

Introduction: Nietzsche's Life and Works

Tom Stern

BIOGRAPHY

Friedrich Nietzsche was born in October, 1844 in Röcken, a small village in Prussian Saxony. He was the son of a Lutheran minister, who died when Nietzsche was not yet five, prompting the family to move to the town of Naumburg. In 1858, Nietzsche was offered a scholarship at Schulpforte (or 'Pforta'), a prestigious nearby boarding school. At Schulpforte, Nietzsche began to excel academically for the first time. In general, his lessons were intensively focused on Latin and Greek. They left him with an unrivalled classical education. As James Porter notes (in his essay in this volume), Nietzsche always thought of the ancients via the moderns, and always thought of the moderns via the ancients. His final essay at Pforta was a sixty-four page dissertation on the Greek poet, Theognis, written in Latin. In addition to the Latin and Greek texts which formed the backbone of his education, Nietzsche read some of the modern authors who would retain significance for him throughout his life – among them Shakespeare and Emerson.

Nietzsche's religious faith began to wane at Pforta, but this did not prevent him from choosing to read theology in addition to philology at the University of Bonn, where he began in 1864. At Bonn, he studied with the classicist Friedrich Ritschl. After just two semesters, he transferred to Leipzig, where he studied philology (now without theology). Nietzsche had moved to Leipzig, in part, because Ritschl had moved there and, indeed, Ritschl soon began to take particular interest in Nietzsche's studies. In addition to Ritschl's guidance, Leipzig saw three important developments. First, shortly after his arrival in 1865, Nietzsche bought and read Arthur Schopenhauer's

masterpiece, *The World as Will and Representation*.¹ While he surely already knew something of Schopenhauer's ideas, reading the work itself made an enormous impression. According to Nietzsche's own testimony, he briefly attempted to live out the ascetic practices that Schopenhauer praises. Schopenhauer's intellectual influence on Nietzsche, which is the subject of Robert Wicks's essay in this volume, can hardly be overstated. The same can be said for the second Leipzig event: his meeting with Richard Wagner, who was there taking temporary shelter from the publicity surrounding the scandalous breakdown of his first marriage. Nietzsche had, by this time, come to love Wagner's music, and was therefore primed to like Wagner. Wagner knew this, and was therefore primed to like Nietzsche. Nietzsche's relation to Wagner is the subject of Mark Berry's essay in this volume.

A third and more mercurial influence began to be felt in Leipzig, where, in 1866, Nietzsche read Friedrich Albert Lange's *A History of Materialism and Critique of Its Present Significance*, published that year.² Lange, himself a former student of Ritschl, made two important claims. On the one hand, while empirical science is the best means we have for the pursuit of knowledge, discoveries within empirical science have revealed that adequate knowledge of the world (as it is in itself) is impossible for us. Scientific knowledge, the best we have got, is not good enough. On the other hand, Lange allows for, and even encourages, speculation about the unknown ultimate reality, as long as these quasi-poetic speculations are not mistaken for knowledge of a scientific calibre. Lange's book offered Nietzsche, among other things, an implicit objection to Schopenhauer's metaphysics as claiming illicit knowledge of ultimate reality, a substantial history of philosophy (including Kant), and a view, however partial, of Darwin's evolutionary theory and aspects of contemporary biological science. Although the fact of Lange's influence is undeniable, it is harder to pin down its nature and extent: notoriously, Nietzsche never once mentions him in a published work, and his unpublished remarks are usually critical, if not dismissive.³

With Ritschl's help, Nietzsche was offered a position as a professor of classical philology at Basel, where he moved in 1869. It is clear that, by this time, he had severe doubts about whether a career in this field was suited to him. But, in addition to financial security, Basel offered a further major advantage: it was close to Wagner's residence at Tribschen. Nietzsche became a frequent visitor, and a close friend. The friendship profoundly influenced his book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). Neither plainly philological, historical, scholarly nor indeed philosophical in any conventional sense, it was quickly dismissed in a review by another former Pforta student, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, who accused him of shaming their alma mater. Shortly afterwards Nietzsche published four essays, known collectively as the *Untimely Meditations* (1873–6) and he wrote, but did not publish, an essay called 'On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense' (1873), which would later become highly influential.

