarly argued that "Maastricht, the ultimate embodiment of benign technocratic management, is in one sense the endpoint of a logic that places material gain at the apex of social values. However, it may be a dead end as far as political union is concerned."[12] There is, then, a growing conviction amongst Europeanists in the post-Cold War era that the functional wager on European integration has reached its limits.[13]

[8] Zaki Laïdi. *A World Without Meaning: The Crisis of Meaning in International Politics*. Trans. June Burnham and Jenny Coulon. London: Routledge, 1998, p. 76.

[9] Ariane Chebel D'Appollonia. "National and European Identities between Myths and Realities" in Ulf Hedetoft (ed.) *Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998, p. 65.

[10] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 76.

[11] Joseph Weiler. "Europe After Maastricht – Do the New Clothes have an Emperor?" *Harvard Jean Monnet Working Papers*. Vol. 12. 1995.

[12] Michael Brenner. "EC: Confidence Lost." *Foreign Policy*. No. 91. Summer 1993, pp. 26-27. See also Ralf Dahrendorf. *Whose Europe? Competing Visions for 1992*. London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1989, p. 8 and William Wallace. *The Transformation of Western Europe*. London: Pinter RIIA, 1990, p. 55.

[13] Brigid Laffan, "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe." *Journal of Common Market Studies*. Vol. 34. 1996, p. 81.

The most prominent response, in turn, to this post-Maastricht Treaty ratification crisis has been to insist that the institutions of the European Union need to provide Europeans with a more meaningful vision of Europe with which they can identify and which might inspire their loyalty along lines that are not purely economic.[14] Exemplary of this response is Jacques Vandamme who, in his function as the president of the Trans-European Policy Studies Association, has argued quite explicitly that "[a] political entity such as the European Union is inconceivable without the existence of a collective identity for its citizens."[15] Vandamme, too, is not alone in expressing this conviction. Throughout the course of the 1990s, Jacques Delors himself, in his position as President of the European Commission, similarly and repeatedly urged scholars to identify and articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe – a task that has subsequently been assisted through the financing of several research programmes. These programmes, in turn, have spawned several academic studies from political scientists and historians through to sociologists and intellectuals.[16]

One such intellectual, and now also a policy-maker, is the Czech president Vaclav Havel. In a speech delivered to Trinity College, Dublin in 1996, Havel noted quite correctly that the European Union currently finds itself at a difficult crossroads. For, he argues, on the one hand the European Union is conducting important negotiations which will greatly influence the future of Europe.[17] On the other hand, there are also growing doubts about the whole integrationist cause in the post-Cold War era. Havel thus shares the concern exhibited by many promoters of European integration about how little public legitimacy the institutions of the European Union seem to enjoy amongst Europeans at large. In light of this predicament, moreover, Havel too insists on the need for greater reflection on the meaning of the European enterprise. Indeed, his appeal is that "Europeans should give deeper thought to the

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[14] Jo Shaw. "Citizenship of the Union: Towards Post-National Membership?" *Collected Courses of the Academy of European Law.* 1995. Vol. VI. No. 1. The Hague: Kluver Law International 1997/1998, p. 251.
[15] Cited in Celine Belot and Andy Smith, "Europe and Identity: a Challenge for the Social Sciences" in Hedetoft, *Political Symbols,* p. 83.
[16] Belot and Smith, "Europe and Identity," pp. 84-85. They refer, for example, to the research programme on the history of European identity and consciousness.

historical significance of their magnificent unification effort, that they should look for the true and innermost reason behind it and for its broader mission, that they should reflect upon their relationship to the world as a whole, to this future, to nature, and to the grave dangers looming over humankind today."[18] In Havel's account, then, it is imperative that promoters of the European unification effort urgently engage in profound reflection on the underlying meaning of the European idea. He finds that as Europe goes ahead with its unification, "it has to rediscover, consciously embrace, and in some way articulate its soul or its spirit, its underlying idea, its purpose, and its inner ethos."[19] In doing so, moreover, Havel exhibits particularly clearly the conviction that the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe is now necessary in order to enhance the legitimacy of the European project.[20] This aspiration for greater public legitimacy constitutes the first important reason for the growing interest in the meaning of the European idea in the post-Cold War era.[21]

2. The Desire for a European Community

At the same time, however, this more pragmatic desire to enhance the relative influence of the European institutions also hides a deeper and more conceptual conviction that informs much of the writing on the political project of Europe. This assumption is that the creation of a united European community ultimately entails the articulation of a common idea of Europe that can be shared by its various citizens. To this extent the preambulatory clause to the Treaty of Rome had already stated very clearly that European integration is about "[a]n ever closer union among the peoples of Europe."[22] Moreover, for many supporters of the European cause, both past and

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[17] Vaclav Havel. *The Art of the Impossible: Politics and Morality in Practice: Speeches and Writings 1990-1996*. Trans. Paul Wilson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997, p. 248.

[18] Havel, *The Art of the Impossible*, p. 248.

[19] Havel, *The Art of the Impossible*, p. 247.

[20] Indeed, the European Commission itself has repeatedly argued that "... political union must not be seen simply as a legalistic exercise but rather as a humanistic enterprise; a 'union among peoples' rather than just formal treaties between states." See Commission of the European Communities. *Treaties Establishing the European Communities* (abridged ed.). Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1983, pp. 109, 113. Cited in Shore and Black, "Citizens' Europe and the Construction of European Identity," p. 275.

[21] Soledad Garcia. "Europe's Fragmented Identities and the Frontiers of Citizenship" in Soledad Garcia (ed.) *European Identity and the Search for Legitimacy*. London: Pinter, 1993, p. 2.

[22] See, for example, Stanley Henig. *The Uniting of Europe: From Discord to Concord*. London: Routledge, 1997, p. 28.

present, the traditional wager on economic and institutional strategies for European unification has often been seen only as a prelude, or a means, for bringing about a deeper and more peaceful union amongst the various peoples of Europe. In the view of Jean Monnet, for example, the point behind the project of European integration was not primarily to bring states together, but rather to unite men.[23] Similarly, Robert Schuman had argued in his memoirs that "[t]he unity of Europe will not be achieved solely or principally by European institutions; their establishment will be an intellectual journey ... Europe cannot and must not remain an economic and technocratic undertaking. It must have a soul, awareness of its historical affinities and its present and future responsibilities and political determination in the service of *a single human ideal*."[24] To the founding fathers of the institutional project of Europe, then, the quest to unite peacefully the various peoples of Europe seemed to also entail precisely this ability to articulate and make relevant, in the minds of Europeans, an idea of Europe that mitigates against national identities, or, at a minimum, complements them.

Several decades after the institutional project of Europe was initiated, however, contemporary scholars of European affairs note that this larger task still remains to be achieved.[25] According to Oliver Schmidtke, for example, the contemporary European Union is no different in this regard from other institutional orders which depend on collective identities in order to delineate the criteria for membership and loyalty. He, too, doubts whether the European Union can flourish on the basis of mutual instrumental interests alone or on the basis of the strategic interests of business and political elites. What is at stake in the contemporary debate on Europe, Schmidtke argues, "beyond the functional integration of economic, political, and legal processes, is the substantiated notion of a European citizenry which may possibly create bonds between individuals and institutions of the EU."[26] The quest to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe that can be shared by

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[23] See D'Appollonia, "National and European Identities between Myths and Realities" in Hedetoft, *Political Symbols,* p. 65.

[24] Robert Schuman. *Memoirs: 'Pour l'Europe.'* http://www.proeuropa.gr/euroreader/schuman.html. Emphasis added.

[25] Wallace, *The Transformation of Western Europe,* p. 55. See also Sven Papcke. "Who Needs a European Identity" in Nelson, Roberts, and Veit, *The Idea of Europe,* pp. 61-74, p. 73; Oliver Schmidtke. "Obstacles and Prospects for a European Collective Identity" in Hedetoft, *Political Symbols,* p. 45; and Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe,* p. 1.

Europeans at large, then, is not at all seen to be tangential to the project of European integration. Rather it is seen to stand at the very centre of a process of the formation of a European community. Indeed, if the notion of community informing the political project of Europe is one consisting of a group of people with shared values and identities, then bringing about a European community, in turn, would seem to entail the articulation of an overarching idea of Europe which embodies these values.[27] In addition, therefore, to the more pragmatic goal of enhancing the legitimacy of the European institutions, the debate on the idea of Europe has also recently emerged because the notion of community underlying the political project of Europe ultimately seems to require such an idea.

3. The Spectre of Violence

What is more, and closely related to the previous point, many of the bellicose episodes witnessed in the course of the 1990s have actually been taken as testament to precisely what can occur when a common idea of Europe is not shared by its citizens. In this regard, the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe is also seen as being able to contribute towards a more peaceful European order in the twenty-first century. "Because Europe was not united," the Schuman Declaration had already proclaimed in relation to the Second World War, "we have had war."[28] Throughout the past decade, Europe's bellicose history has confronted it once more within the context of the events surrounding the collapse of the former Yugoslavia – events which had not been seen in Europe since the 1940s.[29] The view perpetuated by many commentators, that there was somehow a Balkan *Sonderweg* to history, that those involved in the violent outbursts were not part of Europe,[30] could not obscure the underlying fact that Sarajevo had also been a cosmopolitan city which was home to members of four different religions.[31] To many, irrespective of whether it was openly

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[26] Schmidtke, "Obstacles and Prospects for a European Collective Identity" p. 45.
[27] This is the view of community espoused, for example, by William Wallace. See, for example, his *The Transformation of Western Europe*, p. 55.
[28] Cited in Henig, *The Uniting of Europe*, p. 22.
[29] Timothy Garton Ash. "Ten Years in Europe." *Prospect*. July 1999, p. 22.
[30] See R. Ali and L. Lifschulz (eds.) *Why Bosnia? Writings on the Balkan War*. Stony Creek, Conn.: Pamphleteer's Press, 1993. Cited in Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 158.
[31] Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 158.

admitted or not, the inability to avert the extent of the Bosnian crisis symbolised all too readily how divided Europe remained and how a pronounced and cultivated European responsibility was utterly lacking.[32] It is in this sense, then, that the events in the former Yugoslavia have also been taken as testament to the challenges which Europe still faces, and the potential risks that the absence of a commonly held European identity entails.

Nor have Europeanists overlooked the fact that these nationalist and racist sentiments are not confined to the former Yugoslavia, but can rather be found in the very countries which sought to differentiate themselves from the events that occurred in the former Yugoslavia. The signs, in other words, of racist and nationalist violence come, as the French philosopher Jacques Derrida has noted, from "everywhere in Europe" and not only from the former Yugoslavia.[33] Over the course of the past decade, there has indeed been ample evidence of well-known European pathologies resurfacing within many of the countries associated with the project of European unification.[34] The persistence of such eruptions of violence and discriminatory hatred, moreover, has, in many cases, only served to strengthen the conviction that the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe is increasingly necessary if the political project of Europe is to succeed. Much in this vein, one scholar, for example, has argued quite explicitly that "[w]e might quite well even ask if we need a European identity. The answer must be yes. We need it in order to protect us from the secularised remnants of Christendom: the dark and atavistic forces of nationalism and racism with threaten to engulf us."[35] There is, then, a growing sense in which a meaningful vision of Europe needs to be articulated not only in order to enhance the legitimacy of the European institutions, and in order to bring about a genuine European community, but also in order to ensure the emergence of a more peaceful European community in the twenty-first century. This underlying conviction, in turn,

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[32] Stanley Hoffmann. "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited." *Daedalus* Vol. 123. No. 2 Spring 1994, p. 2. See also Brenner, "EC: Confidence Lost," p. 24; Burgess, "On the Necessity and Impossibility," p. 20; and Delanty, *Inventing Europe,* p. viii.

[33] J. Derrida. *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe.* Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Micheal B. Naas. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 6.

[34] See, for example, Jacques Julliard. *Ce Fascisme qui vient...* Paris: Seuil, 1994.

[35] Gerard Delanty. "Redefining Political Culture in Europe Today: From Ideology to the Politics of Identity and Beyond" in Hedetoft, *Political Symbols,* p. 33.

constitutes the third reason why the debate on the idea of Europe has re-emerged in post-Cold War era.

4. The European Imagination in Crisis ?

Despite this widespread aspiration for the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe, however, the task of actually doing so has proved profoundly difficult for scholars and policy-makers in the post-Cold War era. The Swiss writer Denis de Rougement once noted in his study of the European idea that "[t]o search for Europe is to find it."[36] This insight notwithstanding, and despite more than a decade of searching, a more compelling vision of Europe that could enhance the legitimacy of the European institutions and that could serve as the basis for a European identity is still widely deemed to be lacking. Thus, in his 1994 article entitled "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited,"[37] for example, the Harvard Professor of European affairs Stanley Hoffmann 'revisited' an essay he had published thirty years earlier and in which he had concluded that "Europe today has no clear profile other than that which a process of industrialisation and a process of economic integration have given it. Europe today has no sense of direction and purpose."[38] In 1964 Hoffmann had concluded that a meaningful idea of Europe informing the European project was lacking. Writing thirty years later, Hoffmann's discouraging conclusion is that this judgement remains as valid today as it did during the 1960s. Thirty years later, the word 'Europe' continues to pass through the lips of countless commentators and policy-makers on a daily basis, and yet there is also a growing awareness amongst scholars and observers of European affairs that the European idea remains largely vacuous in the post-Cold War era and on the verge of the twenty-first century.[39] If anything, Hoffmann argues,

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[36] Cited in Christopher Coker. *Twilight of the West.* Oxford: Westview Press, 1998, p. 104. See also de Rougement's earlier previous statement: "To seek Europe is to make her!" *The Meaning of Europe.* Trans. Alan Braley. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1965, p. 19.

[37] Stanley Hoffmann published his original article in *Daedalus* Vol. 93. No. 4. Fall 1964. In light of the article's thirty year anniversary, Hoffmann revisited this article and published his reflections under the title of "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited" in *Daedalus* Vol. 123. No. 2 Spring 1994.

[38] Stanley Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis," p. 1244, cited in Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited," p. 1.

[39] Indeed, the necessity to use the cumbersome term 'post-Cold War era' over a decade after the collapse of the Berlin Wall is itself testament to this vacuity. It is also for this reason, moreover, that it is not actually possible, at the outset of this thesis, to define in greater detail what the notion of 'Europe' actually means in the contemporary context. For, it is precisely the question of the meaning of

contemporary Europe is characterised by an acute lack of leaders and elites with a daring vision of Europe and it is this shortcoming which, in turn, has led some Europeans to question whether the process of European integration still has a higher purpose. In his view, moreover, it is also unlikely that such an identity will emerge in the near future, given that many of the transnational ideas which once underpinned the European project, such as social democracy, Christian democracy or even communism, have become decreasingly credible or have suffered from the corrosive effects of power.[40] Europeans, Hoffmann concludes, now simply lack the 'solid bed of beliefs' that is, for example, provided by liberalism in the United States.

Hoffmann, moreover, is also clearly disappointed by the inability of Europe to articulate a more meaningful vision of itself. Indeed, he concludes his article on a sombre note, pointing out that "[i]n 1964 I wondered about Western Europe's spiritual vitality. I still do."[41] Underlying Hoffmann's account, therefore, is also an implicit yet crucial assessment of what constitutes a culture's 'spiritual vitality.' Indeed, while Hoffmann, like many other commentators on European affairs, does not explicitly define what, in his view, would actually constitute a more 'meaningful' idea of Europe,[42] it does nevertheless emerge from his article that what he variously sees lacking in the contemporary project is a clear 'purpose,' a 'sense of direction,' a 'clear identity,' a 'higher purpose,' and a 'common enterprise.'[43] The absence of such attributes, in Hoffmann's account, signals an absence of 'spiritual vitality.' It will be recalled, moreover, that these terms are not at all dissimilar from Havel's earlier plea for an idea of Europe that entails the delineation of Europe's historical significance, its broad mission, its relationship to the whole, to mankind, to nature and to the future.

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the European idea which is being raised by policy-makers and scholars and which this thesis wishes to address.

[40] Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited," p. 16. See also Anthony D. Smith. "A Europe of Nations – or the Nation of Europe" *Journal of Peace Research*. Vol. 30 No. 2, p. 134.

[41] Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited," p. 22.

[42] As Patocka observes, "[w]e often speak of the meaning of particular human events, of the meaning of life, of history, of various institutions, of democracy, without either defining or attempting to define the concept of meaning – evidently because, on the one hand, we sense we need such a concept but, on the other hand, it seems somehow self-evident. ... it is undoubtedly its difficulty and at the same time its inescapability which leads us frequently to resort to a time-honored way of sparing ourselves closer analysis, which is to assume the self-evidence of such inescapable conceptual tools." See his essay "Does History Have Meaning?" in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Trans. Erazim Kohák. Chicago: Open Court, 1996, p. 53. The difficult question of the meaning of the term 'meaning' will, therefore, be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

[43] Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited," pp. 1,1,1,15, 18.

Both Hoffmann and Havel converge, in other words, in their observation that a common, compelling and future-oriented idea of Europe is lacking,[44] and that this absence is indicative of a culture which lacks 'spiritual vitality.' This implicit assumption about what constitutes a culture's 'spiritual vitality,' moreover, represents the fourth reason for the recent emergence of the debate on the idea of Europe. Hoffmann, after all, is far from alone in relying on this underlying conception of 'spiritual vitality.'

Already in 1984 Milan Kundera had voiced similar concerns about the state of the European imagination in his widely read article "The Tragedy of Central Europe," published in *The New York Review of Books*. At a time when Europe was still divided by the Cold War, Milan Kundera lamented that a meaningful conception of Europe no longer existed in 'western' Europe. In order to illustrate his argument, Kundera recalled the plight of the director of the Hungarian News Agency who, in November of 1956, dispatched a telex to the world alerting them of the Russian attack on Budapest. The dispatch ended, Kundera reminds his 'western' European readers, with the following words: "We are going to die for Hungary and for Europe."[45] In order to make this latter claim intelligible, of belonging to Hungary *and* to Europe, Kundera emphasised that to a Hungarian, a Czech or a Pole, and unlike a Russian, the word 'Europe' is not a geographical expression but a "spiritual notion synonymous with the word 'West.'"[46] Consequently, in Kundera's view, the plight of the director of the Hungarian News Agency revealed that the:

> real tragedy for Central Europe, then, is not Russia but Europe: this Europe
> that represented a value so great that the director of the Hungarian News
> Agency was ready to die for it, and for which he did indeed die. Behind the
> iron curtain, he did not suspect, that the times had changed and that in
> Europe itself Europe was no longer experienced as a value. He did not

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[44] For empirical research confirming the lack of a European identity see Sophie Duchesne and Andre-Paul Frognier. "Is there a European Identity?" in Oskar Niedermayer and Richard Sinnott (eds.) *Public Opinion and Internationalized Governance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 223. For a more recent survey with a similar conclusion see Stefania Panebianco "European Citizenship and European Identity: from the Treaty of Maastricht to public opinion attitudes." *Jean Monnet Working Papers in Comparative and International Politics*. No. 3, 1996. Finally, see also Anthony D. Smith, "National Identity and the Idea of European Unity," p. 319.

[45] Milan Kundera. "The Tragedy of Central Europe." *The New York Review* April 26, 1984, pp. 33-38, p. 33.

suspect that the sentence he was sending by telex beyond the borders of his
flat country would seem outmoded and would not be understood.[47]

Kundera's plea, of course, was not to forget 'central' Europe. Culturally, he argued, central Europe undoubtedly belonged to Europe, whereas Russia did not. Consequently, the political frontier had, in his view, clearly been misplaced following the Second World War and even the passage of time should not be allowed to obscure this fact.[48] Yet, the article would also strike a chord in western Europe, where it did indeed appear that Europe, as an idea, was no longer being consciously cultivated by its citizens.

These very concerns have now resurfaced within the debate surrounding the European idea in the post-Cold War era. In his recent book *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, the American scholar Robert Pippin, for example, has chosen to emphasise the contemporary and pervasive dissatisfaction of European high culture with itself and its ideas.[49] In the 1990s, Pippin observes, "[a] culture of melancholy, profound skepticism and intense self-criticism had become official high culture and the dominant academic one in the European West...."[50] Pippin describes, in other words, a European culture immersed in scepticism and criticism and which is unable to articulate a more meaningful vision of itself. Much like Hoffmann, Havel, and Kundera, moreover, Pipin similarly understands this inability to be a pessimistic indicator for the state of European culture in the post-Cold War era. In this account too, therefore, Europe's current 'spiritual vitality' seems to be a matter of considerable concern.

In Agnés Heller's view, in turn, Europe has similarly been engaged, over the past decades, in "a crash course in relativising its own culture, so much so that it arrived at a stage of advanced cultural masochism."[51] The image that Heller associates

[46] Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," p. 33.
[47] Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," p. 38.
[48] See Ole Waever "Europe since 1945: Crisis to Renewal" in Kevin Wilson and Jan van der Dussen *The History of the Idea of Europe*. London: Routledge 1995, pp. 179-180.
[49] Robert B. Pippin. *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfaction of European High Culture*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p. xii.
[50] Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. xi.
[51] Agnes Heller. "Europe – An Epilogue?" in *The Postmodern Political Condition*. Cambridge: Polity, 1988, p. 154.

with contemporary European culture, is that of "a corpse whose hair and nails, wealth, and cumulative knowledge are still growing, but the rest is dead."[52] Europe, she observes, lacks any future-oriented social fantasy apart from its technological forms of governance. It has become a theatre without performers, a place where "[g]rand narratives of another, better future in politics, social questions, or anything else, are no longer forged..." and where, moreover, "[r]edemption is deemed undesirable, and sociopolitical progress [is] ridiculed."[53] Heller does not wish to deny that Europe still retains a prominent position in the realm of philosophy and that Europe still produces interesting philosophy and artworks, but she also wishes to draw attention to the fact that increasingly most of the attractive contributions tend to originate in the periphery rather than in Europe.

Furthermore, according to Heller, the focus of that which is produced in Europe tends to revolve around the past, on preserving the past, and on cultivating past traditions. In light of the fact that the present is incapable of yielding a more meaningful idea of Europe, she observes, the search now centres solely on the past because it is only there that a more meaningful way of life can be discerned. "Old cities," she notes, "are rebuilt, ancient castles are refurbished, old artefacts are exhibited, old books are republished – Europeans tiptoe in their cities as in museums *because their cities are museums*."[54] This, in her view, is surely an admission of defeat on behalf of European culture. Indeed, the emphasis on Europe's past is not seen by her as the gateway to a more meaningful idea of Europe, but rather as an admission of defeat in the contemporary quest to articulate a meaningful idea of Europe commensurate with the times. Europe, in her account, has lost, either temporarily or for good, its trend to orient itself towards a meaningful future, to articulate a meaningful idea towards which to work and to discuss its future at great length. "European culture," Heller starkly concludes therefore, "can legitimately be considered the cadaver of its own self-image."[55] In Heller's view too, then, there is within contemporary European culture a pervasive inability to articulate a more

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[52] Heller, "Europe – An Epilogue?", p. 154.
[53] Heller, "Europe – An Epilogue?", p. 154.
[54] Heller, "Europe – An Epilogue?", p. 155.
[55] Heller, "Europe – An Epilogue?", p. 155.

meaningful vision of itself, and this, in turn, is taken by her as a worrying indicator of the vitality of contemporary European culture.

Finally, this theme of disappearing meaning has recently also received a book-length treatment by the French Professor of International Relations, Zaki Laïdi. In his book *A World without Meaning: The Crisis of Meaning in International Politics*, this absence of 'meaning' is taken to be the defining characteristic of post-Cold War international relations. If, Laïdi argues, we understand 'meaning' to consist of three inter-related notions – a foundation, a sense of unity and a final goal – then international relations in general, and European relations in particular, can properly be described as 'meaningless' in the post-Cold War era.[56] With reference to contemporary European affairs in particular, Laïdi insists that "the need to project ourselves into the future has never been so strong, while we have never been so poorly armed on the conceptual front to conceive this future, which leaves a wide gap between the historic rupture that confronts us and our difficulty in interpreting it."[57] Laïdi too, then, wishes to emphasise that contemporary cultural developments in Europe seem to prohibit the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe along which both policy-makers and citizens could unite, claiming that Europe "risks becoming a heritage site rather than a project, thereby sliding gently from an exercise of will to passivity. Meaning, in this case, would no longer be a projection towards the future, but a nostalgic allegory of the past."[58] Indeed, Laïdi notes, "[t]he European idea has suffered as a result of the teleological deconstruction at work today."[59] The result of this process, Laïdi's argument continues, has been that "[p]olitical actions no longer find their legitimacy in a vision of the future, but have been reduced to managing the ordinary present."[60] Europe, in this account, is suffering from an acute crisis or loss of meaning; "it has trouble metaphorising its own destiny, dramatising it...."[61] It is, moreover, an observation which, he points out, we all make today.[62]

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[56] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 1. Laïdi further defines his terms in the following manner: 'foundation' is meant as the basic principle on which a collective project depends, unity is meant that 'world images' are collected into a coherent plan of the whole; end or final goal is meant to denote a projection towards an elsewhere that is deemed better.
[57] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p.1.
[58] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 75.
[59] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 75.
[60] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 7.
[61] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 76.
[62] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 80.

Laïdi, too, then wishes to draw attention to the pervasive inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era and this inability leads, again, to a pessimistic assessment of contemporary European culture. His response to addressing this situation, moreover, is to insist that there is "no task more urgent than the reconstitution of a symbolic separation between the sphere of daily experience and the tracing of a new horizon of expectation."[63] He, too, in other words, insists that the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe is necessary in the post-Cold War era.

What all these prominent writers share, then, is a considerable scepticism as to whether Europeans currently possess what Stanley Hoffmann has referred to as the requisite 'spiritual vitality' for actually articulating a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era. It is precisely this underlying assumption that a culture's 'spiritual vitality' resides in its ability to identify common purposes and to project these into the future which, in turn, constitutes the fourth reason behind the emergence of the debate on the idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, in this regard the recent debate on the idea of Europe has been driven forward not only by the previously mentioned arguments in favour of articulating such an idea, but also by an intuitive aversion against the implications entailed by the inability to actually articulate such an idea. In driving this debate forward, moreover, these writers have also demonstrated their conviction, in relation to Plato's initial question, that it would be very difficult indeed to imagine a united and flourishing Europe without the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe.

To conclude this section, then, there is, on the one hand, an evident desire for the articulation of a more meaningful vision of Europe in the post-Cold War era. This desire derives initially from the pragmatic consideration of policy-makers wishing to enhance the legitimacy of the European institutions. Underlying this move, however, one can also detect two deeper and more conceptual assumptions which have been equally important in driving this debate forward, namely a conception of a peaceful community which emphasises the importance of shared ideals, and a conception of a culture's 'spiritual vitality' which is based on the ability to articulate common goals

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[63] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 178.

and to project these into the future. Yet, on the other hand, there is also an increasing realisation amongst scholars and policy-makers that the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe remains profoundly difficult, if not impossible, in the post-Cold War era, and this realisation, in turn, has lead to a proliferation of pessimistic accounts of contemporary European culture. As Jacques Derrida has noted in this regard, "we no longer know very well *what* or *who* goes by this name [of Europe]. Indeed, to what concept, to what real individual, to what singular entity would this name be assigned today? Who will draw up its borders?"[64] It is, moreover, unclear how those still interested in the European idea are to proceed. "Must they re-begin?" Derrida asks. "Or must they *depart* from Europe, separate themselves form an old Europe? Or else depart again, set out toward a Europe that does not yet exist? Or else re-embark in order to return to a Europe of origins that would then need to be restored, rediscovered, or reconstituted, during a great celebration of 'reunion' [*retrouvailles*]?"[65] The central question, in short, that emerges from the contemporary debate, is why it is actually proving so difficult to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era, and how, concomitantly, this difficulty might be addressed. It is also precisely this impasse which the present thesis wishes to explore further.

5. Nietzsche's European Thought

In seeking to address this current impasse, the following thesis provides a detailed analysis of the European thought advanced by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) towards the end of the nineteenth century. This thought consists primarily of his analysis of the advent of European nihilism, or meaninglessness, and his response to this development in European culture in the form of his idea of the 'good Europeans.' There are at least four reasons why Nietzsche's European thought, despite the fact that it was written towards the end of the nineteenth century, still constitutes one of the most appropriate intellectual frameworks within which to further explore the current debate on the meaning of the European idea. The first reason derives from the fact that Nietzsche was himself

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[64] Derrida, *The Other Heading*, p. 5.

amongst the first to problematise the collapse of an overarching and teleological idea of Europe within the cultural configuration of European modernity. Indeed, Nietzsche anticipated that one of the greatest dangers likely to confront Europeans in the course of the twentieth century would be the loss of their European voice. In the twentieth century, Nietzsche postulated, Europeans would lack the means with which to cultivate a European spirit.[66] It is this crucial insight which also explains why, long before he was thought of primarily as a 'postmodern' thinker, Nietzsche was internationally recognised for his profound insight into the cultural pathology of the West and the onset of the "afterglow of European civilisation."[67] Nietzsche, then, suggests himself to the question at hand, firstly, because he was amongst the early thinkers to contemplate the collapse of an overarching idea of Europe as well as the wider implications of this development.

In light of this realisation, moreover, Nietzsche also placed the question of 'Europe' at the centre of much of his thinking and it is this fact, in turn, which constitutes the second reason why Nietzsche remains one of the most appropriate sources within which to explore the present question further. On the most basic of levels, this interest of Nietzsche's in the idea of Europe is revealed by the sheer frequency with which he comments on the idea of Europe. According to the index compiled by Jörg Salaquarda to the standard German edition of Nietzsche's writings, Nietzsche used the word 'Europe' over four hundred times.[68] Beyond this more formal observation, however, Nietzsche was also a thinker who consciously cultivated a profound interest in the European idea and who accorded the notion of 'Europe' a central role in much of his thinking.[69] Not least, Nietzsche styled himself as "a thinker who has the future of Europe on his conscience,"[70] and who once wrote of himself

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[65] Derrida, *The Other Heading*, p. 8.

[66] Josef Nolte. *Wir guten Europäer: Historisch-politische Versuche über uns selbst.* Tübingen: Narr, 1991, p. 207.

[67] Robert B. Pippin. "Nietzsche's alleged farewell: The premodern, modern and postmodern Nietzsche." *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche.* Edited by Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 255.

[68] In addition, Nietzsche uses the noun 'European' around 280 times and the adjective 'European' 320 times. Moreover, when he does use the term he tends to use them with strong emphasis. See Nolte, *Wir guten Europäer*, p. 199.

[69] Nolte, *Wir guten Europäer*, pp. 198, 203, 206.

[70] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1966, 251, p. 188.

that, "even if I should be a bad German, I am at all events a *very good European*."[71] Indeed, Nietzsche even occasionally referred to his "European mission"[72] and one of his most important works, *The Gay Science*, was dedicated to the future Europeans which he envisaged. Nietzsche can, therefore, also be seen as one of those philosophers and poets who, as Heinrich Mann once observed, have made such a pivotal contribution to the invention, cultivation and maintenance of the European imagination.[73]

Already as early as 1935 J. P. Mayer had noted, in his introduction to an anthology on Nietzsche's writings, that it may be necessary to explore Nietzsche's pan-European perspective which transcends *völkisch* and nationalist divisions.[74] Yet, as recently as 1991, Josef Nolte has pointed out that Nietzsche's copious remarks about 'Europe,' 'European' and 'Europeanness' remain largely ignored and unexamined both within the discipline of International Relations in particular and within Nietzsche scholarship in general, as do their connections with such closely related subjects such as his views on the Germans, his criticism of the German *Reich*, and of modern nationalism.[75] This oversight appears particularly regrettable given that, as two scholars have recently concluded, "Nietzsche still seems to have been astonishingly prescient about the new Europe and its old predicaments. His overriding concern was that the 'nations and fatherlands' of old Europe not obstruct forever the historic process of European unification."[76] Not ignoring these parts of Nietzsche's corpus, moreover, reveals that Nietzsche was not only a sophisticated thinker, but also one who was intimately concerned with the question of how to conceive of a meaningful idea of Europe and who deliberately styled himself as a 'good European' – a fact which helps to account for why his thought has found nourishing roots in

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[71] Written by Friedrich Nietzsche to his mother from Sils-Maria on August 17th, 1886. Cited in David Farrell Krell and Donald L. Bates. *The Good European: Nietzsche's Work Sites in Word and Image.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. v.

[72] See Friedrich Nietzsche. *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-1885.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, KSA 11, 29[4], p. 337. My translation, *Passim.*

[73] Paul Michael Lützeler. "Writers on European Identity." In *Europe after Maastricht: American and European Perspectives.* Edited by Paul Michael Lützeler. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1994, p. 296.

[74] J. P. Mayer. *Kritik und Zukunft der Kultur. Aus Friedrich Nietzsches Werken für die Gegenwart ausgewählt.* Leipzig: Rascher, 1935. Cited in Nolte, *Wir guten Europäer,* p. 196.

[75] Nolte, *Wir guten Europäer,* p. 195.

[76] D. Krell and D. Bates. *The Good European: Nietzsche's Work Sites in Word and Image.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, p.1.

virtually every European country.[77] Not only, then, did Nietzsche anticipate the collapse of the European idea in the course of the twentieth century, but much of his thought was deliberately European in scope and character, reflecting the fact that much of it was directly devoted to confronting this very impasse.

Yet a third reason why Nietzsche suggests himself, perhaps more than any other thinker, to the question at hand, is because he deliberately cast the question of Europe in terms of 'meaning.' It is, in other words, not fortuitous that Nietzsche spoke not only of nihilism in general, but specifically of European nihilism. Already towards the end of the nineteenth century, Nietzsche was moved to observe that the modern European had begun to reveal an "unspeakable poverty and exhaustion" in whose inner self "grey impotence, gnawing dissatisfaction, busiest boredom, and dishonest misery" prevailed.[78] In Europe, Nietzsche maintained, the overall aim was lacking and the question 'Why?' no longer found an answer.[79] This widespread condition of not being able to experience a meaningful existence Nietzsche termed European nihilism and referred to it as "the *really tragic* problem of our modern world...."[80] Robert Pippin, of course, observes quite rightly that "[o]ne could frame the problem of modernist negativity, dissatisfaction, or despair [in] any number of ways and could make use of any number of attempts at a diagnosis, from Hölderlin to Kierkegaard to Marx to Weber to Adorno to Heidegger...."[81] And yet, as Pippin subsequently points out, it is Nietzsche's discussion of this problem, especially in his passage 125 of *The Gay Science*, "that has as good a claim as any to be considered a *locus classicus* for the expression of the general feature of these constellation of themes...."[82] Nietzsche, however, did not only seek to document the emergence of these sentiments, but he also sought to understand the processes by which they had come about. In his discussion of European nihilism, in particular, Nietzsche illustrated the method

[77] The currently standard edition of Nietzsche's works, for example, was compiled by two Italian scholars, Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari.

[78] Cited in Karl Jaspers. *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity.* Trans. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, p. 240.

[79] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1968, I, 2, p. 9. The present study only draws upon *The Will to Power* as a source for English translations of some of Nietzsche's posthumously published fragments.

[80] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA Vol. 12, 7[8], p. 291.

[81] Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 144.

[82] Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 144.

through which European existence had traditionally been endowed with a greater sense of meaning, and how, within the context of European modernity, this very method had become intellectually unconvincing, thereby giving rise to the European experience of meaninglessness. The third reason, therefore, why Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism seems to be the most suitable context for exploring the present question on the meaning of the European idea further, is that he was not only concerned with the collapse of an overarching idea of Europe and with the question of how to confront this historical development, but that he also deliberately cast his discussion in terms of 'meaning' and 'meaninglessness.'

A fourth and final reason why Nietzsche still constitutes one of the most suitable frameworks within which to further pursue the contemporary impasse, derives from the fact that he straddles precisely those academic debates which bear so decisively on the contemporary reception of Europe's historical heritage. As Ernst Behler has noted in this regard, Nietzsche can be drawn into current debates within the academy as if he were a 'contemporary.'[83] Another scholar concurs, noting how Nietzsche's "philosophical system is now over a century old yet he still sounds contemporary. He needs no translation into the present. His problems are still our problems, his predicament our own."[84] In particular, Nietzsche is largely associated, although perhaps erroneously, with the 'postmodern turn' in the European and American academy.[85] Thus, Jürgen Habermas, for example, takes Nietzsche to mark "the entry into postmodernity" and to be a thinker who "*bids farewell* to the dialectic of Enlightenment."[86] Nietzsche therefore also stands at the centre of those academic debates which affect the contemporary reception of Europe's intellectual heritage and it is this circumstance, in turn, which constitutes the fourth reason why Nietzsche's intellectual corpus still remains one of the most appropriate frameworks within which to further explore the question of how to articulate a meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era. "[E]veryone who thinks today," the German philosopher Martin

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[83] Ernst Behler. *Confrontations: Derrida, Heidegger, Nietzsche.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991, p. viii.
[84] Nimrod Aloni. *Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche's Healing and Edifying Philosophy.* Lanham: University Press of America., 1991, p. 195.
[85] For a discussion of this issue see Clayton Koelb (ed.) *Nietzsche as Postmodernist: Essays Pro and Contra.* New York: SUNY, 1990.

Heidegger once insisted in this regard, "does so in Nietzsche's light and shadow, whether they are 'for' him or 'against' him."[87]

By way of concluding this introduction, then, an analysis of Nietzsche's European thought may well still have great contemporary relevance for the question of whether and how to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, as will emerge in the course of the thesis, it is even possible to suggest that, at bottom, the contemporary question of how to articulate a more compelling vision of Europe, is still essentially Nietzsche's question of how to confront the onset of European nihilism. If this is indeed the case, then his analysis of European nihilism and his concomitant notion of the 'good Europeans' are of all the more contemporary interest. That this should indeed turn out to be the case, moreover, is perhaps not as surprising as it might initially appear. After all, many of the problems facing scholars in the contemporary world are still rooted in the philosophical world of the nineteenth century. The French writer Jacques Darras, for example, has noted that "[i]n many respects our century, the twentieth, is but an annex, a footnote to the nineteenth century...."[88] This is particularly true for much of contemporary thinking informing the political and economic project of Europe.[89] It is in this vein, then, that it is also possible to suggest that Nietzsche's detailed study of European nihilism, in conjunction with his concomitant notion of the 'good Europeans,' can still enhance our understanding of the current impasse and can assist in delineating a response to it. In order to further substantiate this thesis, however, the next chapter turns towards a more detailed consideration of Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism. Such a consideration not only prepares the ground for a later analysis of Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans,' but also allows for a more subtle understanding of our contemporary predicament.

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[86] Jürgen Habermas. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996, p. 86. See also David Michael Levin. *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation*. London: Routledge, 1988, p. 3.

[87] Cited in Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, p. 1.

[88] Jacques Darras. *Beyond the Tunnel of History*. London: Macmillan, 1990, p. 72.

[89] See Luc Ferry. *The System of Philosophies of History*. Trans. Franklin Philip. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

CHAPTER 2

'GOD OR NOTHINGNESS ?' NIETZSCHE'S
DISCUSSION OF EUROPEAN NIHILISM

'GOD OR NOTHINGNESS ?' NIETZSCHE'S DISCUSSION
OF EUROPEAN NIHILISM

Nietzsche's European thought revolves primarily around his detailed analysis of the advent of European nihilism, or meaninglessness. Familiarity with this discussion of European nihilism is of great importance for at least two reasons. Firstly, it helps to ensure a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of his notion of the 'good Europeans' at a later stage in the thesis. For, this idea of the 'good Europeans' constitutes Nietzsche's direct response to the advent of meaninglessness in European culture. At the same time, however, Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism is also additionally useful because it can actually illuminate the origins of the current impasse in the European debate in at least three important ways. In the first instance, Nietzsche identified, within the context of this discussion, the mechanism through which European existence had traditionally been endowed with a greater sense of meaning and also showed how this mechanism had become unconvincing in modern times, thereby giving rise to the experience of meaninglessness. In this sense, Nietzsche's account serves to demonstrate that the current problem is actually part of a much longer and deeper problem that can be traced back at least to the end of the nineteenth century, if not earlier. Secondly, Nietzsche's analysis can help to explain why, as the previous chapter highlighted, the desire for a more meaningful representation of European existence actually persists in modern times, and why the absence of such an idea frequently leads to pessimistic accounts of Europe's 'spiritual vitality.' Thirdly and finally, by exposing the true depth and magnitude of the problem, Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism can also explain why, despite several valiant efforts, it continues to prove so difficult to actually articulate a more compelling vision of Europe in the post-Cold War era. Importantly, then, the present chapter turns towards a detailed consideration of Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism not only because it forms an essential part of coming to terms with Nietzsche's notion of the 'good Europeans,' but also because this discussion can actually go a substantial way towards answering the question of why Europeanists are currently confronting the impasse highlighted in the introduction to this thesis.

1. The Historical Context of Nietzsche's Corpus

Nietzsche is probably most widely known for his famous proclamation that 'God is dead' and for his deliberations about the impact this event would have on European culture in the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. That this should be so, comes as less of a surprise if one bears in mind that Nietzsche lived towards the end of the second wave of European atheism. The first phase of atheism in Europe had been initiated by the scientific advances of Galileo and his followers, and had culminated in a more mechanistic understanding of the universe. Importantly, however, while this understanding of the universe did indeed diminish the role played by God, it had not denied this role altogether. Thus, philosophers and scientists such as Descartes, Boyle and Newton, while no longer conceiving of God as immanent in the world, did not exclude the possibility that God existed externally to it.[1] By refusing the explicit denial of God, moreover, it was still possible, as Leszek Kolakowski notes, for many people to "live without realising that they were denizens of two incompatible worlds and, by a thin shell, protect the comfort of faith while trusting progress, scientific truth and modern technology."[2] It was a fragile balance, indeed, but one which was facilitated by the fact that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was still a considerable gap between the conduct of scientific research and the noticeable impact of such knowledge on the daily lives of Europeans.[3] For several generations, therefore, it was indeed possible to deny the explicit conflict between the scientific and theistic world-views.

What made the time during which Nietzsche wrote unique, however, was the fact that the philosophies of Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, which, despite their differences, each sought to address this emerging rift between science and theology, had all seemed to have spent themselves.[4] What is more, Darwin's evolutionary theory was now gaining in prominence, while scientific theories and applied

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[1] David Ray Griffin. "The Reenchantment of Science" in Lawrence Cahoone (ed.) *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 666.
[2] Leszek Kolakowski. *Modernity on Endless Trial.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 8.
[3] Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial*, p. 99.
[4] Walter Kaufmann. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist.* 4th Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974, p. 96.

technology similarly made great advances, creating yet more inroads into the popular and intellectual reception of Christianity. Indeed, the great temporal distance between the advances of modern science and their application to the improvement of everyday life had narrowed substantially in the course of the nineteenth century,[5] giving rise to a growing sense of scientific and progressive optimism that characterised much of the times.[6] These developments, moreover, also ensured that Nietzsche found himself standing at the end of this second wave of atheism which had now transformed itself from the initial and weaker version, into a much deeper and suspicious form of atheism which sought to radicalise the denial of God.[7] In the latter form, atheists arrived at the conviction that the concept of a God was merely a fiction created by human beings, and in the process tried to elucidate the psychological processes by which this fabrication had come about.

In this vein, the generation prior to Nietzsche had also rebelled, in its own view often heroically, against what it perceived to be the excessive Pietism evident in many European societies.[8] Often the question now preoccupying this generation was no longer whether or not God existed. This question now seemed to be settled for them. Rather, they were much more interested in understanding why Europeans had postulated the existence of God in the first place. It is precisely this important shift of emphasis which Nietzsche himself saw as being so characteristic of the intellectual climate in Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century. "Formerly," Nietzsche observed:

> one sought to prove that there is no God – nowadays one indicates how the
> belief that there is a God could *arise* and how this belief acquired its
> weight and importance: a counter-proof that there is no God thereby
> becomes superfluous. When in former times one had refuted the 'proofs of
> the existence of God' put forward, there always remained the doubt

[5] Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial*, p. 99.
[6] Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, p. 96.
[7] Keiji Nishitani. *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*. Trans. Graham Parkes with Setsuko Aihara. Albany: SUNY, 1990, p. 71.
[8] Keith Ansell-Pearson. *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 24.

whether better proofs might not be adduced than those just refuted: in those days atheists did not know how to make a clean sweep.[9]

This important intellectual shift, moreover, would later contribute towards the collapse of clerical authority in 1848 as well as the subsequent and rapid de-Christianisation amongst European Protestants.[10] As a result, it was left to Nietzsche's generation, in turn, to consider the ramifications of this decisive shift.

One of the central aspects, then, that set Nietzsche's generation apart from the previous one was that it could no longer solely portray this struggle against Christianity as heroic and liberating; rather, the task confronting Nietzsche's generation was to come to terms with the potentially profound implications of European secularisation.[11] This entailed, above all, the attempt to render existence meaningful and intelligible in a world where God no longer credibly existed in their imagination, in an intellectual climate where God was deemed to be 'dead.' As one biographer has noted with respect to Nietzsche's generation, "[s]ecularisation threatened to leave them displaced and rootless, yet enticed them forward with the alternative of a post-religious identity as the first of the 'new men.'"[12] In light of the fact that Nietzsche himself had been raised in firmly Protestant surroundings it is, perhaps, not altogether surprising that he did not consider himself to be immune from the task of exploring the cultural implications of secularisation. Indeed, it is precisely Nietzsche's position at the end of this second wave of European atheism that makes him such a pivotal figure in the quest to trace the origins of the modern European experience of meaninglessness. For, Nietzsche effectively approached his intellectual maturity in an age when the traditional meaning of the European idea, that of the Christian continent, had lost much of its credibility.

In his attempts to think through the challenge of secularisation, moreover, Nietzsche was not convinced that the optimism triggered by the material and

[9] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 95, p. 93.
[10] Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, p. 24.
[11] Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, p. 24.
[12] P. Bergmann. *Nietzsche: The Last Anti-Political German*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 29.

technological advances of his age could sustain European societies in the long run.[13] Nietzsche preferred to offer an assessment of his age that was far more ambivalent. The diagnosis of modern, European culture that he advanced instead, was one of nihilism. "Nihilism," Nietzsche maintained, "stands at the door." But "[w]hat does nihilism mean?" he asked, then providing his readers with the answer that it means "[t]hat the highest values devaluate themselves." It means, moreover, that in Europe the overall "aim is lacking" and the question 'Why?' no longer finds an answer."[14] Nietzsche, in other words, uses the word nihilism to denote that state in which it is no longer possible for a society or culture to experience a meaningful existence because its 'highest values' have become incredible. In the case of Europe, it signified that stage of its historical development, towards the end of the nineteenth century, during which the theistic universe of Christianity was finally starting to lose its grip on the European imagination. "God," as Nietzsche had both Zarathustra and the madman in the market place famously proclaim, "is dead."[15] It is, moreover, precisely this 'decline of the faith in the Christian god, [and] the triumph of scientific atheism," which Nietzsche took to be the most decisive "European event" of modern times, and which the remainder of this chapter analyses in greater detail.[16]

2. The 'Death of God'

The analysis of modern European culture which led Nietzsche to make these observations and which allowed him to anticipate the advent of European meaninglessness is complex and sophisticated.[17] Indeed, as one Nietzsche scholar has pertinently observed in this regard, "[t]o attempt to sort out what Nietzsche meant by

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[13] Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, p. 96.

[14] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1968, I.2., p. 9.

[15] Nietzsche's famous proclamation occurs first in Book 3 of *The Gay Science*, Section 108, which appeared in the year 1882. Here, the analogy with the death of Buddha is drawn: "there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow, too. It reappears in section 343 as the greatest recent event. *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974. It can also be found at the end of Section 2 of the Prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1961.

[16] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 357, p. 306.

[17] Most of Nietzsche's fragmentary notes on the nature of European nihilism from 1883 until 1888 were published posthumously under the title *The Will to Power*.

nihilism is to confront a tangle of issues that must be teased out with great delicacy."[18] A widely-recognised starting point for undertaking this task, however, can be found in Section 125 of *The Gay Science*. In the passage Nietzsche presents his readers with his famous tale of the *'Madman'* – a passage which, it will be recalled from the previous chapter, still represents for many scholars the most eloquent description of the experience of meaninglessness characteristic of modern times.[19] The passage anticipates, in a poetic and metaphorical fashion, the existential discomfort and lack of orientation which might ensue for Europeans following their eventual realisation of the full implications of the 'death of God.'

Due to the central importance of the passage to the remainder of the thesis, and the intellectual history of the twentieth century in general, it is worth quoting it at some length. The passage begins by having the 'madman' draw attention to the 'death of God:'

> Have you not heard of the madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: 'I seek God! I seek God' – As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? – thus they yelled and laughed.

> The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Whither is God?' he cried; 'I will tell you. *We have killed him* – you and I.[20]

The announcement that 'God is dead' and the consequences this entails for European culture is made by a 'madman.' He is mad in the sense that he has understood, unlike his contemporaries, the far-reaching nature of this development in European culture. Moreover, like many of Nietzsche's contemporaries, the atheists standing around the market place no longer believe in God, and view religion as an obsolete superstition in a Europe which has discovered the power of science. In this sense, and as William

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[18] Karen L. Carr. *The Banalization of Nihilism: Twentieth Century Responses to Meaninglessness.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 26.
[19] Robert B. Pippin. *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfaction of European High Culture.* 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p. 144.

Connolly has pointed out, their very laughter at the madman also "reveals unwittingly the truth of his proclamation."[21]

It is important to note, however, that Nietzsche and the 'madman' are not primarily concerned throughout this passage with traditional arguments about the existence of God, such as the cosmological and ontological arguments, or that from design, but rather with the cultural ramifications of this event.[22] Strictly speaking, Nietzsche does not even maintain that God does not exist. Rather, God did once exist in the European imagination but no longer does so, and it is this development, this experience of withdrawal, which would have profound consequences for the viability of much of European culture.[23] Indeed, the fact whether there had been a god or not is fairly irrelevant given that the actual experience of loss and disillusionment brought about by secularisation is certainly real enough.[24] When, therefore, Nietzsche has the madman proclaim that 'God is dead,' he is much rather insisting, as Connolly further argues, that on the level of European culture, "a common faith anchored in a common set of experiences can no longer secure and protect itself from widespread revision, skepticism, doubt and unbelief."[25] Indeed, Nietzsche himself continues the passage much in this vein:

> All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we plunging continuously? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continuously closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the

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[20] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* 125.
[21] See William E. Connolly. *Political Theory and Modernity.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, p. 9.
[22] See Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity,* p. 7.
[23] Thomas L. Pangle. "The Roots of Contemporary Nihilism and Its Political Consequences According to Nietzsche." *The Review of Politics.* Vol. 45. No. 1. 1983, p. 46.
[24] Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem,* p. 150.
[25] Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity,* p. 9.

divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God remains dead. And we
have killed him. ...[26]

The apocalyptic language that Nietzsche invokes here, serves to draw attention to the
great discomfort and disorientation that would be likely to befall European culture as
Europeans increasingly became aware of the ramifications of the 'death of God.'
Indeed, the implications of this event, as Nietzsche metaphorically anticipates them in
this part of the passage, are far-reaching, entailing the potential for a vast
disenchantment of European culture. Following the 'death of God', Christianity could
no longer provide Europe with an overarching meaning, severing Europe, so to speak,
from its sun and pushing it towards what Nietzsche metaphorically referred to as its
'great noon.' The advent of European nihilism, Nietzsche noted in this vein,
represented "a crisis without equal on earth."[27] Indeed, the appearance that "nothing
has any meaning" represented the "[t]he danger of all dangers" for European
culture.[28]

Why, though, did the 'death of God' promise to constitute such a cataclysmic
event for European culture in Nietzsche's account? The reason, Nietzsche argued,
derives, in the first instance, from the fact that so much of European culture had
previously been based on, and revolved around, the Christian faith. Traditionally,
Nietzsche noted, it was precisely Christianity and its faith in the existence of God
which had served to endow much of European existence with meaning and value, and
which had made life, including its suffering and disappointments, intelligible to
Europeans. Thus, despite his prominent criticism of Christianity, Nietzsche was well
aware of its ability, for some time, to avert the experience of meaninglessness. "What
were the advantages of the Christian moral hypothesis?" he inquired in one of his
notebooks, and articulated four different responses.[29] Firstly, he argued, "[i]t granted
man an absolute value, as opposed to his smallness and accidental occurrence in the
flux of becoming and passing away." Within the Christian worldview, man was

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[26] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 125, p.181.
[27] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York:
Random House, 1967, 'Why I am Destiny,' 1, p. 326. See also Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 343, p. 279 and
Will to Power, Preface, 2, p. 3.
[28] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, 2[100],
p. 110.
[29] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 4, pp. 9-10.

deemed to be, even if fallen, God's most important creature, bestowing upon man an important dignity and value in a world otherwise characterised by flux and instability. Secondly, Christianity "conceded to the world, in spite of suffering and evil, the character of perfection – including 'freedom': evil appeared full of meaning." By positing a perfect deity which shines through all suffering and evil, Christianity, in other words, was able to endow even such instances with meaning and value. Thirdly, Christianity "posited that man had a *knowledge* of absolute values and thus *adequate knowledge* precisely regarding what is most important" while, fourthly and finally, Nietzsche also noted that "[i]t prevented man from despising himself as man, from taking sides against life; from despairing of knowledge; it was a *means of preservation.*" Christian morality, Nietzsche therefore concluded, "was the great *antidote* against practical and theoretical *nihilism*" in that it "protected life against despair and the leap into nothing" among the underprivileged, powerless and oppressed.[30] By invoking the existence of a true and divine world beyond earthly existence, Christianity was able to bestow life with dignity and endow much of European existence with a deeper meaning capable of 'redeeming,' and thus also making tolerable, even suffering and death.