As the title of his final meditation, 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth', suggests, Wagner's influence loomed large over Nietzsche's Basel years. But by the time he wrote that essay, the enthusiasm had begun to wane. He attended part of Wagner's first festival at Bayreuth in 1876, but he seems to have been disappointed. In any case, the publication of his next book, *Human, All Too Human* (1878), was intended to mark a break with Wagner, and was certainly experienced by Wagner as such. Nietzsche had befriended Paul Rée, whose ideas, including the book *The Origin of the Moral Sensations* (1877), would exert considerable influence on him. Later, the friendship would end bitterly: through Rée, Nietzsche met Lou Salomé, then a brilliant young student in Rome, in 1882. Competition with Rée for Salomé's affections – a competition which both men ultimately lost – left Nietzsche isolated.

With the exception of serving very briefly, in late 1870, as a medical assistant during the Franco-Prussian War, Nietzsche remained at Basel for ten years. Always prone to bouts of bad health, by 1879 he was unable to continue to work. From then on, funded by a university pension, he moved continuously between various places

in Germany, France, Italy and Switzerland. One preferred pattern was to spend winters in the Mediterranean and summers in the Alps. He was technically stateless, having given up his Prussian citizenship before taking his post in Basel, but never having taken Swiss citizenship. During these wandering years, Nietzsche wrote most of the books that ultimately secured his fame. His wanderings came to an end in January, 1889, in Turin, when he suffered a mental and physical collapse which, according to a popular but much disputed anecdote, was occasioned by witnessing the flogging of a horse. In any case, Nietzsche never recovered, and he was cared for by his mother, and then his sister, until his death in 1900.

Much has been omitted from this brief outline, primarily for lack of space. But some 'omissions' were due to the content in question being mythical, fabricated or unsubstantiated. Some are insignificant: there is now some dispute about whether Nietzsche died of syphilis.⁴ Others are more troubling. Nietzsche was not, of course, a National Socialist. Nor, though this is harder to measure, could he helpfully be termed a 'proto-National Socialist', a label which better fits his sister's husband, whose views he most certainly opposed. Nietzsche scholars may wish that such denials were unnecessary, but they have probably, nonetheless, found themselves having to make them on occasion. On the other hand, there is considerable conceptual space between 'not a proto-Nazi' and 'someone whose views a twenty first-century, Western reader is likely to find comforting and familiar'. Nietzsche usually occupies this space, as can be seen by many of his remarks about Jews, women, racial and national differences, the natural necessity of violence and exploitation, and the advantages of non-voluntary sterilisation of the 'sick', together with his hostility to equality, liberalism and democracy. He stood out, at least in his anti-egalitarianism, to reviewers in his own day. Part of his appeal, no doubt, lies in his willingness at least to try out shocking or horrifying ideas. Whatever we make of Nietzsche's remarks, as with other historical figures, we must have more categories available to us than 'Nazi/not-Nazi', 'anti-Semite/anti-anti-Semite', 'far-sighted

/foolish' or 'to be attacked/defended at all costs'. Nietzsche wrote a great deal about Germany, for example, but there is context and considerable nuance to these writings, as Raymond Geuss's chapter, 'Nietzsche's Germans', explains.