The initial meaning of the 'death of God,' however, is that precisely this avenue for addressing human suffering and rendering it meaningful would no longer be available on a pervasive basis. Following the collapse of the Christian worldview, modern Europeans could no longer easily see themselves as God's most important creatures, nor could they readily believe in the reality of a redeeming afterlife. What is more, the impact of the 'death of God' on European culture is exacerbated by the fact that the influence of the Christian faith was not confined to the Churches, but was translated into virtually all aspects of European existence: into architecture and sculpture, literature and painting, music and philosophy, as well as ethics and law. As the Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sorokin has summarised, medieval culture was a unified system in the sense that it constituted "a whole whose parts articulated the same supreme principle of true reality and value: an infinite, supersensory and super-rational God, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, absolutely just, good and

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[30] Nietzsche, *Will to Power,* 55, p. 36.

beautiful, creator of the world and of man."[31] This is, of course, not to imply Novalis's romantic vision that medieval culture was a monolith and that there was not a wide array of Christian interpretations. It is, however, to insist, with Connolly, that "there was, nonetheless, ample room within its diversity for many to experience the world as enchanted, to discern, darkly and obscurely, the will of God in the things, words, deed, and events of the world."[32] Indeed, Connolly here echoes a sentiment expressed earlier by Nietzsche himself, when he claimed, in one of his aphorisms, that in an earlier time "experiences shone differently because a god shone through them. ... 'Truth' was experienced differently, for the insane could be accepted formerly as its mouthpiece – which makes *us* shudder or laugh."[33] It is, then, by virtue of the central role previously played by Christianity in European culture and in endowing European existence with meaning, that Nietzsche concluded that the 'death of God' would constitute a cataclysmic event and provoke the European experience of meaninglessness.

One of the far-reaching effects of the 'death of God' would be that Christian morality itself would also be increasingly called into question. The 'death of God,' in other words, would not only entail the possible disenchantment of European existence, but would also entail the calling into question of many of the moral and ethical precepts which had been derived from it. In Nietzsche's view, "Christianity is a system, a consistently thought out and *complete* view of things. If one breaks out of it a fundamental idea, the belief in God, one thereby breaks the whole thing to pieces...."[34] Indeed, he noted further in *The Twilight of the Idols*, "Christian morality is a command' its origin is transcendent; it is beyond all criticism, all right to criticism; it has truth only if God is the truth – it stands or falls with faith in God."[35] Much, then, like Dostoyevsky, whom he had read in French translation, Nietzsche argued that in a godless world, everything might ultimately be permitted.[36] "[H]ow much must collapse," Nietzsche subsequently went on to ask, "now that this faith has

[31] Pitirim Sorokin. *The Crisis of Our Age*. Oxford: Oneworld, 1992, p. 18.
[32] Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, pp. 7-8.
[33] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 152, pp. 196-197.
[34] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1990, "Expeditions of an Untimely Man," 5, pp. 80-81.
[35] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Expeditions of an Untimely Man," 5, p. 81
[36] Friedrich Nietzsche. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. Third Essay, 24, p. 150.

been undermined because it was built upon this faith, propped up by it, grown into it; for example the whole of our European morality."[37] The most immediate meaning, then, of Nietzsche's declaration that "God is dead" is "that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable...."[38] and the recognition that this might entail the eventual collapse of both the moral framework and worldview which was built around it.

In light of his own reflections on the unsettling implications of the 'death of God,' moreover, Nietzsche was astonished, even frustrated, that the majority of his contemporaries were as yet unwilling to confront these ramifications honestly and directly.[39] Thus, the famous passage from *The Gay Science* concludes with the 'madman's' recognition that his message was still premature:

> Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. 'I have come too early,' he said then; 'my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightening and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars – *and yet they have done it themselves.*'

> It has been related that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called into account, he is said to have replied nothing but: 'What after all are these churches now if they are not tombs and sepulchers of God?'[40]

Whereas Nietzsche's madman understood very well the implications of the eventual consequences entailed in the 'death of God,' the atheists standing around the market place could not yet envision the impending catastrophe for European culture. It is for this reason, moreover, that Nietzsche felt that the madman had come too early, and

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[37] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 343, p. 279.
[38] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 343, p. 279.
[39] Bruce Detwiler. *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 71.

why Nietzsche himself also thought that he was going to be born 'posthumously,' i.e. that the importance of his corpus would become recognised only *after* the implications of the 'death of God' had begun to spill out of the salons and into the streets of European culture.[41]

To conclude this section, then, in Nietzsche's view the 'death of God' was the decisive, even defining, event of modern European history in the sense that modernity is characterised by a lack of the unperturbed confidence in the reality of God and Christian morality which characterised much of pre-modern Europe. What is more, Nietzsche's discussion of the 'death of God' represents the first step in the approach to trace, genealogically, the origins of the contemporary inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe. For, it was precisely this notion of a common Christian faith which had traditionally underpinned the European idea.[42] If, however, the idea of Europe could no longer be sustained under the auspices of Christianity in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' then it also comes as less of a surprise that the question of how to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe might preoccupy European scholars for quite some time to come, even to this very day. In this way, moreover, Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism illustrates how the European experience of meaninglessness noted by contemporary scholars is not novel, but is actually part of a much longer development which can be traced back at least to the end of the nineteenth century when it surfaced within the context of the 'death of God.'

3. The 'Meaninglessness' of Modern Science

A natural starting point in attempting to answer this last question about how to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' would seem to lie within the realm of modern science itself. For, to the extent that modern science has largely displaced the Christian understanding of existence as the

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[40] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 125, p. 182. Zarathustra comes to much the same conclusion in §5 of the Prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

[41] See, for example, the Preface to the *Antichrist,* p. 125 and *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I am a Destiny', 1.

[42] See D. Hay. *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957.

defining characteristic of modern European culture, it is only appropriate to inquire what, if anything, modern science proposes as a replacement along these lines. Much in this vein, Nietzsche himself turned toward investigating whether or not modern science could, at least in principle, serve as the basis for the articulation of a more compelling vision of Europe following the demise of Christianity. Nietzsche's investigation of modern science, however, led him to conclude that the scientific account of existence could not easily endow European existence with a sense of meaning in the way Christianity had previously done. If anything, he argued, scientific and mechanistic accounts of existence give "the impression of meaninglessness."[43] Indeed, he wished to draw attention to the "[n]ihilistic tendency in the natural sciences. ('Meaninglessness') Causality, Mechanism. The 'law-like regularity' ...."[44] Modern science, according to Nietzsche, lacked an easily recognisable goal and thus could also not easily fulfil the human desire cultivated by nearly two millennia of Christian thinking. Much in this vein, Nietzsche drew attention to the "nihilistic consequences of contemporary science.... Since Copernicus man has been rolling from the centre toward X."[45] As Glen Martin explains, prior to Copernicus, Europeans perceived themselves to be centred in the universe spiritually; they occupied centre stage in the cosmic drama of revelation and redemption. At the same time, however, Europeans had also perceived themselves to be centred physically in the universe, with the heavenly bodies rotating in perfect circles around their privileged position. As modern science advanced, it increasingly called into question this status, and perpetuated a displacement from this unique and privileged position towards a yet unknown 'X.'[46]

Indeed, in light of the growing influence of the 'Darwinian' understanding of evolution, Nietzsche now found modern Europeans to understand themselves as standing in much closer relation to the animal kingdom than to the kingdom of God. With the rise of modern science, Europeans had been relegated from the status of God's most important creature, to that of a sophisticated animal. Thus, Nietzsche noted, for example, how "[a]las, the faith in the dignity and uniqueness of man, in his

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[43] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, 7[54], pp. 312-13.
[44] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, 2[131], p. 130.
[45] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 1, p. 8.

irreplaceability in the great chain of being, is a thing of the past – he has become an *animal*, literally and without reservation or qualification, he who was, according to his old faith, almost God ("child of God," "Godman").[47] What is more, this process, rather than reversing itself, seems instead to be continually perpetuating itself further. "Since Copernicus," Nietzsche wrote in this regard, "man seems to have got himself on an inclined plane – now he is slipping faster and faster away from the centre into – what? into nothingness? into a *'penetrating* sense of his nothingness'?..."[48] The discoveries of modern science and technology, Nietzsche thought, were increasingly carrying the modern European away from his traditional position in the 'great chain of being' and pushing him into an unknown region, without a clear goal or direction. Indeed:

> *All* science (and by no means only astronomy, on the humiliating and degrading effect of which Kant made the noteworthy confession: "it destroys my importance"...), all science ... has at present the object of dissuading man from his former respect for himself, as if this had been nothing but a piece of bizarre conceit."[49]

Not surprisingly, Nietzsche would ultimately conclude that "the most universal sign of the modern age" is that "man has lost *dignity* in his own eyes to an incredible extent."[50] Modern science, in his view, could not easily provide the metaphysical comfort demanded by a European culture which had been accustomed to the balm of faith; it "never creates values" itself.[51]

Nietzsche, then, also saw the modern, scientific worldview as posing a considerable obstacle to those Europeans who wished to experience a more meaningful existence. Indeed, modern science had helped to destroy the concepts of 'purpose' and 'unity' which had traditionally been of central importance in endowing

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[46] Glen T. Martin. *From Nietzsche to Wittgenstein: The Problem of Truth and Nihilism in the Modern World.* New York: Peter Lang, 1989, p. 12.
[47] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals,* III, 25, p. 155.
[48] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals,* III, 25, p. 155.
[49] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals,* III, 25, pp. 155-56.
[50] Nietzsche, *Will to Power,* I, 18, p. 16.
[51] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals,* III, 25, p. 153.

European existence with a greater sense of meaning.[52] To the extent, moreover, that modern European culture embraces, indeed even puts a primacy on science and scientific methodology, it will also find it difficult to answer the question of meaning in general, and the question of Europe's meaning in particular. It is also precisely this inability of modern science to adequately address the question of meaning, in turn, which represents the second step in the attempt to trace genealogically the impasse in which the contemporary debate about the meaning of the European idea finds itself. For, it will be recalled from the previous chapter that it is precisely the technical and scientific nature of both modern European culture, and the form that the process of European integration has taken over the past decades, which several scholars have openly lamented within their discussions of the European idea in the post-Cold War era. A technocratic or functional idea of Europe seems insufficient for stimulating the European imagination. Taken together, moreover, these two interrelated processes, i.e. the challenge of Christianity through the rise of modern science and the subsequently perceived meaninglessness of a scientific European culture, can be seen as constituting the first phase of Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism. These first two steps of Nietzsche's genealogy, in turn, can be distinguished from a second phase within Nietzsche's genealogy of European nihilism which proceeds to an even deeper level, and towards which the next section turns.

4. Modern Science and the Will to Truth

Nietzsche's investigation into the nature of modern science does not cease with the observation that it cannot endow European existence with a greater sense of meaning in the manner in which Christianity had previously done. Rather, Nietzsche provides another and more penetrating reason why, even if, and contrary to his own argument, modern science and its methodology could hypothetically serve as a unifying and meaningful source of European identity, its status would still remain problematic. It is here, moreover, that Nietzsche's genealogy of modern European nihilism can be seen as entering into its second and deeper phase. The more profound problem, Nietzsche argued, that modern science confronts following the 'death of

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[52] Cited in Henning Ottmann. *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987,

God,' is that of grounding its activities without recourse to the very language of traditional Christianity which it has contributed toward displacing. Crucial to this more sophisticated argument, is the recognition that modern science, despite its claim to be objective and without presuppositions, still rests on an underlying value. Indeed, according to Nietzsche there is "no such thing as science 'without any presuppositions.'"[53] Rather, he insisted that despite its appearance to the contrary, science actually "requires in every respect an ideal of value, a value-creating power, in the *service* of which it could *believe* in itself...."[54] In Nietzsche's account, the value still underlying the entire endeavour of modern science is that of 'truth.' Thus, in the *Genealogy of Morals*, for example, he argued how:

> [t]hat which *constrains* these men [the modern scientists], however, this unconditional will to truth, is *faith in the ascetic ideal itself*, even if as an unconscious imperative – don't be deceived about that – it is the faith in a *metaphysical value*, the absolute value of *truth*, sanctioned and guaranteed by this ideal alone (it stands or falls with this ideal).[55]

The enterprise of modern science, in other words, is seen by Nietzsche to still rely, ultimately, on the underlying value of 'truth' and on the conviction that the knowledge that science yields is intrinsically good and worth being known.

Where, though, Nietzsche subsequently inquired, does science derive this overriding value from and how does it justify it? Ironically, according to Nietzsche, the value of truth under which modern science heralds its research and expends its resources, is still ultimately derived from a much longer Christian-Platonic heritage that prevailed in Europe and which itself revolved around the 'will-to-truth.' "[W]e men of knowledge of today," Nietzsche wrote in this vein, "we godless men and anti-metaphysicians, we, too, still derive *our* flame from the fire ignited by a faith millennia old, the Christian faith, which was also Plato's, that God is truth, that truth is *divine*."[56] The dedicated cultivation of truth as an overriding value can, in other words, so Nietzsche argues, already be found in Platonic philosophy and the Christian

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p. 343.
[53] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, p. 151.
[54] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 25, p. 153.
[55] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, p. 151.

faith, the later being, in his view, itself only a form of "Platonism for the 'the people."[57] That the importance of telling the truth forms an important component of the Christian faith can, for example, be discerned by considering the importance of the Ten Commandments or by bearing in mind the important role played by confession in Christianity. Moreover, and as Bruce Detwiler further explains, because both Platonic philosophy and Christianity "assume that knowledge of ultimate truth is knowledge of the divine, both indirectly promote the quest for truth that gives rise to modern science."[58] Modern science, therefore, also remains continuous with one of the defining aspects of Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage, namely in its belief in the overriding value of truth.

Not only, however, is modern science's emphasis on the importance of truth continuous with the Christian-Platonic cultivation of truth in Nietzsche's argument, but he sought to demonstrate how it was precisely the Christian emphasis of the importance of truth which, over time, actually gave rise to scientific accounts of existence which, in turn, subsequently challenged the Christian worldview. Nietzsche, in other words, wished to draw attention to the ironic circumstance that it was precisely Christian piety which, in the end, demanded that Europeans give up their Christianity. It was man's Christian commitment to the truth that later compelled him to admit that the concept of God is a lie.[59] As Nietzsche explains:

> You see what it was that really triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood ever more rigorously, the father's confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price. Looking at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and governance of a god; interpreting history in honour of some divine reason, as a continual testimony of a moral world order and ultimate moral purposes; interpreting one's own experiences as pious people have long enough interpreted theirs....[60]

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[56] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, p. 152.
[57] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Preface, p. 2.
[58] Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*, p. 74.
[59] Carr, *Banalization of Nihilism*, p. 39.

The irony, then, is that it was Christianity's very own moral hierarchy, with its emphasis on truth at any price that gave rise, over time, to a naturalistic account of events which, in turn, called into question the very metaphysical framework out of which it emerged.

Importantly, however, such an account also implies that the 'death of God' is not simply the result of Europeans having turned their back on Christianity. Rather, and this is often seen to be one of the very strength's of Nietzsche's account, the European experience of nihilism results from the sincere and consistent application of Christian values, rather than a simple and deliberate abandoning of them.[61] "We outgrew Christianity," Nietzsche maintained in this vein, "not because we lived too far from it, rather because we lived too close, even more because we grew out of it. It is our strict and over-indulged piety itself that today forbids us still to be Christians."[62] This, in turn, also accounts for why Nietzsche detected a kind of logic behind the advent of modern nihilism, why he asserted that nihilism is the *necessary* consequence of our valuations so far and why he claimed that the highest values devalue *themselves*.

What is more, the view that modern science still remains continuous with, and indeed arises from within, Europe's Christian-Platonic tradition centred around the 'will-to-truth,' also necessitates a reassessment of the radical break that science purports to constitute with relation to Christianity. While, on the one hand, modern science does indeed break with Christianity's belief in a divine world, its overarching moral hierarchy and teleology of truth has, on the other hand, still been retained from its Christian predecessor, which is why Nietzsche concluded that "[i]t is still a metaphysical faith that underlies our faith in science."[63] Indeed, he insisted, "[n]o doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense that is presupposed by the faith in science *thus affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this 'other world' – look, must they not by the same

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[60] Nietzsche, *Gay Science* 357, p. 307. See also *The Will to Power* where Nietzsche remarks that "[m]orality itself, in the form of honesty, compels us to deny morality." 404, p. 219.

[61] Carr, *Banalization of Nihilism*, p. 39.

[62] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, p. 165. Trans. Carr, *Banalization of Nihilism*, p. 40.

[63] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, p. 152.

token negate its counterpart, this world, *our* world?"[64] In this sense, then, the rise of modern science is, in fact, only the most recent manifestation of the much longer will-to-truth evident in the majority of post-Platonic European thought. Indeed, Nietzsche insisted, "[u]nconditional honest atheism ... is therefore *not* the antithesis of that ideal [the will to truth], as it appears to be; it is rather only one of the latest phases of its evolution, one of its terminal forms and inner consequences – it is the awe-inspiring *catastrophe* of two thousand years of training in truthfulness that finally forbids itself the *lie involved in belief in God.*"[65]

If Nietzsche is correct in asserting that the value of truth which scientists pursue still ultimately derives from Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage, then the crucial question that arises is how modern science actually justifies its activities, indeed its underlying worldview, without recourse to the prior Christian framework which it has itself contributed towards displacing? How, in other words, does modern science propose to prioritise and ground the belief in the overriding value of truth following the 'death of God'? For, while the pursuit of truth is certainly intelligible within a Christian framework that posits a supreme God which guarantees the existence of truth, this pursuit of truth becomes much more difficult to sustain once this metaphysical system collapses. This question is, in fact, not easy to answer. Indeed, Nietzsche himself was actually quite sceptical as to whether, in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' modern science could easily justify its elevation and prioritising of the *value* of truth over any other possible value. As the Nietzsche scholar David Owen explains, modern science cannot actually accomplish this task: "science as the will to truth cannot itself articulate a ground on which to assert the value of truth;"[66] indeed, "[s]cience can neither create values nor ground the presuppositions of its own value...."[67] The justification of modern science's emphasis on the value of truth is, then, in Nietzsche's view not easily sustained following the 'death of God' and the demise of Christianity.

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[64] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 344, pp. 282-283.
[65] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 27, p. 160.
[66] David Owen. *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault, and the Ambivalence of Reason.* London: Routledge, 1994, p. 59.
[67] Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, p. 90.

In Nietzsche's account, therefore, the 'death of God' also marks a critical and decisive juncture for modern scientists. Either scientists can refuse to problematise the 'will-to-truth' and continue with the scientific enterprise as they have done in the past. The problem with this response, however, is that it is not very scientific, if by 'scientific' one understands the open and critical evaluation and examination of all of one's assumptions. Max Weber would later draw attention to this very problem in his famous lecture entitled "Science as a Vocation" when he observed that "[s]cience ... presupposes that what is yielded by scientific work is important in the sense that it is 'worth being known.' In this obviously are contained all our problems. For this presupposition cannot be proved by scientific means."[68] In a sense, the unwillingness to scrutinise the prioritising of the value of truth over all other values can, strictly speaking, even be said to constitute a breach of the scientific intellectual conscience. Nevertheless, Nietzsche anticipated that many scientist would simply opt, either consciously or unconsciously, for this strategy. In this case, however, science's inability to ground the values to which it subscribes leads to the paradoxical situation whereby the scientists having "got rid of the Christian God, ... now feel obliged to cling all the more firmly to Christian morality," i.e. to the notion of truth.[69] Importantly, however, this was not the only option left to the modern scientist.

An alternative path for the modern scientist, one which would remain true to, and consistent with, the principles of the scientific spirit, would be to problematise the will-to-truth itself, and to subject it to critical scrutiny. It is in this vein that Nietzsche asserted that "the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*."[70] It is a move which he further corroborated in the *Genealogy of Morals*, where he noted that:

> [a]t this point it is necessary to pause and take careful stock. Science itself
> henceforth *requires* justification (which is not to say that there is any such
> justification). Consider on this question both the earliest and most recent

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[68] Cited in Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, p. 89.

[69] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Expeditions of an Untimely Man," 5, p. 80. This reference is made by Nietzsche in relation to George Eliot and the English, but it can also be seen as applying to modern scientists more generally.

[70] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, p. 153. In an unpublished note written after Nietzsche had completed Part 3 of *Zarathustra*, he had the latter claim that "We are conducting an experience with

> philosophers: they are all oblivious of how much the will to truth itself first requires justification; here the ascetic ideal has hitherto *dominated* all philosophy, because truth was posited as being, as God, as the highest court of appeal – because truth was not *permitted* to be a problem at all. Is this 'permitted' understood? – From the moment faith in the God of the ascetic ideal is denied a *new problem arises:* that of the *value* of truth.[71]

The problem, however, with following this strategy, in turn, is that while it arguably does remain true to the scientific spirit, it also, paradoxically, potentially opens the floodgates to the undermining of the basis of the scientific endeavour itself, at least in its modern rendition. For, now the 'will-to-truth' begins to put itself into question and even begins to prey on itself. As Nietzsche noted:

> Christianity *as a dogma* was destroyed by its own morality ... [a]fter Christian truthfulness has drawn one inference after another, it must end by drawing its *most striking inference*, its inference *against* itself; this will happen, however, when it poses the question *'what is the meaning of all will to truth?'* And here I again touch on my problem, on our problem, my *unknown* friends (for as yet I *know* of no friend): what meaning would *our* whole being possess if it were not this, that in us the will to truth becomes conscious of itself as a *problem*.[72]

It is at this very point, where the will to truth begins to question itself, that the experience of modern nihilism also reaches its highest stage. As David Owen rightly points out, "[n]ihilism emerges in that moment in which the will to truth abolishes the ground of its own value and becomes conscious of itself as a problem."[73] For, now it is not only Christianity which becomes problematic, but the entire Christian-Platonic legacy of the will-to-truth, including those 'secular' practices which ultimately still derive from its moral hierarchy, such as modern science.

This deeper realisation, then, also helps to explain why Nietzsche understood himself to be standing at such a crucial turning point in the entire history of the West.

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the truth!" Cited in Laurence Lampert. *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 23.

[71] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, pp. 152-53.

[72] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 27, p. 161.

[73] Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, p. 59.

In modern Europe, Nietzsche argued, and after nearly two millennia, the pursuit of truth had finally begun to turn against the very metaphysical framework that made it intelligible in the first place and subsequently showed this framework to be both false and untenable. As Nietzsche summarised:

> among the forces cultivated by [Christian] morality was *truthfulness*: this eventually turned against morality, discovered its teleology, its partial perspective – and now the recognition of this inveterate mendaciousness that one despairs of shedding becomes a stimulant. Now we discover in ourselves needs implanted by centuries of moral interpretation – needs that now appear to us as needs for untruth; on the other hand, the value for which we endure life seems to hinge upon these needs.[74]

To Nietzsche, in other words, the history of Western thought is characterised by the development of the will-to-truth culminating in the will-to-truth's "putting itself in question." The result of this development is not only that modern science cannot easily fill the spiritual vacuum left behind by the 'death of God,' but that modern science itself loses its grounding following this event. Importantly, however, it is also with this recognition that, as the next section illustrates, the deeper implications of the 'death of God' and the advent of European nihilism finally begin to emerge.

5. European Nihilism and Europe's 'Christian-Platonic' Heritage

Indeed, with the preceding discussion in mind, it is now possible to arrive at a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of what Nietzsche was referring to when he took, as was noted at the outset this chapter, the advent of European nihilism to mean "[*t*]*hat the highest values devaluate themselves*," and that, moreover, in Europe the overall "aim is lacking" and the question 'Why?' no longer finds an answer."[75] The deeper and more sophisticated meaning of the advent of European nihilism entails not only the disenchantment of European culture at the hands of modern science, but it also means that even modern science itself faces immense difficulties in legitimising its own ground following the 'death of God.' For, with the

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[74] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, I, 5, p. 10.

advent of European nihilism, it is not only of the foundations of Christianity and modern science which collapse, but the fundamental way of thinking that underlies them both, namely that of the will-to-truth. What, for Nietzsche, has become contested in modern times, in effect, is the credibility of an entire pattern of thinking that has predominated in Europe for over two millennia. In this sense, the advent of European nihilism implies not only that 'God is dead,' but, more importantly, also that "*[a]ll gods are dead*" as Nietzsche had Zarathustra observe.[76] Put differently, with the advent of European nihilism and the self-questioning of the will-to-truth, any attempt to posit a deeper or 'true' meaning underlying European existence, i.e. any attempt to reactivate the will-to-truth and to posit a 'true' world, is no longer credible. As Martin Heidegger noted in his study of Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism, the 'death of God' means that the "suprasensory world is [now] without effective power. It bestows no life. Metaphysics, i.e., for Nietzsche Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end."[77] This, then, is the much deeper implication of the advent of European nihilism.

In a section from *The Twilight of the Idols* entitled "How the 'True World' at last Became a Myth" Nietzsche himself summarised this process genealogically in six brief steps, noting how, after more than two thousand years, the will-to-truth had finally begun to prey on itself in modern Europe, thereby giving rise to the experience of meaninglessness. Nietzsche commences his brief history of the 'will-to-truth' with Plato. In Nietzsche's view, Plato was amongst the first to posit the "true world, attainable to the wise, the pious, [and] the virtuous man.' The 'true' world, for Plato, consisted of the non-empirical and eternal Forms.[78] Plato, in Nietzsche's account, thus stands at the beginning of a Western tradition which tended to denigrate the sensuous world for some higher and more true world. Indeed, according to Nietzsche, Plato's is the "[o]ldest form of the idea, relatively sensible, simple, convincing" and in Nietzsche's view, Plato himself thought that he was truth. What Nietzsche is essentially drawing attention to here, as David Toole explains, is that "[s]ince Plato there has been a tendency in the West to give meaning to this world – the world of our

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[75] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, I.2., p. 9.
[76] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, Part I, "Of the Bestowing Virtue," 3, p. 104.
[77] Martin Heidegger. "Nietzsche's Word God is dead" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York: Harper and Row, 1977, p. 61.

daily lives, filled as they are with violence, suffering, injustice, deception, and so on –
by invoking *another world*, a true world, on the basis of which was can determine the
aim, unity, and truth of *this* world."[79] The 'true' world, in this sense in which
Nietzsche uses it here, stands for any attempt to abstract from the diversity and
ambiguity of existence a fixed or 'true' meaning of existence.

This, moreover, is an insight of considerable importance for understanding the
quest to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era. For, in
contrast to those thinkers who do not engage directly with the question of what the
meaning of 'meaningful' is, Nietzsche can be seen as offering a genealogical account
of what the meaning of the term 'meaningful' was implicitly taken to be in Europe in
the past. Indeed, what Nietzsche is illustrating in this passage on Plato, is the
beginning of the process by which European existence had traditionally been
endowed with a greater sense of meaning. In Nietzsche's account, this process
entailed invoking a metaphysical distinction between a merely apparent and
meaningless realm of existence characterised by flux and uncertainty, and the
postulation of a 'true' world, where the more eternal and 'true' meaning of existence
was located. It is this distinction which traditionally ensured the possibility of
obtaining a more meaningful idea of European existence.

Nietzsche continues his account of how the 'true' world gradually became a
myth by noting that during the second stage of its history, the 'true' world became
"unattainable for the moment, but [was nevertheless] promised to the wise, the pious,
the virtuous man (to the sinner who repents)." The idea of the 'true' world becomes
"more refined, more enticing, more incomprehensible, – it becomes *female,* it
becomes Christian." Within the Christian faith, Nietzsche argued, the 'true' world was
no longer as easily accessible as Plato had postulated; rather, it began to reside as a
promise of an afterlife. Nevertheless, and as Bruce Detwiler notes in relation to this
history, like Platonism "Christianity asserts that there is a universal and timeless 'true
world,' independent of the apparent world, that is synonymous with the 'good as
such' and also that there is such a thing as an omniscient 'pure spirit' that is

[78] Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo*, p. 32.
[79] Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo*, p. 32.

independent of and superior to corporeal existence."[80] It is this similarity which led Nietzsche to claim, as was already noted, that Christianity is a form of Platonism 'for the people' and which allowed him to speak of Europe's 'Christian-Platonic' heritage centred around the will-to-truth.

During the third stage of Nietzsche's account of the development of the Western 'will-to-truth,' in turn, the 'true' world ultimately became "unattainable, undemonstrable, cannot be promised," but it was still thought of as "a consolation, a duty, an imperative." What is more, Nietzsche argued, "the idea has become elusive, pale, nordic, Königsbergian." The later is a reference to Kant's philosophy which, in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* demonstrated the limits of reason, and the impossibility of knowing the 'true' world in itself. In this way, the status of reason is limited to the apparent world, thereby saving the place of faith, the sphere of which cannot be penetrated by reason.

The last three stages of Nietzsche's account, in turn, pertain to stages in Nietzsche's own thought.[81] Thus, by the fourth stage in the history of the will-to-truth it was finally recognised, Nietzsche argued, that irrespective of its hypothetical attainability, the 'true' world remained unattained to earthly inhabitants, "[a]nd if unattained also *unknown.* Consequently, also no consolation, no redemption, no duty: how could we have a duty to something unknown?" This stage is marked, Nietzsche argued, by the "first yawns of reason and the cockcrow of positivism." If one cannot know the 'true' world, one can at least resolve to know the sensuous world, and ignore the 'true' world. Overtly metaphysical explanations, at this stage, are slowly replaced in Europe by more empirical and scientific ways of understanding existence. Yet, by the fifth and penultimate stage in the history of the idea of a 'true' world, even "[t]he 'true' world – [is] an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer ... an idea grown useless, superfluous, *consequently* a refuted idea: let us abolish it" – Plato blushes for shame, Nietzsche notes metaphorically, and the 'free spirits' (as well as the 'good Europeans' as will subsequently become clear) begin to emerge. Here, in other words, the will-to-truth begins, as we have seen, to put itself into question itself

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[80] Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism,* p. 74.
[81] Maudemarie Clark. *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 112.

and to realise that even modern science still retains the metaphysical belief in a 'true' world. This insight, in turn, finally gives rise to the sixth and last stage in the history of the will-to-truth in which, Nietzsche argued, "[w]e have abolished the true world: what world is left? The apparent world perhaps? ... But no! *with the true world we have also abolished the apparent world!* (Mid-day; moment of shortest shadow; end of the longest error; zenith of mankind, *incipit Zarathustra.* " The implications of this final realisation are, as Connolly explains, certainly profound, for, "the world of appearances has always been defined through contrast to the true world, to the world as it is knowable in itself. If the later disappears, the world defined by its contrast to it must too. They come and go together."[82] After more than two thousand years of seeking to invoke a 'true' world in order to give European existence a deeper sense of meaning, it is precisely this mechanism which has, in modern times, collapsed and thus also given rise to the experience of meaninglessness in Europe.

What emerges from Nietzsche's discussion, then, is that with the advent of modern European nihilism it is no longer intellectually persuasive to endow European existence with a greater sense of meaning by invoking a metaphysical or 'true' world that would mark the 'true' or 'deeper' meaning of European existence. This in, turn, signals a profound rupture for European culture, for it entails not only the collapse of one ideal or another, but of a fundamental way of thinking that has predominated in Europe for over two thousand years. Indeed, as Bruce Detwiler has noted more recently, the 'death of God' ultimately refers to the collapse of "not only all theological faiths but also the various metaphysical faiths that have served as God surrogates since antiquity, and it would appear that this includes faith in science as a source of ultimate answers."[83] The contemporary philosopher Simon Critchley provides a similar assessment of the advent of European nihilism, pointing out that the 'death of God' "does not only entail the death of God of the Judeo-Christian tradition, but also the death of all those ideals, norms, principles, rules, ends and values that are set above humanity in order to provide human beings with a meaning to life. Such is the twilight of the idols."[84] Indeed, Critchley adds, the advent of European nihilism

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[82] Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, pp. 143-144.
[83] Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*, p. 69.
[84] Simon Critchley. *Very Little ... Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature.* London: Routledge, 1997, p. 2.

refs to the complete "breakdown of the order of meaning, where all that was posited as a transcendent source of value becomes null and void, where there are no skyhooks upon which to hang a meaning for life."[85] What began, therefore, as an observation about the increasing untenability of the Christian faith ends up revealing a much profounder and more pervasive problem, namely the putting into question not only of Christianity itself, but also of the very structures of European thinking as well as the mechanisms for rendering European existence meaningful which have prevailed throughout the majority of Europe's entire Christian-Platonic heritage.[86]

Indeed, if the advent of European nihilism entails that the question of meaning remains unanswered in modern times, then, metaphorically speaking, Europe would truly become unchained from its sun. "What has happened at bottom?" Nietzsche asked, and replied that:

> [t]he feeling of valuelessness was reached with the realisation that the overall character of existence may not be interpreted by means of the concept of 'aim,' the concept of 'unity,' or the concept of 'truth.' Existence has no goal or end; any comprehensive unity in the plurality of events is lacking: the character of existence is not 'true,' is *false*. One simply lacks any reason for convincing oneself that there is a *true* world.[87]

With the advent of European nihilism, the will-to-truth can no longer serve as a guide for rendering existence more meaningful; it has become intellectually incredible and these, in turn, are the full and deeper implications of the advent of European nihilism in Nietzsche's account. It is here, moreover, that the second, and more profound, phase of Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism completes itself. This second and deeper phase of Nietzsche's genealogy of European nihilism, entails the first phase, i.e. the challenge of Christianity through modern science, but it also extends further in the sense that it also recognises the problematic nature of modern science itself following the 'death of God.' Modern science, in Nietzsche's account, is still continuous with the 'will-to-truth' around which Europe's two-thousand year Christian-Platonic heritage is centred, and it is precisely this will-to-truth which has,

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[85] Critchley, *Very Little ... Almost Nothing*, p. 7.
[86] See also Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 132.
[87] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 12 A, p 13.

in modern times, begun to put itself into question. In this sense, then, the 'crisis' of European nihilism runs very deep indeed, for it means that the fundamental mechanism with which Europeans have endowed their existence with a greater sense of meaning for over two thousand years has become untenable, with the result that *all* ideals now seem incommensurate.

6. European Nihilism and the European Debate

This discussion of European nihilism, moreover, bears directly on the question raised in the introduction of this thesis, namely why it is proving so difficult to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era. For, Nietzsche can, in this account, be seen as illuminating to the contemporary scholar of European affairs the true depth and magnitude of the crisis which still afflicts contemporary Europeans. This crisis consists of the process by which 'Europe,' understood historically by Nietzsche as the 'will-to-truth,' has begun to put itself into question. In this sense, Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism can be seen as providing its contemporary readers with an understanding of what Europe was in the past, how Europe traditionally rendered its existence meaningful, namely by means of the will-to-truth, and why, in turn, this avenue can no longer be persuasively pursued within the cultural configuration of European modernity, thereby giving rise to the European experience of meaninglessness. In the first instance, therefore, Nietzsche's account serves to demonstrate that the current problem is actually part of a much longer and deeper problem that emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, if not earlier.

What is more, however, Nietzsche's account can also assist contemporary scholars in understanding why Europeans would actually continue to desire the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' and why they would find the absence of such an idea both disconcerting and indicative of a lacking 'spiritual vitality.' In Nietzsche's view, it was precisely because of the formative impact of Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage that it would require some time before Europeans would be able to renounce the necessity for positing a deeper or 'true' meaning underlying European existence. As Nietzsche

insisted, "it is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted."[88] Much in this vein, Nietzsche himself had anticipated how the impact of the advent of European nihilism would frequently be uncomfortable and disorienting. In one passage, for example, Nietzsche hypothesised that Europeans might even 'bleed to death' from this realisation. "The tragic thing," he noted in this regard:

> is that we can longer *believe* those dogmas of religion and metaphysics, once we have the rigorous method of truth in our hearts and heads, and yet on the other hand, the development of mankind has made us so delicate, sensitive and ailing that we need the most potent kinds of cures and comforts – hence arises the need that man might bleed to death from the truth he has recognised.[89]

It is also for this reason that Nietzsche defined a nihilist as "a man who judges, of the world as it is, that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be, that it does not exist." On the one hand, modern Europeans would feel uncomfortable with a world that appeared to be meaningless. "[T]he pathos of the 'in vain,'" Nietzsche noted, "is the nihilist's pathos."[90] At the same time, however, Europeans could no longer easily convince themselves of any greater meaning to existence once the will-to-truth began to put itself into question. It is precisely this "antagonism – *not* to esteem what we know, not to be *allowed* any longer to esteem the lies we should like to tell ourselves – [that] results in a process of dissolution."[91] In this regard, moreover, Nietzsche's analysis can also help, in the second instance, to illuminate why many Europeans would, on the one hand, still desire a more meaningful representation of their future, and why the absence of such a representation, in turn, would frequently lead to pessimistic accounts of European culture.

Finally, by exposing the true depth and magnitude of the 'crisis of meaning,' Nietzsche's account can also help the contemporary scholar understand why it continues to prove so difficult to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe. After having sought a 'meaning' in all events, and after having come to believe that some

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[88] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, I, 1, p. 7.
[89] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Human, All Too Human*. Trans. Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. London: Penguin, 1984, III, 109, p. 78.
[90] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 585 A, p. 318.

goal is to be achieved through the process, modern Europeans are likely, in Nietzsche's view, to lose faith in the existence of such meaning and to suspect that becoming "aims at *nothing* and achieves *nothing*."[92] Indeed, this, for Nietzsche, is precisely the 'question mark' of modern European nihilism:

> Have we not exposed ourselves to the suspicion of an opposition – an opposition between the world in which we are at home up to now with our reverences that perhaps made it possible for us to *endure* life, and another world *that consists of us* – an inexorable, fundamental, and deepest suspicion about ourselves that is more and more gaining worse and worse control of us Europeans and that could easily confront coming generations with a terrifying Either/Or; 'Either abolish your reverences or – *yourselves!*" The latter would be nihilism; but would not the former also be – nihilism? - This is *our* question mark.[93]

The deeper implication of the advent of European nihilism is that now any attempt to posit a 'true' meaning underlying European existence becomes intellectually unconvincing. Once the will-to-truth begins to put itself into question, Europeans can simply no longer convince themselves that there is a greater or 'true' meaning underlying human existence. Indeed, Nietzsche concluded, in modern Europe one "forbids oneself every kind of clandestine access to afterworlds and false divinities – but *cannot endure this world though one does not want to deny it.*"[94] This condition of not being able to experience a meaningful existence, Nietzsche referred to as European nihilism and understood it as "the really tragic problem of our modern world...."[95] As Nietzsche concluded, in the aftermath of the 'death of God' modern European existence appears to be "a hiatus between two nothingnesses,"[96] i.e. an existence caught between myths that now seemed unacceptable on the one hand, and a pervasive feeling of meaninglessness on the other. By illustrating the true depth and magnitude of this experience, moreover, Nietzsche's account also helps to explain, in the third instance, why it remains so difficult, even in the contemporary context, to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe.

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[91] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, I, 5, p. 10.
[92] Nietzsche, *Will to Power,* 12 A, p. 12.
[93] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* 346, p. 287.
[94] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 12 A, p. 13.
[95] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887,* 7[8], p. 291.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, then, it might be said that Nietzsche is to modernity much as the madman is to the marketplace.[97] Indeed, it is now clear that Nietzsche's reference to the 'death of God' and the advent of European nihilism constitutes more than just an observation about the collapse of Christianity. Rather, it provides a complex account of a much deeper and more profound problem which arose in modern Europe and with which scholars are still engaging today. In this sense, Nietzsche's genealogy of the modern European experience of meaninglessness can also be conceptualised as proceeding in two important phases. In the first instance, the European experience of meaninglessness derives from the disenchantment of European existence at the hands of modern science. In this phase, however, the will-to-truth still remains operational within the context of modern science. In the second, and more profound, phase, the will-to-truth begins to put itself into question. With this second realisation, moreover, it becomes clear that although European existence had traditionally been endowed with a greater sense of meaning by invoking a metaphysical distinction between a merely 'apparent' world on the one hand, and a 'true' world which lurked behind or above earthly existence on the other, it is precisely this mechanism which, with the advent of European nihilism, has become incredible and lost its ability to endow European existence with a greater sense of meaning. By virtue of illuminating this process, moreover, Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism can be seen as marking the formative genealogical milestone in comprehending the contemporary European inability to find a more meaningful representation of its future.

In fact, Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism has helped to illuminate several features of the contemporary impasse in the debate on the idea of Europe. In the first instance, Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism illustrates how Europeans had traditionally endowed existence with a greater sense of meaning and how, in turn, this mechanism became increasingly untenable with the context of

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[96] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, 10[34], p. 473.
[97] Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, p. 12.

European modernity. Europe, understood by Nietzsche as the will-to-truth, began, with the advent of European nihilism, to put itself into question. Nietzsche thus not only provides his readers with an understanding of what 'Europe' is, but also how it has traditionally rendered its existence meaningful. In this sense, the contemporary problem is also part of a much longer problem that can be traced back at least to the end of the nineteenth century, if not earlier. Secondly, Nietzsche's analysis of the advent of European nihilism assists in understanding why Europeans, even after the advent of European nihilism, would, in light of Europe's formative Christian-Platonic heritage, continue to habitually desire the balm of a more meaningful idea of Europe even after the 'death of God,' and why the inability to articulate such an idea often leads to pessimism. Finally, by exposing the actual depth and magnitude of the European experience of meaninglessness, i.e. the self-questioning of the will-to-truth,' Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism also illuminates the profound difficulties which still afflict any contemporary attempt to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe. Indeed, with the advent of European nihilism it became increasingly impossible for Europeans to convince themselves intellectually of the existence of a 'true' world. Nietzsche's account of European nihilism can, therefore, still be seen to be profoundly relevant to the question of why it is proving so difficult to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era. What is more, it was also precisely in response to this very predicament that Nietzsche advanced his idea of the 'good Europeans.'

Before returning, however, to the contemporary debate on the idea of Europe and Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans,' it is necessary to further corroborate this close relationship between Nietzsche's analysis of European nihilism and the contemporary discussion of the European idea by tracing the persistence of European nihilism throughout the course of the twentieth century. Already as early as 1799, the German philosopher Friedrich Jacobi had employed the term 'nihilism' in his "Letter to Fichte,"[98] insisting that human beings have only a single choice alluded to in the title of this chapter: "Nothingness or a God. ... There is no third."[99] In Nietzsche's

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[98] See Critchley, *Very Little ... Almost Nothing*, p. 3.
[99] Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. "Brief an Fichte." *Appelation an das Publikum. Dokumente zum Atheismusstreit Jena 1798/99*. Leipzig: Reclam, 1987, p. 168. Quoted in Critchley, *Very Little ... Almost Nothing*, p. 4.

view, however, the challenge confronting Europeans in the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries would be to investigate whether Jacobi would, in this sense, not only have the *first* word on nihilism, but also the *last*, or, whether, alternatively, it would be possible to articulate a meaningful idea of Europe without recourse to the traditional metaphysical hypotheses. To Nietzsche, in other words, the question of how to live with the 'death of God' would constitute one of the greatest challenges for Europeans in the course of the twentieth century. Indeed, he had asked both ominously and metaphorically, "[h]ow shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood of us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us?"[100] It is in this vein, then, that the next chapter turns towards a consideration of the legacy of the problem of European nihilism in the twentieth century, focusing, in particular, on its relationship to the European crisis which initially prompted the emergence of the institutional project of Europe.

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[100] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 125, p. 181.

CHAPTER 3

EUROPEAN NIHILISM AND ANNIHILATION IN
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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In order to further corroborate the argument that the contemporary debate on how to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe is still, at bottom, Nietzsche's question of how to confront the advent of European nihilism, this chapter illustrates how the problem delineated by Nietzsche persisted in Europe throughout the course of the twentieth century. In particular, this chapter considers some prominent, twentieth-century examples which testify to the actual advent of the first phase of European nihilism as anticipated by Nietzsche, namely the increasing disenchantment of European existence which resulted from the 'death of God' and the ascendancy of modern science.[1] What emerges from such an analysis, however, is not only that the experience of meaninglessness did indeed persist throughout the course of the twentieth century, but also that this experience actually manifested itself most explicitly within the context of the violent conflicts that divided Europe during the twentieth century and against the background of which the institutional project of Europe was initiated. Often it was precisely the urge to transcend and escape the disorienting experience of nihilism and to reconstitute some greater form of meaning which served to fuel the two world wars and the Cold War that followed. These violent conflicts are thus also very real examples of the violent potential inherent in strategies which seek to reactivate the will-to-truth under modern conditions by trying to create a 'true' world based on more earthly notions such as nation, class or race. Tracing the persistence of the experience of European nihilism through the course of the twentieth century thus not only serves to corroborate the argument that the contemporary impasse in the European debate is still, at bottom, Nietzsche's question of how to confront the advent of European nihilism, but it also shows that his analysis still bears decisively on the question of how to delineate, as Europeanists wish to do, a viable response the divisive and violent nature of European history in the twentieth century.

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[1] For a review of the most prominent literature see Charles Irving Glicksberg. *The Literature of Nihilism*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975.

1. Nietzsche, Nihilism and Annihilation

Nietzsche himself thought that the advent of European nihilism might lead to catastrophe in the course of the twentieth century. It will be recalled from the previous chapter that, in his account, the advent of European nihilism referred to a profound cultural crisis, the magnitude of which could hardly be overestimated. Indeed, Nietzsche argued, the advent of European nihilism was likely to result in the experience of an uncomfortable tension between Europe's cultural heritage which had emphasised the existence of a greater meaning and purpose underlying European existence, on the one hand, and the inability, following the 'death of God,' to articulate a compelling substitute, on the other. Thus, in Nietzsche's view, the crucial question confronting Europeans in the twentieth century (as well as the twenty-first) was how they would respond to this rupture. In theory, one option for Europeans would be to simply side-step the crisis by relinquishing the desire to have their existence endowed with a greater sense of meaning or purpose. In light of Europe's lengthy and formative Christian-Platonic heritage, however, Nietzsche thought that it was very unlikely that the majority of Europeans would, in fact, pursue this course in the short term. If anything, he argued, the absence of meaning in their lives would produce only the opposite; it would lead Europeans to demand such meaning with even greater intensity than before.[2] Europeans would thus be left, Nietzsche thought, in the peculiar circumstance where the 'religious' instinct for meaning was growing powerfully at exactly the same time that theistic satisfaction was being increasingly refused with deep suspicion.[3]

How, though, might Europeans seek to comfort themselves, how might they determine a new 'Why?', i.e. a non-Christian method of rendering existence meaningful in the twentieth century? In Nietzsche's account, a likely outcome was that many Europeans would resort, either intentionally or unconsciously, to a form of what he metaphorically called 'intoxication' or 'narcotization.' As Nietzsche formulated it in a posthumously published fragment:

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[2] See, for example, his comment on Thomas Carlyle. Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of the Idols.* Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1990, 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man,' 12, p. 85.
[3] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil.* Trans. by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1989, 53, p. 66.

> *The ways of self-narcotization.* – Deep down: not knowing whither.
> *Emptiness.* Attempt to get over it only by intoxication: intoxication as
> music; intoxication as cruelty in the tragic enjoyment of the destruction of
> the noblest; intoxication as blind enthusiasm for single human beings or
> ages (as hatred, etc.) – Attempt to work blindly as an instrument of
> science: ....[4]

Nietzsche, in other words, posited that in the attempt to fend off and overcome the disorienting experience of meaninglessness in the twentieth century, Europeans might turn to questionable, and perhaps even violent, ways of overcoming this experience. Indeed, he noted, in the aftermath of the 'death of God' Europeans would be seeking a "temporary *redemption* from pessimism," and in this quest would, in his view, turn, amongst other things, to 'great wars,' 'strong military organisations,' and 'nationalism.'[5] The first way, then, in which Nietzsche hypothesised that the advent of European nihilism would become significant for Europeans in the course of the twentieth century, is that this disorienting experience of meaninglessness would spawn great and potentially violent attempts aimed at overcoming it.

There was, however, also a second and closely related way in which Nietzsche thought the advent of European nihilism would affect Europeans in the course of the twentieth century. This second relationship derives from the scope that any such attempts to reconstitute European existence with meaning were likely to take. Despite his own intellectual efforts to the contrary, Nietzsche thought that it would be very unlikely that the ideas advanced in order to fill the spiritual vacuum left behind by the 'death of God' would be European in scope. Rather, the collapse of the Christian idea of Europe would herald, he thought, a violent period of European history in which statesmen would seek to forfeit a European solution in favour of narrower ambitions.[6] In Nietzsche's metaphorical language, the Christian 'ice' was beginning to thaw, leaving behind only large icebergs, i.e. modern European states, destructively colliding into one another other. "[W]e are still caught," he maintained, "in the ice-

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[4] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1968, 29, p. 20.
[5] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, KSA 12, 9 [126], p. 410.

filled river of the Middle Ages." Yet, "it has thawed and begun to rush relentlessly and destructively. The great sheets of ice collide and all shores are flooded and endangered."[7] If, as Keith Ansell-Pearson suggests, it was the Christian framework which had traditionally provided not only European existence with meaning, but, through cultivating popular sentiment and a common identity, had also served as a mechanism towards internal peace,[8] then the 'death of God' might pose a formidable obstacle to the preservation of both a meaningful and peaceful European existence in the twentieth century. In the absence of an overarching idea of Europe "almost everything on earth," Nietzsche thought, would be "determined by the most common and evil forces, by the egoism of acquisitors and military despots." What is more, "[i]n the hands of the latter, the state attempts, as does the egoism of the acquisitors, to organise everything anew from out of itself and to be the bond and the pressure for all those hostile forces; that is to say, the state wants human beings to idolise it in the same way that they previously idolised the Church. With what success? We will have to witness this."[9] Following the death of God, in other words, attempts to reendow European existence with meaning would, Nietzsche anticipated, no longer be constituted along European lines. Rather, Europeans would choose instead to devote themselves to "narrower values (like the 'nation')."[10] Indeed, in his view one of the greatest dangers confronting Europeans in the course of the twentieth century was the loss of a *European* voice.[11] The two principal ways, then, in which Nietzsche thought the European experience of meaninglessness would effect Europe in the twentieth century, is that, firstly, this experience would spawn attempts to reendow existence with a sense of purpose of meaning and, secondly, that the purposes likely to be advocated in this quest would be national, rather than European, in scope.