Other omissions should be highlighted, not because they are myths and legends, but rather because they may be surprising. Nietzsche did not have anything resembling a formal philosophical education. There is no doubt that he read extensively in philosophy and in other fields. But it should be borne in mind, first of all, that he lacked first-hand knowledge of many of the 'great' philosophers of the past, including some of those to whom he refers. Second, he read a great deal of 'minor' or 'local' philosophy (as it now seems to us), works by authors whose names have been long forgotten beyond highly specialised circles, but whose influence was nonetheless significant. Third, there is the question of what Nietzsche was *doing* with the texts that he read. Andreas Urs Sommer's chapter is devoted to what Nietzsche did and did not read, as well as the related questions of how he used his sources, and of the kinds of evidence which are available to the modern scholar.⁵

WORKS

This summary follows the convention of dividing Nietzsche's published works into early (1869–76), middle (1878–82) and late (1883–8). His unpublished work is treated separately. The summary does not include Nietzsche's non-philosophical publications, such as his early philological articles.

Early

The Birth of Tragedy (1872) is, all at once, a theory of Greek tragedy, a cultural history of Europe from before Homer to the present day, a direct intervention into various questions in contemporary aesthetics, a play on and development of Schopenhauerian metaphysics, and an attempt to answer the (then) very pressing question: is life worth living? Paul Daniels's chapter examines the text in more detail.

The first of the *Untimely Meditations* was nominally an attack on a book, then very popular, by David Friedrich Strauss: *The Old Faith and the New*. Strauss had made his name with the publication of a critical-historical analysis of the New Testament, which Nietzsche had read and admired. But the new book took a complacent, patriotic tone, both to the new German Reich and to the march of scientific progress. Nietzsche's savage response is often read for the indications it gives of a Nietzschean vision of culture. The second meditation, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', treats, at its simplest, the general human problem (as Nietzsche sees it) of knowing that we have a past. This knowledge threatens to have a sluggish effect on us, which has until now been overcome by means of various falsifying, distorting or misleading approaches to the representation of the past – basically, tools which can be applied when necessary. These distorting but vital tools are called 'monumental' (the admiration of great figures), 'antiquarian' (a parochialism which makes the individual feel part of something larger) and 'critical' (roughly, hatchet-jobs on those aspects of the past to which we display too great a reverence). They are undermined by the modern, scholarly and supposedly *undistorted* approach to the past. As the title indicates, the ethical orientation of this essay is that what is useful for 'life' is good – a framework which owes an enormous debt to Nietzsche's Schopenhauerian intellectual context, but which departs from Schopenhauer's exact views, since Schopenhauer praises that which *opposes* life. The balance between using and opposing Schopenhauer is one that Nietzsche tests further in the third meditation, 'Schopenhauer as Educator'. Schopenhauer is presented as a kind of ethical exemplar, of the utmost significance for Nietzsche's (and our) personal and socio-cultural upbringing. This approach, not accidentally, has the effect of moving Schopenhauer's specific philosophical views into the shade. The essay stands as Nietzsche's most sustained examination of the notion of selfhood and self-development. The final meditation, 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth', presents Wagner, similarly, as an artistic exemplar.

Middle

The 'middle' period typically includes: *Human, All Too Human* (1878), *Assorted Opinions and Maxims* (1879) and *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (1880) (all three of which were later grouped under the title *Human, All Too Human*); *Daybreak* (1881); *The Gay Science* (1882). During this period, Nietzsche also published some poems ('Idylls from Messina', 1882). (To GS was added, in 1887, a fifth part, which is counted as part of the later works, and he added a revised version of the 'Idylls from Messina' as an appendix.) These books establish the aphoristic style for which Nietzsche became famous: relatively short, numbered remarks, often though not always grouped by theme, which implicitly ask how, if at all, they should be related to each other by the reader. Typically, the middle works no longer praise Schopenhauer and Wagner. This does not mean, of course, that their influence was any the less, nor does it mean that the earlier works were unqualified in their agreement or adulation.