With this analysis in mind, it comes as less of a surprise that Nietzsche also referred to the advent of European nihilism as "a pathological, transitional stage in the

[6] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 7[8], p. 292.

[7] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 'Schopenhauer as Educator,' 4, p. 148.

[8] Keith Ansell-Pearson. *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 86.

[9] Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 'Schopenhauer as Educator,' 4, p. 150.

[10] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, 7[8], p. 292.

[11] "Nietzsche sagt sehr deutlich, die grösste Gefahr für Europa sei, 'die Stimme für die Seele Europas zu verlieren....'" Josef Nolte. *Wir guten Europäer: Historisch-politische Versuche über uns selbst*. Tübingen: Narr, 1991, p. 207.

history of Europe" and as the "danger of all dangers."[12] Indeed, it helps to explain why Nietzsche's predictions for Europe in the twentieth century were often apocalyptic and catastrophic in nature, anticipating great upheavals. There are several passages of his which posit this relationship between the advent of European nihilism and the violent dissolution of Europe in the twentieth century quite clearly. In the first passage, Nietzsche wrote that:

> What I relate [in 1888] is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: *the advent of nihilism*. This history can be related even now; for necessity itself is here at work. This future speaks even now in a hundred signs, this destiny announces itself everywhere.... For some time, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect.[13]

In a second passage Nietzsche also referred to the impending dissolution of Europe by insisting that "[d]isintegration characterises this time, and thus uncertainty: nothing stands firmly on its feet or on hard faith in itself; one lives for tomorrow, as the day after tomorrow is dubious." Furthermore, "[e]verything on our way is slippery and dangerous, and the ice that still supports us has become thin: all of us feel the warm, uncanny breath of the thawing wind, where we still walk, soon no one will be able to walk."[14] In yet a third passage, Nietzsche even alludes to the possibility of unprecedented wars in the course of the twentieth century:

> When truth enters into a fight with the lies of millennia, we shall have upheavals, a convulsion of earthquakes, a moving of valleys and mountains, the like of which has never been dreamed of. The concept of politics will have entirely been merged with war of and for minds; all power structures of the old society will have been exploded – all of them are based on lies: there will be wars, the like of which have never been yet on earth.[15]

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[12] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 45. See also Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 2[100], p. 109.

[13] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Preface, 2, p. 3.

[14] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 57, p. 40.

[15] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo* Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, "Why I am a destiny," 1, p. 327.

Indeed, Nietzsche added, "[a]s the will to truth thus gains self-consciousness – there can be no doubt of that – morality will gradually *perish* now: this is the great spectacle in a hundred acts reserved for the next two centuries in Europe...."[16] Finally, Nietzsche even referred explicitly to the coming of "a few warlike centuries that have no parallel in history; in short, we have entered *the classical age of war*, of scientific and at the same time popular war on the largest scale (in weapons, talents, and discipline)."[17] These passages, moreover, also demonstrate that it is not fortuitous that Nietzsche should have reflected on the possible future implications entailed by the advent of European nihilism for Europeans in the twentieth century. Rather, interrogating modern times from the perspective of imaginary points in the future formed an integral part of Nietzsche's intellectual strategy.[18] Indeed, Nietzsche himself had Zarathustra proclaim that "I walk among men as fragments of the future"[19] and had him warn his readers that "I flew too far into the future: a horror assailed me."[20] In this sense, then, relating Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism to the catastrophic course of European history in the twentieth century is not so much to apply his work out of context as it is achieving the opposite.[21] The remainder of this chapter, therefore, turns towards surveying some of the references, both scholarly and those based on lived experience, which testify to the respective role played by the experience of meaninglessness in the two world wars, as well as the Cold War.

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[16] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Genealogy of Morals.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, III, 27, p. 161.

[17] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974, 362, p. 318.

[18] William E. Connolly. *Political Theory and Modernity.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, p. 6.

[19] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1961, Part Two, 'Of Redemption,' p. 161.

[20] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, ' Of the Land of Culture', p. 142. See also Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1887*-1889, KSA 13, p. 18, where he asks 'where are the barbarians of the twentieth century?'

[21] Indeed, Elisabeth Kuhn points out that Nietzsche's analysis of European nihilism does not at all restrict itself to the past, nor even the present, but also to seeks to anticipate the future, because Nietzsche wanted to describe what for future generations will already have been the past. *Friedrich Nietzsches Philosophie des europäischen Nihilismus.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992, p. 200.

2. European Nihilism and the First World War

Beginning with World War I, it was the German philosopher Karl Löwith who was amongst the first to explicitly consider the relationship between the advent of European nihilism and the occurrence of the First World War. The thesis he advanced was that "[n]ihilism as the disavowal of existing civilisation was the only real belief of all truly educated people at the beginning of the twentieth century" and, consequently, that "[n]ihilism is not a result of the Great War but, on the contrary, its cause."[22] It was, moreover, a thesis which he would later explore further in his essay "European Nihilism: Reflections on the Spiritual and Historical Background of the European War."[23] To what extent philosophical concepts and categories can be legitimately applied to the analysis of complex social phenomena like war is, of course, one of the enduring academic debates of the twentieth century.[24] Moreover, the causes of the outbreak of World War I, both immediate and long-term, are undoubtedly multiple and complex. Nevertheless, Löwith has gathered considerable historical evidence to suggest that the widespread experience of meaninglessness evident *prior* to the outbreak of war played an important role that, at least initially, served to fuel the strong emotions which informed the outbreak of the First World War. What is more, historians of the First World War have themselves repeatedly argued that the general mood in Europe prior to the outbreak of war is of historical significance in accounting for the outbreak of the war. Thus, Marc Ferro, for example, reminds his readers that the "elation is a factor in the origins of the war and of its after-taste, and deserves as much stress as the more strictly economic or political causes."[25] Another historian, James Joll, similarly points out in his study of the origins of the First World War that "[i]t is these attitudes which made the war

[22] Karl Löwith "The Historical Background of European Nihilism" in *Nature, History, and Existentialism: an Other Critical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Edited by Arnold Levison. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966, p. 10. His view has been supported more recently by Roland Stromberg's study *Redemption by War: The Intellectuals and 1914*. Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1982.

[23] Karl Löwith. *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, pp. 173-234.

[24] Theodor Adorno, for example, was very critical of writers such as Spengler, Jünger and Heidegger for what he saw as their anti-Marxist approach of applying metaphysical concepts directly to social analysis. This is not to say that Adorno refused to acknowledge the problem of nihilism, but rather that he sought to distil its origins not so much in philosophy as by means of a Weberian social analysis. See Simon Critchley. *Very Little ... Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 20.

[25] Marc Ferro. *The Great War: 1914-1918*. Trans. Nicole Stone. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, p. xi. Moreover, for Friedrich Meinecke this very elation constituted his most cherished memory

of the First World War that "[i]t is these attitudes which made the war possible; and it is still in an investigation of the mentalities of the rulers of Europe and their subjects that the explanation of the causes of the war will ultimately lie."[26] When accounting for the outbreak of war, then, it is necessary not only to consider the immediate political and economic causes, but also to take into account the predominant mood of Europeans at the time.

Importantly, however, and as Joll further points out, the task of establishing the overall mood in Europe at the time of the First World War is confounded by methodological difficulties, especially in light of the subtle variations between countries, classes, social groups, etc.[27] In this sense, the 'mood of 1914' can only be approached impressionistically at best. Nevertheless, there is agreement that this is an important task, and it is, moreover, also a task which Karl Löwith was engaged in. What Löwith wished to draw particular attention to, was the fact that the mood evident amongst many Europeans prior to 1914 was precisely one characterised by the experience of meaninglessness, by an inability to identify meaningfully with the modes of existence that prevailed in Europe at the time. In this vein, Löwith cited, for example, from the preface of the third annual *Yearbook for the Spiritual Movement* (1912) which was influential amongst the literary circle around Stefan George. In the preface, written two years before the outbreak of war, one could read that "[e]ven the dim eye does not fail to observe the general cheerlessness spreading despite all improvements, alleviations and amusements, provoking the comparison with the late Roman Empire. From the Emperor to the humblest worker everyone feels that it cannot go on in this way." What is more, "[n]obody believes any longer in the foundations of the present state of the world. These pessimistic presentiments and divinations represent the truest feelings of the time and all hopes to build something on nothing have, therefore, the look of despair."[28] In this sense, both the war itself, as

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of the war: "The exaltation of spirit experienced during the August days of 1914, in spite of its ephemeral character, is one of the most precious, unforgettable memories of the highest sort.... One perceived in all camps that it was not a matter merely of the unity of a gain-seeking partnership – but that an inner renovation of our whole state and culture was needed. We generally believed, indeed, that this had already commenced and that it would progress further in the common experience of war." Cited in Eric J Leed. *No Man's Land: Combat & Identity in World War I.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 48-49.

[26] James Joll. *The Origins of the First World War.* 2ⁿᵈ ed. London: Longman, 1992, p. 229.

[27] See Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, p. 199.

[28] Löwith, "The Historical Background of European Nihilism," p. 10.

well as the nationalist sentiments which propelled it, might be seen, at least in part, as attempts to escape or overcome the experience of meaninglessness prevalent towards the beginning of the twentieth century, as 'intoxicating' ways of reinstating a sense of meaning or purpose to European existence.[29]

Over the course of the past decades, this important aspect of the First World War has also gained increasing attention and endorsement by historians studying the origins of the war. Indeed, the important role that organised violence can have in rendering existence meaningful has recently been re-emphasised by Anne Norton, who reminds her readers that "[t]he common characterisation of violence as 'meaningless' is ... foolish and misleading. Violence is seen not only as invested with meaning but also as a means – perhaps the most important means – of inscribing that meaning upon the world."[30] Similarly, the Czech philosopher Jan Patocka pertinently noted in relation to traditional attempts aimed at understanding the First World War, that "the idea that war ... has itself the power of bestowing meaning, is an idea foreign to all philosophies of history and so also to all the explanations of the world war we know."[31] In 1914, in particular, there were many young men in Germany, France and England who, despite often having enjoyed a materially saturated existence, understood themselves to be living in a decadent world without a greater or underlying sense of meaning or purpose. There were a significant number of young men who, as one historian points out, had been "[r]eared in safe, cosy and comfortable surroundings" and "trained by their families to aim for ever-increasing material achievements." Nevertheless, they "greeted the war with an intensity that transcended national traditions."[32] "Everywhere," the historian Gordon Martel adds, "they spoke in idealistic terms of the great unifying spiritual crusade that they were undertaking – a crusade that was the more estimable because it so clearly eschewed petty considerations of material self-interest."[33] Moreover, when war came, many of them longed of "merging into the whole" and of bringing about a new unity in

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[29] The relationship between the advent of European nihilism and the rise of modern nationalism is considered in greater detail in Chapter 5.

[30] Anne Norton. *Reflections on Political Identity*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, p. 6.

[31] Jan Patocka. "Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War" in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Trans. Erazim Kohak. Chicago: Open Court, 1996, p. 120.

[32] Gordon Martel. "Generals Die in Bed: Modern Warfare and the Origins of Modernist Culture." *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 and 4, Autumn-Winter 1981, pp. 2-3.

fighting for a common purpose.[34] "There comes again and again," Nietzsche himself had once noted, "the hour when the masses are *ready* to stake their life, their goods, their conscience, their virtue so as to acquire that higher enjoyment, and as a victorious, capriciously tyrannical nation to rule over other nations...."[35]

Often, then, the First World War was seen as presenting the opportunity to leave behind them what was perceived as a largely meaningless existence and to search for meaning in the experience of war itself. In this sense, the initial experience of war was clearly not H. G. Well's unequivocal "war to end all wars."[36] Rather, as the historian Eric J. Leed reminds his readers, "[t]he war experience [was] an ultimate confirmation of the power of men to ascribe meaning and pattern to a world, even when that world seems to resist all patterning." What is more, Leed notes, "[t]he war mobilised all the cultural resources of meaning available to Europeans in the first decades of the twentieth century. It allows us to see what those resources were, not as an abstract system of thought, but as something which rendered experience coherent and meaningful."[37] Indeed, Patocka further argued with specific reference to the experience of the front warfare during the First World War that, "[i]t is not the fascination of the abyss and the romance of adventure; it is no perversion of natural sentiments. The person on the front line is gradually overcome by an overwhelming sense of meaningfulness which would be hard to put into words. It is a feeling capable of persisting for many years."[38] Not everyone, of course, experienced the front this way. Mostly, there was an initial and persisting revulsion at the experience of war. In this case, as Patocka notes further, the experience is one of utter meaninglessness, one of despair at the horror and the world that produced it. It is the kind of experience immortalised by Babusse.[39] Yet, even this experience of utter despair and meaninglessness would often quickly turn into something 'eschatological,' i.e. an overriding quest to end war, the war against and war and the fight for peace. In this sense, the experience of war often brought about the struggle to secure the conditions

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[33] Martel, "Generals Die in Bed," pp. 2-3.

[34] Martel, "Generals Die in Bed," p. 3.

[35] Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 189, p. 110.

[36] Martel, "Generals Die in Bed," p. 9.

[37] Leed, *No Man's Land*, p. x.

[38] Patocka, "Wars of the Twentieth Century," p. 126.

[39] Henri Barbusse. *Light*. Trans. Fitzwater Wray. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1919.

that will make such an event impossible in future.[40] These aspects of the First World War documented by historians, moreover, not only serve to support Löwith's initial claim that the inability to experience a meaningful, European existence prior to 1914 formed an important historical context of the First World War, but also serve to corroborate Nietzsche's initial suspicion that the attempts to circumvent this disorienting experience of meaninglessness might only serve to usher in catastrophe for Europe in the course of the twentieth century.[41]

Nor, moreover, were these attempts to reconstitute a sense of meaning and purpose European in scope. The second way, it will be recalled, in which Nietzsche had thought that the advent of European nihilism would affect Europe in the twentieth century, was that new forms of meaning that would be advocated would be unlikely to be European in scope. Nietzsche, in other words, anticipated that the advent of European nihilism would lead to a situation where:

> [t]he waters of religion recede and leave behind swamps and ponds; the nations again draw apart in the most hostile manner. ... The sciences disintegrate and dissolve all that was firmly believed. ... Everything serves to promote the coming barbarism.... Surely forces are present, immense forces, but they are wild, primitive and wholly merciless.... Now everything on earth is determined only by the coarsest and most evil

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[40] Patocka, "Wars of the Twentieth Century," p. 127.

[41] This is, of course, not to deny that there were also other, more tangible, material and equally important reasons for the outbreak of war in 1914. Importantly, however, it is very difficult to reduce the experience of meaninglessness to material factors alone. Theodor Barth illuminates this point very well when he argues in relation to the work of Pierre Bourdieu that there is no *a priori* reason 'why the moral "obligation to be happy" or the "duty of happiness" ... in the "affluent society" – e.g. the prevalence of therapeutic ethics – should not result in the same syndrome of laborious indifference and consumerist idiosyncrasy as economic deprivation. ... Consequently, not even economics may provide the standard factor by which all human orders may be appraised and given a critical and realistic perspective – be it in the last instance – since we may argue that both affluence and deprivation similarly result in symbolic collapse, disintegration or accelerated erosion.' Theodor Barth, 'Memories of the Gaon: Ethnographic Documents, Social Organisation and Regions of Humanity' in J. Peter Burgess (ed.), *Cultural Politics and Political Culture in Postmodern Europe.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997, p. 69. Indeed, it was also for this reason that Werner Sombart abandoned his formerly Marxist analysis of the First World War, arguing instead that, in the final analysis, the First World War could only be made intelligible by seeing it as a *Glaubenskrieg,* i.e. as an ideological or religious war. The material gains in the name of which the war was waged, he argued, had to be seen as mere epiphenomena of deeper forces emerging from the 'soul.' See Roland Stromberg, *Redemption by War: The Intellectuals and 1914.* Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1982, p. 137.

> forces, by the egoism of those engaged in acquisitive pursuits and by the military despots.[42]

The advent of nihilism, in this account, would lead to the loss of a European voice; nations would 'draw apart' under the leadership of politicians and 'military despots' seeking to exploit the spiritual vacuum left behind by the 'death of God' in pursuit of their own, narrower ambitions, even at the expense of pitting Europeans against one another.

As early as 1915, the German phenomenologist Max Scheler argued that the First World War was itself testament to, and indeed a reflection of, the immense impact the experience of European nihilism had had on the international relations of Europe. The war, he argued, had demonstrated that in Europe there was no longer a shared meaning to bind the various nations of Europe together. According to Scheler, at no time in the history of Western Europe subsequent to the decline of the medieval papacy, had it become so clear as during the Great War what it meant for Europe no longer to possess any commonly recognised authority.[43] What is more, the war made apparent that "science's claim to take the place of the kind of spiritual European authority which contributes moral weight and its sanctified tradition, has become so ephemeral, so unreliable and empty" with the result that at the time of the war there was "no man, no place, and no authority which possessed the inner worth and moral weight to place it above the danger of partisanship...."[44] Thus, Scheler concluded, "[t]his is the outlook of our time: every aspect has become dubious, in connection with each there prevails an unlimited number of conflicting opinions – and it is only the masses and power that confer some meaning."[45] In doing so, moreover, Scheler demonstrated very eloquently the continuities between the implications of the experience of European nihilism as Nietzsche understood them towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the dissolution of a common European ground evident in the First World War. When viewed in historical perspective, the First World War can thus be partially seen as a reflection of the immense impact that the advent of European

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[42] Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations,* 'Schopenhauer as Educator,' 4, p. 150.
[43] See Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, p. 176.
[44] Max Scheler. *Der Genius des Krieges und der deutsche Krieg.* Leipzig: Verlag der weissen Bücher, 1915, pp. 322-323. Quoted in Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, p. 176-7.

nihilism had had on the international relations of Europe and that a commonly shared idea of Europe had succumbed to attempts to reconstitute meaning along more national parameters.

Indeed, contemporary historians of the First World War, too, still take the war to be testament to the prevalence, amongst Europeans, of attachments to national sentiments and purposes, rather than European ones. The purposes, in other words, for which the war was waged and which propelled men to fight were not European in scope and outlook, but much rather national and particular. For Nietzsche, the spread of modern nationalism which he already detected amongst his contemporaries was, as will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 5, nothing but "the metamorphosis of the cross,"[46] i.e. a modern attempt to re-endow European existence with a greater sense of meaning following the 'death of God.' At the outbreak of war, in turn, strong nationalist sentiments were evident in Germany, Austria, Russia, France and England and, indeed, most studies of the origins of the First World War emphasise the "militant nationalism which without exception inflamed all European states" in August of 1914.[47] Indeed, according to Norman Angell, on the eve of the First World War, nationalism seemed "the most important thing in the world" to Europeans.[48] Most specialists on the origins of the First World War thus accord nationalist sentiments a major status. Indeed, the First world War is generally seen to have been a "supremely nationalistic war"[49] and as part of an era in which "mass armies [were] supported by the fanatical nationalism of the civil population."[50] This identification with the nation, and an overarching national purpose is seen, at a minimum, to constitute a pre-eminent cause of World War I, and at a maximum, as perhaps the "key factor."[51]

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[45] Scheler, *Der Genius des Krieges*, pp. 322-323. Cited in Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, pp. 176-7.

[46] See Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 7[26], p. 305.

[47] For a detailed list of historians advocating this view, see. see L. L. Farrar, jr. "Villain of the Peace: Nationalism and the Causes of World War I." *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, XXII, 1-2 (1995), p. 55, fn. 102.

[48] Cited in Louis L. Snyder. *The Roots of German Nationalism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978, p. vii.

[49] C. J. Hayes. *Nationalism: A Religion*. New York: Macmillan, 1960, p. 122.

[50] Michael Howard. *War in European History*. London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 134.

[51] See Farrar, jr. "Villain of the Peace," p. 56, fns. 137, 138.

In the end, however, the First World War was not able to overcome the European experience of nihilism. It is in this crucial recognition that Georg Simmel can be said to have been more prescient than Scheler. Simmel, too, had seen in the War an attempt at a temporary reconstitution of meaning, but was much more sceptical as to whether the war experience itself could actually produce a new certainty. It was, in his view, much more likely to produce only catastrophe, and with it, an ever more acute sense of meaninglessness.[52] Far from solving the problem of European nihilism, the First World War actually intensified its experience through the vast amount of human carnage and suffering it provoked, giving Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism a real sense of urgency and meaning.[53] Indeed, Michael Gillespie points out, the effect of World War I was that it "dispirited the liberalism that understood history as a process of rational technical and political development and turned man's aspirations toward ideologies that offered radical solutions through revolutionary action."[54] The Great War, in this sense, can be seen both as a testament to, and an exacerbation of, the European experience of nihilism delineated by Nietzsche towards the end of the nineteenth century. It is precisely this realisation, moreover, which led Karl Löwith to conclude that what the First World War finally unveiled for the world to see, had been anticipated by "those *knowledgeable* among the Europeans" for some time.[55] In Löwith's view, Nietzsche constituted precisely such a figure and, in this regard moreover, it is also possible to see some of the key aspects of the First World War as being compatible with the consequences of the advent of European nihilism that Nietzsche anticipated for Europeans in the course of the twentieth century.

3. European Nihilism and the Second World War

The desire to endow existence with a greater sense of meaning and purpose also played an important role in the Second World War, especially through facilitating

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[52] Christopher Coker. "Post-modernity and the end of the Cold War: has war been disinvented?" *Review of International Studies*. Vol. 18, 1992, pp. 189-198, p. 194.

[53] Michael Allen Gillespie. *Hegel, Heidegger, and the Ground of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, 122.

[54] Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger, and the Ground of History*, p. 19.

[55] Löwith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, p. 192.

the rise of the National Socialist party in Germany during the inter-war years. The association between Nietzsche's writings and the Nazi movement is, of course, not novel. "In spite of all that has been written about Nietzsche since the Second World War," one prominent Nietzsche scholar has recently observed, "it remains the case that anyone who approaches [Nietzsche's] work for the first time ... does so with these Nazi connotations."[56] This also means, however, that there exists a significant discrepancy between the popular perception of Nietzsche, on the one hand, and the reception of his corpus by Nietzsche scholars themselves, on the other. Amongst the latter, there is widespread agreement that it would be erroneous to see Nietzsche's corpus as being compatible with the ideology of National Socialism. As Tracy Strong has recently noted in this regard, "perhaps no opinion in Nietzsche scholarship is now more widely accepted than that the Nazis were wrong and/or ignorant in their appropriation of Nietzsche."[57] Yet, despite the fact that many Nietzsche scholars have, following Walter Kaufmann's initial lead, sought to dispel the myth that Nietzsche was a proto-fascist, Nietzsche's corpus is still frequently assumed to have underpinned the ideology of National Socialism. Importantly, however, the attempt to see Nietzsche's philosophical corpus as being complicit in the Nazi project not only fails to recognise the overwhelming incompatibilities between the two, but also ignores the extent to which Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism might actually serve to illuminate some of the important dynamics which underpinned the initial success of the Nazi movement.[58] Rather, in other words, than seeking to implicate Nietzsche in the ideology of National Socialism, it might be more useful to employ his analysis of the advent of European nihilism and its likely consequences in the attempt to better understand the initial success of this movement.[59]

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[56] Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, p. 28.

[57] Tracy B. Strong. "Nietzsche's Political Misappropriation" in Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 131.

[58] Indeed, these consistencies were even evident to some of the Nazi ideologues themselves. Consider, for example, Ernst Krieck, Professor of Pedagogy at the University of Heidelberg, who caustically remarked that apart from the fact that Nietzsche was not a socialist, not a nationalist and opposed to racial thinking, he could have been a leading National Socialist thinker. See Steven E. Aschheim. *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, p. 253.

[59] See, for example, Stefan Elbe. "Of Seismographs and Earthquakes: Nietzsche, Nihilism and Genocide" in James Kaye and Bo Strath (eds.) *Enlightenment and Genocide, Contradictions of Modernity*. Oxford: P.I.E. - Peter Lang, 2000.

Amongst the first to investigate the relationship between the advent of European nihilism and such totalitarian movements as the National Socialist one was the French scholar Aron Gurwitsch. Writing in April of 1945, Gurwitsch insisted that there was an intricate relationship between the European experience of nihilism and the emergence of these totalitarian movements, arguing that the totalitarian movement is "the culmination of nihilism: all its elements and all the tendencies originating therein may be found again in the totalitarian ideology."[60] In Gurwitsch's view, therefore, "totalitarianism must be seen as the most representative phenomenon of nihilism which has found here its full expansion and the realisation of all its potentialities."[61] Nowhere, perhaps, was this tendency more evident than in inter-war Germany. "There can be no doubt," Eric Voegelin observed in this regard, "that the Western crisis [of nihilism] has reached particularly grave forms in Germany...."[62] Indeed, it would fall upon the German philosopher Martin Heidegger to clearly identify the direct relationship between the onset of European nihilism and the rise of the Nazi party by urging his readers and listeners to see in Hitler and the Nazi party a laudable counter-movement to the disconcerting experience of European nihilism.[63] While no longer seen as so laudable, this relationship between the two is nevertheless still seen to exist.[64]

The importance of the relationship between the popular desire for a greater sense of meaning and purpose and the popularity of the Nazi movement has been emphasised by several historians as well. Thus, Fritz Stern, for example, argues that Hitler was the cataclysmic event of our time and that "we need seismographers of the spirit to understand the faults that made possible the earthquake in comparison to preceding, lesser ones." On more than one occasion, Stern himself turned to Nietzsche

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[60] Aaron Gurwitsch. "On Contemporary Nihilism." *The Review of Politics*. Vol. 7, No. 2. April 1945, p. 187.

[61] Gurwitsch, "On Contemporary Nihilism," p. 187.

[62] Eric Voegelin. "Nietzsche, the Crisis and the War." *The Journal of Politics*. Vol. 6, No. 2 May, 1944, p. 183.

[63] Steven E. Aschheim. "Nietzsche, Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust" in Jacob Golomb (ed.) *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 16-17, fn. 3. "These two men," Heidegger argued in his lectures on Schelling from the year 1936, "who each in their own way, have introduced a counter-movement to nihilism – Mussolini and Hitler – have learned from Nietzsche, each in an essentially different way. But even with that, Nietzsche's authentic metaphysical domain has not yet come into its own."

[64] Simon Critchley, for example, sees both the Marxist and Fascist revolutions as responses to the underlying experience of nihilism. *Very Little ... Almost Nothing*, p. 11.

as precisely such a seismographer. Writing about the phenomenon of National Socialism, he remarks that "the zeal of the millions who joined the [Nazi] movement even before 1933 calls to mind Nietzsche's dictum: 'Weariness that wants to reach the ultimate with *one* leap, with one fatal leap, a poor, ignorant weariness that does not want to want anymore: This created all gods and other worlds.'"[65] Nietzsche himself, moreover, had already observed about his own times that, "[w]hoever has preserved, and bred in himself, a strong will, together with an ample spirit, has more favourable opportunities than ever. ... Whoever can command finds those who *must* obey: I am thinking, e.g., of Napoleon and Bismarck."[66] From today's perspective, however, it is not difficult to see that Napoleon and Bismarck were not the last to find those who 'must' obey. In this vein, Stern goes on to note how Hitler was able to offer Germans a secular promise of salvation, i.e. a non-Christian yet quasi-religious ideology.[67] In particular, Stern points out:

> Hitler's rhetoric was religious; he dissolved politics in a religious aura, and all the theological terms which had been previously secularised were now the great standard themes of his appeals. He promised deliverance and redemption, rebirth and salvation, even as he reviled the Reich's enemies as godless and satanic; he did all this in the name of Providence, for he believed that Providence had selected him to deliver the German people.[68]

Hitler, in other words, was able to cast a spell over large sections of the German population with the promise of endowing their lives with a greater sense of meaning and purpose in a world otherwise characterised by hardship and meaninglessness, in a world where, in Nietzsche's words, the "*redeeming* class and human being" were otherwise lacking.[69] It will be recalled, moreover, that one of the ways in which Nietzsche had hypothesised that Europeans might seek to circumvent the experience of nihilism, was precisely through the "blind enthusiasm for single human beings."[70] In the twentieth century, and after the 'death of God' many Europeans would,

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[65] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 'Of the Afterworldsmen,' p. 59. Cited in Fritz Stern. *Dreams and Delusions: National Socialism in the Drama of the German Past.* New York: Vintage Books, 1987, p. 149.
[66] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 128, p. 79.
[67] See also John E. Smith. *Quasi-Religions: Humanism, Marxism and Nationalism.* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994.
[68] Stern, *Dreams and Delusions*, pp. 144-145.
[69] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Book I, 1, p. 8. "Es fehlt der *erlösende* Stand und Mensch...." KSA 12, 2[127], p. 127.

Nietzsche thought, choose to worship human gods, even "the very serpents that dwell amongst His [God's] ruins."[71]

What is true for the worship of 'great' personalities, was similarly true for the success of their movements at large. In this vein, Stern also cites Theodor Heuss (later to become the first president of West Germany) who, as early as 1931, had already been aware of the relationship between the spiritual disappointment entailed in the advent of European nihilism and the Nazis' ability to draw on this reservoir of meaninglessness in order to legitimate their bellicose political project. Lecturing in Tübingen, Heuss inquired "Is National Socialism Germany's Salvation?" thereby drawing attention to the fact that salvation was precisely the promise that Hitler and the Nazi movement held out for Germany; the Nazis would deliver salvation and the 'Führer' was to be their saviour.[72] Heuss concluded, of course, that National Socialism was not Germany's salvation and his books would subsequently be burned by the Nazis for their 'un-Germanness.' Heuss, however, was not alone in drawing this connection. Two years after Heuss' lecture, in April of 1933, Thomas Mann would similarly draw the connection between the 'death of God' and the advent of Hitler, concluding that Hitler "this ludicrous tin god ... has become a religion for millions."[73] Indeed, the attractive power that Hitler's vision held out is exemplified very well by Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker's admission in 1982 that he, too, had considered joining the Nazi movement irrespective of its ideational content. As he explains:

> It is true that I could not develop any interest in the Nazis' ideology either
> before or after their assumption of power. Nonetheless, I was very much
> tempted after 1933 to join the movement in some way or another. But that
> had nothing to do with the ideas these people had but solely with an
> elemental reaction to what Wilhelm Kuetemeyer has called a pseudo-
> outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 1933.[74]

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[70] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 29, p. 20.

[71] Coker, *War and the Twentieth Century*, p. 41.

[72] Quoted in Stern, *Dreams and Delusions*, p. 147.

[73] Quoted in Stern, *Dreams and Delusions*, p. 174. See also Gary Lease "The Origins of National Socialism: Some Fruits on Religion and Nationalism" in Peter Merkl and Ninian Smart (eds.) *Religion and Politics in the Modern World*. New York: New York University Press, 1983.

In the end, of course, National Socialism was not Germany's salvation, but its destruction. Nevertheless, Stern rightly insists that there was a strong religious-mythical element in Nazism which many found appealing. In this sense, moreover, there is considerable historical evidence that the spiritual disappointment entailed in the experience of nihilism, alongside the many traditional factors (political, economic and historical) already documented by historians, can illuminate our understanding of the origins of this appeal. The point, however, is not to insist that the advent of European nihilism was the only, or even the primary, source of suffering for Germans at the time. Rather, it is to insist that what is equally important in understanding the rise of this movement, is the way in which this suffering is addressed and responded to. To the extent that the advent of European nihilism entails the demise of Christianity, it can assist in explaining why people might turn to secular leaders for redemption from their suffering rather than mediating their hardship within the traditional Christian framework. The quest for meaning in their lives, one scholar observes in this vein, "led them to submit to politicians who gave them a sheet anchor on which to hold at the cost later of acquiescence in their own destruction."[75]

More recently, in turn, Henry Staten has made the explicit case in favour of drawing on Nietzsche's corpus in order to better understand the historical background to the rise of the Nazi movement. In his critical engagement with recent theorists advocating the 'radical evil' thesis, Staten argues quite unequivocally in relation to Nazi Germany that "Nietzsche's analysis of the advent of nihilism is still the best account we have of this situation, and in my view gives us a more accurate sense of the state of European society at the birth of Nazism than does the account of the radical evil theorists."[76] Moreover, Staten argues, according to Nietzsche's analysis, "European civilisation by the nineteenth century had put all its eggs in the basket of transcendence, but the same instinct for truth that had created the system of transcendence had now called into question, and with the collapse of this system the spectre of meaninglessness loomed."[77] Thus, Staten concludes, "[i]f Nazism is indeed to be understood as a subreption of the transcendent, which is plausible, the

[74] Quoted in Stern, *Dreams and Delusions*, p. 174.
[75] Coker, "Post-modernity and the end of the Cold War," p. 194.
[76] Henry Staten. "Radical Evil' Revived: Hitler, Kant, Luther, neo-Lacanianism." *Radical Philosophy*. No. 98. 1999, p. 13.

historicizing Nietzschean would see this as one case more of the old habit of mendacity – a problem not of too little transcendence but of still not enough immanence. Germany in the first part of the twentieth century was still under the influence of a Christian or Christian-derived ideology of transcendence."[78] In doing so, Staten serves to further corroborate Nietzsche's hypothesis that the collapse of any way of endowing European existence with meaning following the death of God, would spurn quasi-transcendent movements who would promise to overcome this experience. In this account, the National Socialist movement can be seen, at least in part, as an example of precisely such a violent attempt to endow existence, including its suffering and disappointments, with a greater sense of meaning or purpose following the 'death of God.'

Importantly, however, the fascist challenge to the European order is also an example of the second way in which Nietzsche thought that advent of European nihilism would affect Europe in the course of the twentieth century; it is an example of how such quasi-transcendent movements did not advocate destinies that were European in scope, but rather emphasised particular and national ideas.[79] Thus, the Second World War, too, was itself testament to the absence of a common European voice. Writing in 1944 against the background of the ongoing war, the German philosopher in exile Eric Voegelin urged his readers to interpret Nietzsche's predictions of the coming barbarism and unprecedented wars on the level of empirical description. According to Voegelin, the wars predicted by Nietzsche were immense because the framework of political ordinates which determine the purpose, and with the purpose the limits of war, was breaking down. In Voegelin's interpretation, therefore, the "impending wars," including the Second World War, were "much more the expression of a pneumatic-pathological situation marked by the struggle of instincts between the extirpation of an old and the birth of a new spiritual order."[80]

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[77] Staten, "'Radical Evil' Revived," p. 13.
[78] Staten, "'Radical Evil' Revived," p. 14.
[79] The National Socialists did, of course, refer to a 'new order in Europe,' albeit one that ultimately rested upon imposing the German model on the rest of Europe.
[80] Eric Voegelin. "Nietzsche, the Crisis and the War." *The Journal of Politics*. Vol. 6, No. 2 May, 1944, pp. 180-1.

What is more, much like Max Scheler had observed in relation to the First World War, World War II similarly demonstrated the inability of science to serve as the basis for a peaceful and meaningful European identity. Even worse, science could now be used as a divisive force. What was already dangerously foreshadowed by the gas warfare of the First World War, rose to novel heights during the Second World War. Thus, accusations against the European Jews, for example, were no longer articulated primarily along the lines of religious differences but much more on the basis of 'scientific' or 'medico-biological' differences.[81] In Hannah Arendt's memorable phrase, Judaism was replaced with Jewishness: "Jews had been able to escape from Judaism into conversion; from Jewishness there was no escape."[82] Yet, science was not only invoked to discriminate against the Jews, but was also instrumentalised in order to divide Europe itself – a fact which was quite evident to the Polish jurist, Raphael Lemkin, who first coined the term 'genocide' in 1944. As Lemkin pointed out:

> Hitler's conception of genocide is based not upon cultural but only biological patterns.... Some groups – such as the Jews – are to be destroyed completely. A distinction is made between peoples considered to be related by blood to the German people (such as Dutchmen, Norwegians, Flemings, Luxembourgers), and peoples not thus related by blood (such as the Poles, Slovenes, Serbs.) The populations of the first groups are deemed worthy of being Germanized. With respect to the Poles particularly, Hitler expressed the view that it is their soil alone which *can and should be profitably Germanized.*[83]

In the hands of the Nazi ideologists, modern science could thus serve to divide Europe, rather than constituting the source for a broadly shared identity. Following the First World War, Albert Einstein had already recognised the ambiguous

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[81] That the Jews would be designated as the 'Other' might not even have come as such a surprise to Nietzsche. He himself had already remarked quite ominously that "[a]mong the spectacles to which the coming [twentieth] century invites us is the decision as to the destiny of the Jews of Europe. That their die is cast, that they have crossed their Rubicon, is now palpably obvious: all that is left for them is either to become the masters of Europe or to lose Europe." Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 205, pp. 124-25. Yet Nietzsche himself was opposed to anti-Semitism.

[82] Quoted in Zygmunt Bauman. *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989, p. 59.

[83] Raphael Lemkin. *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944, pp. 81-82. Quoted in Helen Fein. *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective*. London: Sage, 1993, p. 9.

achievement of science when he lamented the uses to which it was being put: "In the hands of our generation these hard-won instruments are like a razor wielded by a child of three. The possession of marvellous means of production has brought misery and hunger instead of freedom."[84] These words would ring even truer following the discovery of the extermination camps. Nietzsche himself, however, had already warned his readers how culture could become 'barbarised' by "the modern traffic with science."[85]

Central aspects, then, of the Second World War can similarly be seen to be compatible with the anticipated ramifications of the advent of European nihilism, exemplifying both the collapse of the traditional moral hierarchy of Europe as well as the attempts to reconstitute a greater sense of meaning which emphasised nationalist purposes rather than ones which are European in scope. Much in this vein, and in the aftermath of the Second World War, the German Professor Heinrich Fries argued that after the Great War it was already evident that Nietzsche's thoughts on nihilism were no longer the distant voice of a past pessimist, but, alas, bitter reality. The Second World War confirmed Nietzsche's vision yet again, and Fries, at the time of his writing, was unwilling to speculate as to whether it would be the last manifestation of European nihilism.[86] One cannot, in this view, easily divorce the two world wars which descended upon Europe in the course of the twentieth century from the problems which Nietzsche had already addressed towards the end of the nineteenth century in his discussion of European nihilism.

What is more, much like the First World War before it, the Second World War, too, was not capable of successfully overcoming the experience of meaninglessness. It, too, left Europe divided and without a strategy for rendering European existence more meaningful. As Gillespie concludes in this regard, "far from shaking the trust that these movements placed in history, the War only strengthened

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[84] Cited in Ronnie S. Landau. *Studying the Holocaust: Issues, Readings, and Documents*. London: Routledge, 1998, p. 7.

[85] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'The Untimely Ones,' 1, p. 276.

[86] Heinrich Fries. *Nihilismus. Die Gefahr unserer Zeit*. 1949, pp. 17, 19. Quoted in Albert Kopf. *Der Weg des Nihilismus von Friedrich Nietzsche bis zur Atombombe*. Munich: Minerva Publikation, 1988, p. 23.

their convictions and intensified their missionary zeal."[87] Moreover, for the next four and a half decades following World War II, Europeans would not have the chance to become the creators of their own meaning, as this task was no longer to be determined by Europeans themselves. Europe's opportunity to regain composure would effectively be postponed until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989. Yet, as will become clear in the next section, this does not mean that the quest to impose upon existence a greater sense of meaning or purpose actually disappeared following the Second World War.

4. European Nihilism and the Cold War

What Gillespie already alluded to in the previous quotation, is that even the ideological component of the Cold War rivalry which divided Europe in the second half of the twentieth century cannot be easily divorced from the underlying question of how existence would be endowed with a greater sense of meaning or purpose in the twentieth century.[88] Much like the Great War before it, the Second World War, with its recourse to concentration camps and nuclear weapons, had not resolved the experience of meaninglessness. If anything, for many it only seemed to make the experience more acute. Thus, as Gillespie further argues, rather than leading to a more reflective stance on the human condition in modern times, the even greater carnage and scope of World War II "evoked a tremendous anxiety that prevented man from coming to terms with the horror and drove him instead into the future as the secure harbour of his hopes and the bastion against his fears."[89] In this vein, the ideologies which gained in prominence in the aftermath of the Second World War might, at least in part, also be seen as attempts to reendow existence with a greater sense of meaning or purpose following the 'death of God.' Michael Novak for example, has observed that "[l]acking faith, our age did not want for warring ideologies."[90] Indeed, he suggests that modern ideologies should be seen as a secular substitute for faith, thereby implicitly drawing attention to the continuities between the 'death of God'

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[87] Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger and the Ground of History*, p. 22.
[88] For a recent treatment see Mark Kramer. "Ideology and the Cold War." *Review of International Studies*. Vol. 25. No. 4. October 1999, pp. 539-576.
[89] Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger, and the Ground of History*, p. 21.
[90] Michael Novak. *The Experience of Nothingness*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1998, p. 130.

and the ideological cleavage which divided Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. It was, moreover, a conclusion which had been reached earlier by the political philosopher Eric Voegelin. Following his extensive study of modern ideologies, Voegelin had concluded that modern political ideologies are essentially closed systems of human knowledge which, as Ted McAllister explains, serve as means for achieving human felicity on earth; they attempt to re-divinisize the world and seek to replace the uncertainty of faith with the certainty of ideology.[91] This ability to provide certainty and meaning constitutes an important factor in accounting for their success in an age which, at bottom, still had not confronted directly the problem of European nihilism.[92]

During his own times, Nietzsche had expressed reservations about the fact that, following the increasing incredulity of the Christian explanation of existence, too many would not embrace the unique opportunity that this presented, in his view, to revalue the traditional values, but would rather revert to this old Christian habit of trying to locate the meaning of the world in something external to mankind. In this vein, Nietzsche noted that:

> The nihilistic question '*for what?*' is rooted in the old habit of supposing that the goal must be put up, given, demanded *from outside* – by some *superhuman authority*. Having unlearned faith in that, one still follows the old habit and seeks *another* authority that can *speak unconditionally* and *command* goals and tasks. The authority of *conscience* now steps up front ... Or the authority of *reason*. Or the *social instinct* (the herd). Or *history* with an immanent spirit and a goal within, so one can entrust oneself to it.[93]

Of all the potential antidotes to meaninglessness that men might seek, Nietzsche was particularly critical of attempts to endow 'world history' with meaning. Indeed, it was a development that Nietzsche was amongst the first to criticise. Thus, already in the

[91] Ted V. McAllister. *Revolt against Modernity: Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin and the Search for a Postliberal Order.* Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1996, pp. 17, 22.

[92] Indeed, Hannah Arendt came very close to articulating this thesis when she concluded at the end of her study on Totalitarianism, that "[l]oneliness is the common ground for terror, the essence of totalitarian government, and for ideology ...." *The Origins of Totalitarianism.* London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1973, p. 476.

[93] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, I, 20, p. 17.

second of his *Untimely Meditations* on *The Use and Abuse of History for Life*, for example, Nietzsche had expressed his disapproval of the fact that amongst many of his contemporaries the belief in the meaning of History had almost attained the status previously accorded to Christianity. "What, there are no longer any living mythologies? What, the religions are dying out? Just behold the religion of the power of history, regard the priests of the mythology of the idea and their battered knees! Is it too much to say that all the virtues now attend on this new faith?"[94] In the course of the twentieth century modern men would indeed increasingly turn to a belief in the meaning of history.

In fact, the ideologies which gained in influence in the course of the twentieth century have been understood by scholars to be exactly such interpretations of History, as attempts to render existence meaningful in the face of modern science's inability to do so. In this vein, Gillespie has argued that:

> [t]here are two great intellectual forces in the modern world, science and history, and while they seem mutually antagonistic they are in fact fundamentally complementary. Modern science determines the causal laws that govern the motions of matter but, in contradistinction to ancient science, eschews teleology and thus any determination of human ends. While it may thus present humanity with supreme knowledge of the mechanisms of nature and open up the possibility for the technological conquest of the natural world and indeed of human nature itself, it does not and in principle cannot tell us what we ought to do or how we ought to live. It is this question that history answers.[95]

History, in other words, becomes the context in which modern men would increasingly look for a greater purpose to human existence and for moral guidance. "We shall conquer," Goebbels proclaimed "because it lies in the logic of history, because a higher destiny wills it, ... because without our victory history would have lost its meaning; and history is not meaningless."[96] In this sense, moreover, modern man's reaction to the alienation and uncertainty brought about by the onset of

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[94] Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History for Life*, VIII, p. 105.
[95] Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger and the Ground of History*, p. ix.
[96] Cited in Richard Ashley. "The geopolitics of geopolitical space: toward a critical social theory of international politics." *Alternatives*. Vol. 12. No. 4. 1987, p. 413.

European nihilism was to attempt to circumvent this predicament by means of a teleological interpretation of History. Leading up to the Second World War, but most importantly during the Cold War, this belief in the meaning of History, as ideology, held out, for modern man, the promise of a meaningful existence sometime in the *future.*

In retrospect, this belief in the meaning of history is, perhaps, understandable. After all, if meaning was no longer to be credibly located in an other-worldly religion, such meaning would have to derive from temporal, earthly existence. "What greater abdication of God than time?" Simone Weil once remarked. "We are," she noted in this vein, "abandoned in time, God is not in time."[97] In the quest to experience a meaningful existence, modern Europeans, following Hegel, sought to identify and decode the essential message and meaning of temporal, earthly existence, i.e. of History.[98] In this sense, the modern age also found it impossible, as the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg suggested "to decline to answer questions about the totality of history. To that extent the philosophy of history is an attempt to answer a medieval question with the means available to a post-medieval age."[99] In the twentieth century, it was often the belief in the deeper meaning of History which held out the possibility for modern Europeans of overcoming their experience of nihilism.[100]

This belief in History as a way of addressing the experience of nihilism is, moreover, of crucial importance in understanding the ideological component of the Cold War rivalry that divided Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. For, as Michael Allen Gillespie reminds his readers, nowhere:

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[97] Simone Weil. *La Connaissance surnaturelle.* Quoted in Anthony Kemp. *The Estrangement of the Past: A Study in the Origins of Modern Historical Consciousness.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 3.
[98] As Leszek Kolakowski notes, such a position might better be described as pseudo-Hegelian because Hegel's position was strictly retrospective and did not extend into the future, as it did with Marx and other young Hegelians. *Modernity on Endless Trial.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 47.
[99] Quoted in Robert B. Pippin. *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 271.
[100] Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger and the Ground of History,* p. 130.

is the importance and depth of the question about the nature and ground of history more evident than in the debate about its answer. Unfortunately, this debate is not merely the concern of learned men and societies, nor is it contested only with words: the debate about the nature and ground of history has become ideological and revolutionary; it has become bellicose and cataclysmic. The greatest event of our times, the Second World War, in whose unperceived shadow we stand, was in principle an internecine struggle about the nature of history. *The cold war is no less the result of the conviction and fervour of some and the perplexity and paralysis of others about the answer to this question.* [emphasis added][101]

This is particularly true for those versions of Marxism which posited the future redemption of humanity through the creation of classless society and the emergence of a new man. Often it was precisely the strength and certainty of the vision of the future posited by Marxism which exerted a strong appeal on many of its adherents. As John Smith has noted in his study of 'quasi-religions,' "[t]he hope engendered in the disinherited by this cosmic vision of redemption has proved to be one of the main motives behind the spread of Marxism throughout the world."[102]

Historical support corroborating Smith's assessment has been collected in the book *The God that Failed* which documented this relationship between some of the movement's most important participants and the cause towards which they laboured. Thus, Arthur Koestler, for example, argued that "the revolutionary's Utopia, which in appearance represents a complete break with the past, is always modelled on some image of the lost Paradise, of a legendary Golden Age."[103] Ignazio Silone would also recall, in relation to his conversion to Communism, that "[f]or me to join the Party of the Proletarian Revolution was not just a simple matters of signing up with a political organisation; it meant a conversion, a complete dedication."[104] André Gide, in turn, similarly noted in his *Journal*, that "[m]y conversion is like a faith. My whole being is bent towards one singe goal, all my thoughts – even involuntary – lead me back to it. In the deplorable state of distress of the modern world, the plan of the Soviet Union

[101] Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger and the Ground of History*, pp. x-xi.
[102] John E. Smith. *Quasi-Religions: Humanism, Marxism and Nationalism*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994, p. 62.
[103] Richard Crossman and Arthur Koestler (eds.) *The God that Failed*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1950, p. 25.
[104] Crossman, *The God that Failed*, p. 104.

seems to me to point to salvation."[105] There is, then, much to support Malraux's view that often Marxism is not so much a philosophy as it is a destiny.[106]

Importantly, however, it was not only the Soviet Union which saw itself as the decoder and agent of History. Rather, both the Soviet Union *and* the United States "saw themselves not as actors, but historical agents with the power as well as the will to give history a push."[107] Indeed, Hegel's historical thinking would later come to greatly influence not only the communist party in the Soviet Union, but, ironically, also the post-war American right.[108] In this vein, Eric Voegelin, for example, once noted that the self-understanding of constitutional democracies, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries, still rests on "the eschatological tension left over from the Puritan Revolution which endows the constitutional form with a character of 'finality' as the successful experiment in organising a society with a classical and Christian tradition."[109] One way, therefore, of understanding the second half of the twentieth century, is to see it as consisting of a violent and aggressive rivalry between competing interpretations of History against the background of an otherwise debilitating nihilism. What is more "these apparently liberatory and critical ideologies," Julia Kristeva argues, "become de facto religious ideologies, in the sense that they are based on the affective, not critical, adherence of the subjects who subscribe to them."[110]

All too often, however, modern ideologies did not content themselves with endowing History with meaning. For, in identifying the key agents of history, they similarly cultivated hatred of those who, in their interpretation of History, stood in

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[105] Crossman, *The God that Failed*, p. 176.

[106] *The Human Condition.* "What has twentieth-century culture opposed to, or how has twentieth-century culture answered, the advent of nihilism? At a philosophical level, some examples seem particularly emblematic: Marxism, in its various theoretical forms...." Gianni Vattimo. *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture.* Trans. Jon R. Snyder. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, p. 22.

[107] Coker, *War and the 20ᵗʰ Century*, p. 11.

[108] For a study on the impact of Hegelian historical thinking on the American Right in the twentieth century see Paul Edward Gottfried. *The Search for Historical Meaning: Hegel and the Postwar American Right.* Deklab, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986. See also Stefan Rossbach. *Gnostic Wars: The Cold War in the Context of a History of Western Spirituality.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

[109] Eric Voegelin, "On Hegel: A Study in Sorcery." Cited in Rossbach, *Gnostic Wars*, p. 224.

[110] Julia Kristeva. *The Crisis of the European Subject.* Trans. Susan Fairfield. New York: Other Press, 2000, p. 135.

way of the creation of this meaningful and redemptive future.[111] It was in this vein, moreover, that Paul Valéry was once moved to observe that:

> History is the most dangerous product that the chemistry of the intellect has invented. ... It engenders dreams, it intoxicates the people, ... leads them to delusions of grandeur or of persecution, and makes nations bitter, arrogant, insufferable and vain. History can justify anything. It can teach nothing with restraint, for it contains everything and gives examples of everything. ... In the present state of the world, the danger of allowing one self to be seduced by history is greater than ever it was.[112]

From the mid century onwards, then, modern man did not, by and large, engage with the problem of nihilism in the way Nietzsche had hoped. The advent of European meaninglessness had not prompted careful reflection on the "fundamental character and really tragic problem of the modern age." Rather, much as he feared, the experience of nihilism led to a growing attachment to ideological interpretations of the meaning of history.