Nietzsche's middle works are not homogenous. *Human, All Too Human*, and in particular its 1878 part, stands out from the rest: in it, Nietzsche praises the scientific or scholarly attitude more highly, and more consistently, than he does elsewhere. The point is not so much that the results of scientific enquiry are profound, but that an appreciation of the *difficulty* of gaining scientific and, by implication, *any* knowledge, must be appreciated by a readership who (Nietzsche thinks) are too inclined to be seduced by the large but empty promise of grand metaphysical systems or works of art. His praise for the 'scientific' (or scholarly) mentality is more or less directly opposed to his criticism of it in the second meditation: this extends to the hope that, when more widespread, science will provide social and cultural benefits. This text also suggests an explicit commitment to causal determinism, which stands out in comparison with later works, even if, as Michael Forster's chapter notes, Nietzsche's underlying view may have remained very similar. *Daybreak* is significant, first of all, for marking the beginning of a sustained and explicit critique of

'morality' and, second, for providing a number of important discussions of psychology, including what Nietzsche calls our 'drives'. Read against *Human, All Too Human* in particular, *The Gay Science* finds a more positive role for art, illusion and falsehood, and it is correspondingly more suspicious of science and scholarship. It contains many of the passages which concern self-creation or self-development, and which generally advocate for the adoption of an aesthetic or artistic approach to ourselves and our world. Finally, Nietzsche, in the fourth part, introduces for the first time the notions of *amor fati* (the love of fate) and the eternal recurrence, which are central to his advocacy of the 'affirmation of life' – probably the closest thing he has to a core, ethical commitment. This is the subject of my essay, 'Nietzsche's Ethics of Affirmation'.

Late

At the end of the fourth part of *The Gay Science*, and immediately after the introduction of eternal recurrence, Nietzsche introduces the character of Zarathustra. This marks the transition to a phase of his life devoted to a completely new kind of work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–5), ostensibly a piece of fiction, which draws on and parodies the style and tropes of various religious and mystical texts. The book tells the story of Zarathustra – another name for Zoroaster – moving through a mythical landscape, making speeches and conversing with humans and other creatures. One important though elusive image is that of the *Übermensch* (variously translated 'Overman', 'Superhuman' or 'Superman'), who is initially presented as Zarathustra's and therefore perhaps also Nietzsche's ideal. Although prominent in the Prologue, the *Übermensch* gets less explicit attention after that, and receives scarcely a mention in the texts that follow *Zarathustra*. The same cannot be said for a second notion of key importance, the 'will to power', which first appears (in published form) in *Zarathustra*. The nature and status of this concept is addressed directly in this volume by Lawrence Hatab, while Robert Pippin looks at its presentation in *Beyond Good and Evil. Zarathustra*

also takes up the idea of the eternal recurrence: indeed, part of the conception of *Zarathustra* appears to be that the protagonist comes to terms with eternal recurrence during the course of the narrative – which may suggest, in turn, that his initial proclamations about the *Übermensch* are made in ignorance of eternal recurrence. Nietzsche always spoke with reverence for *Zarathustra*. Other books, written earlier and later, are not infrequently described as glossaries for, commentaries on, or introductions to this book. Dirk Johnson's chapter examines the text in more detail.

After completing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche wrote six books (along with the fifth part of *The Gay Science*, as already mentioned): *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), *The Case of Wagner* (1888), *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), *The Antichrist* (1888), *Ecce Homo* (1888).⁶ He also collected a selection of (previously published) writings about Wagner, which appeared as *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* (1888) and the poems, *Dionysus-Dithyrambs* (1888). In 1886, he wrote a series of prefaces to his previous books, partly in an attempt to improve their sales, in some cases writing the preface without a copy of the book to hand. While the prefaces usually praise the books, he wrote privately to a friend saying that he couldn't stand them.