As ideology, moreover, History also led to conflict. For, to quote Gillespie once more, "[t]he exclusive and ever more fanatical claim of every ideology necessary [brought] it into conflict with every other ideology." Consequently, the result of attempting to overcome the problem of European nihilism through a belief in History results, ultimately, in a "propaganda war" or a "struggle of world views" to determine in Nietzsche's words "who shall be master of the earth," i.e. which ideological interpretation will direct the conquest and exploitation of man and nature."[113] This struggle, moreover, unfolds itself in world war and intense ideological rivalry which barred the creation of a meaningful Europe from the late inter-war years up until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989. Throughout the twentieth century it was possible for those who had an interest in doing so, to portray themselves as missionaries of a more meaningful future, and to

[111] As the semiotician and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva explains, in the absence of traditional structures, men may engage in defensive reactions consisting of "community bonding whose only identity comes from efforts to sustain *hatred for the other.*" Julia Kristeva. "Comment on the Hutchison Paper: Which Individual for the Twenty-First Century?" In Kokusai Koryu Kikin and Nichi-Bei Senta (eds.) *The End of the Century: The Future in the Past.* Tokyo, New York and London: Kodansha International, 1995, p. 268.
[112] Paul Valéry. "Extraneous Remarks" (1927). *Paul Valéry: Selected Writings.* New Directions Publishing Corp, 1950, p. 136.
[113] Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger and the Ground of History,* p. 130.

themselves as missionaries of a more meaningful future, and to gain significant popular support in this quest. It is in this sense, moreover, that Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism can be seen to pertain not only to the two world wars which shattered Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, but also to an understanding of the ideological component of the Cold War which, until recently, ensured that Europe remained divided. It is this very nexus which allowed André Malraux to conclude that "Nietzsche understood far better than anyone else that the twentieth century would be the century of great ideological wars."[114]

Conclusion

What the plethora of writers cited in this chapter have sought to draw attention to, is the fact that many of the violent political events of the twentieth century which ensured Europe's division in the course of the twentieth century would not have been thinkable without the prior collapse of the spiritual and ethical ground of Europe.[115] What these writers testify to, moreover, is the fact that the experience of European nihilism never actually disappeared from European culture since the end of the nineteenth century. Rather, the problem of nihilism has accompanied European life through to the present day, manifesting itself most starkly in those violent conflicts throughout the course of the 20th century against the background of which the institutional project of Europe was initiated. The ability to actually trace the persistence of the experience of European nihilism throughout the course of the twentieth century, moreover, serves to further corroborate the assessment that the contemporary question of how to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era is still, at bottom, Nietzsche's question of how to confront the advent of European nihilism.

What is more, these conflicts also demonstrate how the attempt to simply transcend and escape the experience of nihilism without a deeper engagement with the advent of European nihilism can become dangerous and bellicose. Indeed, one

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[114] Tracy B. Strong. *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, p. 189.

important common feature of these three conflicts is that they each, in their own way, constitute an attempt to escape the experience of meaninglessness in the aftermath of the 'death of God' through a reactivation of the will-to-truth, i.e. by identifying a 'true' race, nation, class or agent of history as embodying the 'true' meaning of existence. Such a strategy is dangerous if only because in the absence of any external criteria, it is difficult to establish their 'truth' without recourse to the use of force and violence. It thus also seems difficult, in retrospect, to disagree with Nietzsche when he had Zarathustra proclaim that, "blood is the worst witness of truth."[116] Not only, however, is the reactivation of the will-to-truth in the aftermath of the 'death of God' dangerous, but, by virtue of the suffering that such an attempt usually brings about, it also runs the risk, in the end, of simply making the problem of nihilism more acute. Nietzsche himself, although he had not witnessed the violent course of European history in the twentieth century, had thought for his own reasons that "[a]ttempts to escape nihilism without revaluing our values so far: they produce the opposite, make the problem more acute"[117] and that "[t]he fight against [nihilism] strengthens it."[118] Not only, then, did the experience of European nihilism persist in the course of the twentieth century during which, as Jacques Darras has noted, "the fate of Europe was at stake,"[119] but it also bears decisively on our understanding of the violent conflicts against the background of which the institutional project of Europe was initiated. With these points in mind, it is possible to return to the contemporary debate on the idea of Europe and to begin unfolding the various stages in Nietzsche's own response to the advent of European nihilism that will eventually culminate in his idea of the 'good Europeans.'

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[115] Hermann Rauschning. *Masken und Metamorphosen des Nihilismus: Der Nihilismus des XX. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt am Main: Humboldt-Verlag, 1954, p. 24.
[116] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 'Of the Priests,' p. 116.
[117] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 28, p. 19.
[118] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 5[57], p. 206.
[119] Jacques Darras. *Beyond the Tunnel of History*. London: Macmillan, 1990, p. 56.

CHAPTER 4

THE EUROPEAN DEBATE REVISITED

THE EUROPEAN DEBATE REVISITED

The previous chapter demonstrated that the problem described by Nietzsche under the heading of European nihilism persisted throughout the course of the twentieth century, manifesting itself most starkly within the context of its 'deep addiction to war' and its conflicting ideological constructs.[1] The fact, moreover, that these difficulties entailed by the 'death of God' did not vanish in the course of the previous century serves to further corroborate the argument that Nietzsche's European thought in general, and his analysis of European nihilism in particular, is still relevant to the contemporary debate on the European idea, despite being written over a century ago. This chapter, in turn, wishes to finally complete the historical link between Nietzsche's earlier discussion and the present debate on the European idea. It does so by showing how Nietzsche's European thought has become particularly pertinent in the post-Cold War era given that that many Europeans have begun, over the course of the past decades, to display an increasing incredulity towards the Cold War ideologies described in the last section of the previous chapter. This development in European culture means that much like Nietzsche found himself caught in the intellectual climate of an age in which the great speculative philosophies had spent themselves, leaving the question of Europe's meaning unresolved, so too do contemporary Europeans once again confront the question of how to endow European existence with a greater sense of meaning and purpose as the traditional ideologies of the Cold War era gradually decompose. By subsequently drawing attention to the revealing similarities between the contemporary predicament described by scholars of European affairs in the introduction to this thesis, on the one hand, and Nietzsche's earlier discussion of European nihilism on the other, the deeper relevance of Nietzsche's European thought for the contemporary impasse is established. Having established this symmetry, moreover, the chapter subsequently turns towards a consideration of the first step in Nietzsche's own and subtle response to the advent of European nihilism that will eventually culminate in his idea of the 'good Europeans.'

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[1] Jan Patocka. "Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War" in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Trans. Erazim Kohak. Chicago: Open Court, 1996, p. 120.

1. The 'End of Ideology'

That contemporary Europeans should once again be concerned with the question of delineating a greater sense of meaning or purpose for the European idea derives, at least in part, from the increasing incredulity many Europeans now display towards the Cold War ideologies discussed in the previous chapter. European elites, as well as European societies at large, have, as Stanley Hoffmann points out, begun to display an increasing disbelief in relation to these ideologies. Indeed, one of the enduring features of European affairs since the 1960s which Hoffmann identifies, is the absence of any new set of values underlying the project of European integration. In his view, Europeans simply lack the 'solid bed of beliefs' which, for example, is provided by liberalism in the United States. Nor, Hoffmann argues, did the events of 1968 do much to alter this circumstance. Rather, in his view, the "bizarre 'events' of 1968 had many aspects: one was a protest against the vacuum of beliefs, or, with regard to communism, against the ossification and sterilisation of the creed. But the attempt to spread new values failed: it was a revolt, not a revolution."[2] It is for this reason, moreover, that Hoffmann concludes by pointing out that "[i]n 1964 I wrote that the European consensus was negative; I do not think that there is one today."[3] In Hoffmann's account, then, this 'end of ideology' phenomenon goes some way towards explaining the contemporary inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe. Indeed, he singles this factor out as constituting one of the three most important political characteristics of contemporary Europe which are interfering with the articulation of a more compelling vision of Europe in the post-Cold War era.[4] From the perspective of those who desire the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe, therefore, this 'end of ideology' phenomenon is also seen as an ambiguous achievement at best, especially in light of the fact that Europeans have, in the mean time, not been able to readily fill what Hoffmann refers to as the resultant 'vacuum of beliefs.'

Hoffmann, of course, is not the first scholar to draw attention to the 'end of ideology' phenomenon in contemporary European culture. The thesis had already

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[2] Stanley Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited," *Daedalus* Vol. 123. No. 2 1994, p. 13.
[3] Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited," p. 13.

been famously formulated by the sociologist Daniel Bell in the 1960s. In his book, itself entitled *The End of Ideology*, Bell had concluded quite unequivocally that "ideology, which was once a road to action, has come to be a dead end."[5] Since that time, the debate about the 'end of ideology' has occupied a prominent position in the Western academy. Importantly, the thesis would also find nourishing ground within the context of a Europe which had experienced two world wars and was subsequently confronted by the threat of nuclear destruction at the hands of the two rivalling ideological systems. Within this international constellation it had become increasingly difficult for Europeans to view History as a progressive, rational, meaningful and cumulative enterprise – a luxury which, as Walter Benjamin once pointed out in his theses on the philosophy of history, was only granted to the 'victorious ones.'[6] Within the context of the Cold War, European scholars consequently began to engage in a 'postmodern' critique of modern ideology.

Thus, according to Jacques Derrida, for example, actively critiquing the assumptions of modern ideologies was, and continues to be, a normative endeavour required in light of the violent and oppressive nature of much of the twentieth century. Indeed, Derrida has consistently warned his readers against employing any 'totalistic' or 'final' vocabulary in relation to such concepts as 'history' and 'meaning,' or indeed any such combination as in, for example, the 'meaning of history.' His notion of 'deconstruction,' moreover, is concerned, at least in part, with demonstrating the untenability of what he takes to be one of the major axioms of the 'Western' philosophical tradition, namely the view that the meanings of words are fixed, stable and readily accessible to our understanding.[7] This 'logocentric' bias, as David Hall explains, "motivates thinkers to attempt to present the truth, being, essence, or logical structure of that about which they think and discourse."[8] Much like Nietzsche before him, then, Derrida argues that any such attempt at articulating a transcendental ground of things, or one which posits a *telos* working itself through world history, is

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[4] Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited," p. 16.

[5] Daniel Bell. *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*. New York: Free Press, 1962, p. 393.

[6] Walter Benjamin. "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in *Illuminations*. Ed. Hanah Arendt. Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1973, p. 258.

[7] Stuart Sim. *Derrida and the End of History*. Cambridge: Icon Books, 1999, pp. 70-71.

[8] David Hall. "Modern China and the Postmodern West" in Lawrence Cahoone (ed.) *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 698.

ultimately a fiction and is no longer intellectually credible following the 'death of God' and the advent of European nihilism.[9] Derrida, moreover, also detects a strong relationship between the logocentric bias of European thinking and its violent history, especially in relation to the twentieth century. Indeed, he urges his readers to acknowledge that the meaning of words, in particular, and the meaning of existence in general, cannot be fixed or policed, not only because such an attempt is bound to attempt the impossible, but also because it is profoundly dangerous. Any attempt to do so would be, in his view, 'totalitarian' and Derrida is content to openly draw upon the authoritarian connotations which accompany this term, especially in light of such twentieth-century figures as Stalin or Mao.[10] There is, to quote Benjamin once more, "no document of civilisation which is not at the same time also a document for barbarism."[11] While Derrida is, of course, a particularly prominent scholar, he is not the only one to drive forward the debate questioning the prevalent ideologies of modernity.

Another French scholar, Jean-Francois Lyotard, has similarly taken this "incredulity towards metanarratives" to be the defining characteristic of the postmodern outlook in his book *The Postmodern Condition*.[12] Metanarratives, as Lyotard employs the term, are precisely those 'universal' and 'total' accounts of existence which had been advanced by the speculative philosophers of History – Hegel and Marx, but also includes such intellectual systems as liberalism and positivism.[13] What is so characteristic of the 'postmodern' condition, in Lyotard's view, is that "[w]e no longer have recourse to the grand narratives – we can resort neither to the dialectic of Spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern scientific discourse."[14] As is the case with Derrida, however, much of Lyotard's quest is also normative. For, Lyotard, too, is critical of

[9] See, for example, Madan Sarup. *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism.* 2nd Ed. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993, p. 37
[10] Sim, *Derrida and the End of History*, pp. 50-51.
[11] Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," p. 258.
[12] Jean-Francois Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (La condition postmoderne).* Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, p. xxiv. The report was presented to the Conseil des Universités of the government of Quebec at the request of its president. (p. xxv).
[13] See, for example, Steven Best and Douglas Keller. *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations.* New York: The Guilford Press, 1991, p. 165.
[14] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition,* p. 60.

the 'totalising' and 'homogenising' tendencies of such metanarratives.[15] Indeed, he argues that "[t]he nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much horror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one...."[16] The answer to this predicament, he subsequently argued, is to "[l]et us wage a war on totality...."[17] In no small measure, then, the contemporary scepticism that European scholars display towards the traditional European ideologies, is normatively motivated.

The 'end of ideology' phenomenon may, however, not be entirely self-induced. In this vein it is important to also draw attention to Jürgen Habermas's contribution to the debate on the nature and demise and of modern ideologies. In his *Theory of Communicative Action,* Habermas differentiates between first and second generation ideologies. Amongst the former, he includes those ideologies, like liberalism and nationalism, which emerged around the time of the French Revolution. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, these were followed by a second generation of ideologies which emerged in reaction to the first one. These 'second generation' ideologies expressed, Habermas argues, "society's paradoxical rationalisation: the destruction of traditional forms of life and the partial realisation of modernity which necessitated the reinvention of tradition."[18] What is more, they sought the political transformation of society without overt recourse to metaphysical or religious world views.[19] Despite these differences, however, Habermas goes on to argue that both generations of ideologies shared a totalising conception of society, usually addressed to mass society by elites who were struggling to gain control of the state.[20] What, according to Habermas, is particularly important to note in the contemporary context, however, is that these ideologies have lost their ability to function properly as an extension of elite rule in Europe. Their manipulative operation, he argues, is inhibited by the increasing social fragmentation evident in most European societies. Indeed, he deems existence in modern European societies to

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[15] See Best and Keller, *Postmodern Theory,* p. 166.

[16] Lyotard, *Économie Libidinale.* Cited in Seyla Benhabib. "Epistemologies of Postmodernism: A Rejoinder to Jean-Francois Lyotard," *New German Critique,* 33, 1984, p. 121.

[17] Lyotard, *Économie Libidinale.* Cited in Benhabib, "Epistemologies of Postmodernism," p. 121.

[18] For a treatment of Habermas's theory of ideology, see Gerard Delanty. "Redefining Political Culture in Europe Today: From Ideology to the Politics of Identity and Beyond" in Ulf Hedetoft. (ed.) *Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998, pp. 26-27.

[19] Delanty, "Redefining Political Culture in Europe Today," p. 27.

have reached such a level of complexity and specialisation that existence in such an environment evades the possibility of being understood with reference to a single ideology. In his view, therefore, society as a whole is no longer likely to be grasped by Europeans pursuing their individualised and rationalised existences. In his own formulation, "[e]veryday consciousness is robbed of its power to synthesise; it becomes fragmented."[21] Importantly, then, in Habermas's account the end of ideology is not so much voluntary, as a result of underlying sociological and historical developments.

Irrespective, however, of whether scholars understand the increasing incredulity towards 'grand narratives' to be the result of a normative critique or of the underlying sociological processes, or even a combination of the two, it remains the case that increasing numbers of Europeans are demonstrating a growing incredulity towards such totalising ideologies. Interestingly, Nietzsche himself had already noted, somewhat prematurely, in the *Genealogy of Morals* that:

> [t]o view nature as if it were a proof of the goodness and providence of a
> God; to interpret history to the glory of a divine reason, as the perpetual
> witness to a moral world order and moral intentions; to interpret one's own
> experiences, as pious men long interpreted them, as if everything were
> preordained, everything a sign, everything sent for the salvation of the soul
> – that belongs to the *past*.[22]

Today, however, Nietzsche's assessment may be a more accurate description. Much in this vein, Göran Rosenberg, for example, has recently argued that the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 may have signalled the end "not of the 20th century, but of a very long 19th century, a double-century that began in 1789, with the French Revolution and the dream of a new, secular, rational, enlightened, evermore perfect, world-order. With the idea that history had a meaning, a given course of progress – and a final goal."[23]

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[20] Delanty, "Redefining Political Culture in Europe Today," p. 27.
[21] Delanty, "Redefining Political Culture in Europe Today," p. 27.
[22] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, III, 27, pp. 160-1.
[23] Göran Rosenberg. "The Heritage of a Century" in James Kaye and Bo Strath (eds.) *Enlightenment and Genocide, Contradictions of Modernity*. Brussels: P.I.E. – Peter Lang, 2000, p. 245.

Importantly, however, if Europeans are becoming increasingly critical of these ideologies, this also means that Europeans have become critical of one of the most influential ways in which the twentieth century had sought to avert the advent of European nihilism. It will be recalled from the previous chapter that it was precisely by providing ideological interpretations of History, that European existence could be rendered meaningful and the deeper implications of European nihilism could be avoided. The question that subsequently arises in the absence of these ideologies, is what, if anything, will provide European existence with a greater sense of meaning in the post-Cold War era. It is here, moreover, and as was already noted in Chapter 1, that many contemporary scholars and policy-makers of European affairs detect an uncomfortable silence. In contemporary Europe, it does indeed seem as if the overall aim is once again lacking, and the question 'Why?' no longer finds a ready answer. With this very realisation, however, contemporary Europeans can also be seen as entering a renewed phase of what Nietzsche already referred to as European nihilism towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the result that the historical link between Nietzsche's earlier discussion and the contemporary predicament is also finally completed. Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism, then, is particularly relevant for the contemporary debate on the idea of Europe because Europeans, despite their growing incredulity towards many of the ideological accounts of twentieth century, have nevertheless not yet been able to successfully address the deeper and underlying ramifications of the 'death of God' already detected by Nietzsche towards the end of the nineteenth century. As the doubts about the traditional ideologies of the Cold War increasingly emerge, therefore, so too does the underlying problem of European nihilism which these ideologies partially sought to address.

2. Contemporary European Nihilism

If it is indeed the case that many contemporary Europeans have once again returned to Nietzsche's earlier problem, and have begun to enter a renewed phase of European nihilism, then one would expect there to be a general convergence between the descriptive analysis of European culture provided by contemporary scholars of

European affairs, on the one hand, and the analysis of European nihilism already provided by Nietzsche towards the end of the nineteenth century, on the other. In order to ascertain whether such a convergence does, in fact, exist, it is useful to recall in greater detail the way in which Nietzsche actually described the experience of European nihilism. Nietzsche wrote, for example, that:

> [t]he feeling of valuelessness was reached with the realisation that the overall character of existence may not be interpreted by means of the concept of 'aim,' the concept of 'unity,' or the concept of 'truth.' ... Briefly: the categories 'aim,' 'unity,' 'being' which we used to project some value into the world – we *pull out* again; so the world looks valueless.[24]

Nihilism, in other words, is the experience likely to result when the concepts of 'aim' and 'unity,' which were traditionally employed to establish the meaning of European existence, became unconvincing. As was already noted in Chapter 2, the advent of European nihilism reaches its highest point when the will-to-truth of Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage begins to undermine these very concepts and, as a consequence, modern European existence increasingly takes on the appearance of actually being meaningless.

Nietzsche described the onset of European nihilism more specifically through the means of a three-step realisation.[25] "Nihilism," he argued, would be reached first "when we have sought a 'meaning' in all events that is not there. ... Nihilism, in this sense, is the recognition of the of the long *waste* of strength, the agony of the 'in vain....'" One had sought to achieve something and "now one realises that becoming aims at *nothing* and achieves *nothing*." Once, in other words, world history, for example, is seen to move in a specific direction and towards a specific goal, it is deemed to be meaningful as a whole. To the extent that Europeans took part in such processes, their existence, too, could come to be seen as being meaningful. When, however, it increasingly emerged that no such meaning exists in world history, existence, too, might take on the appearance of being meaningless. In this sense, the

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[24] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1968, 12 A, pp. 12-13.
[25] For the following citations, see Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, I, 12 A, pp. 12-13.

experience of nihilism begins, in the first instance, with the suspicion that a specific meaning which had been previously posited as underlying all events is no longer credible. The past subsequently takes on the appearance of a great waste of resources, of a misguided and futile effort.

Nihilism, moreover, is reached *secondly*, Nietzsche further explained, when one has posited "a totality, a systematization, indeed any organisation in all events, and underneath all events.... 'The well-being of the universal demands the devotion of the individual' – but behold, there is no such universal!" The result of this realisation, in Nietzsche's view, is that "[a]t bottom, man has lost faith in his own value when no infinitely valuable whole works through him; i.e. he conceived such a whole in order *to be able to believe in his own value.*" Put differently, the experience of nihilism is intensified by the realisation that it is not only one particular interpretation of existence that is no longer credible, but that, in fact, no universalisable or transcendent meaning can be ascribed to existence at all, be it either of the Christian or of any other conceivable kind. This recognition that it is no longer possible to posit a meaning underlying all events, moreover, provokes the suspicion that there no longer is any universalisable meaning underlying human existence as well. Faith in an existing overall unity of European existence is lost.

Finally, in Nietzsche's account, these two sources of European nihilism can give rise to the third and most pervasive stage of nihilism. When, he noted, "man finds out how that world is fabricated solely from psychological needs, and how he has absolutely no right to it, the last form of nihilism comes into being: it includes disbelief in any metaphysical world and forbids itself any belief in a *true* world." Over time, in other words, the quest for an overall aim and meaning to existence may culminate in profound disillusionment. Indeed, Nietzsche noted further, "[h]aving reached this standpoint, one grants the reality of becoming as the *only* reality, forbids oneself every kind of clandestine access to afterworlds and false divinities – but *cannot endure this world though one does not want to deny it.*" It is, moreover, against the backdrop of this analysis that Nietzsche concluded over a century ago that "[w]e Europeans confront a world of tremendous ruins. A few things are still towering, much looks decayed and uncanny, while most things already lie on the ground. It is all very picturesque – where has one ever seen more beautiful ruins? –

and overgrown by large and small weeds."[26] European existence, in Nietzsche's account, is likely to be understood as being meaningless unless scholars find a compelling way of circumventing this experience.

Do, then, Nietzsche's observations in regard to the advent of European nihilism, now over a century old, still resonate in contemporary Europe? One answer to this question has already been provided by Keith Ansell-Pearson who has argued that "[o]ne of the ways of understanding Nietzsche's characterisation of the experience of nihilism as a psychological experience of weariness, distrust, apathy, and hopelessness, is by reflecting on some recent events in our own time, such as the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and its existential impact on committed socialists and Marxists."[27] In relation to those contemporary Europeans confronting the collapse of Communism, Ansell-Pearson points out that in Nietzsche's account nihilism is:

> the recognition of the long *waste* of strength, the agony of the 'in vain', insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and regain composure – being ashamed in front of oneself, as if one had deceived oneself all too long. – This meaning could have been: the 'fulfilment' of some highest ethical canon in all events, the moral world order; or the growth of love and harmony in the intercourse of beings; or the gradual approximation of a state of universal happiness; or even the development toward a state of universal annihilation – any goal at least constitutes some meaning. What all these notions have in common is that something is to be achieved through the process and now one realises that becoming aims at nothing and achieves nothing.[28]

After several decades of Communist rule, many of those who had come to believe in the socialist cause, Ansell-Pearson argues, experienced sentiments not at all that foreign from the ones Nietzsche had earlier associated with the experience of European nihilism. This time, however, the experience was triggered not by the collapse of the 'God-hypothesis' but by one of the ideologies which, as discussed in

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[26] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974, 358, p. 310.

[27] Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Introduction to Nietzsche as a Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 38.

the previous chapter, served, at least in part, as an attempt to re-endow existence with meaning following the 'death of God.'

Yet, it is also possible to pursue this analogy even further. Indeed, it can be suggested that it was not only 'eastern' Europe which would be revisited by the experience of nihilism following the tremendous events of 1989. Thus, one of the unexpected results of the collapse of the Cold War, perhaps, is that this experience of meaninglessness and disorientation was not confined to eastern Europe but has also become manifest in 'western' Europe as well. As the 'postmodern' critique made its impact on European culture, and as the Cold War rivalry receded, the 'universal' ideologies of the past decades were no longer readily seen to provide comfort to Europeans. As a consequence, European and world affairs could also no longer be assessed, interpreted and appropriated within the encompassing framework of the Cold War rivalry, aspects of which had previously permeated virtually all of international politics and reached into the four corners of the planet.[29] If, as Zaki Laïdi has recently argued in his book *A World without Meaning: The Crisis of Meaning in International Politics*, we understand 'meaning' to consist of three inter-related notions – a foundation, a sense of unity and a final goal – then international relations in general, and European relations in particular, can properly be described as 'meaningless' in the post-Cold War era.[30] If, in other words, in the post-Cold War era, ideological forms of thinking can no longer readily provide European existence with meaning, if their credibility has become challenged far enough so as to no longer provide for such a possibility, then Europe is left, once again, in want of a meaningful identity; it has once again to confront the problem of European nihilism. In this sense, then, the crisis of meaning, or the experience of meaninglessness, is not at all confined to 'eastern' Europe and the formerly Communist or socialist countries. Rather, as Laïdi notes, "[t]he loss of reference points and the dispossession of a 'principal meaning' affect far more than just the former communist societies, or just the continent of Europe."[31] It is, moreover, in precisely this sense that it can also be

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[28] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, I, 12 A, p. 12.
[29] See Zaki Laïdi. *A World Without Meaning: The Crisis of Meaning in International Politics*. Trans. June Burnham and Jenny Coulon. London and Routledge, 1998.
[30] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 1.
[31] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 2. Indeed, for Laïdi this loss of meaning following the end of the Cold War was even 'planet-wide' and 'universal.'

said that Nietzsche's account of European nihilism still resonates over a century after he first penned it. Indeed, Keith Ansell-Pearson has noted, "[t]oday it remains as necessary as ever to think through the problem of nihilism...."[32] For, he argues further, "[i]f God is dead, and if we have lost the traditional metaphysical-moral structure which enabled us to make sense of existence, to give it a meaning and a purpose, how is it possible for us now to interpret the world and to give meaning to our lives?"[33]

The analogy between Europe's contemporary predicament and Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism emerges even more clearly when one recalls, from Chapter 1, some of the ways in which contemporary Europe has been characterised by those scholars engaged in the debate over the European idea. According to a plethora of scholars of European culture, contemporary Europeans are deemed unlikely to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe which could serve to legitimise the institutional project of Europe. There is, in other words, a growing feeling that, much as Nietzsche anticipated, Europeans have lost the voice with which to cultivate the European idea. One could even cite one of Nietzsche's own descriptions of Europe and it would not seem out of place in the company of these previous descriptions. Thus, Nietzsche himself, for example, wrote that "[t]he whole of the West no longer possesses the instincts out of which institutions grow, out of which a *future* grows: perhaps nothing antagonises its 'modern spirit' so much. One lives for the day, one lives very fast, one lives very irresponsibly: precisely this is called 'freedom.'"[34] Indeed, he added elsewhere, "this is how things are: the diminution and levelling of European man constitutes *our* greatest danger, for the sight of him makes us weary. ... The sight of man now makes us weary – what is nihilism if it is not *that*? – We are weary of *man*."[35] Contemporary Europeans simply seem unable to in determine a new 'Why?' and it is this inability to identify an overall aim which is precisely the definition of nihilism that Nietzsche provided. It is in this sense, then, that there is

[32] Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, p. 8.

[33] Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, pp. 7-8. For similar assessments see: Gianni Vattimo. *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988, p. 19; David Owen. *Nietzsche, Politics and Modernity: A Critique of Liberal Reason*. London: Sage, 1995, p. ix; William E. Connolly. *Political Theory and Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, p. 12.

[34] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1990, 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man,' 39, p. 105.

also a very close symmetry between Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism and the contemporary debate on the meaning of the European idea.

What is more, this inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe is not widely met with enthusiasm and acceptance but is rather deemed to be problematic. It does not seem, in other words, that Europeans are today content to simply substitute the prospect of a more meaningful existence in favour of the attainment of physical security and material satisfaction. This may have seemed a like a desirable and reasonable prospect in the aftermath of two world wars and within the context of Europe's resultant and fragile position between the two 'superpower' rivals. In the post-Cold War era, however, there are many Europeans who express the demand for an existence which is more meaningful than the one described by Nietzsche towards the end of the nineteenth century under the heading of the 'last man':

> Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man, and the string of his bow will have forgotten how to whir....
>
> Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*. "What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?" thus asks the last man, and he blinks....
>
> "We have invented happiness," say the last men, and they blink. They have left the regions where it was hard to live, for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbour and rubs against him, for one needs warmth....
>
> One still works, for work is a form of entertainment. But one is careful lest the entertainment be too harrowing. One no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion.
>
> No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels differently goes voluntarily into a madhouse.[36]

Nietzsche considered the 'last man' to be the most nauseating type because he is incapable of setting the kinds of goals that would enable him to overcome himself.[37]

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[35] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, I, 12, p. 44.
[36] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1961, I, "Zarathustra's Prologue," 5, p. 46.

He is, in the words of Francis Fukuyama, the kind of man who "gave up prideful belief in his or her own superior worth in favour of comfortable self-preservation."[38] Much in this vein, Nietzsche also warned his readers in *The Genealogy of Morals,* that "the diminution and leveling of European man constitutes *our* greatest danger"; man is becoming 'thinner ... more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent."[39] What Nietzsche worried about in relation to modern Europe, in other words, is the increasing mediocritisation and despiritualisation of Europeans. Indeed, he pointed out that "[t]he glorification of 'work', that hard industriousness from early till late," had become "the best policeman [which] keeps everyone in bound and can mightily hinder the development of reason."[40] What is more, it makes people "ashamed of resting, and prolonged reflection almost gives people a bad conscience. One thinks with a watch in one's hand, even as one eats one's midday meal while reading the latest news of the stock market."[41]

Similarly, it seems that there are, today, many who share these kinds of apprehensions about a Europe reminiscent of this 'last man.' Francis Fukuyama, for example, has argued in his influential book *The End of History and the Last Man* that:

> [w]hen Nietzsche's Zarathustra told the crowd about the last man, a clamor arose. "Give us this last man, O Zarathustra!" "Turn us into these last men!" they shouted. The life of the last man is one of physical security and material plenty, precisely what Western politicians are fond of promising their electorates. Is this really what the human story has been "all about" these past few millennia? Should we fear that we will be both happy *and* satisfied with our situation, no longer human beings but animals of genus *homo sapiens*? Or is the danger that we will be happy on one level, but still *dis*-satisfied with ourselves on another, and hence ready to drag the world back into history with all its wars, unjustice, and revolution.[42]

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[37] Bruce Detwiler. *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 73.

[38] Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History and the Last Man.* London: Penguin, 1992, p. 301.

[39] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals,* I ,12, p. 44.

[40] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality.* Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 173, p. 105.

[41] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* 329, p. 259.

[42] Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man,* p. 312.

By way of analogy, there is no guarantee that contemporary Europeans will, in the post-Cold War era, content themselves with the parameters of existence described by Nietzsche under the heading of the 'last man.' If anything, there is evidence to suggest that there has been, over the course of the past decade, a growing demand for significant change in this regard. Stanley Hoffmann, for example, points out that some Europeans now "wonder what the higher purpose of West European integration is if their societies do not have anything specific to protect and promote."[43] Zaki Laïdi, moreover, has recently noted that European societies are currently experiencing what he calls the *paradox of meaning*:

> Though European societies demonstrate an extreme reservation and resistance towards any wholesale, voluntarist reformulation, they persist in expressing a strong but complex demand for meaning. Though they expect a collective project to have a practical effect on their daily lives, they cannot persuade themselves to construct a 'horizon of meaning' founded solely on instrumental rationality.[44]

As emerged particularly clearly in relation to the Maastricht Treaty, the goals of material gratification and physical security no longer exhaust the demands of a growing percentage of Europeans. This is a trend, moreover, backed by contemporary sociologists who detect a consistent rise in the percentage of the populations of European societies frequently reflecting about the meaning or purpose of their existence.[45] There are, perhaps, as Walter Kaufmann once pointed out, increasing numbers of people who realise "that their pleasure does not add up to happiness and that their ends do not give their lives any lasting meaning" and who consequently wish to keep the question of Europe's meaning alive.[46] In this sense, then, the advent of European nihilism described by Nietzsche does indeed continue to be a problem confronting contemporary Europeans, and the historical link between Nietzsche's earlier discussion and the contemporary debate is finally completed.

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[43] Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited," p. 15.

[44] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 76.

[45] Ronald Inglehart. *Modernisation and Postmodernisation: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 286.

[46] Walter Kaufmann. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. 4th Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974, Preface to the First Edition (1950), p. xvi.

3. 'Incomplete' Nihilism and the European Debate

Having drawn attention to the relevance of Nietzsche's European thought for understanding the current impasse in the European debate, it is now possible to turn towards unravelling Nietzsche's own subtle response to the advent of European nihilism that will culminate in his idea of the 'good Europeans.' At this point, in other words, Nietzsche himself can be drawn into the contemporary debate on the idea of Europe. Nietzsche's philosophy was, after all, very much addressed to the philosophers of the future. Moreover, contemplating the predicament of the lack of an overall aim or purpose to existence constituted one of the most important aspects of Nietzsche's intellectual pursuit. Indeed, Nietzsche himself characterised his philosophical project much in these terms, as the following passage illustrates:

> He that speaks here, conversely, has done nothing so far but reflect: a philosopher and solitary by instinct, who has found his advantage in standing aside and outside, in patience, in procrastination, in staying behind; as a spirit of daring and experiment that has already lost its way once in every labyrinth of the future; as a soothsayer-bird spirit who *looks back* when relating what will come; as the first perfect nihilist of Europe who, however, has even now lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself.[47]

Nietzsche sought to think through the crisis of European nihilism and to free European life from its moribund remnants. Most of his published works following *Zarathustra*, furthermore, constitute his responses to this advent of European nihilism.[48] Nietzsche's self-appointed task, in this sense, consisted, as Keiji Nishitani has pointed out, of experimenting:

> with the future tendencies and issues of history by making the self one's laboratory. This activity discloses the end of history lurking in its ground by tempting the self to venture into every labyrinth of the future, which is to lure the ending out of history and into the self. This is the meaning of

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[47] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Preface, 3, p. 3.
[48] Alan D. Schrift. *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990, p. 15.

'living nihilism through to its end' and the standpoint of 'one who is a philosopher and a hermit by instinct.[49]

Nietzsche thus sought to contemplate the trajectory of European history and to experiment with this trajectory within himself. This also means, however, that, as one scholar has pointed out, "[n]ihilism is not the doctrine which he seeks to defend, as is popularly supposed, but rather the *problem* with which his philosophy begins."[50] It may well turn out that Nietzsche's corpus in general, and his idea of the 'good Europeans' in particular, can indeed provide some fruitful insights into what might constitute an appropriate response to the contemporary inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe.

How, though, would Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' seek to address the advent of European nihilism? The answer to this question, like Nietzsche's analysis of European nihilism itself, is complex and will, in fact, take the remainder of the thesis to unfold.[51] A sound starting point, however, is the recognition that Nietzsche set out his engagement with the experience of European nihilism by distinguishing, in the first instance, between two different forms of nihilism – 'incomplete' and 'complete' nihilism. For the purposes of this chapter, it is the former which is of the most immediate interest, while it is left to the last chapter to consider the latter of the two strategies for responding to the advent of European nihilism. In Nietzsche's view, a strategy of 'incomplete' nihilism consists of any "attempt to escape nihilism without reevaluating our values so far."[52] Incomplete nihilism is the attempt, in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' to replace the 'old God' with more secular ones. As the French Nietzsche scholar Michel Haar has argued in this vein, "[i]ncomplete nihilism is but the decomposition of the 'true world,' the recurrent attempt to find replacement values to substitute for the Platonic and Christian ideals (Christianity only having 'popularised' the concept of a 'true world' with its idea of a 'world beyond')."[53]

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[49] Keiji Nishitani, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*. Trans. Graham Parkes with Setsuko Aihara. Albany: SUNY, 1990, p. 30.

[50] R. C. Solomon. *From Rationalism to Existentialism: The Existentialists and Their Nineteenth-Century Backgrounds*. New York: Harper and Row, 1970, p. 112.

[51] See Henning Ottmann. *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987, p. 342.

[52] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 28, p. 19.

[53] Michel Haar. "Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language" in David Allison (ed.) *The New Nietzsche*. London: The MIT Press, 1997, p. 14.

Underlying this strategy for confronting the 'death of God' was the desire to salvage the traditional structure of endowing European existence with a greater sense of meaning, not by erecting new, other-worldly deities, for this was now no longer credible in modern times, but rather by transposing this metaphysical distinction between a 'true' world and an 'apparent' world onto the 'earthly' realm.

Strategies of incomplete nihilism thus also operate quite explicitly under the assumption that the 'dead God' can be replaced in modern times by other, more earthly values. Martin Heidegger explained how according to Nietzsche the empty space left behind by the 'death of God' demands, in modern times:

> to be occupied anew and to have the god now vanished from it replaced by something else. New ideals are set up. That happens according to Nietzsche's conception ... through doctrines regarding world happiness, through socialism, and equally through Wagnerian music, i.e. everywhere where 'dogmatic Christendom' has 'become bankrupt.' Thus does 'incomplete nihilism' come to prevail.[54]

Nietzsche's notion of incomplete nihilism, then, refers to those strategies which, in their engagement with the experience of meaninglessness, seek to erect new ideals and idols in place of the 'dead God,' in which case the metaphysical structure of thinking is not so much abandoned as it is merely transposed from the otherworldly realm to the earthly one. The will-to-truth nevertheless continues to remain in operation.

It is, moreover, precisely this strategy of confronting the advent of European nihilism which seems to have prevailed throughout the course of the twentieth century. As was already noted in the previous chapter, the violent nature of the twentieth century was intimately connected with the attempts to erect and legislate new and secular idols and meanings which promised earthly forms of transcendence at some point in the future. These attempts, too, did not rest so much on an abandonment of the previous metaphysical distinction between a 'true' world and a

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[54] Martin Heidegger "Nietzsche's Word God is dead" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt: New York: Harper and Row, 1977, p. 69.

merely 'apparent' world, as they did on transposing this distinction onto the realm of human history, where the notion of a 'true' world was not abolished, but rather directed into the future. These strategies were often directed not to the god of the past, but to the one *that is coming*.[55] Thus, while Nietzsche found that many of the doctrines advanced by Europeans following the 'death of God' had clearly done away with the overt doctrine of Christianity, many of them were nevertheless still ultimately derived from its conceptual and psychological foundations.

The German philosopher Karl Löwith further elaborated on this point by noting how "Christian trust in a future fulfilment has been abandoned by modern historical thinking, but the perspective toward the future as such has been maintained. It pervades all European thought and all our concern with and whence and whither of the historical process. Together with the horizon of the future, the quest for meaning as goal and purpose has persisted."[56] Thus, despite the frequent abandonment of overt Christian theology, there still remains much that is 'Christian' in modern European thought, and much which still retains, as Nietzsche and Löwith argued, the Judeo-Christian faith in a future redemption by positing a redeeming future and *telos* underlying world history. Politically, Löwith argued in a Nietzschean vein, this logic was present in the English, French, and Russian revolutions, all of which "would not have taken place without the faith in progress, and secular faith in progress would hardly have come into existence without the original faith in an ultimate goal of human existence."[57] In this sense, Löwith, like Nietzsche before him, sought to expose the residual teleological belief in progress, for example, which he detects in a variety of forms, such as:

> progress toward the fulfilment of conscious freedom (Hegel), toward scientific positivism (Comte), toward a classless society (Marx), towards conscious decline (Spengler), toward a universal religion as the creative escape from a declining civilisation (Toynbee). All are directed toward an

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[55] Jürgen Habermas. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996, p. 87.
[56] Karl Löwith. *Nature, History, and Existentialism: and Other Critical Essays in the Philosophy of History.* Edited by Arnold Levison, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966, p. 23.
[57] Löwith, *Nature, History and Existentialism*, p. 23.

aim and are therefore progressive toward an aim and therefore progressive toward the fulfilment of a meaningful purpose.[58]

From Nietzsche's perspective, all these strategies would similarly constitute examples of incomplete nihilism. Indeed, as David Toole notes with reference to Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism, the only difference between Christianity and strategies of incomplete nihilism, "is that this space is now occupied by a new god. [Yet, t]he same drive to escape meaninglessness, the same unwillingness to face the world as it is – a drive that Nietzsche deems 'the will to truth' – remains operative in this incomplete form of nihilism."[59] With strategies of incomplete nihilism the will-to-truth seeks to maintain or re-establish itself in the aftermath of the 'death of God.' As Nimrod Aloni notes in relation to Nietzsche's understanding of incomplete nihilism, "God's shadow lingers when thinkers retain a belief in a *telos*, a cosmic goal, a direction in nature, a purpose in existence, an end to history."[60]

The likely response, then, that Nietzsche anticipated for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, was the erection of new ideals which would fill the space left behind by the 'death of God.' Indeed, Nietzsche understood that strategies of incomplete forms of nihilism would, in fact, be quite attractive to Europeans in the course of the twentieth century. For, although Christianity was indeed deemed to be dead by many Europeans, the adoption of incomplete forms of nihilism served to retain some of the metaphysical 'balm' which Europeans would, in Nietzsche's view, still desire in light of the formative impact of Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage on modern European culture. This was particularly true with respect to the metaphysical distinction between a 'true' world and an 'apparent' world, which could be retained in terms of an artificial distinction between the present and the future. Rather than simply accepting the experience of meaninglessness in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' Nietzsche thought that many Europeans would seek instead to circumvent this experience by positing new and secular values and it is precisely this strategy which he referred to as incomplete nihilism. As Nietzsche himself put it, "God is dead; but

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[58] Löwith, *Nature, History and Existentialism*, p. 22.

[59] David Toole. *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo: Theological Reflections on Nihilism, Tragedy and Apocalypse*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998, p. 37.

[60] Nimrod Aloni. *Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche's Healing and Edifying Philosophy*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1991, p. 91.

given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown."[61]

Importantly, however, and despite being able to understand their appeal, Nietzsche himself found strategies of incomplete nihilism to be unconvincing responses to the advent of European nihilism for at least two reasons. Nietzsche objected to such strategies, firstly, because they still rested on precisely this metaphysical distinction that was, in his view, no longer intellectually tenable in the aftermath of the 'death of God.' The reason, in other words, why Nietzsche opposed strategies of incomplete nihilism was because, as Heidegger further noted, "that which must take the place of the suprasensory world will [still] be variations on the Christian-ecclesiastical and theological interpretation of the world, which took over its schema of the *ordo* of the hierarchy of beings from the Jewish-Hellenistic world, and whose fundamental structure was established and given its ground through Plato at the beginning of Western metaphysics."[62] Forms of incomplete nihilism, while indeed displacing the overtly Christian aspects of the past, still retain the same way of endowing existence with meaning by positing an essence or a *telos*, albeit one which resides in the earthly realm; they still rely on the underlying will-to-truth. Yet, as will be recalled from Chapter 2, in Nietzsche's view the deeper implications of the advent of European nihilism entailed precisely that the will-to-truth put itself into question, with the result that any attempt to postulate a new 'true' world in the aftermath of the 'death of god' was, strictly speaking, no longer credible. Strategies of incomplete nihilism may please old habits and thus also attain considerable success, but they are no longer, Nietzsche insisted, intellectually tenable following the 'death of God.'

In addition to being intellectually untenable, Nietzsche was, however, also critical of strategies of incomplete nihilism for a second and equally important reason. For, according to Nietzsche, such strategies of incomplete nihilism are still nihilistic in the sense that, like Christianity beforehand, they affirm a non-existent ascetic ideal which reduces the rich complexity and ambiguity of earthly existence and which is indicative of a resentful attitude towards existence. In this vein, Nietzsche sought to

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[61] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* 108, p. 167.
[62] Heidegger, "Nietzsche's Word God is dead," p. 64.

demonstrate, in the *Genealogy of Morals*, how the origins of these metaphysical distinction are indeed human, all too human. In Nietzsche's account, and as David Owen has noted in relation to Nietzsche's genealogy, "the act of offering a historical (this-worldly) account of the emergence of values for which a *transcendent* (other-wordly) status is claimed, performs a critique of this status which renders it open to question...."[63] Nietzsche, in other words, wished to draw attention to the questionable status of traditional dualistic assumptions of Europeans by demonstrating how the evolution of this distinction can, in fact, be explained in naturalistic terms.

Nietzsche thus set out to trace how man, originally nothing more than a sophisticated animal, came, over time, to be a creature which endowed, and needed to endow, existence with a greater sense of meaning. Nietzsche argued that the distinction between an 'apparent' and a 'true' world emerged historically during the process of state formation, when stronger men began to forcefully enslave weaker men. From the perspective of the powerful men, Nietzsche explained, the weaker men were seen to be bad examples of human beings. This, as Nimrod Aloni notes, "did not mean bad in the sense of evil or selfish. It would be rather like referring to 'bad apples,' that is, rotten apples, apples low on the scale of applehood. There is nothing immoral in being a bad apple, just as there is nothing evil in being a bad human in the eyes of the noble aristocrat."[64] This ability of the rulers to unreflectingly understanding themselves as being inherently good, Nietzsche referred to as 'master' morality, while he labelled the morality of those subsequently ruled as 'slave morality.'

Nietzsche continued his account of the origins of such metaphysical distinctions by noting that for the weaker men the experience of enslavement is traumatic. Confined to the violent rule of the stronger men, the weaker men can no longer find a ready outlet for their natural instincts and physical drives. As a consequence, in Nietzsche's account, they become increasingly repressed and evolve an inner life or soul within which to process the aggression and cruelty that they

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[63] Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics, and Modernity*, p. 71.
[64] Aloni, *Beyond Nihilism*, p. 126.

suffer at the hands of the 'masters.'[65] Indeed, Nietzsche argues, in order to come to terms with their suffering, these 'slaves' begin to deny earthly existence, marred as it is for them by suffering, in favour of another, 'truer' world where the moral hierarchy is precisely the opposite of the one there are experiencing, i.e. where the suffering men are redeemed and where the powerful masters are revealed as 'evil' and are consequently shamed and punished.[66] Unable to resist physically to the masters the slaves resist spiritually. It is, therefore, also precisely amongst the weaker and enslaved men that, as David Allison points out, "the *need* arises for postulating every form of transcendence: an otherworldly religion, the metaphysical ideals of unchanging being, permanence, unity, soul, the moral ideals of ascetic virtue, absolute truth, and divine justice."[67]

Importantly, however, this also means, according to Nietzsche, that the invention of the distinction between a 'true' and an 'apparent' world is, in effect, the creative act of *ressentiment* against earthly existence. As he argued in this regard in the *Genealogy of Morals*:

> [t]he slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate with an imaginary revenge. While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside' what is 'different,' what is 'not itself;' and *this* No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye – this need to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself – is of the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all – its action is fundamentally reaction.[68]

Not only, then, is this metaphysical distinction between a 'true' world and an 'apparent' world intellectually untenable, but, as Nietzsche hypothesised, it also has a decidedly earthly origin that can be traced back to the resentful attitude displayed

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[65] See Aaron Ridley. *Nietzsche's Conscience: Six Character Studies from the Genealogy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998, p. 8.
[66] Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics, and Modernity*, p. 69.
[67] David B. Allison "Introduction" in Allison (ed.), *The New Nietzsche*, p. 2.

towards existence within the context of what Nietzsche referred to as 'slave morality.' In making this critique of 'slave' morality, however, Nietzsche is not arguing that slavery is inherently good. Rather, he is insisting that an ethics or worldview which derives from slavery is likely to be negative and destructive.[69] It is precisely this logic, moreover, which, in Nietzsche's account, was also retained within the various forms of incomplete nihilism that emerged in the twentieth century. By retaining this nihilistic tendency of denying earthly existing is favour of greater ascetic ideals, such strategies are, quite literally, still nihilistic and do not mark a decisive break with Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage. Bearing in mind, then, that Nietzsche found this distinction between a 'true' world and an 'apparent' world to be both intellectually unconvincing and ultimately grounded on a resentful attitude towards existence, it comes as less of a surprise that he opposed both Christian morality, as well as incomplete forms of nihilism which retained and perpetuated this logic in the aftermath of the 'death of God.' To this extent, Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' would *not* choose to opt for a strategy of incomplete nihilism in response to the advent of European nihilism.

This assessment about the inadequacy of strategies of 'incomplete' nihilism, moreover, also puts Nietzsche and his idea of the 'good Europeans' at odds with the two principal ways in which scholars and policy-makers in the European debate have sought to address the experience of meaninglessness. For, as the sociologist Gerard Delanty has recently noted "[t]he great ideologies of European modernity have [now] decomposed in the new scenario of identity politics. In short, then, we are witnessing a very profound culture shift from ideology to identity."[70] In the post-Cold War era, in other words, many Europeans have turned away from the notion of ideology and towards the concept of identity in order to endow contemporary European existence with a greater sense of meaning or purpose. Mirroring this important shift, the question of whether political identities should be structured along nationally defined parameters, on the one hand, or more transnational and European lines on the other,

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[68] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, I, 10, pp. 36-37.
[69] Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, p. 152.
[70] Delanty, "Redefining Political Culture in Europe Today," p. 25.

has become one of the most divisive contemporary questions in Europe.[71] The outpouring of literature on national and European identities to which scholars of International Relations have been witness in recent years can be understood against the background of the contemporary experience of meaninglessness described in the previous section.

What is more, despite the countless positions which have been articulated in relation to the future development of 'Europe' over the decades, it is possible, as Ulf Hedetoft has argued, to broadly distinguish in the contemporary debate between two different visions for Europe in the post-Cold War era. On the one hand, there are those to whom Hedetoft refers to as 'Europeanisers' and who generally emphasise the need and desirability of an over-arching European identity. In this vein, promoters of the European Union have, in recent years, sought to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe around which a European identity may be formulated with the result that "a preoccupation with cultural definitions has returned to supplant purely economic and political concerns."[72] On the other hand, however, there is the group which Hedetoft calls the 'nationalisers.' Writers in this group, in turn, insist, as the name already implies, that the future European order should be based predominantly on national identities. It is, however, also important to emphasise that members of this latter camp too, mostly consider themselves to be articulating a vision of Europe, albeit one consisting of nation states.[73] Hedetoft, moreover, is cautious not to overstate the division between the 'Europeanisers' and 'nationalisers' and notes that some important compromises have been made on both sides of the debate. Europeanisers, for one, have become increasingly convinced that any attempt to create or conceptualise a meaningful European identity has to bear in mind, in a serious fashion, the existence of national sentiments, whereas many nationalisers, have

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[71] Leszek Kolakowski. *Modernity on Endless Trial*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 19; Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, p. 64; Charles Taylor cited in Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 51; John. D. Caputo (ed.) *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1997, p. 118.

[72] Delanty, "Redefining Political Culture in Europe Today," p. 32.

[73] See, for example, William Hague's speech in Budapest on May 13th 1999, entitled "In Europe, Not Run by Europe." Reprinted in *The European Journal*. Vol. 6. No. 7. May/June 1999, p. 20. Tony Judt, in articulating a position more favourable to the continuing importance of nation-states, also explicitly states that he nevertheless considers himself very much to be a European. See the introduction to his *A Grand Illusion? An Essay on Europe*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1996. See also Ulf Hedetoft. "On Nationalisers and Europeanisers in Contemporary Europe – an Introduction" in Ulf Hedetoft (ed.) *Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998, p. 3.

learned to concede that their nationalising fervour has been provoked by 'Europe' and therefore: "cannot but accept that the world has been changed, that European integration is a fact of life, that Europe needs a political governance elevated above the nation-state (though the nature of this governance is disputed), and that Europe as a 'civilisation' might be able to rally some allegiance over and above the expedience of opportunism."[74] The two camps, then, are not as far apart as the discourse sometimes seems to suggest.

Yet, as Hedetoft further points out, this does not mean that there actually exists a viable middle ground where a meaningful European identity might mingle harmoniously with the gambit of national identities and cultures. In the final analysis, he concludes, "[s]ymbolic discourses of identity politics are still basically locked into an 'either/or' predicament, and integrative-syncretic thinking or theorising is hard to come by...."[75] The closest that contemporary scholars can come to in terms of a consensus, is to pursue the possibility of articulating a European identity which would not supersede national identities, but would rather complement and supplement them. Yet, "how this could happen and what the different meanings of 'identity' might be in the two instances only very few have tackled in a serious way...."[76] There is, then, still no clear and established middle ground on the question of what a meaningful idea of Europe may look like around which its various people could rally. Indeed, in the course of the 1990s the prospects for such an articulation have actually declined as the balance in the debate between the Europeanisers and the nationalisers has once again shifted to the later. Whereas in the 1980s Europeanisers had gained the most influence, in the course of the 1990s advocates of a Europe based on stronger national identities have once again attained the greater weight, not least by representing the advances towards European union as a threat to national cultures and identities.[77] In this sense, it is not difficult to see how, in the post-Cold War era the "very aim of a more thorough European integration has fostered a political fight over collective and political identities on the continent."[78] This development, Oliver Schmidtke further

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[74] Hedetoft. "On Nationalisers and Europeanisers in Contemporary Europe – an Introduction," p. 3.
[75] Hedetoft, "On Nationalisers and Europeanisers," p. 4.
[76] Hedetoft, "On Nationalisers and Europeanisers," p. 4.
[77] Hedetoft, "On Nationalisers and Europeanisers," pp. 2-3.
[78] Oliver Schmidtke. "Obstacles and Prospects for a European Collective Identity" in Hedetoft, *Political Symbols*, p. 44.

observes, is representative of a more general trend whereby the "more ambitious the goals become in terms of integrating the established nation-states into a wider political union, the more it becomes obvious how fragile the legitimating base of this trans-national community is."[79] Contrary to much premature writing on the obsolescence of nations and nationalism, these entities and ideas remain potent forces in contemporary European politics. Indeed, as the twentieth century drew to a close, advocates of an over-arching European identity were once again in the minority. What remains to be seen, however, is to what extent any of these two prominent responses to the current experience of meaninglessness escape Nietzsche's critique of incomplete nihilism.

Conclusion

By way of concluding this chapter, then, it has been argued that, as the traditional political ideologies of the Cold War era have receded, and as European culture has embarked upon what several commentators have referred to as its 'postmodern' turn, contemporary Europe once again faces a predicament not at all dissimilar from the one described by Nietzsche in his genealogy of European nihilism. After having subsequently noted the similarities between Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism and the contemporary predicament, it was argued that Nietzsche's own intellectual project of how to best engage and respond to the advent of European nihilism retains great contemporary pertinence because it is, at bottom, nothing other than a response to the question of how to articulate a more meaningful idea of European existence in modern times. In this vein, the chapter then turned toward a consideration of Nietzsche's notion of 'incomplete' nihilism which he used for designating those strategies which retain the traditional metaphysical distinction between a 'true' world and an 'apparent' world in order to render European existence meaningful in the aftermath of the 'death of God.' What is more, in addition to finding, in Chapter 2, that such strategies are intellectually untenable in the aftermath of the 'death of God' because they still rely on the will-to-truth, this chapter added Nietzsche's second critique of such strategies, namely that they are usually derived

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[79] Schmidtke, "Obstacles and Prospects for a European Collective Identity," p. 44.

from a resentful attitude towards existence. This analysis, moreover, now allows for a critical juxtaposition between Nietzsche's critique of strategies of incomplete nihilism, on the one hand, and the current strategies of addressing the experience of meaninglessness by advocating national and European identities, on the other. It is to this task that Chapters 5 and 6 turn respectively.

CHAPTER 5

'LABYRINTHS OF THE FUTURE' :

NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF A NATIONALIST RESPONSE TO EUROPEAN NIHILISM

'LABYRINTHS OF THE FUTURE' : NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF A NATIONALIST RESPONSE TO EUROPEAN NIHILISM

Does the advocacy of national ideas and identities constitute, in Nietzsche's account, an appropriate response to the advent of European nihilism? In continuing with the critical dialogue initiated in the previous chapter between Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism and the contemporary debate on the idea of Europe, and in seeking to further unfold Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans,' it is necessary to consider in greater detail his critique of modern nationalism. Such an analysis, moreover, is not without contemporary relevance. For, as one scholar has noted, "[n]o matter which shape they eventually come in, new European identities will have to either reconcile themselves with or combat nationalism and ethnicism."[1] Indeed, the challenge of nationalist sentiments and loyalties has been one of the principle moral motives and goals informing the process of European integration since 1945. Yet, judging on the basis of the European debate in the 1990s, this benchmark is still far from being achieved. After much initial optimism and enthusiasm for a federal Europe leading up to Maastricht, there has been a progressive return, in the course of the 1990s, to the more modest consensus that for the foreseeable future the European order should remain based primarily on national identities and that these nations should provide the locus of meaning for societies in Europe. Contrary to much premature writing on the obsolescence of nations and nationalism, and despite several attempts to articulate the basis for a common European identity, these forces remain potent in contemporary European politics. Indeed, as Isaiah Berlin once noted in this regard, nationalism is not so much new or resurgent; rather, it has never died.[2] An analysis of Nietzsche's critique of modern nationalism, then, is important not only in order to understand more fully his notion of the 'good Europeans,' but also because it still bears on those who, within the context of the contemporary European debate, wish to emphasise the primacy of national identities.

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[1] Thomas Hylland Eriksen. "In Search of Brussels: Creolization, Insularity and Identity Dilemmas in Post-National Europe" in J. Peter Burgess (ed.) *Cultural Politics and Political Culture in Postmodern Europe*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997, pp. 254-255.
[2] Isaiah Berlin. "Two Concepts of Nationalism." *The New York Review of Books*. November 21, 1991. Cited in Tony Judt. "The New Old Nationalism." *New York Review of Books*. May 26, 1994, 44-51.

Part of the very originality of Nietzsche's treatment of modern nationalism derives from the fact that he sought to understand its rise against the backdrop of the wider cultural crisis of European nihilism. "What is the meaning of our nationalism?" Nietzsche asked and replied, "the metamorphosis of the cross."[3] Nietzsche, in other words, urged his readers to view nationalism as a modern response to the European experience of meaninglessness, as an attempt to re-endow existence with a greater sense of meaning or purpose in the aftermath of the 'death of God.'[4] By viewing modern European nationalism in this light, moreover, Nietzsche was able to gain original insights into the nature of modern nationalism, many of which have found an echo in the twentieth-century scholarship on nationalism. Importantly, however, this does not mean that Nietzsche actually considered modern nationalism to be either a viable or a desirable response to the advent of European nihilism. Rather, in his account, modern European nationalism still constituted a form of incomplete nihilism, i.e. a strategy which, while no longer advocating an 'otherworldly' purpose, as had previously been the case with Platonism and Christianity, nevertheless still rests on the same structure of meaning and the need for positing a higher purpose underlying human existence.[5] In this sense, it also promises merely a transposition of the Christian-Platonic will-to-truth onto the earthly realm, rather than a transvaluation of it.[6] Nietzsche argued, therefore, that nationalism is a highly artificial process of endowing modern existence with meaning which, like most forms of incomplete nihilism, is more likely to culminate only in a further institutionalisation of nihilism rather than in an honest confrontation and genuine engagement with it.

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[3] See Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, KSA 12, 7[26], p. 305. See also KSA 12, 2, [127], p. 127.

[4] See Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1968, I, 1, p. 8 and Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 9[82], p. 377.

[5] See also Elisabeth Kuhn. *Friedrich Nietzsches Philosophie des europäischen Nihilismus*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992, p. 244.

[6] This will-to-truth, it will be recalled from Chapter 2, is a mode of existence that denigrates the sensual world, broadly conceived, in favour of some fixed and higher reality or 'ascetic ideal' which is subsequently used in order to judge the meaning of this world. It is, moreover, a mode of approaching existence ingrained in European culture that seeks to abstract from the diverse aspects of existence an underlying truth or reality and which seeks to impose upon the day-to-day existence of Europeans a metaphysical structure that discriminates between a merely apparent and meaningless realm of existence that is in constant flux, and the postulation of a 'true' world where the real and deeper meaning of existence is located.

Correspondingly, he also sought to confront critically and quite unequivocally the rise of modern nationalism in Europe.[7]

1. Nietzsche, Nihilism and Nationalism

Nietzsche approached the rise of modern nationalism in Europe in a manner that would, perhaps, be deemed unconventional by contemporary standards. Rather than investigating it against the experience of two devastating world wars, to which nationalism is generally seen as having contributed in the first half of the twentieth century, Nietzsche approached the phenomenon against the background of the cultural crisis of European nihilism. Writing prior to the advent of the two world wars, Nietzsche, in other words, urged his readers to understand the rise of modern nationalism in Europe primarily as a response to the experience of European meaninglessness triggered by the 'death of God.'[8] This linking of the advent of the 'death of God' with the rise of modern European nationalism is not fortuitous, but, as some brief biographical notes reveal, is partially derived from his own personal experience as a youth. Nietzsche, after all, had come of age politically during Bismarck's rise to power and, like many other young men of his era, he affirmed the German nation-state as a student.[9] Indeed, the young Nietzsche cultivated respect for established 'historical heroes,' for the classics, for his nation and for great leadership.[10] Based, moreover, on the nationalist sentiments which he often expressed in his letters from the 1860s, it is clear that in his youth Nietzsche, while not uncritical of Germany, can nevertheless be said to have been a German patriot.[11]

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[7] Karl Jaspers once argued in relation to Nietzsche that scholars drawing on his work should not rest content until they have also found the exact opposite of what he is claiming elsewhere in the corpus. In relation to the question of nationalism, however, this principle does not seem to hold.

[8] Throughout this chapter, the term modern nationalism refers to what Otto Dann has classified as organised nationalism, i.e. that form of nationalism which arose in the last third of the nineteenth century. See Otto Dann. "Modernity and the Project of the Modern Nation." in Johannes Müller and Bo Stråth (eds.) *Nationalism and Modernity.* EUI Working Paper HEC 99/1. San Domenico, Florence: 1999, pp. 24-25.

[9] Peter Bergmann. *Nietzsche, The Last Anti-Political German*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 30.

[10] Keith Ansell-Pearson. *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 24.

[11] Tarmo Kunnas. *Die Politik als Prostitution des Geistes: Eine Studie über das Politische bei Nietzsche.* Munich: Frido Flado, 1982, p. 130.

The first test of Nietzsche's political views, in turn, came with the war against Austria in 1866. Initially Nietzsche thought it "an audacity on Bismark's [*sic*] part to create a united Germany in this manner"[12] and several of his friends even participated in anti-war demonstrations. Once the war proceeded, though, Nietzsche endorsed the Prussian deployments.[13] What is more, by the time he took up his professorship at Basel, at the young age of 24 and without yet having completed his doctorate, Nietzsche's patriotism had not yet receded as is evident, for example, from his voluntary service as a medical orderly in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71. It is important to recognise, however, that even in this early phase Nietzsche was not an unconditional supporter of nationalism. Rather, his nationalism is generally deemed to have been closer to the form articulated by Herder, i.e. a form which did not seek to preach an aggressive self-assertion and also included an important component of self-criticism.[14] Nevertheless, Nietzsche clearly did endorse nationalist ideas as a young scholar and intellectual.

By the middle period of his writing career, however, and for reasons that will be treated in greater detail below, Nietzsche would come to abandon these sentiments and emerged as the fierce critic of nationalism which he remained until the end of his life.[15] Nevertheless, these early years of Nietzsche's career, during which he hoped that nationalist ideals might effect a cultural regeneration of Europe and would lead to the overcoming of the experience of European nihilism, would later also allow him to understand the profound appeal of nationalist sentiments in an age otherwise characterised by a perceived lack of a greater sense of meaning or purpose underlying European existence. Bearing in mind, from the previous chapter, Nietzsche's attempt to experiment with European history within himself, Nietzsche even took his early flirtation with nationalist sentiments as a worrying indicator that, in future, much larger sections of European society might pursue a similar course, and that it might well take many decades before people would recognise, like he had done, that the nationalist alternative to nihilism was, metaphorically speaking, only a 'labyrinth of

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[12] Bergmann, *Nietzsche*, p. 46.
[13] Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, p. 25. See also Bergman, *Nietzsche,* Chapter 3, and Henning Ottmann. *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987, p. 15.
[14] Kunnas, *Die Politik als Prostitution des Geistes*, p. 130. See also Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, p. 24.
[15] See, for example, Ottmann, *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche*, p. 18.

future,' i.e. an initially appealing but ultimately not viable antidote to the experience of nihilism. Thus, one of the distinct features that defined the 'good Europeans,' which Nietzsche hoped would emerge in the future, was that they would arrive at this realisation much quicker than most of their contemporaries. As Nietzsche explained, partially in critical reflection on his own brief pondering of nationalist sentiments stimulated by his having just listened to Wagner's music:

> We 'good Europeans' – we, too, know hours when we permit ourselves some heartly fatherlandishness, a plop and relapse into old loves and narrowness – I have just given a sample of that – hours of national agitations, patriotic palpitations, and various other sorts of archaizing sentimental inundations. More ponderous spirits than we are, [however,] may require more time to get over what with us takes only hours and in a few hours has run its course: some require half a year, others half a life, depending on the speed and power of their digestion and metabolism. Indeed, I could imagine dull and sluggish races who would require half a century even in our rapidly moving Europe to overcome such atavistic attacks of fatherlandishness and soil addiction and to return to reason, meaning 'good Europeanism.'[16]

In Nietzsche's view, the attraction of nationalist sentiments in an age deemed to lack a greater sense of meaning or purpose was so great that even, or perhaps especially, the intellectuals would not be immune to such persuasion. Nevertheless, Nietzsche thought that modern nationalism was only a 'labyrinth of the future' in which to get lost, rather than a genuine solution to the experience of meaninglessness, which is why he argued for a decidedly European perspective and became an advocate of 'good Europeanism.'[17] Indeed, already in *Human, All to Human*, Nietzsche had insisted that those who propagate nationalist ideas are perpetuating the "sickness of the century" and are "an enemy of the good Europeans, an enemy of the free spirits."[18] In this sense, then, Nietzsche's critique of nationalism also forms an integral part of what it means to be, in his view, a 'good European.'

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[16] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1966, 241, p. 174.
[17] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 3, p. 3.
[18] See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, Part II, 87.

Is there any historical evidence to support Nietzsche's understanding of nationalism as an antidote to the experience of European nihilism? In the course of the twentieth century the phenomenon of nationalism has become a major field of academic inquiry in its own right and has spurned countless studies. Nor is there any indication that interest in the subject of nationalism is in the decline. The existence of a resultant wealth of scholarly literature on nationalism, moreover, allows for an investigation into whether Nietzsche's claim that his experience as a young scholar, of being attracted to nationalism in order to find a greater sense of meaning in a Europe otherwise characterised by the 'death of God,' is plausible and perhaps even representative of larger sections of society. Indeed, a consideration of this literature reveals that there is, in fact, substantial support for Nietzsche's hypothesis within the twentieth-century scholarship on nationalism. Thus, the thesis that nationalism functions as a surrogate religion, as a substitute for Christianity, is a view shared by a host of prominent nationalism scholars. "Is it not a demonstrable fact," Charles Hayes already asked as one of the pioneering scholars of the field, "that nationalism has become to a vast number of persons a veritable religion, capable of arousing that deep and compelling emotion which is essentially religious?"[19] Another early scholar of nationalism, Hans Kohn, similarly observed that nationalism replaced the divine right of kings with the divine right of nations. "Messianic dreams with the nation at their centre," he noted, "put the nation into immediate and independent relations with the Absolute."[20] Kohn thus wrote of nationalism in the post-Revolutionary era as, quite explicitly, "taking the place of religion."[21] Despite these early efforts, however, it remains the case that this religious element has largely been ignored by subsequent generations of nationalism scholars.[22]

Not ignoring this relationship, however, would lead to the recognition that there are, in fact, striking similarities between the emotive appeal of religion, and that of nationalist doctrines following the 'death of God.' Indeed, according to the

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[19] Carlton J. H. Hayes. *Essays in Nationalism*. New York: Macmillan, 1926, p. 95.

[20] Hans Kohn. *Prophets and Peoples: Studies in Nineteenth Century Nationalism*. New York: Macmillan, 1946, p. 8.

[21] Hans Kohn. *The Idea of Nationalism*. New York: Macmillan, 1948, p. 574. Cited in William Hutchison. "The Long Goodbye: Revision of Traditional Identities in the 'Christian West.'" in Kokusai Koryu Kikin and Nichi-Bei Senta (eds.) *The End of the Century: The Future in the Past*. London: Kodansha International, 1995, p. 250.

[22] Hutchison, "The Long Goodbye," p. 250.

historian Arnold Toynbee, nationalism substituted the worship of God with that of collective power. Toynbee insisted that "spiritual nature, like physical nature, abhors a vacuum; and, since the eruption of the American and French Revolutions, the spiritual vacuum left in Western souls by the recession of Christianity has been filled by the resurgence of the older, and always latent, worship of the collective power of human communities."[23] What more, in Toynbee's view, it was even possible to trace the dynamic whereby, in post-Christian societies, the religious zeal was transferred from religious worship to the nationalist doctrine. As he explained:

> In our post-Christian age, the worship of collective human power has been keyed up to a higher pitch by the infusion of ex-Christian fanaticism into it. The post-Christian worship of collective human power is the evil religion whose name is 'nationalism.' It is un-Christian, except in the point of being Christianly fanatical. Unhappily, fanatical nationalism is today about 90 per cent of the real religion of about 90 per cent of the human race.[24]

While Toynbee clearly saw nationalism as something profoundly un-Christian, he nevertheless insisted that it did possess a strong religious quality and that its rise profited directly from the collapse of Christianity in European societies.

Are these earlier analyses of nationalism still tenable in light of subsequent scholarship which has emerged in the intervening decades? With regards to their analysis of the relationship between the decline of religion and the rise of nationalism, it seems that these studies have largely withstood the test of time. Indeed, it is interesting to note, in this regard, that some recent studies of modern European nationalism have begun, in line with the earlier studies of modern nationalism, to re-emphasise the close relationship between the decline in the role of Christian faith in European societies and the rise of nationalist sentiments. Thus, the title, for example, of Joseph Llobera's recently published study of the rise of modern nationalism in western Europe, *The God of Modernity*, evokes this relationship quite clearly.[25] In the

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[23] Arnold Toynbee. "Death in War" in Toynbee (et. al.) *Man's Concern with Death*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1968, p. 147.
[24] Toynbee, "Death in War," pp. 147-148.
[25] Joseph Llobera. *The God of Modernity*. Oxford: Berg, 1994.

book, Llobera explains that modern national identity appeared in western Europe at the same time that all the intermediary bonds of society were collapsing, and religion itself was losing its grip on the peoples. Religion was a ready-made model for nationalism and in many cases it was also a powerful ally, reinforcing emerging nationalism.[26] This leads Llobera to argue quite explicitly that "nationalism has become the functional equivalent of religion; or, expressed in a more pungent way, nationalism has become a religion – a secular religion where god is the nation."[27] Indeed, in the twenty-first of his twenty-two concluding theses on the nature of modern nationalism, Llobera concludes, again quite unequivocally, that "[i]n the final resort, the success of nationalism in modernity has to be attributed largely to the sacred character that the nation has inherited from religion. In its essence the nation is the secularised god of our times."[28]

Llobera, moreover, is not the only contemporary scholar of nationalism to stress the intricate relationship between the decline of religion and the rise of modern nationalism in Europe. Thus, a further example of contemporary scholarship on nationalism which endorses this relationship, is the recently published book by Mark Juergensmeyer, entitled *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. Juergensmeyer similarly finds it no accident that nationalism was becoming increasingly religious in character at the same time as religious sentiments were declining in the West. In his view the structural similarities between religion and nationalism show themselves with particular clarity in their ability to draw allegiance and loyalty to the extent of sanctioning even martyrdom and violent conflict.[29] He finds these similarities striking enough to even merit the coinage of a new term, 'ideologies of order,' which he uses to encompass both religion and nationalism. Theses ideologies of order, Juergensmeyer maintains, "conceive of the world in coherent, manageable ways; they both suggest that there are levels of meaning beneath the day-to-day world that give coherence to things unseen; and they both provide the authority that gives the social and political order its reason for being."[30]

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[26] Llobera, *The God of Modernity*, p. 144.
[27] Llobera, *The God of Modernity*, p. 143.
[28] Llobera, *The God of Modernity*, p. 221.
[29] Mark Juergensmeyer. *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, p. 15.
[30] Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, p. 31.

Secular nationalism, as an ideology of order, locates an individual within the universe and ties him to a larger collectivity associated with a particular place and a particular history. Thus, organised religion and nationalism, in Juergensmeyer's view, both "serve the ethical function of providing an overarching framework of moral order, a framework that commands ultimate loyalty from those who subscribe to it."[31] Judging, then, from the scholarship on modern nationalism produced in the century since Nietzsche's death, there is considerable evidence to suggest that his initial hypothesis about the relationship between the rise of nationalism, and the crisis of meaning induced by 'the death of God' is tenable. What remains to be seen in greater detail, however, is how this relationship unfolds in detail, especially with reference to both the appeal of nationalism on behalf of those who accept national identities, and in relation to the interests of those who actively advocate and propagate nationalist sentiments. For, such an analysis is not only interesting in its own right, but actually constitutes the background against which Nietzsche's vehement critique of modern nationalism emerges.

2. Nihilism and the Appeal of Nationalism

In the first instance, Nietzsche's analysis of the advent of European nihilism can assist in understanding the *appeal* of these nationalist sentiments in the aftermath of the 'death of God.' An understanding of the nature of this appeal is crucial to any account of nationalism and is something which structural accounts in general, and Marxist accounts in particular, generally face difficulty in accounting for. Thus, Benedict Anderson, for example, has argued in relation to Tom Nairn's theory of nationalism that while structural and Marxist accounts of nationalism can explain why nationalist ideas are advocated by certain segments of society, they encounter difficulties in explaining the attraction of these nationalist sentiments to those who accept them. Anderson thus grants that, up to a point, Nairn's argument that the "new middle-class intelligentsia of nationalism had to invite the masses into history; and [that] the invitation-card had to be written in a language they understood" is correct. Yet, Anderson continues, "it will be hard to see why the invitation came to seem so

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[31] Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, p. 15.

attractive ...."[32] Structural and Marxist accounts, in other words, can explain the self-interest of certain segments of society in advocating nationalist sentiments, but, despite the complexities of their positions, they have greater difficulty in explaining why people actually believed the nationalist ideas.

This inability to adequately explain the attraction of nationalist ideas raises the suspicion that many of these structural accounts often rely implicitly on an underlying theory of meaning in human life without, however, making such assumptions explicit. In his recent article on psychological theories of nationalism, Alan Finlayson has thus sought to draw attention to some of these hidden assumptions.[33] By way of example, Finlayson cites the celebrated scholar of nationalism, Ernest Gellner. In his book *Nations and Nationalism* Gellner points out to his readers that by emphasising the contrived and artificial nature of nationalism, he had not intended to "deny that some measure of such patriotism is indeed a perennial part of human life."[34] Yet, as Finlayson points out, this concession is actually of crucial importance to the viability of Gellner's account of nationalism. While Finlayson agrees with Gellner that nationalism can be historicised and to some extent inserted into larger and over-arching structural forces, this should, in his view, not be allowed to obscure the fact that at the basis of Gellner's argument is "an untheorised, asserted claim about the innate features of human social need and an unexplained 'loyalty.'"[35] This claim about a social need occupies a crucial place in Gellner's account and yet remains largely unexplored. In Finlayson's view, however, this under-theorisation needs to be addressed because the 'agency' involved in the spread of nationalism is of great enough importance not to be simply reduced to being either of marginal or of secondary importance. In doing so, moreover, Finlayson points to an important weakness of structural accounts of modern nationalism.

This is, however, not to insist that a psychological account of nationalism would be sufficient in and of itself. For, psychological accounts of the rise of modern European nationalism, in turn, run into the opposite problem; while they might be

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[32] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 77.
[33] Alan Finlayson. "Psychology, Psychoanalysis and Theories of Nationalism." *Nations and Nationalism.* Vol. 4, No 2. 1998, pp. 145-162.
[34] Ernest Gellner. *Nations and Nationalism.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, p. 138.

able to better explain the appeal of nationalism, they face difficulties in explaining why certain groups perpetuated nationalist ideas, and also why they did so particularly effectively in modern Europe. Thus, in his overview of the various theories of nationalism, John Breuilly, for example, remains sceptical of a theory of nationalism which grounds its explanation in psychological functions alone.[36] As Breuilly argues, the problem with psychological accounts of nationalism in particular, and with functional accounts of nationalism in general, is that they also need to account for the particularly *modern* aspects of the rise of nationalism.[37] In order to do so, Breuilly argues, such explanations invariably need to complement their account by taking into consideration some specifically modern development, such as religious decline or industrial economics. In doing so, however, such explanations also tend to move beyond the limits of functional explanation alone. In short, then, and at the risk of slightly oversimplifying matters, the problem in accounting for the rise of modern nationalism in Europe, is that structural accounts of nationalism face difficulties in explaining the appeal of nationalism, while the resort to psychological theories of nationalism faces difficulties in accounting for the historical rise of nationalism in modern Europe. Against the background of this set of difficulties, it is interesting to return to Nietzsche's own account of modern nationalism.

Nietzsche himself was very much interested in understanding the appeal of nationalism in modern Europe. Moreover, based on his own early experience as a youth, Nietzsche could understand very well the appeal of nationalism in European societies characterised by the 'death of God.' Thus, in Nietzsche's account, the appeal of national ideas in modern Europe derived, at least in part, from the formative

[35] Finlayson, "Psychology, Psychoanalysis and Theories of Nationalism," p. 146.

[36] John Breuilly. "Approaches to Nationalism" in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation*: London: Verso: 1996, p. 154.

[37] Breuilly, "Approaches to Nationalism," p. 155. To what extent nationalism is a truly modern phenomenon is, of course, a matter of debate amongst scholars of nationalism. The two sides are, however, not as far apart as is sometimes suggested. In a recent article, for example, Armstrong notes that "to a considerable extent ... one may agree with ... [Hobsbawm and Anderson] ... that, like other human identities, national identity has been an invention. The principal remaining disagreement is over the antiquity of some inventions and the repertory of pre-existing group characteristics that inventors were able to draw upon." "Towards a Theory of Nationalism: Consensus and Dissensus" in S. Periwal (ed.) *Notions of Nationalism* (1995), p. 36. Cited in Shaw, "Citizenship of the Union," p. 263. Similarly, Hutchinson notes that ethnicists "would accept that post-eighteenth-century nations differ significantly from earlier forms of community in several respects, including their political conception of human identity, the democratic character of their societies and the intensity of social and economic interactions." *Modern Nationalism*, p. 10. Cited in Shaw, "Citizenship of the Union," p. 263.

influence of Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage. Following the 'death of God,' Europeans would be left, Nietzsche thought, in a situation where they still craved a greater purpose and meaning in their lives at precisely the time when Christianity was no longer perceived to be able to fill this desire. Following the 'death of God,' Europeans would be looking for a new why, a new purpose in their lives. It is within the context of this spiritual vacuum that nationalism could prosper. As Nietzsche explains, "[t]he nihilistic question 'for what?' is rooted in the old habit of supposing that the goal must be put up, given, demanded *from outside* – by some *superhuman authority*." The response to the 'death of God' that Nietzsche found most likely in modern Europe was that "[h]aving unlearned faith in that, one still follows the old habit and seeks *another* authority that can *speak unconditionally* and *command* goals and tasks."[38] As the hypothesis of 'God' lost its grip on the European imagination and ceased to constitute the unconditional goal, rather than accepting the meaninglessness of existence, the nation could step in to fulfil its place. Indeed, Nietzsche noted, in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' Europeans would be seeking a "temporary *redemption* from pessimism," and in this quest would turn, amongst other things, to 'nationalism.'[39] It is in this vein, moreover, that Nietzsche considered modern, European nationalism to be "the metamorphosis of the cross."[40] Nietzsche, in other words, thought that much like he himself had done in a qualified form in his early years, many Europeans would similarly prefer to turn towards the belief in the spiritual sanctity of the nation in order to render existence meaningful in the aftermath of the 'death of God.' In this sense, moreover, Nietzsche also did indeed link the rise of modern European nationalism to a particularly modern development, namely the process encapsulated under the heading of European nihilism. Indeed, for him the rising nationalism was itself already a sign of the '*nihilistic catastrophe*' that had befallen Europe.[41]

Nietzsche's voice, moreover, finds great contemporary resonance in what is one of the most influential contemporary writers on nationalism, Benedict Anderson. Being dissatisfied with traditional Marxist and liberal accounts of nationalism,

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[38] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, I, 20, p. 17.
[39] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887,* KSA 12, 9 [126], p. 410.
[40] See Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, KSA 12, 7[26],p. 305.

Anderson attempted a reorientation of perspective in "a Copernican spirit" by viewing nations and nationalism as cultural artefacts of a particular kind which need to be understood in the terms of which they have come into historical being, in what ways their meaning changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy.[42] Against the background of Nietzsche's aforementioned discussion of European nihilism, it is interesting that Anderson should commence his exposition of nationalism as a cultural artefact with a consideration of religion's important role in endowing existence with a deeper meaning, including its suffering and death.[43] Anderson begins his account with these observations because, in his view, it is crucial to understand that the dawn of nationalism in Western Europe during the eighteenth-century is linked to the dusk of religious modes of thought. In doing so, moreover, his account is clearly reminiscent of Nietzsche's earlier discussion of the important role played by Christianity in European societies and its ability to give meaning even to suffering and death.

The problem entailed by the diminishing role of religious modes of existence, Anderson's argument continues, was that their decline was not necessarily accompanied by a decline in suffering itself. While Christianity increasingly disappeared from European existence, the suffering which it had previously mediated did not. If anything, the experience of suffering may, in fact, have even been exacerbated by the striking absence of the promise of a redeeming afterlife. Indeed, Nietzsche himself had once noted in this similar vein that "[w]hat really arouses indignation against suffering is not suffering as such but the senselessness of suffering," and it is this *senselessness* of suffering which the Christians were spared.[44] Correspondingly, in Anderson's account, what was needed as religious modes of existence waned, was "a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning," and in Anderson's view, "few things were [are] better suited to this end than an idea of nation."[45] With the decline in religion and the rise of the printed word, according to Anderson, it had become both possible and necessary to 'imagine' communities through which a sense of immortality can be projected, and

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[41] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 9[82], p. 377.
[42] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 13.
[43] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 19.
[44] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, II, 7, p. 68.

with which people in secular, capitalist societies can identify with, so as not to suffer from a pervasive sense of anonymity. In the modern age, these 'imagined communities' or nations are thus also able to provide important psychological functions. In doing so, moreover, Anderson explicitly recognises the relationship between nationalism and religion as cultural systems grappling with the problems of suffering and death. Nationalism, in his view too can be seen as addressing the 'metaphysical' questions of human existence. For Anderson and Nietzsche alike, therefore, modern nationalism can be seen as fulfilling a desire formerly addressed by Christianity and left otherwise unfulfilled in modernity.[46]

Importantly, however, Nietzsche's account also differs crucially from these above accounts in that Nietzsche actually sought to historicise this 'need for meaning.' Unlike psychological theories of nationalism, or, for that matter, structuralist accounts like that of Gellner, Nietzsche did not take this 'need' for meaning to be an innate feature of human existence. Rather, as is particularly evident in his genealogies and as was already explained in Chapter 2, Nietzsche traced the advent of modern European meaninglessness and the desire for a modern substitute back to the formative impact of the Christian-Platonic heritage of European culture. In Nietzsche's view, it was precisely the centuries of Christian-Platonic thinking that had sensitised Europeans into requiring a greater sense of meaning or purpose, a need which, following the 'death of God' and the rise of modern science, remained largely unfulfilled. In this sense, moreover, Henry Staten's recent assessment of one particularly virulent form of modern nationalism, National Socialism, remains true for the rise of modern nationalism in general; it is, as Staten observes from a Nietzschean perspective, "one case more of the old habit of mendacity – a problem not of too little transcendence but of still not enough immanence."[47] Nietzsche, in other words, did not necessarily take the human need for meaning to be an innate feature of human existence, but rather illustrated genealogically how, in Europe, this need was cultivated through centuries of Christian-Platonic interpretations of existence. Thus, Nietzsche does indeed realise that "[g]radually, man has become a fantastic animal

[45] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 18.
[46] See Daniel Pick. *War Machine: The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, pp. 158-159.

that has to fulfil one more condition of existence than any other animal: man *has* to believe, to know, from time to time *why* he exists....”[48] It is, furthermore, precisely with this 'need for meaning' that Nietzsche relates the rise of modern nationalism. At the same time, however, Nietzsche does not take this need to be an immutable, biological or psychological one, but rather as one which has been historically conditioned and one which must not necessarily be addressed in the way it has been done so in the past. In this way, moreover, Nietzsche's move to view the phenomenon of nationalism against the backdrop of the larger cultural crisis triggered by the 'death of God' can also be said to go some way in avoiding the difficulties inherent in both functional and structural accounts of modern European nationalism. Contrary to structuralist accounts of modern nationalism, Nietzsche's approach can account for the appeal of modern nationalism in Europe. At the same time, however, by historicising this need for meaning rather than seeing it as being innate, he also avoids the difficulties usually encountered by functional accounts of nationalism.

What is more, it is precisely the fact that the appeal of modern nationalism hinges on some kind of perceived 'identity need' or 'need for meaning' that also allows for Nietzsche's criticism of it. Indeed, according to Nietzsche this is an assumption which informs strategies of incomplete nihilism more generally and which he wished to challenge. Thus, Nietzsche himself understood the conviction that such a need does exist to be the result of the formative influence of the Christian faith and post-Platonic philosophy on European culture. As Henry Staten further explains, "[w]hat motivates the immanentizing of transcendence could thus well be not a transhistorical or transcendent need for transcendence but a pre-existent ideology of transcendence or a need generated by such an ideology."[49] The reason, in other words, for the success of modern nationalism may not be some transcendental or biological need for meaning, but rather a need which is perceived as necessary on the basis of a preceding Christian-Platonic heritage, but one which is nevertheless not necessary immutable. It is this very insight which nationalist ideas refuse. Consequently, rather than combating the assumption of an innate need for meaning, advocates of nationalist

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[47] See Henry Staten "'Radical Evil' Revived: Hitler, Kant, Luther, neo-Lacanianism" in *Radical Philosophy* No. 98, 1999, p. 14.
[48] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974, 1, p. 75.

ideas and identities actually encourage and indeed prosper on the basis of this assumption.

It is, moreover, for this reason that Nietzsche ultimately understood modern nationalism to be a form of incomplete nihilism. At bottom, Nietzsche insisted, modern nationalism still rests on the same objectionable foundation as Christianity, the same will-to-truth, and, in fact, perpetuates it further. Thus, in the *Gay Science*, for example, Nietzsche emphasised that:

> The demand that one *wants* by all means that something should be firm (while on account of the ardor of this demand one is easier and more negligent about the demonstration of this certainty) – this, too, is still the demand for a support, a prop, in short, that *instinct of weakness* which, to be sure, does not create religious, metaphysical systems, and convictions of all kinds but – conserves them. ... Even the vehemence with which our most intelligent contemporaries lose themselves in wretched nooks and crannies, for example into nationalism [*Vaterländerei*] (I mean what the French call *chauvinisme* and the Germans 'German') ... always manifests itself above all the *need* for a faith, a support, backbone, something to fall back on.[50]

At the root of modern nationalism, in other words, is the desire not to confront the experience of meaninglessness and contingency in an honest manner, but rather the desire to simply escape it by replicating the transcendental within the earthly realm. Instead of provoking a genuine confrontation with the experience of European nihilism, modern nationalism seeks to further institutionalise it.

The first criticism, therefore, that emerges from Nietzsche's analysis of the appeal of modern nationalism is that it still rests on the same psychological principles as Christianity had done previously and that, as a strategy of incomplete nihilism, it perpetuates the need for a greater sense of meaning, rather than undermining it and subjecting it to critical scrutiny. Indeed, for Nietzsche, modern nationalism, like

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[49] Staten, "'Radical Evil' Revived," p. 14.
[50] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 347, pp. 288-289.

Christianity, is a form of 'slave' morality.[51] It desires something greater and something higher in order to endow existence with a deeper sense of meaning and is based on a resentful attitude towards existence. Much like Christianity before it, modern nationalism is based on a resentful attitude towards existence which "from the outset says No to what is 'outside' what is 'different,' what is 'not itself;' and *this* No is its creative act."[52] Nietzsche's own response, in contrast, was an attempt to wager on whether it was really necessary for a society and an individual to have some greater sense of meaning. For, to quote Staten once more, it is "far from proven that, whatever may be the case for given individuals, humanity in the mass has such a need...."[53] For this reason, then, Nietzsche also thought it important to interrogate with greater scrutiny why national ideas were actually being advocated in modern Europe.

3. Nihilism and the Advocates of Nationalism

So far it has been argued that Nietzsche's analysis of the religious disappointment evident in the cultural configuration of modernity can help to explain the under-theorised appeal of national ideas that rests at the centre of many of the structural and Marxist accounts of modern nationalism, and that Nietzsche's understanding of this appeal also constitutes the ground for his criticism of modern nationalism in particular, and of strategies of incomplete nihilism more generally. For, in Nietzsche's account, strategies of incomplete nihilism are, as was noted in the previous chapter, premised on a resentful attitude towards existence. Importantly, however, this does not mean that Nietzsche failed to recognise, as structuralist theories of nationalism point out, that it is also in the self-interest of certain segments of a society to propagate national ideas. Indeed, there are several passages in Nietzsche's corpus which indicate that it was his very awareness of these interests, rather than his ignorance of them, which triggered his suspicion that nationalism did not constitute a desirable and honest confrontation with the spiritual vacuum left behind after the 'death of God.' Already towards the end of the nineteenth century

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[51] Laurence Lampert. *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 170.
[52] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals,* I, 10, p. 36.
[53] Staten, "'Radical Evil' Revived," p. 13.

Nietzsche urged his readers to detect the self-interest behind the perpetuation of nationalist ideas by politicians and businessmen. The recognition of this aspect of modern nationalism, moreover, meant that Nietzsche ultimately understood its rise as a regrettable symbiosis between European publics' yearning for a greater sense of meaning or purpose following the 'death of God,' on the one hand, and self-interested segments of society wishing to profit from the production of meaning through nationalism on the other.

The primary promoter of modern nationalism, Nietzsche argued, was the modern state. In order to justify its existence and to legitimate the demands it made of the citizenry, the state employed nationalist ideas.[54] As a result, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the modern, nationalistic state is labelled by Nietzsche as the "new idol" and the "coldest of all cold monsters" because it follows, and is in fact made possible, by the 'death of God.'[55] As Nietzsche lamented in this regard:

> [t]oday almost everything on earth is determined by the most common and
> evil forces, by the egoism of acquisitors and military despots. In the hands
> of the latter, the state attempts, as does the egoism of the acquisitors, to
> organise everything anew from out of itself and to be the bond and the
> pressure for all those hostile forces; that is to say, the state wants human
> beings to idolise it in the same way that they previously idolised the
> Church. With what success? We will have to witness this.[56]

In Nietzsche's account, then, the modern state sought to profit from the 'death of God' by portraying itself as the new source of meaning in people's lives. "The monster," as he metaphorically called it, "divines you too, you conquerors of the old god."[57] What is more, he warned his readers, "[y]our weariness serves the new idol."[58] The modern state, in other words, through its use of nationalist ideas, is able to thrive on the basis of those unwilling to welcome the experience of meaninglessness as harbouring the possibility of a cultural rejuvenation of Europe and

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[54] See, for example, Friedrich Nietzsche. *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 'Schopenhauer as Educator,' 6, pp. 165-166.
[55] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1961, 'Of the New Idol,' p. 75.
[56] Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 'Schopenhauer as Educator,' 4, p. 150.
[57] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 'Of the New Idol,' p. 76.
[58] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 'Of the New Idol,' p. 76.

harbouring the possibility of a cultural rejuvenation of Europe and who prefer instead a secular substitute for the 'old Idol' of Christianity.

In fact, Nietzsche argued, the modern state is not at all interested in a critical engagement with the advent of European nihilism. Rather, it is content with simply advocating a new and artificial form of meaning. "Coldly," Nietzsche noted, "it lies, too; and this lie creeps from its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people.' It is a lie! It was creators who created peoples and hung a faith and a love over them: thus they served life."[59] Nietzsche maintained instead that it is precisely the destroyers "who set snares for many and call it the state: they hang a sword and a hundred desires over them."[60] Indeed, it will be recalled from the previous chapter, that Nietzsche stipulated that it is precisely the state, broadly conceived, which facilitates the emergence of slave morality and generates the need for transcendence amongst its subjects. In Nietzsche's account, the emergence of the state is generally due to "a conqueror and master race which, organised for war and with the ability to organise, unhesitatingly lays its claws upon a populace perhaps superior in numbers but still formless and nomad."[61] By hanging this sword over its subjects, and by virtue of the suffering it induces, the state thereby also creates the appetite for metaphysical meaning which will ultimately culminate in a way of interpreting existence which devalues existence in favour of a higher, life denying purpose. In this way, the state generates the very appetites which it claims to be addressing, and, in doing so, further institutionalises the advent of meaninglessness and the quest for some form of redemption.

In addition to serving the members of state bureaucracies, the advocacy of national ideals also served to benefit, Nietzsche further argued, those who stand outside of politics and in the service of international capital.[62] Here, Nietzsche, like several scholars after him, sought to attack those "'truly international homeless hermits' who, due to their lack of state instinct, abuse politics as an apparatus for their

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[59] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 'Of the New Idol,' p. 75.
[60] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 'Of the New Idol,' p. 75.
[61] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, II, 17, p. 86.
[62] See, for example, Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 'Schopenhauer as Educator' 6, pp. 164-165.

own enrichment."[63] It is in this vein, moreover, that Nietzsche also designated, "as the most dangerous characteristic of the political present, the application of revolutionary thought to the service of a selfish stateless gold-aristocracy...."[64] Nietzsche, in other words, was also disturbed by the existence of men whose only loyalty was primarily to money and material wealth.[65] Such men, he argued, would manipulate and propagate nationalist sentiments in the service of their own material interests. Thus, what united both European statesmen and businessmen alike, in Nietzsche's account, was their joint lack of interest in confronting honestly the experience of meaninglessness. In addition, therefore, to resting on the same psychological foundations as Christianity, Nietzsche's second reason for criticising modern nationalism as a means of engaging with the problem of European nihilism derives from his argument that it was being perpetuated by precisely those two types of actors in European affairs who had little interest in actually addressing the problem of nihilism, indeed who sought to exploit the 'death of God' in order to advance their own interests.

To Nietzsche, however, the fact that these ideas where deployed largely in order to meet the instrumental concerns of certain modern political and economic actors also meant that these ideas constituted a fairly artificial response to the advent of meaninglessness. In this vein, Nietzsche noted, for example, how national ideas require "cunning, lies, and force to remain respectable."[66] The continued existence of nationalist sentiments depends on the decisive efforts of the commercial and social classes in whose interest such a situation is maintained.[67] It is in this vein, moreover, that Nietzsche insisted that "[w]hat is called a 'nation' in Europe today, and is really rather a *res facta* than *res nata* (and occasionally can hardly be told from a *res ficta et picta*) is in any case something evolving, something young, and easily changed...."[68] Not only is nationalism a fairly artificial response to the advent of European nihilism, but is also, Nietzsche argued, a very basic and unsophisticated one. Nationalism,

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[63] Tracy B. Strong. *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, p. 209.

[64] Nietzsche, *The Greek State*, III, 283-284. Cited in Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, p. 209.

[65] Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, p. 209.

[66] Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, I, 475, p. 228.

[67] Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, I, 475, p. 228.

when compared to the European scope of the advent of nihilism, is a very modest form of meaning ascribed to European existence.[69] Nietzsche thus repeatedly refers to nationalism as 'petty' and small, and sees it in no way as being fit to deal with the problem of European nihilism whose nature is more profound and sophisticated. As Nietzsche himself complained, "[n]ationalism, *this névrose nationale* with which Europe is sick, this perpetuation of European particularism (*Kleinstaaterei*), of petty politics [has] deprived Europe itself of its meaning, of its reason – [has] driven it into a dead-end street. – Does anyone besides me know the way out of this dead-end street? – A task that is great enough to *unite* nations again?"[70] This artificial and basic nature of national ideas, moreover, constitutes Nietzsche's third critique of modern nationalism.

To Nietzsche, then, the rise of modern nationalism in Europe must ultimately be understood as a regrettable symbiosis between European publics' yearning for a greater sense of meaning or purpose following the 'death of God,' on the one hand, and self-interested segments of society wishing to profit from the production of meaning through nationalism on the other. What is worse, the overall effect of this symbiosis, in Nietzsche's view, is actually is to avoid a genuine and critical confrontation with the advent of European nihilism. As Tracy Strong points out in this regard, "[n]ationalism allows people to avoid coming to terms for a while with the gradual disintegration of meaning – what Nietzsche formulated in the aphorism of the "death of God."[71] Indeed, Strong explains further, "[n]ationalism is .... essentially a resisting force. It does not want to return to something atavistic, but wants to stabilise the onrushing nihilism."[72] In this way, modern nationalism, like strategies of incomplete nihilism more generally, also obstructs much more than it facilitates a critical confrontation with the problem of European nihilism.

Indeed, in Nietzsche's view those who have understood the implications of the advent of European nihilism would find the advocacy of national ideas an

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[68] Something made; something born; something fictitious and unreal. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 251, pp. 188.

[69] Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, p. 208

[70] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, 'The Case of Wagner,' 2, p. 321.

[71] Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, p. 205.

unconvincing response to the advent of European nihilism. Thus, Nietzsche himself, for example, noted in a fragment entitled '*Critique of the worship of fatherlands*' that "whoever feels above himself values which he takes a hundred times higher than the wellbeing of the 'fatherland,' of society, of blood and race relatives, – values that are beyond fatherlands and races, i.e. international values – he would be a hypocrite to play the 'patriot.'" For, Nietzsche insisted, "[i]t is a *lowering* of man and spirit, which tolerates within itself national hate, or even admires and deifies it: the dynastic families exploit this type of man – and, in turn, there are enough commercial and societal classes ... that profit from the national divisions are in power."[73] Indeed, Nietzsche added in the end, "[i]t is a bad symptom, that one pays so much tribute to the love of the fatherland and politics. It seems that there is nothing higher which one can praise."[74]

It is against the background of this pervasive critique of modern nationalism that one must also understand Nietzsche's despising of the self-intoxication of the European nations,[75] as well as his ardent pleas to overcome the petty nationalism of European nation-states. Thus, in one of his posthumously published notes, Nietzsche plead to "[l]et some fresh air in! This absurd state of affairs must not go on any longer in Europe! What sense is there in this bone-headed nationalism? Now that everything points to larger common interests, what is the purpose of encouraging this scurvy egoism?"[76] Indeed, he thought modern nationalism to be intellectually suffocating as well as barring human creativity. It is, he concluded, the anti-cultural sickness *par excellence*.[77] Not only, then, are nationalist ideas are premised on a resentful attitude towards existence, in Nietzsche's view, they are also intellectually untenable in the aftermath of the 'death of God' once the will-to-truth has put itself into question. Indeed, he argued, "to be national, in the way and degree in which it is now demanded by public opinion, would ... pose not only a case of bad taste among us more intellectual people, but also a deliberate numbing of our better knowledge and

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[72] Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, p. 208.

[73] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 7[47], pp. 310-11.

[74] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1875-1879*, KSA 8, 17[52], p. 305.

[75] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Anti-Christ*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1990, Foreword, p. 125.

[76] See Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1887-1889*, KSA 13, 11[235], p. 92.

[77] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'The Case of Wager', 2, p. 321.

conscience."[78] In nationalism, Nietzsche concluded provocatively "people want to work as little as possible ... with their heads."[79]

All of Nietzsche's above criticisms of the way in which modern nationalism seeks to deal with the advent of European nihilism are unleashed in his attack on German nationalism in particular. Indeed, Nietzsche looked upon the German character with 'sorrowful despair'[80] leaving the historian Golo Mann to later conclude that "there has never been a shrewder critic at any time anywhere."[81] Nietzsche was, in fact, so critical of German nationalism that he once suggested that "to be a good German means to de-Germanicise oneself[82] and even accused the Germans of denying Europe its last cultural harvest.[83] By the time of the 1880s, Nietzsche was thus also no longer a friend of the German state. Rather, Nietzsche now loathed the philistinism of Bismarck's *Reich* with its emphasis of racist, statist, nationalist and power politics.[84] Already in the first of his *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche had drawn a crucial distinction between the German *Geist*, and the German *Reich*.[85] For, in Nietzsche's view, German public opinion had profoundly misunderstood the lessons of the Franco-Prussian War. It was not, as so many believed, German culture which had been victorious in the war with France. The things which led to the German victory, such as superior generalship and discipline must not, Nietzsche insisted, be confused with culture.[86] Indeed, he lamented in this vein, "there no longer exists any clear conception of what culture is" in Germany.[87] This line of criticism, moreover, is continued in the *Twilight of the Idols* where he expressed the view that the cry "*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*" had signalled the end of any serious thinking

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[78] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 2[199], pp. 164-65.
[79] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Human, All Too Human*. Trans. Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. London: Penguin, 1984, I, 480, p. 232.
[80] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967, 23, p. 136.
[81] Golo Mann, in *The History of Germany since 1789*. Middlesex: Penguin, 1985, p. 396.
[82] "Gut deutsch sein heisst sich entdeutschen." Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II*, 'Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche,' KSA 2, 321, p. 511.
[83] See also Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, 61, p. 196.
[84] Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, p. 26.
[85] Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, p. 27.
[86] Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche*, p. 27.
[87] Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. 'David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer,' 1, p. 5.

in German.[88] In his autobiography of 1888, moreover, Nietzsche even attacked Treitschke, noting that "German has become an argument, *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* a principle, the Teutons represent the 'moral world-order' in history ..." What is more, "[t]here is now a historiography that is *reichsdeutsch*; there is even, I fear, an antisemitic one – there is a court historiography and Herr von Treitschke is not ashamed.[89] Nietzsche himself, however, insisted quite unequivocally that "[t]he nationality-insanity ... is without magic for me. '*Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles'* rings painfully in my ears."[90]

Nietzsche, moreover, also blamed the Germans for actually spreading modern nationalist sentiments and for turning their romanticism into an unreasonable political programme, which is why, in *Beyond Good and Evil,* he again portrayed them as a constraining force:

> It must be taken into the bargain if all sorts of clouds and disturbances – in brief, little attacks of hebetation – pass over the spirit of a people that is suffering, and *wants* to suffer, of nationalistic nerve fever and political ambition. Examples among the Germans today include now the anti-French stupidity, now the anti-Jewish, now the anti-Polish, now the Christian-romantic, now the Wagnerian, now the Teutonic, now the Prussian (just look at the wretched historians, these Sybels and Treitschkes, and their thickly bandaged heads!) and whatever other names these little mystifications of the German spirit and conscience may have. Forgive me, for during a brief daring sojourn in very infected territory. I, too, did not altogether escape this disease and began like everyone else to develop notions about matters that are none of my business: the first sign of the political infection.[91]

By the middle phase of his writing career, therefore, it seems that Nietzsche had clearly come to the conviction that German nationalism in particular, and modern nationalism in general, was neither a viable nor a desirable way of confronting the advent of European nihilism. Indeed, as Laurence Lampert notes in his study of

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[88] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of the Idols.* Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1990, 'What the Germans Lack," 1, p. 71.
[89] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* 'The Case of Wagner,' 2, p. 319.
[90] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887,* KSA 12, 2[10], p. 70.
[91] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* 251, pp. 186-87.