It is extremely difficult to present a coherent picture of *Beyond Good and Evil*. The first part, 'On the Prejudices of Philosophers', contains many of his most famous, and most perplexing, remarks about truth. The book has been taken as a key for understanding Nietzsche's philosophical project – but in very different ways. It contains many of the passages about the 'mask' and 'masked' philosophy, seen, by some interpreters, as indicative of how Nietzsche would like to be read: as playful, experimental, free, not committed to any particular claim, perhaps as deceitful or deceptive. On the other hand, it is also noted for its apparent description of Nietzsche's 'task' as one of 'translat[ing] man back into nature' – that is, as getting rid of various moralising fictions about what we are and how we act, in favour of telling it like it is. His immediate example is the

replacement of self-serving moralising terms which praise the truth-seeker (his 'honesty', 'love of truth') with terms which, Nietzsche says, describe what is really going on: namely, a kind of self-directed cruelty (BGE 229–230). As we shall see, one's understanding of the relationship between these two elements – the free, experimental Nietzsche, and the one who describes man in natural terms – can pervade one's understanding of his philosophical project as a whole. *Beyond Good and Evil* also floats the idea of a distinction between 'master morality' and 'slave morality', immediately adding that mixtures of the two are often found in the same culture and even in the same person. At its very simplest, his idea is that 'master morality' says that acting in a way that masters approve of is good, whereas 'slave morality' says that acting in a way that slaves approve of is good, and that these produce very different verdicts on the same behaviours. Hence, inspiring fear in others is 'good' if you are a master who wants others to be afraid of him (so master morality prizes it), but not 'good' if you are a slave, who would rather not have a fear-inspiring master (so slave morality condemns it). On Nietzsche's analysis, contemporary Europe is overwhelmingly and problematically 'slavely'.

This difference between 'master' and 'slave' moralities, much developed, takes centre stage in the first of the three essays which comprise *On the Genealogy of Morality*, probably Nietzsche's most influential book in academic philosophical circles. The *Genealogy* presents itself both as a history of how we ended up with the morality that we have (a project which requires him to specify what he takes that morality to be), and as a critique of that morality. In addition to 'master' and 'slave' moralities, the historical account connects various other strands. In the first essay, Nietzsche argues that the concept of free will becomes both plausible and appealing to the 'slaves'. This forms part of a larger critique of free will, which is the subject of Michael Forster's chapter. In the second essay, Nietzsche attempts to show how and why we prioritise those religious outlooks which characterise our relation to the divine as one of a defaulting debtor. He posits, amongst other things, an in-built need, in settled, socialised

humans, to take out their aggression upon themselves. In the third essay, he argues that *apparently* ascetic behaviours, in which people look like they are cutting themselves off from what they naturally want, in fact reveal a deeper need for power and meaning. The third essay also contains his famous comment that 'there is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival "knowing"'. In addition to the meaning of this remark, focuses for critical debate on the *Genealogy* have included: its characterisation of morality; the intended status of the historical claims (which are, on the face of things, imprecise, implausible and not set out or supported in a conventional scholarly manner); the nature and effectiveness of its critique; and the question of which, if any, ethical view Nietzsche ultimately favours or recommends. The *Genealogy* is the subject of Christa Davis Acampora's chapter, while Antony Jensen's chapter looks at Nietzsche's understanding of history.

Towards the end of his productive life, Nietzsche began to describe Western morality and culture as 'decadent' which, as its etymology suggests, implies decline or descent. *The Case of Wagner* looks at his former mentor through that lens, criticising him as an instance of decadence, where Nietzsche favours ascendance. The concepts of ascent and descent are certainly intended to apply to cultures or societies, but Nietzsche also appears to see them as biological or physiological categories. Generally, the question of whether later concepts like decadence, the will to power or Christian 'anti-naturalness' should be understood biologically (and, if so, how) is highly significant. *Twilight of the Idols* features important discussions of truth, morality, metaphysics and Nietzsche's view of philosophy and particular philosophers. It includes a revised account of the influence of Socrates on Western cultural history – with deliberate echoes of *The Birth of Tragedy*. *The Antichrist* shares some similarities with the *Genealogy* in that it, too, presents a (somewhat different) historical account of the origins of morality. *Ecce Homo*, an autobiography of sorts, looks back at all of Nietzsche's prior published works, offering an idiosyncratic commentary which, like so much of

Nietzsche's writing about himself, tends to provoke more interpretative questions than it puts to rest.