Nietzsche's thought, "it was Nietzsche who warned good Europeans in the 1880s that there was nothing they should fear as much as they should fear nationalism; and in particular that they should fear German nationalism with its basis in German racial hatred; and more particularly still, they should fear German hatred of Jews and take steps against it."[92]

Nietzsche's development from being an early, yet qualified, supporter of the German nationalist cause through to the ardent critic of nationalism is also mirrored in his relationship with Wagner, a relationship which preoccupied him until the very end of his sane life. "What did I never forgive Wagner?" Nietzsche asked and replied, "that he became *reichsdeutsch*."[93] Nietzsche realised that Bayreuth was increasingly becoming the new 'cultural' centre of the 'German *Reich*,' the Holy City of anti-Semitic 'Christian' chauvinism.[94] Indeed, he had grown sick of what he perceived as Wagner's romanticism and egomania, as well as his anti-Semitism:[95] "Thus I attacked Wagner – more precisely, the falseness, the half-couth instincts of our "culture" which mistakes the subtle for the rich, and the late for the great."[96] Nietzsche would subsequently become, at least in his own view, the very antipode of Wagner,[97] the antipode of the man who's *Parsifal*, for Nietzsche, was proof that Wagner ultimately "knelt at the cross."[98]

The factor, then, that perhaps differentiates Nietzsche from Wagner so crucially is not that Nietzsche himself did not also have a decadent side. After all, Nietzsche himself admitted quite openly that he was "no less than Wagner, a child of his age, that is a *decadent*: but," Nietzsche wrote, "I comprehended this, I resisted it."[99] In contrast to Wagner, Nietzsche chose to vehemently fight his age, something Wagner had not done. Rather, in Nietzsche's view, Wagner made his peace with his contemporaries and became the high priest of decadence. Towards the end of his sane

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[92] Lampert, *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche*, p. 9.

[93] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* 'Why I Am So Clever,' 5, p. 248.

[94] Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations,* I, 1. Cited in Kaufmann, *Nietzsche,* p. 38.

[95] Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche,* p. 27. "Die verfluchte Antisemiterei ... hat R[ichard] W[agner] und mich verfeindet, sie ist die Ursache eines *radikalen* Bruchs zwischen mir und meiner Schwester..." See Ottmann, *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche,* p. 250.

[96] Kaufmann, *Nietzsche,* p. 135.

[97] Kaufmann, *Nietzsche,* p. 66.

[98] See A. J. Hoover. *Friedrich Nietzsche: His Life and Thought.* London: Praeger, 1994, p. 9.

[99] Cited in Kaufmann, *Nietzsche,* p. 73.

life, Nietzsche reflected once more on his early infatuation with Wagner's music, concluding that "[a]ll things considered, I could not have endured my youth without Wagner's music. For I was *condemned* to Germans." Yet, Nietzsche further noted, "[i]f one wants to rid oneself of an unbearable pressure, one needs hashish. Well then, I needed Wagner. Wagner is the antitoxin against everything German *par excellence* – a toxin, a poison, that I don't deny."[100] What, however, Nietzsche had still seen in his youth as an antidote to 'everything' German, had subsequently turned into a very different kind of intoxication, namely one that had made its peace with the *Reich*. It is also in this vein that one should understand his 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism' which he later added to the preface of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche had now come to the realisation that his earlier quest to bring about the re-emergence of tragic culture was actually indicative of the very crisis he thought he had diagnosed.[101] Indeed, as Daniel Conway points out, "[t]he guiding conviction that modernity stands in need of redemption, that its goals and accomplishments fall short of some shadowy trans-historical standard of cultural 'health,' is itself symptomatic of the facile moralising that he now associates with the crisis of modernity."[102] In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche consequently came to the realisation that the most important task in an age characterised by the 'death of God' is "[n]ot to remain stuck to a person – not even the most loved – every person is a prison, also a nook. Not to remain stuck to a fatherland – not even if it suffers most and needs help most – it is less difficult to sever one's heart from a victorious fatherland."[103]

By way of concluding this section, then, Nietzsche saw both modern European statesmen and businessmen as working in opposition to the quest to achieve a more honest confrontation with the advent of European nihilism. Their willingness, moreover, to propagate national sentiments in order to serve their own interests, stood in opposition to Nietzsche's search of a more honest and critical response to the onset of European nihilism. Rather than confronting the advent of European nihilism, such leaders preferred, in Nietzsche's account, to keep the myth of a greater meaning alive, and to sustain the conviction that there has to be a greater meaning underlying

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[100] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I Am So Clever, 6, p. 249.
[101] Daniel Conway. "The Politics of Decadence." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. XXXVII (Supplement). 1999: 19-34, p. 22.
[102] Conway, "The Politics of Decadence," p. 22.

existence, even if this meant, in the end, pitting Europeans against one another. It is for this reason, moreover, that Nietzsche insisted that "this artificial nationalism is in any case as perilous as artificial Catholicism used to be, for it is in its essence a forcibly imposed state of siege and self-defence inflicted on the many by the few and requires cunning, force and falsehood to maintain a front of respectability."[104] Moreover, he insisted, "[i]t is not the interests of the many (the peoples), as is no doubt claimed, but above all the interests of certain princely dynasties and of certain classes of business and society, that impel to this nationalism; once one has recognised this fact one should not be afraid to proclaim oneself simply a good European and actively to work for the amalgamation of nations."[105] Nietzsche, then, was similarly not blind to the fact that nationalist sentiments were being promoted in order to protect and enhance self-serving interests amongst certain sections of society. Those who do so, however, could not be considered, by Nietzsche, to be the 'good Europeans' which he hoped would evolve in Europe as some point in the future, because they did not realise that such a strategy is, strictly speaking, no longer intellectually tenable in the aftermath of the 'death of God' and that such a strategy is still premised on a resentful attitude towards existence. Nietzsche himself therefore clearly objected to the "dangerous carnival of nationaliy-insanity"[106] and sought to expose the "national lies"[107] as "humbug."[108]

Conclusion

What emerges, then, from the above consideration of Nietzsche's writings on modern nationalism is that his critique of it, written prior to the advent of the two world wars, actually follows a trajectory quite different from the conventional one found in the contemporary literature on nationalism. Most studies of modern nationalism are, after all, conducted against the background of the devastating effect it has had on Europe in the course of two world wars. Scholars of nations and nationalism thus do not tire of warning their readers that nationalism can be, and in

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[103] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 41, p. 52.
[104] Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 475, p. 228.
[105] Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 475, p. 228.
[106] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 2[3], p. 67.
[107] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 2[121], p. 121.

fact has been, a contributing factor towards war in the twentieth century. Stanley Hoffmann, for example, has stated this relationship quite unequivocally when he observed that in the twentieth century "destructive nationalism ... had led to the devastation of two world wars."[109] Moreover, it seems that the bellicose propensity of nationalism has not receded in Europe, as has once again become all too clear during the re-emergence of nationalist hostilities in 'eastern' Europe and the Balkans. Many scholars of nationalism thus accept, either implicitly or explicitly, the nexus between nationalism and war and consequently often, and rightly, plead against the spread of nationalist ideas.[110] Such a critique of nationalism is surely defensible, and, indeed, Chapter 3 sought to demonstrate how it was precisely during the world wars that the quest for meaning was most evident amongst European societies. At the same time, however, it emerged from that chapter that the violent conflicts of the twentieth century, by virtue of the suffering they brought about, only ended up intensifying the experience rather than remedying it. In this sense, "[a]ttempts to escape nihilism without revaluing our values so far, they produce the opposite, make the problem more acute.[111]

One of the difficulties, however, with basing the normative critique of nationalism on its propensity to cause violence alone, is that it is very difficult to apply it to situations, as in contemporary 'western' Europe, where nationalist sentiments and identities continue to enjoy an embedded and accepted status and where they have resurfaced in the contemporary debate on Europe, but where the immediate prospect of armed conflict is quite low. Given that western Europe since 1945 has experienced a prolonged phase of peace, this argument about the violent propensity of nationalist sentiments faces difficulties in challenging the status quo of European politics. Indeed, defenders of an overarching European identity or political union can thus only warn that if, in the long run, nothing is done, there might be war on the continent once more. It is here, that Nietzsche's original critique of nationalism regains great contemporary relevance. For, Nietzsche also noted how modern

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[108] Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 'Schopenhauer as Educator,' 7, p. 179.
[109] S. Hoffmann. "Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation State" in S. Hoffmann, ed., *Conditions of World Order* New York, NY: 1966, p. 110.
[110]See also Anthony D. Smith. "Nationalism and the Historians" in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed). *Mapping the Nation*: London: Verso: 1996, p. 182.
[111] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 28, p. 19.

nationalism, as a form of incomplete nihilism, is ultimately based on a resentful attitude towards existence and is, strictly speaking, no longer intellectually tenable in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' once the will-to-truth has begun to put itself into question. Such a critique, moreover, can still be applied to contemporary European politics in a way which a critique based mostly on the violent effects of nationalism cannot. In this sense, perhaps, the very originality of Nietzsche's critique of nationalism, may simultaneously also be its greatest strength.

Indeed, within the context of the contemporary debate over the idea of Europe, Nietzsche's critique of modern nationalism as a form of incomplete nihilism would lead to a distancing from any attempt to confront the advent of European nihilism in this way. As Graham Parkes explains, if one were, in response to the advent of European nihilism, to "find meaning of one's existence in being a certain nationality, this would for Nietzsche be a sign that the abysmal depths of the self opened up by nihilism had not been properly plumbed."[112] Much in this vein, Nietzsche himself had asked in the *Gay Science*, "[h]ow can those of us who are children of the future be at home in this house of today! We are averse to all the ideals in which anyone today, in this brittle and broken time of transition, might feel at home; but as far as the 'realities' of our time are concerned, we do not believe that they will *last*."[113] What is more, Nietzsche wrote towards the end of 1888 "[t]his provocation to self-idolisation of the nations is described as great politics, is being experienced almost as a duty and taught in this way!!! ... This has to be put to an end – and I am strong enough for this."[114] Indeed, Nietzsche even concluded, "I have taken the spirit of Europe inside myself, now I will make my counterstrike!"[115] A nationalist response to the advent of European nihilism would, therefore, clearly not be the chosen approach of Nietzsche's 'good Europeans.' In Nietzsche's view, those who propagate nationalist ideas are simply perpetuating the 'sickness of the century' and are, in fact, "an enemy of the

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[112] Graham Parkes. "Wanderers in the Shadow of Nihilism: Nietzsche's Good Europeans." *History of European Ideas*. Vol. 16. No. 4-6 1993: 585-590, pp. 586-87.
[113] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 377. Cited in David Krell and Donald L. Bates. *The Good European: Nietzsche's Work Sites in Word and Image*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 2.
[114] Nietzsche in a letter to Bonghi at the end of 1888. Cited in Josef Nolte. *Wir guten Europäer: Historisch-politische Versuche über uns selbst*. Tübingen: Narr, 1991, p. 197. Nietzsche thought, perhaps somewhat erroneously, that "[t]he love of fatherlands in Europe is something young and stands on weak legs: it falls over easily! One must not let oneself be fooled by the noise they make: small children scream the loudest." Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 3[6], p. 172.
[115] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1880-1882*, KSA 9, 8[77]p. 399.

good Europeans, an enemy of the free spirits."[116] What still remains to be done in greater detail, however, is to trace whether contemporary Europeanists, in turn, escape Nietzsche's critique of incomplete nihilism. It is to this task that the next chapter turns.

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[116] Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human II*, §87.

CHAPTER 6

EUROPEAN NIHILISM AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Nietzsche, the previous chapter argued, understood modern nationalism to be a form of incomplete nihilism and thus also considered it to be an inappropriate response to the advent of European nihilism. Strategies of incomplete nihilism were, in his view, not only intellectually untenable in the aftermath of the 'death of God' but were also usually based on a resentful attitude towards existence. In the contemporary debate, therefore, between those advocating the primacy of national identities on the one hand, and those calling for the articulation of a European identity on the other, a Nietzschean perspective would yield a position quite critical of the former. Indeed, in contrast to those favouring the continued primacy of national identities in Europe, Nietzsche thought instead that the problem of European nihilism could only be engaged on a *European* level, which is why he deliberately styled himself as a 'good European,' that is to say, in his own words, "supra-national."[1] What still remains to be investigated in greater detail, however, is whether this European perspective on behalf of Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' is compatible with the political project of Europe as it is currently conceived and whether, contrary to modern nationalism, it actually escapes Nietzsche's critique of incomplete nihilism. What emerges from such an investigation, however, is that the contemporary European project can itself be seen as constituting a form of incomplete nihilism which merely replicates many aspects of the logic of modern nationalism already criticised by Nietzsche, albeit it on a much larger scale. Despite their European perspective, therefore, Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' may well end up standing in critical relation to *both* sides of the post-Cold War debate on Europe already outlined in Chapter 4.

1. Nietzsche, the 'Good European'

Nietzsche consistently preferred to extol the benefits of being a 'good European' over and above the nationalist ideas that were attaining increased importance amongst his contemporaries. "And here I stand now," he wrote for

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[1] See Friedrich Nietzsche. *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-1885*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, KSA 11, 26[297], p. 229.

example in a passage from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* "as [a] European. I cannot do otherwise...!"[2] In a letter to his mother he later added that "even if I should be a bad German, I am definitely a *very good European.*"[3] Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans,' moreover, was intended to be very different from the style he associated with his German contemporaries in particular. Thus, the 'good Europeans' which Nietzsche hoped his writings might provoke sometime in the future would clearly not resemble the Germans of his day, "in the sense in which the word 'German' is constantly being used nowadays, to advocate nationalism and race*hatred and to be able to take pleasure in the national scabies of the heart and blood poisoning that now leads the nations of Europe to delimit and barricade themselves against each other as if it were a matter of quarantine."[4] Rather, Nietzsche insisted:

> [f]or that we are too openminded, too malicious, too spoiled, also too well informed, too 'travelled': we far prefer to live on mountains, apart, 'untimely,' in past or future centuries, merely in order to keep ourselves from experiencing the silent rage to which we know we should be condemned as eyewitnesses of politics that are desolating the German spirit by making it vain and that is, moreover, *petty* politics: to keep its own creation from immediately falling apart again, is it not finding it necessary to plant it between two deadly hatreds? *Must* it not desire the eternalisation of the European system of a lot of petty states?[5]

In contrast to many of his German contemporaries Nietzsche himself chose to maintain instead that "I look beyond all the national wars and the new '*Reiche,*' and all else that currently stares us in the face. As far as I am concerned I see the gradual preparation of the *one Europe.*"[6]

Nietzsche's advocacy of a European perspective, however, was not only intended as a foil against German nationalism in particular, but also against what he

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[2] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1961, 'Among the Daughters of the Desert,' p. 319.

[3] Nietzsche, in a letter to his mother on August 17, 1886. Cited in David Farrell Krell and Donald L. Bates. *The Good European: Nietzsche's Work Sites in Word and Image.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, back of title page.

[4] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974, 377, p. 339.

[5] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* 377, pp. 339-340.

[6] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-1885,* KSA, 11, 37[9], p. 583.

considered to be the 'stupidities' of nationalism in general. "This artificial nationalism," he argued elsewhere, "is as dangerous as artificial Catholicism was, for it is in essence a forcible sate of emergency and martial law, imposed by the few on the many, and requiring cunning, lies, and force to remain respectable."[7] Nationalism, Nietzsche argued in a fashion which recalls much contemporary literature, is an invented and artificial form of producing meaning which merely served specific commercial and social classes rather than aspiring to promote a cultural rejuvenation of Europe as a whole. What is more, it constituted yet another form of what he called 'slave morality,' i.e. a way of existing which required that a greater sense of meaning or purpose be attributed to European existence. Not surprisingly, then, Nietzsche chose to extol instead "[t]he good European ... laughing about the nations [*Vaterländer*]."[8]

If Nietzsche's European bias was partially the result of his dismay over the nationalist turn in European, and especially German, politics, he was equally critical of any suggestion that a European order should be based on a concept of racial purity. Indeed, Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' would recognise the benefits of 'racial' diversity over racial purity. As he himself argued in this vein, "[w]e who are homeless are too manifold and mixed racially and in our descent, being 'modern men,' and consequently do not feel tempted to participate in the mendacious racial self-admiration and racial indecency that parades in Germany today as a sign of a German way of thinking and that is doubly false and obscene among the people of the 'historical sense.'"[9] After having passed into the initial stages of his madness, Nietzsche even proclaimed that "I am having all anti-Semites shot."[10] It was, then, both Nietzsche's distaste for nationalism and racism, as well as his unbelief in their ability to honest confront the experience of European nihilism, that led him to address his idea of the 'good Europeans' to the few amongst his contemporaries who looked beyond the domain of nations and races and thought along decidedly European

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[7] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Human, All Too Human*. Trans. Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. London: Penguin, 1984, 475, p. 228.
[8] See Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-1885*, KSA 11, 32[8], p. 404. As Nietzsche put it in a fragment, "against the national [*das Nationale*] – the good European." See Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-1885*, KSA 11, 25[523], p. 150.
[9] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 377, p. 340.
[10] Cited in Laurence Lampert. *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 9.

parameters.[11] Indeed, he wrote to Georg Brandes at the beginning of December of 1888, "[i]f we are victorious, we will have the governance of the earth in our hands – including world peace... We have abolished the absurd divisions of race, nation, and class."[12]

In light of these convictions, Nietzsche also went to great lengths to convince his own contemporaries that the only way forward was to think along European lines. In a note from *Human, All Too Human,* intended, perhaps, for the politicians and businessmen of his day, Nietzsche wrote, for example, that "[c]ommerce and industry, traffic in books and letters, the commonality of all higher culture, quick changes of locality and landscape, the present-day nomadic life of all nonlandowners – these conditions necessarily bring about a weakening and ultimately a destruction of nations, or at least the European nations; so that a mixed race, that of the European man, has to originate out of all of them, as the result of continual crossbreeding."[13] Given increased interdependence and cross-border traffic, thinking based on the level individual European nations alone would, Nietzsche urged his readers to recognise, not suffice in the long run to meet the requirements of Europe in the future. Yet, in Nietzsche's view "[t]he isolation of nations due to engendered *national* hostilities now work[ed] against this goal, consciously or unconsciously, but the mixing process goes on slowly, nevertheless, despite those intermittent countercurrents...."[14] Indeed, "[t]he national stupidities," he insisted, "should not blind us to the fact in the higher regions there already exists a significant amount of interdependence."[15] While Nietzsche thought that his thinking, too, would become outmoded one day, he was convinced that those who failed to adjust their thinking beyond the nation-state would be forgotten long before him. For, he insisted, "[e]verything is striving for a synthesis of European history into the highest cultural and spiritual types – a kind of centre which denies the sickness of the nations."[16]

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[11] The nature of Nietzsche's European vision is treated in greater detail in Chapter 7.
[12] Cited in Josef Nolte. *Wir guten Europäer: Historisch-politische Versuche über uns selbst.* Tübingen: Narr, 1991, p. 197.
[13] Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human,* 475, p. 228.
[14] Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human,* 475, p. 228.
[15] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-1885,* KSA 11, 25[112], p. 42.
[16] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-1885,* KSA 11, 25[112], p. 42.

Nietzsche thus also demanded quite unequivocally from his readers that they see through the façade of 'petty' nationalism and recognise the value and importance of being a 'good European,' as he did, for example, in the following passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*:

> Owing to the pathological estrangement which the insanity of nationality has induced, and still induces, among the peoples of Europe; owing also to the shortsighted and quick-handed politicians who are at the top today with the help of this insanity, without any inkling that their separatist policies can of necessity only be entr'acte policies; owing to all this and much else that today simply cannot be said, the most unequivocal portents are now being overlooked or arbitrarily and mendaciously reinterpreted – *that Europe wants to become one.[17]*

Indeed, Nietzsche added elsewhere, "[t]he spiritual labour of all the deep thinkers of this century was really to prepare the ground for a new synthesis and to experiment with the future European. Only in their weakest hours, or when they became old, did they fall back on the national limits of their *Vaterländer.*"[18] It is precisely this dynamic of transcending European nationalism which Nietzsche sought to maintain and which is why he repeatedly referred to "[y]ou victorious ones, you overcomers of time, you healthiest and strongest, *you good Europeans!* "[19] and why he insisted that his readers should choose to be "in one word – and let this be our word of honour – *good Europeans*, the heirs of Europe, the rich, oversupplied, but also overly obligated heirs of thousands of years of European spirit."[20] There is, then, much textual evidence to indicate that Nietzsche went to considerable lengths to encourage the spread of a *European* perspective amongst his contemporaries and amongst the generations that would follow.

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[17] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1966, 256, p. 196.

[18] Nietzsche, *Unschuld des Werdens*. Cited in Albert Kopf. *Der Weg des Nihilismus von Friedrich Nietzsche bis zur Atombombe.* Munich: Minerva Publikation, 1988, p. 217.

[19] Zweite Vorrede zu "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches,": "Ihr Siegreichen, ihr Zeit-Überwinder, ihr Gesündesten, ihr Stärksten, *ihr guten Europäer!*" Cited in Nolte, *Wir guten Europäer*, p. 199. See also Krell and Bates, *The Good European*, p. 7.

[20] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 377, p. 340.

It is, furthermore, Nietzsche's choice of extolling the benefits of being a 'good European' over and above the forces of modern nationalism that can be seen as retaining great contemporary relevance. His critique of modern nationalism might be taken as one of the examples of how his themes can often still be drawn into contemporary debates with relative ease. Nietzsche's recent biographer Lesley Chamberlain, for example, emphasises that "[n]ot least, Nietzsche aimed to be European, not German, in spirit...."[21] In her view, moreover, this attitude is not without contemporary relevance, for it is indicative of an "absence of national narrowness we can delight in these days, and delight in with a timeless relish too, because a European *style* was part of Nietzsche's campaign."[22] Given, in other words, that Nietzsche did give his thinking such a decidedly European scope, it is possible to bring him into closer intellectual dialogue with the contemporary institutional project of Europe. This is all the more possible given that Nietzsche himself had even thought that there would, in future, emerge "a European league of nations, within which each individual nation, delimited according to geographical fitness, will possess the status and right of a canton."[23] The question that arises from this observations, therefore, is whether the institutional project of Europe in its current form escapes Nietzsche's critique of incomplete nihilism and whether it is compatible with Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans.' For, it must not necessarily follow from the fact that Nietzsche was critical of those advocating the primacy of national identities, that he would have accepted uncritically those attempts, cited in the introduction of this thesis, to advocate the development of an idea of Europe that would serve to counter this trend and which would increase the legitimacy of the European Union. Advocates of such an idea of Europe are, of course, certainly immune to one of the principal critiques that Nietzsche levied against modern nationalism, namely that it addresses the problem of European nihilism on too small a scale. It still remains to be seen, however, whether they are equally immune to some of the other critiques that Nietzsche previously made about the appeal and advocacy of nationalist ideas, especially in relation to his understanding of it as a form of incomplete nihilism.

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[21] Lesley Chamberlain. *Nietzsche in Turin: The End of the Future*. London: Quartet Books, 1997, p. 9.
[22] Chamberlain. *Nietzsche in Turin*, p. 9.
[23] Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, 'The Wanderer and his Shadow,' 293, KSA 2, p. 684.

2. Nihilism and the Appeal of 'Europe'

Only half a century after his death, and by the time of the Second World War, Nietzsche would no longer have had to go to such rhetorical lengths to make his advocacy of a more European perspective heard. For, it was precisely the challenge to transcend the national boundaries which confronted Europeans during the final years of the Second World War. By then, the experience of devastation in the two world wars had given rise to a fairly widespread desire to transcend the traditional and national boundaries. Through eventually merging the various nations of Europe into a larger entity, many hoped, violent conflict between nations might be averted in future. Indeed, members of the Resistance no longer saw the national boundaries as inviolable. If anything, nationalism was now seen to have been largely responsible for the two world wars that ravaged in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. As the historian of European integration David Urwin has pointed out in this regard, "[r]esistance views on the future therefore stressed the need to transcend historical national boundaries, dismissed as artificial and discredited, in order to rebuild a revitalised and genuine European community."[24] These sentiments, moreover, can, in the first instance, be seen as being broadly compatible with Nietzsche's earlier critique of nationalism and his advocacy of a European perspective. This is not to say, though, that this compatibility translates into an uncritical acceptance of this early project.

Where Nietzsche would most certainly have differed with the initial project, is with respect to the Christian overtones that it embodied from its outset. While Nietzsche had regretted about his own times that, under the conditions characterised by the advent of European nihilism "a European politics has become untenable" he also insisted that a solution along "Christian perspectives is a malheur."[25] Nietzsche, in other words, did not think that the problem of nihilism could simply be refused by Christians, nor did he think that this crisis could be circumvented by a pre-modern leap of faith. In the *Gay Science* he consequently noted quite explicitly that it is precisely in this opposition to Christianity that "we are *good* Europeans and heirs of

[24] D. W. Urwin. *The Community of Europe: A History of European Integration Since 1945*. London: Longman, 1991, p. 8.

Europe's longest and most courageous self-overcoming."[26] Yet, it was also this very desire to reconstitute the idea of Europe along Christian lines that was initially quite a strong one amongst supporters of the integrationist cause. In fact, this attempt to reconstitute a Christian version of the European idea actually has a much longer history that can be traced back at far back as Novalis' influential essay entitled *Christianity or Europe* in which he insisted that "[o]nly religion can re-establish Europe."[27] Following Germany's defeat in the Great War, moreover, Max Scheler had similarly argued that the "cultural reconstruction of Europe" must be based on the Christian tradition as the common possession of the European peoples.[28] In the aftermath of the Second World War, in turn, such sentiments were expressed once again.[29]

Indeed, the Christian interpretation of the European idea would find considerable resonance amongst the founding fathers of the institutional project of Europe. Schuman, Adenauer and de Gasperi were all men with sincere catholic beliefs and simultaneously prominent members of Christian-democratic parties.[30] As one scholar of European affairs has noted in this vein, "the synthetic idea underlying Europe, in the minds of the founders of the EC was Christian", and "Schuman's vision of European integration was based on Christian individualism and moral values."[31] What is more, in a sense even the entire underlying idea of the project of European integration is itself still very much a Christian one, centring around a call for forgiveness and a quest to overcome the mutual hatred of the nations of Europe. In Joseph Weiler's view, therefore, the European project as a whole actually "resonates with ... the distinct discourse, imagery and values of Christian Love, of Grace."[32] There can be little doubt, then, that at least some of the most instrumental protagonists

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[25] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-1885,* KSA 11, 26[336], p. 239.

[26] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* 357, p. 307.

[27] Cited in James Joll "Europe – An Historian's View" *History of European Ideas.* Vol. 1, 1980, p. 11.

[28] Karl Löwith. *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism.* Trans. Gary Steiner. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 177.

[29] See, for example, Winston Churchill's 'Something that Will Astonish You' Speech delivered in Zurich on September 19, 1946, in David Cannadine (ed.) *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat: Winston Churchill's Famous Speeches.* London: Cassell, 1989, pp. 309-314.

[30] Joll, "Europe – An Historian's View," p. 11.

[31] Jude Bloomfield. "The New Europe: A New Agenda for Research?" in Mary Fulbrook (ed.) *National Histories and European History.* London: UCL Press, 1993, p. 264.

[32] Joseph Weiler. "Europe After Maastricht – Do the New Clothes have an Emperor?" *Harvard Jean Monnet Working Papers* Vol. 12. 1995. http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/JeanMonnet/papers/95

of an institutionally united Europe had similar hopes and aspirations about the role Christianity might have in the Europe to come. This, moreover, is surely understandable given that Christianity could be seen as offering a non-nationalist, pan-European form of allegiance. Nevertheless, this would *not* be the strategy pursued by Nietzsche's 'good Europeans.'

To some extent the Christian conception of the European idea remains evident even today. According to the Pope, for example, Europe remains "a Christian continent" and Christianity is seen by him to have "moulded the civilisation and founded the common identity on the European people."[33] In fact, the European idea has been useful for the Vatican which has sought, following the collapse of communism, to push the notion of an enlarged, 'Christian Europe.'[34] What is more, one scholar notes, "[p]art of the Vatican's campaign for a 'new evangelization' is based upon the idea that the failure of all major efforts to create a secular, non-religious universalism proves the need for a renewal of Christian spirituality as a centripetal force in the world today."[35] Countering such a conception of Europe is the obvious objection that religion has contributed as much to Europe's division and violent conflicts as it has done to conserve European unity. Besides this immediate objection, however, there is also a more 'Nietzschean' objection to this early aspect of the institutional project of Europe. For, in Nietzsche's view, Christianity had devalued earthly existence in favour of the promise of an otherworldly gratification and constituted a path which, following the 'death of God,' was no longer intellectually credible. Indeed, from a Nietzschean perspective, the attempt to articulate a more meaningful Europe along Christian lines would signal a worrying relapse into 'slave morality,' i.e. an attempt to mediate the devastating experience of suffering which befell Europe in the first half of the twentieth century by erecting yet another, greater ascetic idol. In this respect, the attempts on behalf of the resistance movements also showed signs of precisely that way of addressing suffering which Nietzsche found so

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[33] Max Gallo. "Europe without Nations" in J. Peter Burgess (ed.) *Cultural Politics and Political Culture in Postmodern Europe*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997, p. 384.

[34] See P. Chenaux. *Une Europe Vaticane?* Brussels: Ciaco, 1990 and M. Kettle. "John Paul's Grand Design for Europe" *The Guardian* 27 April 1990. Cited in Gerard Delanty. *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*. London: Macmillan, 1995, p. 145.

[35] Ludo Abicht. "One Nation as God? A Critique of Metaphysical Nationalism." *Cultural Dynamics* Vol. 7. No. 2. 1995, p. 262.

problematic and thus would also lead to a critical distancing between the institutional project of Europe, on the one hand, and Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans' on the other.

Fortunately, though, it is possible to note, from a Nietzschean perspective, that although the idea of 'Europe' continues to exert its influence as a new idol in contemporary politics, it is nevertheless the case that, as Hugh Seton-Watson has argued, "[i]n today's world, allegiance to Christendom, the land of the true faith, can have no meaning."[36] In contemporary European societies, in other words, the influence of Christianity as a politically mobilising force in insufficient to underpin the institutional project of Europe with a greater sense of meaning that would be accepted on a widespread and pervasive basis. Indeed, the linking of the institutional project of Europe with Europe's Christian heritage is now largely confined to the historiography of European integration and to central and eastern European intellectuals.[37] If, moreover, the Christian reading of the European project is no longer as prominent as it was in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, it would also seem that the initial Christian overtones of the institutional project of Europe need not, in the contemporary context, necessarily be an impairment for endorsing the institutional project of Europe from the Nietzschean perspective. To this extent, it would also be conceivable, at least in theory, that a certain reconciliation of these perspectives would be possible in the contemporary context.

Importantly, however, the now diminished Christian overtones of the political project of Europe do not actually free this project from Nietzsche's critique of incomplete nihilism, i.e. of strategies which apply the same fundamental principle of the will-to-truth upon which Christianity is founded, yet redirect it onto the earthly realm. For, the institutions of the European Union, even without the recourse to the overt language of Christianity, can, like its nationalist predecessor, be seen as encouraging precisely such a strategy of incomplete nihilism. Indeed, the initial

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[36] Hugh Seton-Watson. "What is Europe, Where is Europe: From Mystique to Politique." *Encounter*. July-August 1985, p. 16. See also Anthony Smith "National Identity and the Idea of European Unity." *International Affairs*. Vol. 68. 1992, pp. 55-76.

[37] Bloomfield, "The New Europe," p. 264. For a more recent statement of this case, made in favour of a certain reappropriation of the Orthodox faith, see Julia Kristeva. *The Crisis of the European Subject*. Trans. Susan Fairfield. New York: Other Press, 2000.

compatibility of the institutional project of Europe with the aforementioned Christian aspirations does much to raise precisely this suspicion. The case in favour of such an assessment rests on the recognition that the institutional project of Europe still benefits substantially in the public domain from the perception that it represents both the culmination of European history, as well as the pathway to a peaceful, equitable and united European order. Despite their stated inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era, the institutions of the European Union have nevertheless relied in the past, and arguably still continue to rely, on the appeal of the underlying *telos* of peace and unity. To this extent, the European Union has also been repeatedly portrayed, and portrayed itself, as the harbinger of a European peace for all European peoples and as the structure which will redeem the violent history of Europe in the course of the twentieth century. Representatives of the institutions of the European Union, as well as the treaty texts which established them, have frequently referred to "the contribution which an organised and active Europe can make to world peace." They affirm, moreover, the mentality that "because Europe was not united we have had war." It is this underlying logic, i.e. that the institutions of the European Union will redeem the suffering that Europe experienced in the course of the twentieth century, which has helped to give the institutional project of Europe much of its momentum and has helped it achieve its current level of public endorsement and appeal.

In this sense, moreover, the public appeal of the institutional project of Europe can also be seen to be based, as is the case with other forms of incomplete nihilism, on the attempt to render the experience of suffering meaningful through the erection of a greater ideal which is to be pursued. From a Nietzschean perspective, in other words, the vision of Europe embodied in the institutional project of Europe can be seen to rest on the same psychological principles as its Christian and nationalist predecessors; it still expresses the demand for 'something greater' to which Nietzsche objected and which, in his view, was indicative of 'slave' morality. Nietzsche himself had already observed about his own times that "[e]very philosophy that ranks peace above war ... that knows some *finale*, some final state of some sort, every predominantly aesthetic or religious craving for some Apart, Beyond, Outside, Above,

permits the question whether it was not sickness that inspired the philosopher."[38] It is in this sense, moreover, that the idea of 'Europe as peace' embodied in the institutional project also remains anathema to Nietzsche's notion of 'good Europeanism' – not, however, because Nietzsche desired war, but rather because such an idea constitutes yet another in the series of ascetic ideals which European culture has generated in reaction to the experience of suffering and which nevertheless mark a resentful attitude both towards life and the experience of meaninglessness.

What emerges upon closer inspection, then, is that although Nietzsche did indeed advocate the transcendence of nationalist ideals, and made the case for the emergence of the 'good Europeans,' this position does not necessarily translate into an uncritical acceptance of the institutional project of Europe as it is currently conceived. Rather, in the contemporary debate on Europe, a Nietzschean perspective would have to call for a more critical assessment, not only of nationalism, but also of the kind of Europeanism often embodied in the European Union. Indeed, the first critique that derives from a Nietzschean perspective in relation to today's idea of Europe is that, however vacuous it seems to be, it still constitutes a remarkably under-criticised concept. To this extent, a Nietzschean perspective in the current debate would not be incompatible with the recent assessment made by Gerard Delanty when he claimed that a more sustained critique of the European idea is long overdue. Delanty notes that while there is plethora of studies on nationalism, racism and fascism, "there is no systematic and critical study of the idea of Europe in relation to the politics of identity in the modern polity. The idea of Europe is a major aspect of modern political culture and is astonishingly under-researched. ... nothing has been written to dispel the myth of Europe as a unifying and universalising project."[39] The idea of Europe as a mobilising metaphor and as a central aspect of contemporary political discourse, then, might well have to be subjected to critical scrutiny, for, its appeal may, from a Nietzschean perspective, still be derived from the same principles as other forms of incomplete nihilism, such as modern nationalism. The institutional project of Europe, especially to the extent that it encourages the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe, may still be part of the "the tremendous amount of forgery

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[38] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* Preface to the Second Edition, 2, p. 34.
[39] Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. vii.

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in ideals," which, in Nietzsche's view, were traded in modern Europe.[40] Much like nationalism in his own day, the implicit idea of Europe upon which advocates of the European Union always already draw, seems to rest on "the old habit and seeks *another* authority that can *speak unconditionally* and *command* goals and tasks."[41] The growing discourse on the 'meaninglessness' of Europe, moreover, which was cited in Chapter 1 of this thesis, only serves to mask the very extent to which the European project is always already endowed with a greater sense of meaning. In this sense, then, the political project of Europe, even in its current manifestation, also does not escape Nietzsche's critique of strategies of incomplete nihilism and cannot be readily equated with Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans.'

3. Nihilism and the Advocates of European Union

If the intrinsic appeal of the institutional project of Europe can be seen as ultimately resting on a strategy of incomplete nihilism, then it still remains to be seen, from Nietzsche's perspective, which actors are seeking to promote this form of 'meaning.' It will be recalled from the previous chapter that part of the reason why Nietzsche objected to the rise of modern nationalism was because it constituted an artificial way of endowing European existence with a greater sense of meaning or purpose which was being advocated by European statesmen and businesses, i.e. those two groups who, in his account, had little interest in confronting the experience of European nihilism honestly and critically. In this vein Nietzsche noted, for example, how "[i]t is not the self-interest of the many (the people), as one would have it, that urges this nationalism, but primarily the self-interest of certain royal dynasties, as well as that of certain commercial and social classes; once a man has understood this, he should be undaunted in presenting himself as a *good European*, and should work actively on the merging of nations."[42] This also means that while Nietzsche's European perspective would not have been incompatible with the wish of many of the members of the Resistance Movement to transcend the 'old' politics of Europe based

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[40] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Genealogy of Morals.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, III, 26, p. 159.
[41] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1968, I, 20, p. 17.
[42] Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, 475, p. 228.

on nation-states and nationalism, it is nevertheless possible that, in the contemporary context, a Nietzschean perspective would still yield a position not uncritical of the institutions of the European Union. For, what emerges from a critical investigation of the history of the European Union is that, over the course of the past decades, the European project has increasingly been assimilated by the same forces which, in the course of the nineteenth century, had encouraged the propagation of nationalist ideas. Both national government bureaucracies and European businesses, in other words, have been largely able to reconcile their interests with the institutions of the European Union. This circumstance, moreover, arouses the suspicion that the current institutional project of Europe might be yet another way of institutionalising the advent of European nihilism and might thus also be anathema to his understanding of what constitutes 'good Europeanism.' Like its nationalist predecessor, the political project of Europe might similarly be seen as a regrettable symbiosis between a European population still demanding a greater sense of meaning, and political and business elites wishing to fill this vacuum with an institutional project of Europe that will serve their respective interests.

Much of the initial progress in the project of European integration, it will be recalled, occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, a time when the nation-state was still struggling to rebuild its legitimacy in the aftermath of the Second World War and when European idealism still ran high. This idealism, moreover, presented a significant challenge to the traditional status of national governments.[43] It does not seem, however, that this dynamic has persisted to this day. Rather, it was eventually possible for national governments and bureaucracies to halt further integration and realign the project to meet their needs. Ironically, it seems that part of the reason accounting for this ability of certain countries to halt, or at least significantly slow down, the pace of further European integration, was their ability, in the decade following the Second World War, to rehabilitate their credibility and to obtain civic loyalties by providing their populations with an impressive amount of material

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[43] William Wallace. "Rescue of Retreat? The Nation State in Western Europe, 1945-1993" in Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson (eds.) *The Question of Europe*. London: Verso, 1997, p. 26.

prosperity which they, in turn, had obtained from the economic fruits of integration.[44] To this extent, historians of European integration are today also much more sceptical as to whether the political processes leading up to European integration actually conformed to the idealist view.[45] It seems instead that, in the long run, the national governments and bureaucracies have been able to recognise that a European Union is not necessarily inimical to their interests.

In this vein, another prominent historian of European integration, Alan Milward, has recently provided a very influential revision of the early idealist historiography of European integration in favour of one centred more on economic integration. The long-term effect of the process of European integration, Milward argues, has been not so much the erosion of the modern nation-state as its 'rescue,' and this by virtue of the fact that economic cooperation provided sufficient material prosperity for the emergence of new popular support for the state. Milward goes on to note, therefore, that "for many political scientists the process of European integration is now seen much more as one directed by the greater powers in their own interests – as many diplomatic historians would always have liked to see it – and not as a new and inevitable trend."[46] Over the course of the past decade, moreover, Milward's thesis has received substantial support. Even William Wallace, who differs in crucial respects with Milward's thesis on the history of European integration, concedes that, at least up until the end of the 1960s, there was "a positive sum relationship between the security and economic frameworks which the institutions of European integration ... had built, and the maintenance – or re-establishment – of national legitimacy and autonomy."[47] In fact, Wallace further points out, the continuing economic growth afforded by European integration actually assisted national government in achieving their narrower political and economic objectives, freeing resources that could, for

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[44] For the figures of postwar European economic growth, see, for example, Göran Therborn. *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies 1945-2000*. London: Sage, 1995, especially Chapter 7.
[45] Wallace, "Rescue of Retreat?", pp. 25-26.
[46] Alan S. Milward. "The Springs of Integration" in Gowan and Anderson, *The Question of Europe*, p. 6. Milward invokes Robert Keohane's and Stanley Hoffmann's piece "Conclusions: Community Politics and Institutional Change" in W. Wallace (ed.) *The Dynamics of European Integration*, London 1990 as well as "Institutional Change in Europe in the 1980s" in R. O. Keohane and S. Hoffmann, eds., *The New Europeans Community: Decision Making and Institutional Change*, Boulder, 1991 as evidence for this trend.
[47] Wallace, "Rescue of Retreat?", p. 22.

example, be allocated to welfare programmes.[48] In recent years, then, historians of European integration have also arrived at a much more sceptical attitude in relation to the links between the 'idealist' intellectuals on the one hand, and the founding fathers on the other.[49] In retrospect, it increasingly seems that the long-term impact of the process of European integration has not led to a transcendence of the modern nation-state and its national forms of identification, as it has contributed to preserving and perhaps even rehabilitating it.[50] It is this circumstance, moreover, which further complicates a simple reconciliation between Nietzsche's notion of 'good Europeanism' and the institutional project of Europe as it is currently conceived.

What is more, this tendency within the institutional project of Europe has not escaped the attention of the wider scholarly community. Thus, Philip Allott, for example, observed in his address to the annual conference of the British International Studies Association, that "in Europe, there [now] is the best new-old game of all. Having tried the exhilarating and virile game of killing each other by the tens of millions, our games masters have found a delightful new game to play called European integration, a cynical perversion of a wonderful idea." In Allott's view, the "wonderful idea is the redeeming of the European peoples from their historical inequities in the name of their historic achievements; the recreation of a European-wide society, in the richest sense of the word – ideal, necessary, hypothetical, possible, rational." Allott thus sustains the idealistic vision of the European idea already referred to, i.e. the idea of Europe as redeeming Europeans from their destructive past. The cynical perversion, on the other hand, is "the system which is forming itself in Europe at the moment: a counter-revolutionary conspiracy of the public realms under the slogan, *Forward to the nineteenth century*."[51] In this view, the current direction that the European project is heading towards, is marked neither by intellectual creativity, nor insight into the profoundly problematic nature of articulating a more meaningful Europe, but is rather allowing for the institutional project of Europe to serve national and European bureaucracies and governments.

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[48] Wallace, "Rescue of Retreat?", p. 22.

[49] Milward, "The Springs of Integration," p. 11.

[50] See Alan Milward. *The European Rescue of the Nation State*. London 1992. Cited in Milward, "The Springs of Integration," p. 9.

[51] Philip Allott. "Kant or won't: theory and moral responsibility." *Review of International Studies*. Vol. 23, 1997, pp. 354.

Importantly, however, it is not only the national governments of Europe which have been able to reconcile themselves quite positively with key aspects of the project of the European Union. Large businesses and industries, too, have often been able to do the same. Indeed, the economic pressures have been equally important in driving forward to process to European unification.[52] Thus, the desire to expand markets, to increase the mobility of labour and to increase investment potential have been a similarly important driving force behind the institutional project of Europe.[53] Much as is the case with national bureaucracies, the project of European integration is often not driven by an overriding idea of 'good Europeanism' which would seek to address the crisis which shook Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, but rather by much narrower interests.[54] "The money alone," Nietzsche himself had already penned in one of his notebooks, "forces Europe eventually to unite itself,"[55] which is also why he concluded that the European economic unification would follow at some point in the future.[56]

In many ways, this aspect of the development of the European Union also echoes Gellner's earlier theory of modern nationalism in which he argued that nationalism emerged as a necessary adjunct to the process of industrialisation and the needs of nineteenth century capitalism.[57] By way of analogy, a considerable component of the impetus behind the process of European integration can similarly be seen to lie in the interests of large multi-national corporations.[58] This factor, moreover, has triggered some harsh assessments of the European Union by the Left in recent years. Thus, Gerard Delanty, for example, critically observes that increasingly the European Union is marked not by a genuine internationalism but by a "socio-

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[52] Wallace, *The Transformation of Western Europe* and A. D. Smith, "Towards a Global Culture?" *Theory, Culture and Society.* Vol. 7, 1990, pp. 171-92. Both cited in Cris Shore and Annabel Black. "Citizens' Europe and the Construction of European Identity" in Goddard, Llobera and Shore, *The Anthropology of Europe*, p. 277.
[53] See G. Smith. *Politics of Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis.* New York: Holmes and Meier, 1972, pp. 297-298.
[54] Furio Cerutti. "Can there be a Supranational Identity?" *Philosophy and Social Criticism.* Vol. 18, No. 2. 1992, p. 153.
[55] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1884-1885*, KSA 11, 37[9], pp. 583-84.
[56] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1887-1889*, KSA 13, 11[235], p. 93.
[57] E. Gellner. *Nations and Nationalism.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.
[58] See Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 8. Delanty is referring to Ernst Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.

technical framework for the exploitation of scarce resources and the pursuit of unrestrained economic growth."[59] Indeed, he notes, "[w]e find that the idea of Europe is becoming the driving force of strategies of macro-political and economic engineering, and, above all, the substitution of a new goal, closely linked to the neo-liberal political programme, for the traditional social democratic programme."[60] Nietzsche himself, moreover, had also expressed his own reservations about proceeding in this way. Indeed, he noted critically, "[o]nce we possess that common economic management of the earth that will soon be inevitable, mankind will be able to find its best meaning as a machine in the service of the economy – as a tremendous clockwork, composed of ever smaller, every more subtly 'adapted' gears..." What is more, Nietzsche added, "[i]t is clear, what I combat is *economic* optimism: as if increasing the expenditure of everybody must necessarily involved the increased welfare of everybody."[61]

What emerges, then, from a more critical investigation of the European Union is that in its current shape it only vaguely reflects the initial vision of the Resistance movement and its founding fathers. Furthermore, much like governments and international businessmen had, in Nietzsche's own lifetime, often encouraged nationalist identities that promoted their interests, it now seems that they often chose to endorse the European Union instead. Following Italian unification, Massimo d'Azeglio's famously proclaimed that "[w]e have made Italy, now we have to make Italians."[62] In the view of one scholar, the situation today is not altogether different for those wishing to bring about a more united Europe today. Europe is in the process of integrating economically, but those elusive citizens, the 'Europeans,' have yet to be invented.[63] What is more, these actors have now also begun to apply the same techniques used for the purposes of nation-building in the nineteenth century. In order to ascertain how best to bring about loyalties and affective attitudes to the European Union and the European cause, scholars have not so much sought to develop new models as they have repeatedly turned to the literature on nationalism for guidance.

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[59] Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 9.
[60] Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 9.
[61] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 866, pp. 463-464.
[62] This phrase was addressed to the parliament of the newly united Italian kingdom. See E. Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 44.
[63] Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 8.

It is, perhaps, not even a coincidence that the pioneers of regional integration theory such as Ernst Haas and Karl W. Deutsch were also pioneers of the literature on nation-building and nationalism. Haas actually defined regional political integration as a process of collective identity formation, as "the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation states."[64] This same logic, moreover, is reflected in Monnet's *A Ferment of Change,* in which he had argued that:

> [t]o establish this new method of common action, we adapted to our situation the methods which have allowed individuals to live together in society: common rules which each member is committed to respect, and common institutions to watch over the application of these rules. *Nations have applied this method within their frontiers for centuries, but they have never yet been applied between them.* [emphasis added]

This very logic, moreover, has not been buried in the early literature of European integration. Two scholars working on the anthropology of contemporary Europe, for example, have recently noted that there are crucial and revealing parallels between the attempt to bring about a European citizenry and such attempts at the national level. The view, they note, "that the formation of European nation-states provides useful parallels, perhaps even a model, for understanding some of the processes involved in European political integration and state-formation" is still a widely held belief today.[65] Throughout the history of the European integration, then, the debate on the idea of Europe has remained very firmly grounded within traditional conceptions of state organisation; the project of European integration has not so much transcended national ideals as it has displaced them to a higher, European level.[66] Consequently, there would, from the Nietzschean perspective, also be a danger that the institutions of

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[64] Ernst B. Haas. *The Uniting of Europe: Political Social and Economical Forces 1950-1957.* London: Stevens & Sons, 1958, p. 16.

[65] Shore and Black, "Citizens' Europe and the Construction of European Identity," p. 277. See also Göran Therborn. "In talking about Europeanism and European identity, we are talking about something which might as well be called nationalism, nationality and-or ethnicity." *European Modernity and Beyond,* p. 242.

[66] Thomas Diez. *Neues Europa, altes Modell. Die Konstruktion von Staatlichkeit im politischen Diskurs der europäischen Gemeinschaft.* Frankfurt am Main: Haag + Herchen, 1995, p. v.

the European Union will not so much transcend its predecessor, as they would replicate its logic on an even larger dimension.[67]

Much, then, like modern nationalism in Nietzsche's own times, the institutional project of Europe is, today, often being advocated by those actors who, in Nietzsche's account, often had little interest in confronting the advent of European nihilism. Indeed, for Nietzsche the fact that European governments and European businesses endorse the institutional project of Europe may well have raised a certain amount of suspicion. For, as Nietzsche himself had noted in one of his fragments, and not without irony, "they call the unification of German governments into a single state a 'great idea.' It is the same type of person who will one day be enthusiastic about the united states of Europe: it is the even 'greater idea.'"[68] Many of the contemporary advocates of the institutional project of Europe, in other words, are clearly not the 'good Europeans' which Nietzsche hoped would emerge at some time in the future. It is for this reason, moreover, that although Nietzsche himself was clearly critical of attempts to give a nationalist response to the advent of European nihilism, and while he certainly did advocate a European perspective, it not at all clear that he would also have endorsed uncritically the institutional project of Europe as it is currently conceived. If anything, it increasingly seems that when compared with the phenomenon of modern nationalism, the idea of Europe embodied in the European institutions often constitutes not so much a qualitative difference as a quantitative one. Much like modern nationalism before it, the European Union's attempt to articulate and propagate a more meaningful idea of Europe that would provide the basis for a European identity, and that would also enhance the legitimacy of the European Union, might equally be seen as a form of incomplete nihilism, i.e. as a way of simply substituting one form of meaning for another without genuinely and honestly confronting the deeper implications of the advent of European nihilism. In this sense, moreover, the contemporary European Union too might be seen as a regrettable symbiosis between a European population still demanding a greater sense of meaning, and political and business elites wishing to fill this vacuum with an institutional project of Europe that will serve their respective interests. In this case, however, its

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[67] Diez, *Neues Europa, altes Modell*, p. 1.
[68] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1875-1879*, KSA 8, 19[74], pp. 357-348.

initial advantage over nationalist meanings, of addressing the problem on the appropriate scale, becomes, perhaps, not so much an asset as a liability.

4. European Nihilism and the European Union

In light of these preceding criticisms of the institutional project of Europe, it would seem that the more idealistic promoters of the European project now face a crucial question, namely of how to respond to the appropriation of the project by those forces in whose partial opposition it was initially set up. Amongst contemporary Europeanists, there are, in turn, at least two broad strategies that have been proposed in this regard. In the first instance, supporters of the European Union could, of course, simply continue with the functionalist course pursued in the past. The founding fathers of the institutional project of Europe had chosen to avoid an overtly revolutionary process of European federalism, opting instead for a strategy that would achieve unification of Europe more gradually, by taking one step at a time and by focusing on small specific forms of intergovernmental co-operation. It was hoped that by focusing on piecemeal and sectoral integration, co-operation between countries was more likely to ensue in the long run, and that such co-operation could, in turn, breed a habit of further co-operation which could also induce ever greater steps towards integration. Eventually, according to this aspiration, loyalties would begin to shift from the nation-states to the supranational institutions. In this way the functionalist mode of integration might, over time, even culminate in a federal Europe. As Zaki Laïdi has noted, "[a]dhesion to Europe was stronger because it involved nothing, or nothing much. It was being put in place without commitment, without arousing passions. Europe was, in the full sense of the term, 'an affair of states.'"[69] Indeed, the European edifice was being erected without immediately affecting the day-to-day lives of Europeans.[70]

The founding fathers had thus also deliberately adopted a policy that did not cast the European question in spiritual or philosophical terms. Instead, it placed

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[69] Zaki Laïdi. *A World Without Meaning: The Crisis of Meaning in International Politics*. Trans. June Burnham and Jenny Coulon. London: Routledge, 1998, p. 72.
[70] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 72.

economics before politics, making the latter a function of the former, and relied on the logic of the market to drive forward the political project of Europe.[71] The functional approach to European integration was, in this sense, also an example, as Stanley Hoffmann points out, of "the old Saint-Simonian dream of depoliticised progress, accompanied by one idea that, at first sight, seemed quite political: the idea that the gradual dispossession of the nation-state and the transfer of allegiance to the new Community would be hastened by the establishment of a central quasi-federal political system."[72] Functionalism opted for technical and functional solutions, rather than talking of 'meaning' and specifying the content of the European idea that informed this project. Indeed, Mitrany himself had pointed out that "[t]he functional way may seem a spiritless solution – and so it is, in the sense that it detaches from the spirit the things which are of the body." For, Mitrany further maintained, "[n]o advantage has accrued to anyone when economic and other social activities are wedded to fascist or communist or other political ideologies; their progeny has always been confusion and conflict."[73] Mitrany thus cannot be accused of inadvertently ignoring questions of meaning and vision in his account of integration. For, he argued, it is precisely these notions which any attempt at uniting Europe must resist in the short term if it wishes to stand a chance of succeeding in the long run. In any case, the 'spiritless' approach, he argued, would eventually be redeemed by the later emergence of a more meaningful and united Europe.

Increasingly, however, precisely this wager on the functional approach to European integration is seen by scholars as being both paradoxical and deficient. For, in the functional account, the best way of institutionalising a more meaningful idea of Europe resides precisely in avoiding overt reflection on the meaning of the European idea. This explicit deferment of the question of 'meaning' in favour of technical solutions is exemplified by Jean Monnet himself, when he wrote, for example, that "I have never been in doubt that this process would one day lead us to a United States of Europe, but I do not even try to imagine what the political framework will be. There is

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[71] Stanley Hoffmann. "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited." *Daedalus*. Vol. 123. No. 2. 1994, p. 16.
[72] Stanley Hoffmann. "Reflections on the Nation-State in Western Europe Today" *Journal of Common Market Studies*. 21, 1982, p. 29. Cited in Wallace, "Rescue of Retreat?, p. 26. See also Tony Judt. *A Grand Illusion? An Essay on Europe*. London: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 37.
[73] Cited in Brent F. Nelson and Alexander Stubb. (eds.) *The European Union: Readings on the Theory and Practice of European Integration*. London: Boulder, 1998, p. 113.

probably no precedent for what we are preparing."[74] What exactly a meaningful Europe will look like, in other words, is the deferred task of later generations. In the first instance, in Monnet's account, the institutional framework must be established. Yet, as was noted in the introduction to this thesis, scholars have now begun to question this belief that affective associations will result from processes of functional integration. For, the result of this deferment has been, as Hoffmann recently noted, that there still remains today a vast difference between Europe "as a zone of economic integration (this has been achieved) and Europe as a common enterprise."[75] Despite nearly half a century of institutional co-operation and functional integration, and despite the widely accepted arguments in favour of market integration, Europe still finds it difficult to evoke a sense of meaning socially shared by all the nations and peoples of Europe.[76] This critique of functionalism, moreover, is largely compatible with Nietzsche's perspective. For, Nietzsche himself also preferred a more reflective approach to the question of Europe. Indeed, from the Nietzschean perspective, the functional approach to European integration remains an inadequate response to the contemporary impasse, not only because it is itself still based on a strategy of incomplete nihilism, but also because it has not been very successful at actually challenging the spread of nationalism and national identities in Europe, which, in his account, similarly constitute strategies of incomplete nihilism and are thus also very much in need of critique. To this extent, it also remains questionable whether a continuation of the functional approach in the contemporary context would be compatible with Nietzsche's idea of what constitutes 'good Europeanism.'

The most prominent response to this shortcoming of the functional approach, in turn, has, as was already shown in the introduction to this thesis, been the call by Europeanists for the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe that could serve as the basis for a European identity. The 'post-functionalist' approach, moreover, constitutes the second broad strategy identified by Europeanists for addressing the current impasse. In this vein, Jacques Delors, for example, has personally reminded his listeners and readers that "[h]istory is only interested in the far-sighted and those

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[74] Jean Monnet. *Mémoires*. Paris: Fayard, 1976, pp. 615-616. Cited in Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 192, fn 19.

[75] Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited," p. 18.

[76] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 67.

who think big, like Europe's founding fathers." By 'far-sighted,' he further explains, "I mean being simultaneously capable of drawing on our historical heritage and looking to the future. Futurology has a part to play but so has a code of ethics for the individual, society and the human adventure. This, frankly is what we most lack today."[77] Before him, Jean Monnet himself had already insisted that "[w]here there is no big vision, the people perish."[78] More recently, in turn, Vaclav Havel has insisted, with the Czech poet Valdimir Holan, that "without genuine transcendence, no construction shall ever reach completion."[79] Today, then, the functionalist wager on European integration is no longer generally seen to be able to redeem either the European Union, nor Europeans at large, from the experience of meaninglessness. Rather, there is a perceived need for the explicit articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, as Zaki Laïdi has noted with exemplary clarity, "[u]ntil this force [of nationalism] is matched with a project of meaning, it is very unlikely to die down or come to a halt."[80] Today, therefore, a unified Europe is increasingly seen to also require a common idea of Europe. As Nietzsche himself once noted, the "the advance toward universal empires is always also an advance toward universal divinities...."[81] In this sense, the task formerly deferred by an earlier generation of Europeanists has now returned to confront contemporary scholars much more directly.

Bearing in mind, however, the discussion of Nietzsche's European thought carried out in the previous chapters, it is now also possible to see why this preferred response, like the functionalist one to which it responds, is likely to remain problematic for Nietzsche as well as for the 'good Europeans' which he hoped would emerge in the future. In the first instance, it is, as was already noted in the introduction, proving very difficult to actually articulate an idea of Europe that is compelling to Europeans at large. Not only is there, according to several scholars, a lack of requisite symbolic heritage for Europeanists to draw upon, but the latter would also have to contend with the sceptical attitude, already noted in Chapter 4, of

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[77] Jacques Delors. "A Necessary Union." Bruges Speech on 17 October 1989. Reprinted in Nelson and Stubb, *The European Union*, p. 58.
[78] Cited in Delors, "A Necessary Union," p. 60.
[79] Vaclav Havel. *The Art of the Impossible: Politics and Morality in Practice: Speeches and Writings 1990-1996*. Trans. Paul Wilson. New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997, p. 246.
[80] Laïdi, *A World Without Meaning*, p. 4.

Europeans in general.[82] When the will-to-truth puts itself into question, the deployment of new idols remains profoundly difficult as any attempt to articulate the true meaning of the earthly existence is likely to remain intellectually unconvincing. Nietzsche himself had already noted in this regard that one of the most difficult lessons to learn in modern times, is that "[w]hat will not be built any more henceforth, and *cannot* be built anymore, is – a society *(Gesellschaft)* in the old sense of that word; to build that, everything is lacking, above all the material. *All of us are no longer material for a society*; this is a truth for which the time has come."[83] The public mood in the post-Cold War era may simply be too sceptical to allow for the adhesion to an overarching idea of Europe and for the rebuilding of a community based around shared ideals. Indeed, the European Song Contest, the new currency, the European City of Culture, its European flag and its anthem from the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth symphony have not only failed in providing a genuine European identity, but in the eyes of many they also look very much like crude attempts at social engineering, reminiscent, to some, of earlier forms of state-sponsored propaganda.[84]

There is, however, also a second and deeper problem which affects any such move to delineate a more meaningful idea of Europe. For, from the Nietzschean perspective, the fundamental problem that any attempt to constitute this institutional project in the symbolic realm confronts, is that it runs the risk of further simulating the logic of nationalism, and thus also of incomplete nihilism, but on a much larger scale. Indeed, it cannot be without relevance that in seeking to achieve a more meaningful attachment to the European project, policy-makers have resorted to the very same tools of nationalism, such as the flag, the passport, and the anthem.[85] It is difficult to see, in other words, how the articulation and deployment of a more

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[81] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, II, 20, p. 90.

[82] Oliver Schmidtke. "Obstacles and Prospects for a European Collective Identity" in Ulf Hedetoft (ed.) *Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998, p. 45. Anthony Smith, moreover, notes that there is, "no European analogue to Bastille or Armistice Day, no European ceremony for the fallen in battle, no European shrine of kings or saints. When it comes to the ritual and ceremony of collective identification there is no European equivalent of national or religious community." "National identity and the idea of European unity" in *International Affairs*, Vol. 68. No. 1. 1992: 55-76, p. 73. See also Michael Heffernan, *The Meaning of Europe: Geography and Geopolitics*. London: Arnold, 1998, p. 2.

[83] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 356, p. 304.

[84] Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 128

[85] Delanty, *Inventing Europe*, p. 128

meaningful idea of Europe in response to the perceived inadequacies of functionalism would or could avoid replicating this logic of incomplete nihilism. The political project of Europe, set up to transcend European nationalism, thus also runs the risk of returning to the very strategies their nationalist and Christian predecessors relied upon.[86] Much like the nationalists eventually challenged the Christian superstition with their own myths, so might the institutional project of Europe now be seen as seeking to challenge the nationalist superstition with a more European myth. In this case, however, the logic of nationalism and incomplete nihilism of its historical predecessors would not so much be transcended, as it would be replicated on a much larger scale. Any further step in this direction, moreover, would only serve to exacerbate this tension.

In the view of Europeanists, of course, this may nevertheless seem like an acceptable price to pay in the sense that the nationalist division of Europe would be superseded by a European perspective and thus the problem of the violent nature of the twentieth century would be seen to be adequately addressed. Yet, such an argument is sound only if the crisis that shook Europe in the course of the twentieth century is traced back to the rise of modern nationalism itself. What such a view neglects, however, is the possibility that the rise of modern nationalism is not itself necessarily at the origin of the violent nature of the twentieth century. Rather, the rise of modern nationalism, may, as Nietzsche argued, itself be a response to the underlying experience of meaninglessness. In this case, however, the violent nature of the twentieth century is due, as was noted in Chapter 3, not only to nationalism *per se*, but also to the underlying logic of the will-to-truth upon which it flourished in the first place, namely that the experience of meaninglessness must be avoided in all circumstances. It is, in other words, precisely the desire to fend off the experience of meaninglessness and to invent a 'true' world which is indicative of an incomplete form of nihilism, and which serves to fuel potentially violent conflicts. Yet, it would also be precisely this logic which any attempt to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era would risk replicating and sustaining. To the extent

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[86] This fact, moreover, makes Paul Michael Lützeler's assessment that Nietzsche simply sought to transpose the ideology of nationalism to the European level with no qualitative difference unconvincing. *Die Schriftsteller und Europa: Von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart.* Munich: Piper, 1992, p. 200.

that they do so, moreover, they would also not escape Nietzsche's critique of incomplete nihilism. In this sense, moreover, while a Nietzschean perspective does indeed share the suspicion about a merely functionalist strategy for European integration, his 'good Europeans' would also have to distance themselves from the contemporary literature which wishes to remedy the current impasse by articulating a more meaningful idea of Europe.

What is more, if Nietzsche's criticism is taken into account, then the institutional project of Europe now faces an even greater dilemma than before. For, now it either refuses to constitute itself in the symbolic order and thus serves to leave unchallenged traditional, national identities which themselves constitute a form of incomplete nihilism and which, from a Nietzschean perspective, need to be challenged. Or, alternatively, the institutional project of Europe seeks to constitute itself in the symbolic realm by seeking to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe. In this case, however, it only serves to replicate the move of incomplete nihilism, which is to escape the experience of meaninglessness through the erection of new idols. In doing so, moreover, the institutional project of Europe, understood as a mechanism for peace, would also run the risk of exposing itself to a performative contradiction. For, from the Nietzschean perspective, which sees precisely this logic of incomplete nihilism as operating throughout the violent course of European history in the twentieth century, the attempt to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe would simply serve to replicate the very structures of European experience which have proved so problematic and violent in the past. The quest to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe that could serve as a basis for a European identity might thus encourage the very structures of thinking and acting which it is seeking to remedy. In this sense, then, both the functionalist path to European integration, as well as the post-functionalist strategy which explicitly opts for the deployment of a more meaningful idea of Europe, constitute problematic responses – both from a Nietzschean perspective, as well as in light of its own stated aim of redeeming Europe from its violent history.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, then, it seems that the broad parameters of the contemporary debate on Europe do not promise to adequately address the problem of European nihilism and do not provide the adequate conceptual grounds for engaging with the experience of European nihilism. 'Nationalisers' who emphasise the primacy of nationalist sentiments overlook, or deliberately obscure, the fact that the very nature of modern nationalism, as a strategy of incomplete nihilism, is to avoid a genuine and critical confrontation with the experience of European nihilism. It is, moreover, an overly modest and artificial process of producing meaning which, however regrettable, still seems convincing to many. While, on a Nietzschean reading, Europeanists are thus correct to adjust their thinking to the European level, and there was indeed a broadly conceived convergence between Nietzsche's aspirations for Europe, and those who sought to work towards a united Europe in the post-war era, the functionalist wager on European integration ended up creating the institutions of the European Union which, today, can no longer be seen as the embodiment of 'good Europeanism' as Nietzsche understood it. Rather, these institutions have become substantially assimilated by the very forces which Nietzsche lamented in regard to his discussion of modern nationalism at the end of the previous century, and which he hoped would be displaced by a more European perspective. "[N]ihilistic values," Nietzsche once noted, "hold sway under the holiest of names."[87] Both the nationalist response, as well as the counter-response on behalf of Europeans to develop a European identity, constitute strategies of incomplete nihilism. Such strategies are, from a Nietzschean perspective, not only dangerous and intellectually unconvincing in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' but they are also ultimately based on a resentful attitude towards existence and are thus also inappropriate responses to the advent of European nihilism. In the contemporary predicament, therefore, neither the nationalist approach, nor the functionalist one, nor, for that matter, the attempt to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe constitute, from the Nietzschean perspective, an appropriate way of addressing the problem of European

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[87] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Anti-Christ*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1990.6, pp. 129-130.

nihilism. Nor would any of these strategies be pursued by the 'good Europeans' whom he hoped might emerge in future.

Importantly, however, Nietzsche himself did not, despite this critique, seek to actively work against the amalgamation of nations. For, as he noted in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "[t]he very same conditions that will on the average lead to the levelling and mediocritisation of man – to a useful, industrious, handy, multi-purpose herd animal – are likely in the highest degree to give birth to exceptional human beings of the most dangerous and attractive quality."[88] Indeed, he added, "[i]n accordance with the slowly arising democratic order of things (and its cause, the intermarriage of masters and slaves), the originally noble and rare urge to ascribe value to oneself and on one's own and to 'think well' of oneself will actually be encouraged...."[89] It is in this sense, moreover, that Nietzsche could also suggest that "this process will probably lead to results which would seem to be least expected by those who naively promote and praise it, the apostles of 'modern ideas.'"[90] Despite his severe reservations, in other words, Nietzsche nevertheless placed his wager on proceeding with the uniting of Europe, for this would not only work towards challenging the national identities of Europeans, but it might also inadvertently facilitate the emergence of what Nietzsche, in turn, considered to be the 'good Europeans.' What still remains to be investigated in greater detail, therefore, is how Nietzsche himself proposed to engage with the advent of European nihilism, i.e. what his own notion of a 'good European' entails. Having considered Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism, as well as his critique of both sides in the contemporary debate on Europe, it is, in fact, now possible to turn towards precisely this task.

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[88] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 242, p. 176.
[89] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 261, p. 209.
[90] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 242, p. 176.

CHAPTER 7

"WE GOOD EUROPEANS ..."

"WE GOOD EUROPEANS..."

If both the 'national' and 'European' sides in the contemporary debate on Europe are seen, by Nietzsche, as strategies of incomplete nihilism, and thus also as inappropriate responses to the advent of European nihilism, then the final question that remains, is what would actually constitute a more reasonable response to the current impasse? Having, in other words, elaborated those strategies which Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' would *not* choose to pursue in response to the advent of European nihilism, it is now necessary to investigate what exactly Nietzsche had in mind when he referred to these 'good Europeans' whom he hoped might come about in the future, and who would, in his view, engage in a more honest and sensible confrontation with the advent of European nihilism. The task of this chapter, therefore, is to delineate in greater detail what Nietzsche's notion of the 'good Europeans' entails, and to probe whether Nietzsche's corpus really is, as two scholars have recently suggested, "too culture-bound, too excessively European" for thinking about the idea of Europe in the contemporary context.[1] For, it may well turn out that such an assessment is premature. Indeed, what emerges from such an investigation is a conception of a 'good European' that transcends the logic of nationalism without, however, simply replicating the logic of incomplete nihilism on an even larger scale. Rather, Nietzsche's idea of the 'good European' is one who pursues a strategy of a more complete nihilism and thereby opens up a conceptual space in the contemporary debate on Europe that does not posit an essentialist idea of Europe, and that nevertheless does not fall back onto a merely technical and functional approach to European governance.

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[1] "After all," they further point out, "he was a classicist, who specialised in Greek literature and philosophy, and an admirer of Rome; he did not open his eyes to Africa or the Orient; Venice is as close to China as he ever got, and German translations are as close as he came to *Huckleberry Finn*." David Farrell Krell and Donald L. Bates. *The Good European: Nietzsche's Work Sites in Word and Image*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 1. For similar assessments see Paul Lützeler. *Die Schriftsteller und Europa: Von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart*. Munich: Piper, 1992, p. 200 and Ofelia Schutte "Nietzsche's Cultural Politics: A Critique." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. XXXVII Supplement. 1999: 65-71. It should not be overlooked, however, that Nietzsche was very knowledgeable about Oriental as well as Indian philosophy.

1. Complete Nihilism

In the first instance, Nietzsche's 'good Europeans,' or 'free spirits' as he also frequently referred to them, are distinguished by their unwillingness to erect new idols in order to replace the old God that has 'died.'[2] Any such attempt to replace the 'dead God' with a new idol would, in Nietzsche's view, constitute a form of incomplete nihilism which, as Martin Heidegger pointed out in his study of Nietzsche, seeks to "replace the former values with others, but it still posits the latter always in the old position of authority that is, as it were, gratuitously maintained as the ideal realm of the suprasensory."[3] The attempt to erect new idols in the aftermath of the 'death of God' is likely to simply replicate this logic of ascetic ideals that traditionally accompanied Europe's Christian-Platonic cultural heritage. This logic, moreover, remains problematic for Nietzsche not only because it is intellectually unconvincing in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' but also because it is ultimately still premised, like its Christian predecessor, on a resentful attitude towards existence. In addition to these criticisms of incomplete nihilism made by Nietzsche himself, moreover, it is also possible, with the benefit of hindsight, to add an additional objection to such strategies of incomplete nihilism. For, these very strategies were also implicated in the violent conflicts that contributed towards Europe's division in the course of the twentieth century and against the background of which the institutional project of Europe was initiated. As Chapter 3 argued, often it was precisely the attempt to reconstitute a greater form of meaning which served to fuel many of the violent conflicts that hindered the unity of Europe in the course of the twentieth century. While not having experienced these conflicts himself, Nietzsche had nevertheless realised in relation to incomplete nihilism, not only that "we live in the midst of it" but also that such "[a]ttempts to escape nihilism without revaluing our values so far:

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[2] Nietzsche often used the expression 'good Europeans' and 'free spirits' interchangeably. In the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, Nietzsche refers to "we *good Europeans* and free, *very free spirits....*" Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1966, Preface, p. 3. See also Henning Ottmann. *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987, p. 125 and Josef Nolte. *Wir guten Europäer: Historisch-politische Versuche über uns selbst.* Tübingen: Narr, 1991, p. 202. Nietzsche, moreover, continues to accord his notion of a 'good European' a central role until his collapse in 1889. See Nolte, *Wir Guten Europäer,* p. 203.

[3] Martin Heidegger "Nietzsche's Word God is dead" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays.* Trans. William Lovitt: New York: Harper and Row, 1977, p. 69.

they produce the opposite, make the problem more acute."[4] Or, as he put it more succinctly, "[t]he fight against [nihilism] strengthens it."[5] And yet, as the previous two chapters have sought to demonstrate, both the spread of nationalist ideas, as well as the attempt to counter this trend by articulating a more meaningful idea of Europe, still constitute contemporary examples of precisely such strategies of incomplete nihilism which Nietzsche sought to resist.

In light of this critique of incomplete nihilism, then, Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' are also likely to refuse to partake in an engagement with the advent of European nihilism that consists of positing new idols that are ultimately derived from Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage. Indeed, Nietzsche himself wrote quite explicitly that "[n]o new idols are erected by me; let the old ones learn what feet of clay mean."[6] What is more, he insisted, "we *men of conscience* who do not want to return to that which is outlived and decayed, to anything 'unworthy of belief,' be it called God, virtue, truth, justice, charity; we do not permit ourselves any bridges-of-lies to ancient ideals; we are hostile to every kind of faith and Christianness existing today; hostile to all romanticism and fatherland-worship."[7] Nor did Nietzsche himself want to be considered a new idol. If anything, he counselled his readers to be suspicious of him, which is why, for example, he had Zarathusta famously instruct his listeners to:

> [g]o away from me and resist Zarathustra! And even better: be ashamed of
> him! Perhaps he deceived you ... One repays a teacher badly if one always
> wants to remain nothing but a pupil. And why do you not want to pluck at
> my wreath? ... You say you believe in Zarathustra? But what matters
> Zarathustra? You are my believers – but what matter all believers? You
> had not yet sought yourselves: and you found me. Thus do all believers;
> therefore all faith amounts to little.[8]

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[4] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1968, 28, p. 19.

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, KSA 12, 5[57], p. 206.

[6] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, Preface, 2, pp. 217-218.

[7] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, Preface, 4, p. 4.

[8] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, Preface, 4, p. 220.

In fact, for Nietzsche the ability to dissent was the really great achievement of European culture, as well as the most important "step of all steps for the free spirit."[9] In his view, however, Pauline Christianity had largely denied precisely this possibility, which is why he insisted all the more that "[i]t is a matter of course with me, from instinct. I am too inquisitive, too *questionable*, too exuberant to stand for any gross answer. God is a gross answer, an indelicacy against us thinkers – at bottom merely a gross prohibition for us: you shall not think!"[10] By way of analogy, the invitation to see the nation, or even the idea of Europe, as the highest source of meaning in European existence would constitute yet another 'gross' answer, a prohibition against critical reflection. Instead of recommending any such strategy of incomplete nihilism to the 'good Europeans' who he hoped might emerge in future, Nietzsche extolled instead the benefit of pursuing a strategy of *complete* nihilism.

What does such a strategy of *complete* nihilism entail? In the case of a strategy of complete nihilism, Nietzsche argued, the deeper implications of the advent of European nihilism are accepted, and there is subsequently no eager attempt to escape these implications.[11] A strategy of complete nihilism, in other words, proceeds not by rejecting of the advent of nihilism in European culture, but with the recognition that it must rather take this development as its starting point. It is also precisely this strategy of complete nihilism which Nietzsche recommended to the 'good Europeans.' "One could conceive," Nietzsche noted in this vein, "of such pleasure and power of self-determination, such a freedom of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practised in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit* par excellence."[12] Nietzsche's 'good Europeans,' then, would opt to accept the implications of the advent of European nihilism, i.e. the collapse of the highest values hitherto, rather than trying to legislate new values or idols in the quest to fill the vacuum left behind by the 'death of God.'

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[9] "Das Widersprechen-Können ... ist das eigentlich Grosse, Neue, Erstaunliche unserer Kultur – der Schritt aller Schritte des befreiten Geistes." From the Aphorismensammlung 'Sanctus Januarius.' Cited in Nolte, *Wir guten Europäer*, p. 141.

[10] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I Am So Clever," 1, p. 236.

[11] See, for example, David Toole. *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo: Theological Reflections on Nihilism, Tragedy and Apocalypse*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998, p. 37.

[12] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974, 347, p. 290.

Indeed, the 'good Europeans' were deemed by Nietzsche to be 'free spirits' precisely in the sense that they no longer believed that there was a need for a greater meaning or purpose underlying European existence. "What alone can be *our* doctrine?" Nietzsche asked, and replied:

> [t]hat no one *gives* man his qualities – neither God, nor society, nor his parents and ancestors, nor he himself.... No one is responsible for man's being there at all, for his being such and such, ... The fatality of his essence is not to be disentangled from the fatality of all that has been and will be. Man is not the effect of some special purpose, of a will, an end.[13]

And, indeed, for Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' and 'free spirits' "the demand for certainty is not ... the inmost craving and the deepest need ...." Rather, Nietzsche recommended to them instead "the magic of the opposite way of thinking, not to be denied the stimulation of the enigmatic character."[14] He insisted, furthermore, that their starting point would have to be a "[d]eep aversion towards resting once and for all in any total interpretation of the world." [15] In addition, then, to having understood the deeper implications of the 'death of God,' and in addition to their criticism of a nationalist response to European nihilism, Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' are distinguished, in the first instance, by their preference of a strategy of *complete* nihilism which accepts the deeper implications of the advent of European nihilism described in Chapter 2. This second and deeper phase of Nietzsche's genealogy of European nihilism entails the first phase, i.e. the challenge of Christianity through modern science, but it also extends further in the sense that it additionally recognises the problematic nature of the will-to-truth itself. Within the context of this second phase *all* ideals now seem incommensurate, including that of modern science within the context of which the will-to-truth still remains operational.

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[13] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of the Idols and The Antichrist*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1990, 'The Four Great Errors," 8, p. 65.

[14] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 2[155], p. 142. What is more, he insisted, "[o]ne should not let oneself be misled: great intellects are sceptics." Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 54, p. 184.

[15] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 470, p. 262.

2. Nietzsche – A Nihilist ?

Does this adoption of a more complete form of nihilism by the 'good Europeans' not mean, however, that their position is also inherently nihilistic? The Czech philosopher Jan Patocka, for example, has suggested that "Nietzsche's offense against contemporary European civilisation as nihilistic ... [is] itself nihilistic...."[16] By way of analogy, are Nietzsche's 'good Europeans,' by advocating a more complete form of nihilism, not similarly caught in the midst of a debilitating nihilism that is incapable of believing in anything? In response to this question it must be noted that Nietzsche himself, in fact, anticipated this very question. In *The Genealogy of Morals,* for example, Nietzsche thought that he might well be asked: "What are you really doing, erecting an ideal or knocking one down?" Nietzsche replied, however, with the following response: "But have you ever asked yourselves sufficiently how much the erection of *every* ideal on earth has cost? How much reality had to be misunderstood and slandered, how many lies have had to be sanctified every time? If an ideal is to be erected *an ideal must be destroyed*: that is the law! – let anyone who can show me a case in which it is not fulfilled!"[17] According to Nietzsche, in other words, it is not clear that those who erect and propagate ascetic ideals in the aftermath of the 'death of God' have also attained the moral high ground. For, Nietzsche argued, it is precisely in the quest to erect new ideals – be they national, European, or otherwise – that the diversity of existence is reduced and, to varying degrees, destroyed. In this sense, the erection of ascetic ideals itself destroys what for Nietzsche is an ideal of a very different kind, namely an existence which resists being encompassed by such ascetic ideals.

In a second passage, moreover, Nietzsche again demonstrated that he was very aware of the question of whether he is a nihilist, noting that "I have tried to deny everything. Oh, tearing down is easy, but constructing!" Yet, he does not proceed to address it before pointing out to his readers that "even tearing down seems easier than

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[16] Jan Patocka. "Europe and the European Heritage until the End of the Nineteenth Century" in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Trans. Erazim Kohak. Chicago: Open Court, 1996, p. 93.

[17] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, II, 24, p. 95.

it is: we are so determined down to the heart's core by the impressions of our childhood, the influence of our parents, and our upbringing, that those deeply rooted prejudices are not so readily eradicated by rational arguments or mere force of will."[18] Thus, the Christian-Platonic conviction, for example, that ascetic ideals are utterly necessary for human felicity, was so ingrained in European culture that a pervasive critique of such values was, in itself, no small achievement. It is worth noting, therefore, that irrespective of whether Nietzsche presents a generally acceptable alternative in the contemporary debate on Europe, his critique of prevailing patterns . of thinking remains, at least in his own view, a formidable intellectual achievement.

With these caveats in mind, then, it is possible to turn more explicitly towards the question of whether Nietzsche was, in the end, a nihilist. The view that Nietzsche was indeed such a nihilist was put forward in a forceful manner in 1965 by Arthur Danto in his book *Nietzsche as Philosopher*.[19] In his book Danto concludes that "Nietzsche's is a philosophy of Nihilism."[20] If Danto is correct, then there is little hope that Nietzsche can assist the contemporary scholar of International Relations in successfully addressing the problem of European nihilism. Indeed, if Nietzsche's work does mark such "a deep and total Nihilism"[21] which "is not an ideology but a metaphysics,"[22] then Nietzsche's corpus might have to be abandoned in the attempt to come to terms with the problem of European nihilism. Importantly, however, there is a substantial amount of evidence within Nietzsche's own corpus to suggest that, contrary to the argument of Danto and others, Nietzsche neither considered himself, nor his idea of the 'good Europeans,' to be nihilistic.[23]

A review of Nietzsche's references to nihilism does, of course, reveal that there are a few passages which, upon a cursory reading, might convey the impression that he did consider himself to be a nihilist. Thus, in his posthumously published

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[18] Krell and Bates, *The Good European*, pp. 31-32.
[19] Arthur Danto. *Nietzsche as Philosopher*. New York: Macmillan, 1965.
[20] Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, p. 80. Danto uses the term 'Nihilism' in the upper case to emphasise the centrality of this notion to Nietzsche's corpus.
[21] Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, p. 31.
[22] Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, p. 30.
[23] Richard Schacht has gathered much of this textual evidence in his essay "Nietzsche and Nihilism: Nietzsche and Danto's Nietzsche" in *Making Sense of Nietzsche: Reflections Timely and Untimely*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995, p. 37. The subsequent account, therefore, draws substantially on his essay.

notes from *The Will to Power*, for example, Nietzsche wrote that "it is the measure of strength to what extent we can admit to ourselves, without perishing, the merely *apparent* character [of things], the necessity of lies. To this extent, nihilism, as the denial of a truthful world, of being, might be a divine way of thinking."[24] In other notes Nietzsche also argued that nihilism can be a form of strength. Nietzsche wrote, for example, how "[n]ihilism ... can be a sign of strength: the spirit may have grown so strong that previous goals ... have become incommensurate."[25] Furthermore, "[i]t could be a sign of a crucial and most essential growth ... that the most extreme form of pessimism, genuine *nihilism*, would come into the world."[26] With reference to himself, Nietzsche even observed, "[t]hat I have hitherto been a thorough-going nihilist, I have admitted to myself only recently."[27] Finally, in the preface to this planned, but abandoned, book Nietzsche also intended to refer to himself quite explicitly as "the first perfect nihilist of Europe."[28]

Despite these pronouncement by Nietzsche himself, however, there is also much evidence to suggest that Nietzsche nevertheless did not consider himself to be a nihilist. After all, of the copious remarks that Nietzsche did make on the subject of nihilism, these are the only ones that can be used in support of the view that Nietzsche actually considered himself to be a nihilist.[29] What is more, in the preface to his planned book *The Will to Power*, where these notes appear, Nietzsche also remarked that "one should make no mistake about the meaning of the title that this gospel of the future wants to bear, '*The Will to Power: An Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values*' – in this formulation a countermovement finds expression, regarding both principle and task: a movement that in some future will *take the place of* this perfect nihilism."[30] The goal of Nietzsche's intellectual endeavour, in other words, can be seen to be that of moving beyond the experience of European nihilism. What is more, whenever Nietzsche did refer to himself as a nihilist, he always did so in the past tense, or pointed out the he had subsequently moved beyond being one. Thus, when Nietzsche, for example, referred to himself as "the first perfect nihilist of Europe," the passage

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[24] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 15, p. 15.
[25] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 23, pp. 17-18.
[26] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 112, p. 69.
[27] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 25, p. 18.
[28] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Preface, 3, p. 3.
[29] Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, p. 36.

continues to point out that he is one "who, however, has even now lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself."[31] Similarly, when Nietzsche claimed that he has *hitherto* been a nihilist, he means precisely that, he once saw himself as a nihilist but no longer does so.

One must also, however, be sceptical of whether Nietzsche ultimately understood himself to be a nihilist in light of the many *critical* comments that he made about nihilism and nihilists. "Nihilism," Nietzsche maintains, "represents a pathological transitional stage (what is pathological is the tremendous generalisation, the inference that there is no meaning at all)."[32] In *The Will to Power*, furthermore, Nietzsche also notes how "[t]he nihilistic movement is merely the expression of physiological decadence."[33] What is more, Nietzsche's critical attitude towards nihilism is also demonstrated by the fact that he locates its origins in the Christian-moral interpretation of existence for which he had great distaste: "It is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted."[34] Indeed, he added, "[t]he belief in ... aim and meaninglessness, is the psychologically necessary effect once the belief in God and an essentially moral order becomes untenable. Nihilism appears at that point .... One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered *the* interpretation, it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence....."[35] This "as if," moreover, is of crucial importance.[36] Indeed, and as will emerge below, in Nietzsche's view this conclusion is, in fact, premature.

The fact that Nietzsche did not consider himself to be a nihilist and that he indeed wished to move beyond the experience of nihilism is further supported by many of his published writings as well. Thus, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, Nietzsche was moved to remark that "there may actually be puritanical fanatics of conscience who prefer even a certain nothing to an uncertain something to lie down on – and die. But this is nihilism and the sign of a despairing, mortally weary soul."[37]

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[30] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Preface, 4, p. 3.
[31] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Preface, 3, p. 3.
[32] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 13, p. 14.
[33] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 38, p. 24.
[34] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 1, p. 7.
[35] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 55, p. 35.
[36] Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, p. 37.
[37] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 10, p. 16.

In the *Antichrist* Nietzsche made yet another dismissive comment on nihilism, noting that: "[s]ome have dared to call pity a virtue.... To be sure – and one should always keep this in mind – this was done by a philosophy that was nihilistic and had inscribed *negation of life* upon its shield."[38] In light of such passages it is necessary to reinterpret the initial remarks that Nietzsche made and which have led some commentators to conclude that Nietzsche was in fact a nihilist.[39] Rather, what Nietzsche seems to be conveying in such passages is that nihilism has arrived in European culture and that its arrival is, based on his analysis of Christianity, to some extent necessary and inevitable. When Nietzsche does affirm nihilism, therefore, he does it not for its own sake, but only as a necessary first step in revaluing traditional European culture. Nihilism thus brings with it new possibilities and it is these possibilities rather than nihilism itself which Nietzsche occasionally embraces.

Finally, the conclusion that Nietzsche does not consider himself to be a nihilist is also corroborated by his critical stance towards the 'last man.' It is the 'last man' which, in Nietzsche's account, has forfeited the question of meaning in return for material gratification. A society composed of these 'last men,' it will be recalled from Chapter 4, is one which is content to aim primarily at its self-preservation.[40] Indeed, as Michel Haar notes in this regard, the last man is "a will satisfied with meaninglessness, with non-sense, a will happy that there is no longer any sense or any meaning to look for, a will having found a certain comfort in the total absence of meaning and a certain happiness in the certainty that there is no answer to the question 'why?'"[41] It is an existence in which the advent of European nihilism has shifted from the 'anxious *inequiétude*' of the 'madman' to the much more complacent quietude of the 'last man.'[42] In doing so, moreover, the 'last man' is, in Nietzsche's view, not true to the entire array of human experience presented to him by Europe's heritage. On the one hand, then, Nietzsche is indeed critical of the highest values that have traditionally directed European culture. On the other hand, however, he similarly

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[38] Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, 7, p. 130.
[39] Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, p. 37.
[40] Cited in Keith Ansell-Pearson. *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 105-106.
[41] Michel Haar. "Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language" in David B. Allison (ed.) *The New Nietzsche*. New York: Dell, 1977, p. 13.
[42] Michel Haar. *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*. Trans. Michael Gendre. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 11.

does not wish to abandon the inner space and distance that this tradition has instilled upon Europeans. For, despite his criticism of Christianity as slave morality, Nietzsche nevertheless granted that, historically, it constituted the soil upon which "man first became *an interesting animal*, ... only here did the human soul in a higher sense acquire *depth* and become *evil*...."[43] The attempt to simply refuse the question of meaning, as the 'last man' does, would, in Nietzsche's account, be just as nihilistic as the postulating of ascetic ideals resentful of earthly existence. There is, then, substantial evidence amongst Nietzsche's corpus to suggest that he did not consider himself, nor his idea of the 'good Europeans' which he advanced, to be nihilistic.

Nor, for that matter, did Nietzsche seem to think that his strategy of a more complete form of nihilism would necessarily deliver the 'good Europeans' into the nihilistic predicament of the 'last man.' As he writes in a passage from the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* which is worth quoting at some length:

> But the fight against Plato or, to speak more clearly and for 'the people,' the fight against the Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia – for Christianity is Platonism for 'the people,' – has created in Europe a magnificent tension of the spirit the like of which had never yet existed on earth: with so tense a bow we can now shoot for the most distant goals. To be sure, European man experiences this tension as need and distress; twice already attempts have been made in the grand style to unbend the bow – once by means of Jesuitism, the second time by means of the democratic enlightenment which, with the aid of freedom of the press and newspaper-reading, might indeed bring it about that the spirit would no longer experience itself so easily as a 'need.' ... But we who are neither Jesuits nor democrats, nor even German enough, 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. And perhaps also the arrow, the task, and – who knows? – the *goal*——[44]

In contradistinction to the 'last man,' then, Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' still recognise the inner depth cultivated by Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage. Indeed, while Nietzsche's intellectual efforts sought to dispel all those idols which humans

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[43] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, I, 6, p 33.
[44] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Preface, pp. 2-3

had elevated above existence and which, in his view, often served to devalue earthly existence, Nietzsche did not desire, nor did he think, that in attacking these idols he left modern Europeans in the position of the 'last man' who forfeited a reflective depth about European existence. In fact, in Nietzsche's view, the utter absence of a meaningful conception of European existence would be just as nihilistic as the positing of a metaphysical ideal divorced from earthly experience, and consequently he welcomed the abandonment of the human interpretation of its existence as little as he did the articulation of any 'absolute' forms of meaning.

How, though, does Nietzsche's strategy of complete nihilism escape, in his view, the relapse into the scientific, materialistic and atheistic worldview of the 'last man'? Is, moreover, Anthony Smith not correct when he notes that the new Europe's true dilemma is "a choice between unacceptable, historical myths and memories on the one hand, on the other a patchwork, memoryless scientific 'culture' held together solely by the political will and economic interest that are so often subject to change"?[45] While a Nietzschean perspective would indeed find renewed European 'myths' unacceptable, it does not necessarily fall back into this culture of 'meaningless,' scientific governance. The reason why this is so, is that Nietzsche's strategy actually works in the opposite direction from the one that predominates amongst Europeanists today. Rather than seeking to challenge the scientific and technical nature of European culture through the positing of renewed idols, Nietzsche's strategy chooses to push what is already falling and to press ahead towards the second and even deeper phase of European nihilism already described in Chapter 2. Such a strategy of complete nihilism pushes ahead with the problem of European nihilism until it reaches the point where it exposes the underlying *telos* that remains even within the scientific understanding of existence. This deeper phase of nihilism, it will be recalled, entails the challenge of Christianity through modern science, but it also pushes ahead to the point where the will-to-truth puts itself into question, raising profound questions even about the status of modern science.

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[45] Anthony D. Smith. "National Identity and the Idea of European Unity" in Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson (eds.) *The Question of Europe*. London: Verso, 1997, p. 338.

Indeed, in Nietzsche's view, it was one of modern science's great deceits to appear as meaninglessness and disinterested when, in fact, it was not. It will be recalled from Chapter 2, that Nietzsche argued instead that modern science, too, despite its claims to objectivity, still rests on the underlying value of truth, and that it is thus also part of the much longer will-to-truth that runs through large parts of the European tradition. As Nietzsche had argued, "[t]hat which *constrains* these men [the modern scientists], however, this unconditional will to truth, is *faith in the ascetic ideal itself*, even if as an unconscious imperative – don't be deceived about that – it is the faith in a *metaphysical value*, the absolute value of *truth*, sanctioned and guaranteed by this ideal alone (it stands or falls with this ideal)."[46] Indeed, he insisted further, "[n]o doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense that is presupposed by the faith in science *thus affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this 'other world' – look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, *our* world?"[47] In its own way, therefore, modern science too still retains its underlying *telos*, i.e. that of truth, and thus also constitutes a form of incomplete nihilism which seeks to escape the human world of flux and uncertainty.[48] "[W]e men of knowledge of today," Nietzsche wrote in this vein, "we godless men and anti-metaphysicians, we, too, still derive *our* flame from the fire ignited by a faith millennia old, the Christian faith, which was also Plato's, that God is truth, that truth is *divine*."[49] What is more, he concluded, these scientists and atheists "are far from being *free* spirits: *for they still have faith in truth*."[50] Despite its appearance to the contrary, then, modern science still constitutes an ascetic ideal. Indeed, Nietzsche insisted, "this 'modern science' – let us face the fact!– is the *best* ally the ascetic ideal has at present, and precisely because it is the most unconscious, involuntary, hidden, and subterranean ally!"[51] This also means, moreover, that the worldview and methods of modern science are not beyond Nietzsche's critique. Indeed it is very much in need of critique, as are, according to

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[46] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, p. 151.

[47] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 344, pp. 282-283.

[48] See also Elisabeth Kuhn. *Friedrich Nietzsches Philosophie des europäischen Nihilismus*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992, p. 244.

[49] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, p. 152.

[50] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, p. 150.

[51] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 25, p. 155.

Nietzsche's strategy of complete nihilism, all other forms incomplete nihilism. "Free spirits," Nietzsche concluded in this vein, "take liberties even with science."[52]

Nietzsche thus also went to great lengths to illuminate the harmful consequences that might ensue from putting the primacy of meaning in the realm of modern science. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, Nietzsche noted that science and technology in the modern era, as much as religions and moralities in the past, "do *not* want to be a means of education and cultivation in the philosopher's hand but insist on having their own *sovereign* way, when they themselves want to be ultimate ends and not means among other means."[53] Moreover, in section 373 of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche asks his readers whether:

> we really want to permit existence to be degraded for us like this – reduced to a mere exercise for a calculator and an indoor diversion for mathematicians? Above all, one should wish to divest existence of its *rich ambiguity*: that is a dictate of good taste.... That the only justifiable interpretation of the world should be one in which *you* are justified because one can continue to work hard and do research scientifically, in *your* sense (you really mean, mechanically?) – an interpretation that permits counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching, and nothing more – that is a crudity and naivete, assuming that it is not a mental illness, an idiocy.... A 'scientific' interpretation of the world, as you understand it, might therefore still be one of the *most stupid* of all possible interpretations of the world, meaning that it would be one of the poorest in meaning...."[54]

Nietzsche's strategy of complete nihilism, then, also clearly extends into the realm of modern science. It is also in this way, moreover, that Nietzsche's notion of the 'good European' who engages in a strategy of complete nihilism cannot, strictly speaking, be said to fall back on a merely scientific world-view. If anything, Nietzsche's critique of modern science does much to alleviate the modern experience of meaninglessness because the more subtle understanding of the nature of modern

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[52] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 180, p. 203. This is, however, not to say that they would abandon the scientific spirit altogether. Thus, in one of his letters, Nietzsche wrote that "Europe is necessary for me because it is the seat of science on the earth." KSB 7:773. Cited in Laurence Lampert. "'Peoples and Fatherlands': Nietzsche's Philosophical Politics." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. XXXVII (Supplement) 1999: 43-63, p. 44.
[53] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 62, p. 74.

science also serves to lessen the impact and authority of the claims of modern science and its status as a cultural force in modern Europe. Nietzsche's strategy thus also puts him outside Anthony Smith's characterisation; his strategy of a more complete nihilism leads neither to the articulation of new myths, nor does it merely collapse into a scientific and technical worldview. Rather, it seeks to expose the myths that underlie both strategies, even the endeavours of modern science. Not only, then, did Nietzsche consider himself not to be a nihilist, but he also did not think that the strategy of complete nihilism which the 'good Europeans' were to pursue, would lead them into a nihilistic predicament.

To recapitulate, the two defining characteristics of the 'good Europeans' delineated by Nietzsche so far are, firstly, that they recognise the advent of European nihilism and accept its profound implications and, secondly, that, in responding to this development, they do not seek articulate new idols to replace the 'old God.' In Nietzsche's account, moreover, such a strategy of complete nihilism does not leave the 'good Europeans' in the situation described by Nietzsche under the heading of the 'last man' and which Nietzsche found to be nihilistic in the sense that it no longer believed in a deeper meaning underlying European existence. Indeed, the way in which the 'good European' remains distinct from the 'last men' is, in the first instance, through the former's appreciation of Europe's longer Christian-Platonic heritage as well as an appreciation for the 'spiritual depth' it cultivated amongst Europeans. It is this depth, moreover, which, in contradistinction to the 'last men,' Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' wish to retain. In the second instance, moreover, Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' also differ from the perspective of the 'last man' in that they find the latter position untenable, or at least contradictory. For, according the strategy of complete nihilism advocated by the 'good Europeans,' the conviction of the 'last man' that there is no greater meaning underlying existence is, paradoxically, itself still based on a metaphysical principle, namely that of truth. "Unconditional honest atheism," Nietzsche noted in this vein, is "*not* the antithesis of that ideal [the will to truth], as it appears to be; it is rather only one of the latest phases of its evolution, one of its terminal forms and inner consequences...."[55] Contrary to the 'last

[54] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* 373, p. 335.
[55] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals,* III, 27, p. 160.

men,' in other words, the 'good Europeans' recognise that the incredulity which the 'last men' display towards metaphysics following the 'death of God' itself still rests on a metaphysical value. In this way, the strategy of complete nihilism adopted by Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' also does not deliver them into the condition of the 'last man.'

What nevertheless still remains to be investigated, however, is how the 'good Europeans' can both accept and embrace a strategy of complete nihilism, one which is pervasive enough to extend even into the realm of modern science, and yet still consider this strategy to be an *affirmative* one that escapes the pitfalls of a debilitating nihilism. Indeed, as Richard Schacht openly concedes in relation to Danto's account, "the logical illegitimacy of the generalisation [that Nietzsche is a nihilist] by itself does not serve to establish that some other interpretation of the world is in fact either possible or correct; and it remains to be seen what Nietzsche intends to propose along these lines."[56] The question that Nietzsche still faces, in other words, is how one can overcome the experience of nihilism without actually falling back on substituting ideals that themselves remain nihilistic.[57] In order to illuminate how the strategy of a more complete nihilism pursued by the 'good Europeans' can still be an affirmative one, Nietzsche introduced one final distinction into his analysis of complete nihilism, namely that between *passive* nihilism and *active* nihilism. It is to a consideration of this distinction that the next two sections turn.

3. Europe's Passive Nihilism

In Nietzsche's account, both *passive* and *active* nihilism are forms of complete nihilism. Contrary to strategies of incomplete nihilism, therefore, strategies of passive and active nihilism both readily accept the implications of 'death of God,' i.e. that new idols based on the will-to-truth are no longer intellectually credible. Despite this shared assessment, however, passive and active strategies of nihilism also differ from each other in their respective responses to this realisation. Nietzsche associated the former type of complete nihilism, i.e. passive nihilism, with the pessimism of

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[56] Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, p. 39.

Schopenhauer.[58] Passive nihilism, Nietzsche argued, is the nihilism that despairs upon recognising the implications of the 'death of God.' In Nietzsche's view, moreover, it was also precisely this 'passive' and pessimistic form of complete nihilism that was the most likely to prevail in Europe following the 'death of God.' Alan Schrift has described Nietzsche's notion of passive nihilism in greater detail, noting that "[a]s a symptom of decline, 'passive nihilism' is the expression of a weary, exhausted will which has searched in vain to locate the highest values: aim, unity, Being. Having grown dissatisfied with the unsuccessful search for these highest values, passive nihilism devalues not only these values but goes on to devalue the world as well, insofar as the world *ought* to have manifested these values."[59] It is an assessment shared by William Connolly, who has similarly pointed out that "[t]he passive nihilist admits the inability to ground his highest values in a transcendent standard, but this admission leads him to devalue this world, to despise the world because it has deserted his ideals. ... He becomes passive, withdrawn, pessimistic."[60] Passive nihilism thus refers to the nihilism of a spirit or culture too exhausted to do more than passively succumb to the emptiness that threatens to engulf it.[61] Indeed, Nietzsche himself described how "[t]he strength of the spirit may be worn out, exhausted so that the previous goals and values have become incommensurate and no longer are believed."[62]

It is, however, also precisely this passive form of complete nihilism which Nietzsche wished to single out and criticise and which would *not* be form of complete nihilism that his 'good Europeans' would pursue. "The nihilist's eye," Nietzsche noted in this vein, "idealises in the direction of ugliness."[63] Indeed, he considered this kind of nihilism to be dangerous for Europe given that it was reminiscent of the "nihilistic catastrophe that finished Indian culture."[64] In his view, the greatest danger with the passive form of complete nihilism is that it might lead to a severe "decline

[57] Haar, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, p. x.
[58] Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo*, p. 37.
[59] Alan D. Schrift. *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*. London: Routledge, 1990, p. 56.
[60] William E. Connolly. *Political Theory and Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, p. 15.
[61] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 22-23, pp. 17-18.
[62] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 23, p. 18.
[63] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 21, p. 17.
[64] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 64, p. 43.

and recession of the power of the spirit" marked by Hamlet-like inaction.[65] In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, Nietzsche noted how the 'death of God' in Europe might lead to "the worship of the stone, stupidity, gravity, fate, the Nothing.... All of us already know something of this."[66] Interestingly, a consideration of the contemporary literature on the idea of Europe also reveals that much of the current debate on the idea of Europe actually emulates precisely this response to the inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe. Many contemporary scholars of European affairs, in other words, have set out in the quest of seeking to distil an 'aim' or 'unity' to the European idea and, in their inability to identify a 'higher purpose,' a 'clear identity,' or a 'common enterprise,' to use Hoffmann's criteria, have arrived at largely frustrated and pessimistic accounts of contemporary European culture. In doing so, moreover, they bear witness to the prevalence, in the contemporary debate, of the response of passive nihilism outlined by Nietzsche.

In order to understand why the conclusion reached by passive nihilists may nevertheless be premature, it is necessary to recall why, in Nietzsche's view, Europeans are actually prone to understand the advent of European nihilism as discouraging and problematic. In Nietzsche's account, it will be recalled from Chapter 2, this pessimistic response of passive nihilism is likely to ensue because of Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage which had accustomed European culture to positing a deeper meaning underlying all events. Implicit in Nietzsche's account, therefore, is the crucial recognition that a pessimistic assessment of modern European culture is ultimately still derived from Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage itself. It is precisely by virtue of having previously judged existence on the basis of the Christian-Platonic standard which modern Europeans inherit, that modern European culture is largely interpreted as being meaningless and that the experience of nihilism emerges in modern Europe. "For why has the advent of nihilism become *necessary?*" Nietzsche asked, and promptly replied, "[b]ecause the values we have had hitherto thus draw their final consequence; because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals – because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what value these 'values' really had."[67] In Nietzsche's view, the advent of passive

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[65] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 22, p. 17.
[66] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 55, p. 67.
[67] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Preface, 4, p. 4.

nihilism was the price that Europeans had to pay for having been Christians for over two thousand years.

According to Nietzsche, then, the origins of the European experience of meaninglessness, or nihilism, are also *not* to be found primarily in the organisation of society, or the economic and political structures which govern it, but in its self-understanding. Indeed, in his view it was "an error to consider 'social distress' or 'physiological degeneration,' or worse, corruption as the *cause* of nihilism." For, Nietzsche maintained, this would be to mistake the symptoms of nihilism for its causes. Rather, he argued, "it is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted."[68] The cause of the experience of nihilism, Nietzsche thus insisted, is the result of a particular interpretation of the world, and of human existence, which has governed the cultural horizon of occidental humanity for virtually two thousand years: the Christian-moral interpretation of the world. Once this heritage had become increasingly untenable in the European imagination, modern Europeans would habitually yearn for the lost form of meaning previously posited by Christianity, but would no longer be able to readily partake in it. The categories "'aim,' 'unity,' 'being' which we used to project some value into the world – we *pull out* again; so the world looks *valueless*."[69] "One interpretation," it will be recalled, "has collapsed; but because it was considered *the* interpretation, it now seems as if there were no meaning in existence at all."[70]

To Nietzsche, then, it was also quite comprehensible that many Europeans would find the advent of European nihilism to be a discouraging development in European culture. In this vein, he explained, for example, how in modern Europe "we can no longer *believe* those dogmas of religion and metaphysics, once we have the rigorous method of truth in our hearts and heads," and yet how "the development of mankind has made us so delicate, sensitive and ailing that we need the most potent kinds of cures and comforts – hence arises the need that man might bleed to death from the truth he has recognised.[71] After having sought a 'meaning' in all events, and

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[68] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 1, p. 7.
[69] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 12 A, p. 13.
[70] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Book One, 55, p. 35.
[71] Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, Section Three, 109, p. 78.

after having come to believe that some goal is to be achieved through the process, modern Europeans would subsequently find the revelation that there is no such meaning or goal as distressing and dissolving. In modern Europe, Nietzsche concluded, one "forbids oneself every kind of clandestine access to afterworlds and false divinities – but *cannot endure this world though one does not want to deny it.*"[72] This paralysis, moreover, can all too easily result in passive nihilism.

Importantly, however, the very fact that the desire to identify a deeper meaning underlying European existence still derives from Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage also means that this pessimistic conclusion is not the only one that can be drawn. "The philosophical nihilist," Nietzsche insisted, "is convinced that all that happens is meaningless and in vain; and that there ought not to be anything meaningless and in vain." "But," he crucially intervened "whence this: there ought not to be? From where does one get *this* 'meaning,' *this* 'standard'?"[73] Thus, while the former attitude towards nihilism has predominated in the course of the twentieth century, and arguably still constitutes the most frequent response to the inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe, it is neither the only possible response, nor necessarily the preferable one. Indeed, Nietzsche himself was quite critical of this reaction to the advent of European nihilism.

This is particularly true, moreover, of his famous 'madman' passage in the *Gay Science*, of which so much of the contemporary literature lamenting the absence of an overarching idea of Europe is reminiscent. This passage of Nietzsche's is meant precisely to capture the mood of passive nihilism. The passage is still symptomatic and diagnostic rather than prescriptive. In Nietzsche's view, it does not, in fact, constitute the only, nor even the most appropriate response to the advent of European nihilism.[74] As Robert Pippin notes, in this passage:

> Nietzsche is clearly trying most of all to draw attention to, rather than
> express or identify with, the melancholic tone, both of the announcement
> and perhaps of the coming culture of melancholy that we noted above, the

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[72] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 12 A, p. 13.
[73] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 36, p. 23.

> tone appropriate to the belief that a kind of death has occurred, that we
> were responsible, and that this death results only in some unbearable,
> frightening absence.[75]

While many commentators have taken this to be Nietzsche's response to the advent of European nihilism, it is, in fact, precisely this mood which Nietzsche wishes to diagnose and address, rather than himself adopt or indeed prescribe to his 'good Europeans.'

In retrospect, Section 125 of the *Gay Science* can thus also be seen as already containing, in symbolic form, both of the primary responses to the 'crisis of meaning' currently evident in the European debate. On the one hand, it entails the people in the market place who laugh at the madman, i.e. those who have given up the quest for meaning, settling instead for a scientific account of existence which aims mostly at material gratification and discards the 'why' question as being largely irrelevant, meaningless or unanswerable. It is this attitude that broadly corresponds to the functional approach to European integration which eschews overt question of meaning and focuses on piecemeal, functional co-operation. Importantly, however, this worldview is still, despite its appearance to the contrary, based on the will-to-truth of Europe's longer Christian-Platonic heritage which remains operational within the realm of modern science and which now seems to expose all metaphysical ideals as unnecessary and incredible. It is this residual will-to-truth, moreover, which means that Nietzsche's "good Europeans" distance themselves from this attitude.

On the other hand, this famous passage of Nietzsche's also anticipates the more contemporary response in the European debate, i.e. the expression of despair and melancholy at the inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe that will enhance the legitimacy of the European institutions and provide the basis for a European identity capable of mitigating against the rise of nationalist and racist violence. This view, in turn, corresponds to the passive nihilism of the 'madman' recounted by Nietzsche in the passage. Initially, moreover, this view seems closer to

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[74] Robert B. Pippin. *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfaction of European High Culture.* 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p. 151.
[75] Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 148.

Nietzsche's for, unlike the 'last man,' Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' did indeed understand the profound implications of the 'death of God' and wished to salvage the spiritual depth afforded by Europe's Christian-Platonic tradition. Despite this proximity, however, this response too is not, in the end, that of the 'good Europeans.' For, unlike the passive nihilism of the 'madman' and the contemporary Europeanists cited in the introduction to this thesis, the recognition of the profound implications of the 'death of God' does not trigger amongst the 'good Europeans' the experience of melancholy and the corresponding desire for redemption from this event. Rather, it provokes amongst them a much more appreciative response which, in turn, manifests itself in the second and more active form of complete nihilism.

4. The Active Nihilism of Nietzsche's 'Good Europeans'

In contrast to this predominantly pessimistic reaction to the advent of European nihilism, Nietzsche insisted instead that, at a minimum, the experience of complete nihilism is 'ambiguous.'[76] The advent of European nihilism, in other words, can indeed be a sign of a weakened spirit, but, at the same time, it can also be the sign of a strengthened spirit.[77] It is, moreover, this latter aspect of nihilism as the sign of a strengthened spirit which Nietzsche, in turn, wished to emphasise. Much in this vein he wished to point towards a form of nihilism that does not succumb to passive resignation, but which rather takes a more active form instead. The aim, in turn, of this more *active* form of complete nihilism is, as David Toole explains, "to clear the way so that one can replace those values with new ones, not in the way that incomplete nihilism proposes, but with a vigor that in fact leads not only to new values but to a whole new conception of value itself. Gone, in other words, are the structures of authority so deeply imprinted by the tales of the suprasensory world."[78]

This *active* response to the 'death of God' which Nietzsche recommends to the 'good Europeans,' moreover, is different from the previous and passive nihilism in that it additionally recognises the questionable character of the Christian-Platonic

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[76] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 22, p. 17.
[77] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 22, p. 17.
[78] Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo*, p. 37.

heritage itself and its understanding of existence. In the response of the more active nihilism, in other words, there is no *prima facie* reason why there should be a greater meaning underlying all events and consequently also no *a priori* reason why the inability to articulate such a greater meaning underlying European existence should necessarily lead to a pessimistic account of European culture. Conversely, there is also no initial reason why the inability to articulate an idea of Europe that delineates a 'higher purpose,' a 'clear identity,' or a 'common enterprise' – to use Hoffmann's criteria – should be a cause for great concern. Indeed, to claim the absence of meaning in contemporary Europe is, in Nietzsche's account, still to judge European existence according to criteria which have themselves come under critical scrutiny in the aftermath of the 'death of God'.[79] It is, then, by recognising the questionable status of the Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage itself, that Nietzsche could insist that the pursuit of an active nihilism actually constitutes a sign of strengthened spiritual vitality, in the sense that "the spirit may have grown so strong that previous goals ... have become incommensurate."[80] "It could," he insisted, "be the sign of a crucial and most essential growth, of the transition to new conditions of existence, that the most extreme form of pessimism, genuine *nihilism*, would come into the world."[81]

Much in this vein, then, Nietzsche also invited his 'good Europeans' to recognise what he actually saw as the enormous liberating potential inherent in the advent of European nihilism, that nihilism could even signal a divine way of thinking. As Nietzsche noted in a posthumously published fragment from the *Will to Power*, "[t]he most extreme form of nihilism would be the view that *every* belief, every considering-something-true, is necessarily false, because there simply is no *true world*. Thus: a *perspectival appearance* whose origin lies in us (in so far as we continually *need* a narrower, abbreviated, simplified world)." Moreover, he concluded in this note, "it is the measure of strength to what extent we can admit to ourselves, without perishing, the merely *apparent* character, the necessity of lies. To this extent, nihilism, as the denial of a truthful world, of being, might be *a divine way of*

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[79] In this sense it is interesting that it was Francis Bacon himself who once pointed out in relation to his revolutionary ideas, "I cannot be fairly asked to abide by the decision of a tribunal which is itself on trial." See the Preface of Francis Bacon. *The Great Instauration* in Francis Bacon *Works*. Edited by J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis, and D. D. Heath. 14 vols. 1847-1874. New York: Garret Press, 1968. Cited in Laurence Lampert. *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 40.
[80] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 23, pp. 17-18.

thinking.[82] Michael Haar further explains Nietzsche's important reference to nihilism as a 'divine way of thinking' in greater detail, noting that "[n]ihilism is not overcome simply because the essential metaphysical distinction ceases to be of value. In order to transform 'complete' nihilism into 'consummated' nihilism ... it is necessary that we pass from a recognition of the dissolution to an active, an affirmative dissolution." Indeed, Haar argues:

> [t]he new affirmation includes an act of destruction whereby all the relations issuing from the difference are destroyed. This unity of creation and destruction at the core of a force supremely affirmative (active nihilism) comprises a perspective that Nietzsche also calls 'Dionysian': the perspective of the joyous, pure affirmation of the unity of contraries. It is this latter sense – namely an invalidation of all metaphysical differences and as a radical abolishment of the 'true world,' as a negation of the singular God (Christian representative of the world) – that 'nihilism might indeed be a divine manner of thinking': delivered from the paralysis effected by the Singular, the creative instinct of Multiple gods would be re-animated. This 'divine' form of nihilism prefigures and essential transition.[83]

Once this is realised, in Nietzsche's account, there would be novel opportunities for the development of European culture which is why he also insisted that "from such abysses [of nihilism], from such severe sickness, also from the sickness of severe suspicion, one returns *newborn* ... with merrier senses, with a second dangerous innocence in joy, more childlike and yet a hundred times subtler than one has ever been before."[84]

From this perspective, then, the advent of European nihilism is not even seen as a disaster. Rather, "[i]t must come, as the traditional world view must go, if a new world view is to take its place; and the fact that it is coming may be due at least in part to the fact that some feel strong enough to try to do without the traditional world view."[85] Indeed, Nietzsche pointed out how the advent of European nihilism was

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[81] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 112, p. 69.
[82] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 15, pp. 14-15.
[83] Haar, "Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language," pp. 15-16.
[84] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Preface 4, p. 37.
[85] Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, p. 40.

simultaneously a moment of the "the greatest courage" for Europeans,[86] and how the 'death of God' was "the most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps also the most hopeful of all spectacles."[87] Ultimately, Nietzsche even concluded that "I praise I do not reproach, its arrival."[88] Indeed, in the form of his 'good Europeans,' Nietzsche himself actually wished to encourage a countermovement which "will in some future or other slough off that consummate nihilism; and yet which presupposes it, logically and psychologically, and can actually only come to that nihilism and out of it."[89] It is, paradoxically, only by accepting and passing through the experience of nihilism that the feeling of *meaninglessness* may eventually cease to be experienced as distressing.

Nietzsche's own invitation, then, to the 'good Europeans' whom he hoped might emerge in the future, was to pursue this more *active* strategy of complete nihilism, i.e. to see the arrival of nihilism as a new source of renewed strength for the 'European spirit.' In the hands of the strongest, Nietzsche noted, nihilism "is only an additional hammer and tool with which to create a new set of wings."[90] Those who would take up this invitation, Nietzsche metaphorically referred to as 'free spirits' and 'good Europeans.' Such an attitude and position, moreover, would constitute precisely the opposite of the passive nihilism of a weakened spiritual vitality, i.e. a more active nihilism of intellectual strength and creativity. In this vein, he also repeatedly referred to the positive aspects of the experience of nihilism, and emphasised the recovery it provides from previous constraints. A philosopher like himself, Nietzsche explained, "heals himself differently; he heals himself, for example, through nihilism. The belief that there is no truth, the nihilist belief, is a great stretching of the limbs for one who, as a warrior of knowledge, incessantly lies in battle with hateful truths."[91] One of Nietzsche's most important insights, then, about the nature of European nihilism was that, despite the fact that it is often experience, and continues to be experienced, as disquieting and disorienting, it also entails a vastly creative and liberating potential, both intellectually and spiritually. Indeed, Nietzsche insisted, one now realises that "[b]ecoming must be explained without recourse to final intentions.... Becoming does

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[86] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 2[129] p. 128.
[87] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 27, p. 161.
[88] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1887-1889*, KSA 13, 11[119], p. 56.
[89] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Preface, 4, pp. 3-4.
[90] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 2[101], p. 111.

not aim at a final state, does not flow into 'being.'"[92] Once this potential within the experience of European nihilism is recognised, moreover, Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage could be increasingly left behind, enabling new opportunities to eventually open themselves up for European culture.[93]

The response of Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' to the onset of European nihilism is, therefore, also quite different from the attitude displayed by many of the contemporary scholars and drawn attention to at the outset of this thesis. For, this response is not formulated in the pessimistic and melancholic tone frequently encountered in the debate on the idea of Europe today. Rather, Nietzsche noted in the *Gay Science* how this response to the experience of nihilism is "not at all sad and gloomy, but rather like a new, difficult to describe kind of light, happiness, relief, amusement, encouragement, dawn...." He added, moreover, that "we philosophers and 'free spirits' feel, when we hear the news that 'the old god is dead,' as if a new dawn shone on us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonition, expectation. At long last the horizon appears free to us again."[94] Nietzsche's own response to the 'death of God,' in short, was one of 'cheerfulness.'[95]

In Nietzsche's own view, then, the task for modern Europeans is to cultivate an attitude towards European nihilism as a creative strength and appropriate it as a tool assisting in a comprehensive revaluation and rejuvenation of European culture. It is also precisely this attitude of openness inherent in a strategy of active nihilism, moreover, which Nietzsche singled out as the last defining characteristic of the 'good Europeans.' Indeed, he insisted, "[w]e are, in one word — and let this be our word of honour — *good Europeans*, the heirs of Europe, the rich, oversupplied, but also overly obligated heirs of thousands of years of European spirit."[96] These 'good Europeans'

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[91] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1887-1889*, KSA, 13, 11[108], p. 51. Note Trans. Carr, *The Banalization of Nihilism*, p. 44.
[92] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 708, p. 377.
[93] As Nietzsche noted in the *Gay Science*. "*A dangerous resolve.* — The Christian resolve to find the world ugly and bad has made the world ugly and bad." 130, p. 185.
[94] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 343, p. 280.
[95] In 1886 Nietzsche thus also added a fifth book to *The Gay Science*. The first aphorism of Section V (343) is written under the heading "The Meaning of Our Cheerfulness' and notes how "[t]he greatest recent event - that 'God is dead,' that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable — is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe."
[96] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 377, p. 340.

might "redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this antichrist and antinihilist; this victor over God and nothingness – *he must come one day.*"[97] In addition, therefore, to having understood the implications of the 'death of God,' and in addition to refusing the articulation of new idols to replace the old God, the third and final defining characteristic of Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' is to understand the liberating and creative potential which is, in fact, afforded to European culture by the advent of European nihilism. For, Nietzsche noted in this vein, at long last "our ships may finally venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an 'open sea.'"[98] What Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' and 'free spirits' discover with the advent of European nihilism, then, is not a pessimistic world which has deserted their ideals, but rather a creative experience of freedom and a *'great separation'* from previous constraints which have directed European thinking for over two thousand years.[99] This experience of freedom, for Nietzsche, is the 'decisive event' for the 'free spirit' as well as the 'good European,' and is marked by a "dangerous curiosity for an undiscovered world [which] flames up and flickers in all the senses."[100] It is, in turn, precisely this *ethos* of Nietzsche's 'good Europeans,' of pursuing a thinking that is more free than it is 'true,' which can be said to constitute a vibrant alternative to the predominantly pessimistic assessments of contemporary European culture which predominate today. In this case, however, the current inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe would not so much be a sign of a weakened 'spiritual vitality' as it would be the sign of a strengthened and, in Nietzsche's view, 'free' spirit. Indeed, it would be the sign of a 'good European.'

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[97] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals,* II, 24, p. 96.
[98] Nietzsche, *Gay Science,* 343, p. 280.
[99] Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, Preface, 3, p. 6.
[100] Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, Preface, 3, p. 6.

Conclusion

What Nietzsche's idea of the 'good European' can offer to the contemporary scholar of European affairs, then, is the recognition that it is also possible to understand the advent of European nihilism, and the self-overcoming of past values, not as a negative and pessimistic development of European culture, but as a necessary, and indeed welcome, development in European culture that affords many new possibilities previously unrealised in European culture. The key to understanding Nietzsche's way out of the 'crisis of meaning' in Europe, in turn, is to understand that, in a sense, the entire realisation of this crisis is still itself ultimately very much bound up with Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage. It is precisely the incessant will-to-truth of this tradition which drives Europeans first to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe within the context of Christianity, and which, under modern conditions, subsequently bars the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe conceived along these or similar lines. As Nietzsche insisted in this vein, "we men of knowledge of today, we godless men and anti-metaphysicians, we, too, still derive *our* flame from the fire ignited by a faith millennia old, the Christian faith, which was also Plato's, that God is truth, that truth is *divine*."[101] The incredibility of metaphysical values, in other words, itself still hinges on the will-to-truth having reached its highest stage. Without the incessant will-to-truth of Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage, there would neither be the need to articulate a 'more meaningful' idea of Europe, nor, for that matter, would there even be a 'crisis' of European nihilism in the absence of such an idea. The appropriate way to engage the 'European crisis of meaning', therefore, is, in Nietzsche's account, not the articulation of new ideas of Europe which will challenge the 'meaningless, scientific' understanding of existence and which will reactivate Europe's will-to-truth. These ideas are likely to be criticised and undermined in the aftermath of the 'death of God,' and are thus also likely to make the experience of meaninglessness more acute. Rather, the way out of this 'crisis' is a more trenchant critique of Europe's heritage centred around the will-to-truth, and the realisation that the perception of a 'crisis' is itself very much implicated in this heritage. As Nietzsche himself insisted in this regard, "No! You ought to learn the art of *this-worldly* comfort first; you ought to learn to laugh, my young friends, if you are

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hell-bent on remaining pessimists. Then, perhaps, as laughers, you may some day dispatch all metaphysical comforts to the devil – metaphysics in front."[102]

By way of analogy, Europe's 'identity crisis,' or its 'crisis of meaning' as it is variously referred to in the contemporary debate, can be bemoaned and lamented, as is so often done. At the same time, however, in Nietzsche's account it could also be seen as an invitation to critically rethink the state of Europe in the late twentieth century and to consider the conceptual framework for a Europe which finds itself embedded in an ever changing world. As Karen Carr explains, in Nietzsche's view:

> [e]ither European culture would perish, under the nothingness that ensues from the death of God and the self-dissolution of Christianity, or the experience of the empty, mendacious character of Platonic-Christian metaphysics would purge it of a way of viewing the world as was both debilitating and false, thereby opening the way for healthier forms of self-expression.[103]

In doing so, moreover, Nietzsche also puts to the contemporary scholar of international relations a perspective on Europe which cannot be easily ignored in our attempts to delineate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era.

Indeed, in Nietzsche's account it was precisely those aspects of the European tradition which had traditionally been seen as signs of spiritual vitality which turn out to actually be its opposites. It was the ascetic ideals of the past which emerge as signs of a declining spirit and which were intricately bound up with the resentment of what Nietzsche referred to within his discussion of 'slave morality.' Conversely, it could similarly be the very absence of a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era which could be indicative of a strengthened 'spiritual vitality,' rather than a weakened one. "*The self-overcoming of nihilism*" in this account, consists precisely in the attempt to say "yes to all that has previously been denied and rejected."[104] This insight, perhaps, also explains why Nietzsche himself once insisted that "I have a

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[101] Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, III, 24, p. 152.
[102] Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, Preface 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism,' 7, p. 26.
[103] Carr, *The Banalization of Nihilism*, pp. 48-49.
[104] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 9[164], p. 432.

subtler sense of smell for the signs of ascent and decline than any other human being before me; I am teacher par *excellence* of this – I know both, I am both ... I turned my will to health, to *life*, into philosophy."[105] Himself realising the radical nature of his thinking, moreover, and indeed anticipating the resistance it was likely to encounter, Nietzsche wrote to Brandes explaining that "[m]y task is quite singular this time: I've asked myself what mankind has always hated, feared, and despised the most – and precisely out of this I've made my gold."[106] Nietzsche thus challenged a central assumption that runs through much of European intellectual heritage, namely that a more meaningful idea of Europe needs to be postulated.

What is more, Nietzsche insisted, "[l]et us not undervalue this: *we ourselves*, we free spirits, are already a 'revaluation of all values', an *incarnate* declaration of war and victory over all ancient conceptions of 'true' and 'untrue.'"[107] In contradistinction, therefore, to Plato's initial question of whether it would be possible to imagine a city where the idea of a city was no longer recognisable at all, the Nietzschean perspective places its wager on the possibility of a Europe consisting of 'good Europeans' who do not necessarily share a fixed idea of Europe. Nietzsche himself was even quite optimistic about this prospect in the long term, noting in *Human, All too Human:*

> [t]hat there *could* someday be such free spirits, that our Europe will have such lively, daring fellows among its sons of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, real and palpable and not merely, as in my case, phantoms and a hermit's shadow play: I am the last person to want to doubt that. I already see them *coming,* slowly, slowly; and perhaps I am doing something to hasten their coming when I describe before the fact the fateful conditions that I *see* giving rise to them, the paths on which I *see* them coming?[108]

In this sense, then, it might also not at all be necessary to possess a more meaningful idea of Europe in order to demonstrate one's spiritual vitality as a 'good European.' Of course, the challenge of Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' may initially seem

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[105] Cited in Aloni, *Beyond Nihilism*, p. vii.
[106] A. J. Hoover, *Friedrich Nietzsche: His Life and Thought.* London: Praeger, 1994, p. 21.
[107] Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ*, 13, p. 135.
[108] Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, Preface, 2, pp. 5-6.

unconventional; but then again, and as Jacques Darras has noted more recently, "Europe would not be Europe if it were to fail to find a new way to cope with an old dilemma."[109]

[109] Jacques Darras. *Beyond the Tunnel of History*. London: Macmillan, 1990, p. 60.

CONCLUSION

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This thesis began, it will be recalled, by drawing attention to the fact that many European policy-makers and scholars have, in the course of the 1990s, sought to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe which would serve to enhance the legitimacy of the European Union and which could provide the basis for a European identity capable of mitigating against the rise of nationalist and racist violence in Europe. Over the course of the past decade, however, and despite several valiant efforts, the attempt to articulate such an idea has proved profoundly difficult. The question that subsequently emerged, therefore, was why it is actually proving so difficult to articulate a more compelling vision of Europe in the post-Cold War era, and how, concomitantly, this difficulty might be addressed. In light of this impasse, the thesis set out to analyse the contribution that Nietzsche's European thought could make towards addressing the contemporary predicament, focusing in particular on his discussion of European nihilism and his response to this development in terms of his idea of the 'good Europeans.' After having carried out this analysis, several conclusions may be drawn, both in terms of our understanding of the contemporary impasse, and in terms of our response to this predicament.

1. The 'Crisis of Meaning' in the European Debate

The first set of conclusions that can be reached, relates to the ability of Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism to enhance our understanding of the contemporary impasse. Indeed, what emerged from analysing Nietzsche's discussion, is that the contemporary 'crisis of meaning' in the European debate is not novel, but is rather only the most recent manifestation of a much longer and more fundamental problem, the origins of which can be traced back at least to the end of the previous century. Already towards the end of the nineteenth century, Nietzsche had drawn attention to the absence of an overarching idea of Europe. More specifically, he illustrated how Europeans had traditionally rendered their existence meaningful by means of the will-to-truth, i.e. by postulating the existence of a 'true' or 'real' world in which the deeper meaning of existence was to be located. This, for example, could

take the shape of the ideal world of forms, as it did with Plato, or the promise of a redeeming afterlife, as was the case with Christianity. In either case, however, the positing of 'meaning' rested on a metaphysical distinction between a 'true' world with fixed attributes, and a merely 'apparent' world characterised by flux and uncertainty. Yet, as Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism also showed, it was precisely this distinction that became untenable in modern times. Indeed, Nietzsche's account illustrated how the emphasis of truth, especially within Christianity, had, over time, given rise to scientific accounts of existence which revealed the existence of God, and that of a redeeming afterlife, to be mere fictions, thereby provoking the experience of meaninglessness. Nor has the problem of European nihilism disappeared from European culture since the end of the nineteenth century, as an analysis of the historical continuities between Nietzsche's own discussion of European nihilism and the contemporary situation sought to demonstrate. The first conclusion, therefore, that can be reached on the basis of an analysis of Nietzsche's European thought, is that the current impasse must be seen within the larger context of modern, European history and the problems of articulating a more meaningful conception of European existence within the cultural configuration of European modernity.

In the second instance, Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism can also go a substantial way towards explaining why this experience of meaninglessness persists to this day and why this experience leads to a predominance of pessimistic accounts of contemporary European culture. For, in Nietzsche's account, it is due to the lengthy and formative influence of Christian-Platonic forms of thinking on European culture, that the experience of meaninglessness persists even after the 'death of God.' A culture based on the pursuit of truth, and accustomed to addressing its suffering by inventing an ideal or 'true' world in order to give its existence a greater sense of meaning, will perceive the inability to articulate such an idea as a loss and as a shortcoming. One interpretation, Nietzsche noted in this regard, had collapsed, but because it had traditionally been *the* interpretation through which to render existence meaningful, European existence took on the appearance of being meaningless in the aftermath of the 'death of God.' This disappointment would, Nietzsche thought, be capable of lasting for many decades, even centuries. In the second instance, therefore, Nietzsche's account can illuminate our understanding of the contemporary impasse by accounting for the persistence of the European experience of meaninglessness to this

day, and by showing why, in light of Europe's lengthy Christian-Platonic heritage, this experience frequently leads to pessimistic accounts of European existence.

Finally, Nietzsche's discussion of European nihilism can also, by virtue of drawing attention to the true depth and magnitude of the problem of nihilism, enhance our understanding of why it remains so difficult to actually articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe to this day. Thus, Anthony D. Smith, for example, has recently characterised the contemporary predicament as consisting of "a choice between unacceptable, historical myths and memories on the one hand, on the other a patchwork, memoryless scientific 'culture' held together solely by the political will and economic interest that are so often subject to change."[1] The shift in European culture from a theistic to a more scientific understanding of the existence meant that metaphysical attempts to articulate a greater meaning underlying European existence would be deemed to be incredible almost *a priori*. What is more, the deeper implications of the advent of European nihilism also entailed the questioning even of modern science itself. For, what had begun to put itself into question with the advent of European nihilism, was the underlying will-to-truth which had shaped the structure of European thinking for over two millennia, including that of modern science. In this sense, modern existence also appears, in Nietzsche's words, to be "a hiatus between two nothingnesses,"[2] i.e. an existence caught between myths that now seem unacceptable on the one hand, and a pervasive feeling of meaninglessness on the other. This 'crisis' runs very deep indeed and is not easily remedied. It requires, in all likelihood, a very different form of thinking. By drawing attention to the depth and magnitude of this problem, moreover, Nietzsche's European thought can still assist the contemporary scholar in understanding why it continues to prove so difficult to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe, even today.

There are, then, at least three different ways in which Nietzsche's analysis of the advent of European nihilism can enhance our understanding of the contemporary impasse confronted by scholars of European affairs. Indeed, in retrospect it seems

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[1] Anthony D. Smith. "National Identity and the Idea of European Unity" in Peter Gowan and Perry Anderson (eds.) *The Question of Europe*. London: Verso, 1997, p. 338.
[2] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, KSA 12, 10[34], p. 473.

that much of the evolution of the European debate actually follows, in broad outlines, Nietzsche's genealogical account of the advent of European nihilism. Thus, the question of Europe's meaning began to emerge as Europe ceased to be the 'Christian continent.' The subsequent inability to identify an underlying meaning for European existence following the 'death of God' partially served to fuel two world wars during which the idea of Europe as the Christian continent could no longer be readily discerned. Amongst the devastation left behind by two world wars, the 'founding fathers' of the institutional project of Europe opted for an idea of Europe that was closer to the altered configuration of European societies where science had increasingly begun to replace Christianity as the formative cultural structure. Yet, nearly half a century later, and as the straightjacket of Cold War politics was removed, it emerged that a 'spiritless' and 'scientific' Europe was not sufficient in order to evoke a meaningful response to the European project. In this vein, scholars have sought, over the past decade, to retrieve the cultural space they abandoned earlier and to recover a more meaningful understanding of the European idea. Yet another decade later, however, many of these scholars have been disappointed in their quest, seeing only the remnants of a Europe whose 'spiritual vitality' is, in their view, too badly shattered to give birth to a new horizon. In doing so, moreover, they testify to the prevalence, in the contemporary debate, of the response already referred to by Nietzsche as passive nihilism. In this sense, then, an analysis of Nietzsche's European thought can indeed go some way towards enhancing our understanding of the current predicament that Europe continues to face.

2. Responding to the Experience of Meaninglessness

In addition to these above conclusions, however, there is also a second set of conclusions that can be reached after analysing Nietzsche's European thought. These, in turn, relate to the question of how to best respond to the current inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe. For, with an analysis of Nietzsche's European thought in mind, it is no longer self-evident that the most appropriate response to experience of meaninglessness is to seek the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe along the lines demanded by Hoffmann and others. Such a

move would, in Nietzsche's account, constitute a strategy of incomplete nihilism and, as the thesis has shown, there are several reason for objecting to such strategies. In the first instance, and as was noted in Chapter 3, it was precisely such strategies that were implicated in the violent nature of European history in the twentieth-century. Seeking to reactivate the will to truth by identifying the 'true' meaning of existence as residing in such notions as the nation, class, or race is thus a dangerous endeavour, if only, because in the absence of external criteria, the decision of the veracity of such 'meanings' is ultimately deferred to the use of force. With the benefit of hindsight, therefore, it is possible to identify the danger which generally accompanies such strategies, including any contemporary strategy to re-activate the will-to-truth in the name of 'Europe.'

Nietzsche himself, of course, did not witness the twentieth century, but he did nevertheless argue that "[a]ttempts to escape nihilism without revaluing our values so far: they produce the opposite, make the problem more acute"[3] and that "[t]he fight against [nihilism] strengthens it."[4] For, even without witnessing the course of European history in the twentieth century, Nietzsche had his own reasons for objecting to strategies of incomplete nihilism. Firstly, such strategies were, in his view, intellectually untenable in the aftermath of the 'death of God' because the implications of the latter are precisely that the will-to-truth has begun to put itself into question. Simply reactivating the will-to-truth may please old habits and thus achieve considerable success, but they can hardly be the appropriate response to a crisis whose implications entail precisely the calling into question of Europe's traditional will-to-truth itself. What is more, Nietzsche also thought, in the second instance, that such strategies are, much like their Christian-Platonic predecessors, indicative of a resentful attitude towards existence because they seek to reduce the diverse and fluctuating conditions of existence into one that is fixed. They lead to a withdrawal from the ambiguous aspects of existence and towards the devotion of ascetic ideals. In light of these two reservations, then, the current attempt to articulate a European ideal must equally be treated with reservations from a Nietzschean perspective.

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[3] Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1968, 28, p. 19.
[4] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, KSA 12, 5[57], p. 206.

This critique of strategies of incomplete nihilism thus also places Nietzsche and his idea of the 'good Europeans' in critical opposition to those writers, cited at the outset of the thesis, who wish to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era. It is, after all, difficult to see how, despite their often benevolent intentions, these recent attempts to develop a more compelling vision of Europe could actually escape the logic of incomplete nihilism. Would not any attempt to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe simply end up returning to the very language and logic perpetuated by Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage? Would such an attempt not culminate in the eventual postulation of an inner essence or an overriding *telos* to European existence, as had been the case with traditional attempts to endow European existence with a greater sense of meaning? Indeed, it is precisely this kind of language which has, in fact, already resurfaced in the contemporary debate on the idea of Europe. As was noted in Chapter 1, Stanley Hoffmann, for example, linked his understanding of what would constitute a more meaningful idea of Europe to such related notions as the ability to delineate a clear 'purpose,' with having a 'sense of direction,' a 'clear identity,' a 'higher purpose,' a sense of *'projet,'* and a 'common enterprise.'[5] According to Hoffmann, a lack of these attributes signals a lack of 'spiritual vitality.' Nor, as was also shown in Chapter 1, is Hoffmann alone in exhibiting such concern. Rather, the inability to articulate a more compelling vision of Europe has, over the course of the past decade, led to a proliferation of pessimistic accounts of contemporary European culture which lament the inability to produce a more compelling vision of Europe and which take this 'failure' to be indicative of a damaged and fading 'spiritual vitality.' Although a Nietzschean perspective is certainly compatible both with their plea for greater reflection about the institutional project of Europe and with their view that the functional approach alone is inadequate, in Nietzsche's view the answer to the contemporary impasse cannot be the challenge of a supposedly 'meaningless' and scientific European culture with a more meaningful idea of Europe. For, any such notion is likely to be reminiscent of the logic of incomplete nihilism which he wished to challenge and which he sought to replace with a more complete and active form of nihilism.

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[5] Stanley Hoffmann. "Europe's Identity Crisis Revisited." *Daedalus*. Vol. 123. No. 2. 1994, pp. 1, 1, 1, 15, 15, 18.

Not only, moreover, would such an attempt simply be reminiscent of this traditional way of thinking, but it might, from the Nietzsche perspective, have the even more adverse effect of actually perpetuating the logic of incomplete nihilism in contemporary Europe. Put differently, the attempts to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe, as well as the copious references to the 'crisis of meaning' witnessed in the post-Cold War era, run the combined risks of perpetuating this traditional language of ascetic ideals, and drawing the majority of the debate onto this ground. Indeed, much of the contemporary literature on the European 'crisis of meaning' can be understood as an implicit incitement to attempt to reactivate the will-to-truth and to postulate some greater meaning underlying European existence.[6] This also means, however, that the call by European policy-makers to articulate a more compelling vision of Europe is potentially self-fulfilling in the sense that, as Henry Staten has recently argued, "the very claim that human beings need transcendence might itself be the cause of human beings coming to feel the need for transcendence, and we can have no fair test of the matter until we have an instance of a society in which such claims have been thoroughly extinguished."[7] Yet, as Staten argues further, "[t]o date, we have no such instances (in the West, at least), nor any that come remotely close; what we do have is societies that exist in the shadow of Christian transcendentalism.[8] In this vein, moreover, Nietzsche himself had already pointed out with regard to the role of the Church in the Middle Ages, that "the universal institution of the Church was reflecting artificial needs, based on fictions, which, if they were not yet present, it first had to produce (need for redemption.)"[9] By way of analogy, in seeking to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe, and by constantly invoking a 'European crisis,' European policy-makers and scholars may well be encouraging and sustaining practices which, in light of Nietzsche's analysis, as well as the violent nature of the twentieth century, remain problematic.

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[6] As J. Peter Burgess has argued in this vein, "[c]ultural identity cannot recall a time when it wasn't a question of cultural identity, when cultural identity was not in question, when some form of disequilibrium, dispersion, rupture was not present, sounding the alarm and the call to redefining, re-establishing the identity presumed lost or threatened. There was never not crisis." J. Peter Burgess. "European Borders: History Of Space/Space Of History." www.ctheory.com/a-european_borders.html.

[7] Henry Staten. "'Radical Evil' Revived: Hitler, Kant, Luther, Neo-Lacanianism." *Radical Philosophy.* No. 98, 1999, p. 13.

[8] Staten, "'Radical Evil' Revived," p. 13.

[9] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Human, All Too Human.* Trans. Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. London: Penguin, 1984, 476, p. 230.

There is, in fact, some evidence to suggest that this process is already taking place. One scholar of European affairs, for example, has recently pointed out how "[t]he very aim of a more thorough European integration has fostered a political fight over collective and political identities on the continent" and that "[t]he endeavour to generate a European collective identity has produced new or re-established competing forms of social exclusion."[10] The attempt to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe, in other words, has already begun to lead to a contest over collective identities in Europe and has drawn much of the European debate onto this terrain. From the Nietzschean perspective, however, this move is strategically questionable not only in the sense that the European perspective has a comparative disadvantage vis-à-vis more established national identities, but also because the very attempt to articulate a more compelling vision of Europe actually draws the European project into practices which are themselves in need of critical evaluation. It is in this very context, moreover, that Nietzsche himself also set out to philosophise with a hammer, the tap of which would expose the hollowness of traditional idols and which would also destroy those ideals which were no longer credible following the 'death of God.' In the contemporary debate, in turn, it would be not only the 'nationalisers' who would fall within the realm of Nietzsche's criticism, but, to the extent that they approximate a form of incomplete nihilism which embodies a form of teleology or essence, also the Europeanists.

In addition to enhancing our understanding of the contemporary predicament, then, a study of Nietzsche's European thought also casts doubt on whether the best response to this impasse is, as several scholars have argued, to seek the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe. For, from the perspective of Nietzsche's 'good Europeans,' this would not necessarily be the most appropriate strategy to pursue in response to the contemporary predicament. Nietzsche himself, for one, clearly did not think that it was necessary to respond to the advent of European nihilism through the erection of new European idols. Nor did he himself seek to offer such idols. "No new idols," he wrote quite explicitly "are erected by me; let the old ones learn what feet of clay mean."[11] Rather, he insisted, *"[o]verthrowing idols* (my word for 'ideals') – that

[10] Oliver Schmidtke. "Obstacles and Prospects for a European Collective Identity" in Ulf Hedetoft (ed.) *Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998, p. 44.
[11] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo,* Preface, 2, pp. 217-218.

comes closer to being part of my craft.[12] Similarly, Nietzsche's revaluation of values does not mean, as Walter Kaufmann has rightly pointed out, "a table of new virtues, nor an attempt to give us such a table."[13] Rather, it is instead "a courageous becoming conscious,"[14] especially of the problematic nature of Europe's historical asceticism which, as David Krell and Donald Bates note, include "its religion, its science, its scholarship, [and] its lust for power."[15] Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' and 'free spirits,' in turn, would constitute precisely such a revaluation of traditional values. "Let us not undervalue this," Nietzsche noted in this regard, "*we ourselves*, we free spirits, are already a 'revaluation of all values,' an *incarnate* declaration of war and victory over all ancient conceptions of 'true' and 'untrue.'"[16] In addition to enhancing our understanding of the contemporary predicament, therefore, an analysis of Nietzsche's European thought also casts considerable doubt on whether the best way to confront the contemporary impasse in the European debate is the attempt to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe along traditional lines.

3. Europe's 'Spiritual Vitality'

Does, however, such a critique of the contemporary literature on the European idea not simply contribute further towards Europe's already fragile 'spiritual vitality?' This too must not necessarily be the case. For, a final and equally important conclusion that can be derived from an analysis of Nietzsche's European thought, is that the conception of 'spiritual vitality' informing much of the contemporary debate is one which is quite contestable. In Nietzsche's own view, for example, it was precisely the attempt to fix a more meaningful idea of Europe that beckoned a declining spirit, resentful of existence. "One has deprived reality," he noted in this vein, "of its value, its meaning, its truthfulness, to precisely the extent to which one

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[12] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, Preface, 2, pp. 217-218.
[13] Walter Kaufmann. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist.* 4th ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, pp. 110-111.
[14] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 1007, p. 521.
[15] David Farrell Krell and Donald L. Bates. *The Good European: Nietzsche's Work Sites in Word and Image.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 3.
[16] Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ*, 13, p. 135.

has mendaciously invented an ideal world."[17] Inventors of 'ideal' worlds are usually those incapable or unwilling to accept the ambiguous and diverse aspects of existence and whose ascetic ideals substitute the meaningfulness of earthly existence in favour of fictitious, ascetic ideals. From Nietzsche's perspective, therefore, it is precisely the positing of higher idols and ideals which devalues life and can thus be said to be nihilistic.[18] To this effect, Nietzsche also repeatedly insisted that the modern "inference that there is no meaning at all" was a "tremendous generalisation" that was "pathological" in being so extreme.[19] While he did acknowledge that "the world is not worth what we believed," he also suggested that, far from having no meaning, "the world could be worth much more than we believed."[20] Indeed, modern pessimism is, in his view, "an expression of the uselessness of the modern world – not of the world and of existence."[21] It was, he concluded, above all a symbol of modern man's lack of humility that led him to deny the meaning of existence simply because he could not see it.[22] What an analysis of Nietzsche's European thought further suggests, therefore, is that it may be precisely those who call for the articulation of new ideals and who offer pessimistic accounts of European culture in the absence of such ideals, who are indicative of weakened 'spiritual vitality' on behalf of Europeans.

It is at this point, moreover, that Nietzsche's own idea of the 'good Europeans' also becomes particularly important; for, it, in turn, allows for a very different understanding of what actually constitutes a culture's 'spiritual vitality.' Nietzsche himself had insisted that the 'free spirits' and 'good Europeans' do not need an end or goal for existence in order to demonstrate their 'spiritual vitality.' Rather, he argued, "[i]t is a measure of the degree of strength of the will to what extent one can do without meaning in things, to what extent one can endure to live in a meaningless world *because one organises a small portion of it in oneself.*"[23] Correspondingly, Nietzsche's is also a vision of Europe which does not seek to close off and fix, in advance, the meaning of the European idea, but one which is premised on a

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[17] Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, Preface, 2, pp. 217-218.

[18] "Nihilist and Christian: they rhyme [in German *Nihilist und Christ*], and do not merely rhyme..." Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, 58, p. 194.

[19] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 13, p. 14.

[20] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 32, p. 22.

[21] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, 1[194], p. 54.

[22] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885-1887*, 2[109], p. 114.

"[p]rofound aversion to responding once and for all in any one total view of the world" and a "refusal to be deprived of the stimulus of the enigmatic."[24] In fact, it is not even so much a vision of an 'idea of Europe' as it is a notion of 'good Europeans.' Nietzsche's own response, in other words, takes his readers away from overarching and essentialising ideas and back towards persons. In order to be such a 'good European,' however, Nietzsche also maintained that "[o]ne must have liberated oneself from many things that oppress, inhibit, hold down, and make heavy precisely us Europeans today."[25] Indeed, for Nietzsche it was "part of the nature of the free spirit ... that he has released himself from tradition, be it successfully or unsuccessfully."[26] In this sense, the acceptance of a strategy of active and complete nihilism which Nietzsche recommended for the 'good Europeans' also does not, as it might initially appear, lead to a philosophy of nihilism, but rather, on the contrary, to a preparation for that kind of 'good European' who is more tolerant of the inherent ambiguity of existence, including its suffering and disappointments, without seeking to escape this existence by recourse to Christian metaphysics, or ascetic philosophy. As Randall Havas concludes in this regard, "[o]vercoming nihilism, on this reading, is not so much a matter of replacing old values with new ones, as it is coming to value something where previously one, in effect, valued nothing."[27] Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans' can thus be seen to suggest a very different conception of 'spiritual vitality.'

For Nietzsche, then, 'spiritual vitality' would also consist precisely in the ability to exist without the reliance on greater idols or ideals. Indeed, the strategy of the 'good Europeans' to pursue a more active nihilism seeks precisely to turn Europeans away from their history of ascetic ideals, and to bring them closer to the primacy of human experience and its interpretative capacity. As Michael Haar notes in this vein, Nietzsche "makes us see what the concern with primary causes and ultimate ends and the quest for the originary and the unconditional dissimulate to us

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[23] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 585, p. 318.
[24] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 470, p. 262.
[25] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 380, p. 342.
[26] Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 225, p. 140.
[27] Randall Havas. *Nietzsche's Genealogy: Nihilism and the Will to Knowledge*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995, p. xiv.

because with them we lose sight of the elementary perspectives of the living being."[28] Similarly, the impossibility of positing new idols and meanings underlying European existence, and the fact that all meanings posited by human beings ultimately must remain questionable, are, for Nietzsche, not a reason for despair but rather a symbol of what William Connolly has described as the "protean diversity of life" and existence's "ambiguous conditions of possibility."[29] Indeed, as Nietzsche himself put it:

> [b]ut to stand in the midst of this of this *rerum concordia discors* and of this whole marvellous uncertainty and rich ambiguity of existence *without questioning*, without trembling with the craving and the rapture of such questioning, without at least hating the person who questions, perhaps even finding him faintly amusing – that is what I feel to be *contemptible*, and this is the feeling for which I look first in everybody. Some folly keeps persuading me that every human being has this feeling, simply because he is human. This is my type of injustice.[30]

Where others seek to reduce the ambiguity of existence, Nietzsche sought to affirm it, and it is this affirmation, in turn, which entails resisting the articulation of a more meaningful idea of Europe which would reduce this diversity. This also means, however, that it is not so much the 'good Europeans' who are nihilistic but rather, as Connolly points out, he "who refuses to affirm when the ambiguity of existence comes into view ... [and who] would rather endorse nothing at all than affirm the ambiguity of existence."[31] Put differently, the strategy of active nihilism pursued by Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' is not nihilistic because it aims at undermining precisely those values which, with Nietzsche's analysis in mind, can themselves be seen as nihilistic.

On the basis of this transvaluation of values, moreover, Nietzsche subsequently also went to great lengths to convey to his readers that his message for Europe was, in the end, an affirmative one, reminding his readers that "negating *and*

[28] Michel Haar. *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*. Trans. Michael Gendre. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. xii.
[29] William E. Connolly. "Suffering, Justice, and the Politics of Becoming." *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* Vol. 20. No. 3. 1996, p. 257, 258.
[30] Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 2, pp. 76-77.

destroying are conditions of saying Yes."[32] With specific reference to himself, he noted how "I contradict as has never been contradicted before and am nevertheless the opposite of a No-saying spirit."[33] It is a character trait that he had even endowed Zarathustra with. As Nietzsche explained in his autobiography:

> [t]he psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra is how he that says No and *does* No to an unheard-of degree, to everything to which one has so far said Yes, can nevertheless be the opposite of a No-saying spirit; how the spirit who bears the heaviest fate, a fatality of a task, can nevertheless be the lightest and most transcendent – Zarathustra is a dancer – how he that has the hardest, most terrible insight into reality, that has though the 'most abysmal ideal,' nevertheless does not consider it an objection to existence, not even to its eternal recurrence – but rather one reason more for being himself the eternal Yes to all things, "the tremendous, unbounded saying Yes and Amen." – "Into all abysses I still carry the blessings of my saying Yes." – *But this is the concept of Dionysos once again.*[34]

What is more, Nietzsche concluded, "in the Dionysian symbol the ultimate limit of *affirmation* is attained."[35] It is precisely this affirmative spirit that Nietzsche wished to instil upon the 'free spirits' and 'good Europeans' whom he hoped would emerge at some point in the future. "A freed spirit," he noted in this vein, "stands in the midst of the universe with a joyful and trusting fatalism, in the *faith* that only what is separate and individual may be rejected, that in the totality everything is redeemed and affirmed – *he no longer denies.*" To this extent the message of Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' can indeed be seen as being an affirmative, rather than a nihilistic one, and Nietzsche's European thought can thus also be seen as offering an important corrective towards more recent accounts which emphasise the pessimistic nature of European culture in the post-Cold War era.

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[31] William E. Connolly. *Political Theory and Modernity.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, pp. 167-168.
[32] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I am a Destiny,' 4, p. 328.
[33] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I am a Destiny,' 1, p. 327.
[34] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Zarathustra', 6, p. 306.
[35] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'The Birth of Tragedy,' 1, p. 271.

Conclusion

In the end, then, the most important contribution that Nietzsche's notion of the 'good Europeans' can make to the contemporary debate on the European idea, is to demonstrate that it might not at all be necessary to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in order to demonstrate one's 'spiritual vitality' as a 'good European.' Indeed, what his idea of the 'good Europeans' shows, is that a very different answer is, in fact, possible to Plato's initial question of whether one could imagine a city where the idea of a city was no longer recognisable. For, contrary to a plethora of literature on the idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era, it may indeed be possible to imagine Europeans peacefully coexisting with each other without articulating a more meaningful idea of Europe. Concomitantly, rather than seeing the current inability to articulate a more compelling vision of Europe as being indicative of a lacking 'spiritual vitality' and as an obstacle to proceeding with the political project of Europe, it might be precisely this inability, indeed this active unwillingness, which could form the cornerstone for advancing with this project in the course of the twenty-first century. In this sense, there would also be no reason why the current inability to articulate a more meaningful idea of Europe in the post-Cold War era should be seen as a formidable obstacle to the advancing with the political project of Europe in the twenty-first century.

The question that remains, then, is whether Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans' does not simply take us back to a metaphysics of a different kind, namely a metaphysics of immanence? It may, in fact, very well do so. For, as Jan Patocka once noted, "[t]he constant shaking of the naïve sense of meaningfulness is itself a new mode of meaning, a discovery of its continuity with the mysteriousness of being and what-is as a whole."[36] Correspondingly, while Nietzsche does not offer his readers a new 'meaning' of the European idea along traditional lines, he nevertheless does provide them with a vision of the 'good Europeans' that is in itself meaningful, albeit in a very different way, namely precisely in its absence to fix to the meaning of the European idea. Nor, however, is this necessarily a debilitating factor. For, to quote

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[36] Jan Patocka. "Does History Have a Meaning?" in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History.* Trans. Erazim Kohak. Chicago: Open Court, 1996, p. 61.

Michel Haar once more, "[i]f Nietzsche's last word takes us back towards a metaphysics of immanence or within immanence, it leads us also perhaps not to the direct reestablishing or validating of metaphysics, but to reevaluating and rethinking its concept, once this concept has been freed of its reactive, negative, essentially pejorative charge and of its status as an obstacle to overcome."[37] If, in other words, Nietzsche does remain a metaphysician in one form or another, his metaphysics is one of a very different kind, and one which is arguably less likely to lead to a repetition of the violent struggles witnessed by Europeans during the past century. It is, moreover, also one that is likely to be intellectually more convincing than the articulation of renewed myth about the meaning of the European idea and one which is also less resentful in relation to the diverse and ambiguous aspects of existence.

Indeed, the kind of European existence that Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' would, perhaps, cultivate in the end, is the one he had Zarathustra once describe in the following terms: "Not riddle enough to scare human love from it, not solution enough to put to sleep human wisdom — a humanly good thing was the world to me today, of which such bad things are said."[38] Such a 'Europe' consisting of Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' would be one which avoids nationalist and racist interpretations of existence. It is, moreover, one which refuses to fix the deeper meaning of the European idea and thus also remains open to those who currently remain outside the borders of the European Union. At the same time, however, it is a conception of what it means to be a 'good European' that also seeks to address the problem of the increasing globalisation of the 'last man' through combating the refusal to cultivate, within existence, an important reflective depth. In this account, in short, Europeanisation would manifest itself not so much in the attempt to articulate a 'true' idea of Europe, but rather in the encouraging of the emergence of those 'good Europeans' who "can actually tolerate free thoughts,"[39] and who can share in an experience of freedom that has long been lost in the political project of Europe.[40] To

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[37] Haar, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics,* p. xiii.

[38] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra,* 'Of the Three Evil Things," 1. Cited in Bonnie Honig. "Nietzsche and the Recovery of Responsibility" in *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics.* Ithica: Cornell University Press, p. 42.

[39] Nietzsche in a letter to Malwida von Meysenburg from October 1874. Cited in A. J.Hoover. *Friedrich Nietzsche: His Life and Thought.* London: Praeger, 1994, p. 18.

[40] As John Rajchman has rightly pointed out, "Nietzsche is the philosopher who separates the problem of freedom from the problem of acquiring the truth about ourselves, who would free us from the

recover this experience of freedom, in turn, is the challenge of Nietzsche's European thought, of which such equally bad things have been said.

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tyrannies of such truths through an analysis of their histories. He separates our freedom from the knowledge of our nature." *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, p. 121.

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