Unpublished Writings

Nietzsche's extensive unpublished writings are available from his childhood up to his collapse in 1889. They range from relatively complete lectures, essays and aphorisms, to poems (which he wrote from a young age), drafts, plans and notes he took on the books he read. Many of these notes were subsequently included or reworked into his published books. He was a keen musician and composer: recordings have been made of some of his compositions, but there is general agreement that his legacy lies elsewhere.⁷ There are also several volumes of letters.

As far as the relation between the notes and the published works goes, arguments could be made for relative priority in both directions. On the one hand, as with any unpublished material, there is the question of whether the author has committed to them to the same extent. 'Publishing' something, after all, is literally a 'making-public', so material that is not 'publicked' comes with a further layer of doubt and distance. On the other hand, if we conceive of the notes as akin to diary entries, we can think of them as bringing us closer to a 'private' Nietzsche, in comparison to which it is the published works which may appear to be a kind of show put on for the public. Nietzsche himself often implies that ideas are held back from his published works. The goal for the critical, open-minded reader is not to choose between these two arguments, but rather to bear them both in mind.

While what we have said so far would apply to any author's unpublished material, in Nietzsche's case, there are further complications. First, some historically influential ideas appear *only* (or, at least, overwhelmingly and most explicitly) in his notes. If you want a more 'metaphysical' Nietzsche – one who is interested in causality, time, or the fundamental features of reality – then you had better include his notes. Second, some of Nietzsche's most influential *texts* went

unpublished, notably his essay, 'On Truth and Lie in a Non-Moral Sense' – his clearest and most sustained discussion of truth, which he later claimed was written for himself as an aide-mémoire. This is the essay in which Nietzsche writes that 'truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions'. Though less influential, other relatively complete texts include 'On the Future of Our Educational Institutions' (a series of public lectures on education and culture, from 1872); *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, probably written in 1873 (which treats a selection of pre-Socratic philosophers); and his 'Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books', given as a gift to Wagner's wife, Cosima, in January, 1873. The latter includes 'The Greek State', in which the young Nietzsche notoriously argues for the necessity of slavery and war.

Finally, mention must be made of a planned magnum opus, conceived at least from 1884, first advertised on the back cover of BGE as 'under preparation', and known by various names, most famously *The Will to Power* and *The Revaluation of All Values*. According to his own testimony, Nietzsche in the end considered *The Antichrist* to be 'my *Revaluation of All Values*'. However, until at least *very* late in the day (October, 1888) he treats A as only the first book of four, so that many if not all of his later notes and books treat a magnum opus as forthcoming (and as not being just *The Antichrist*). While the abandonment question is not settled, its potential importance is clear: choosing not to publish on some theme might in fact be a matter of saving it up for the magnum opus. On the other hand, if A just is the magnum opus, then Nietzsche's (chronologically) final judgement would seem to have been that the unpublished material was not worthy of inclusion.⁸ Independently of such considerations, it is accepted that any book, by Nietzsche, with the title *The Will to Power* is in fact a collection of unpublished fragments, put together by others, as all modern editions make very clear.

All in all, once we know what is in the notes (and, especially, what is in them but not in the published work), a decision about how to weight them is harder to make on any general, interpretative

principle and it is not philosophically neutral. By broad though by no means standard convention, scholars seeking to present Nietzsche's considered philosophical views tend to give priority to published works when supporting their interpretations, using unpublished notes as auxiliary support – as unpolished, unofficial books to be dipped into in support of a particular reading. This is understandable, but not without disadvantages. Those who have spent time with the unpublished notes are often surprised to find a more sober, less flamboyant Nietzsche waiting for them: for example, one who takes more careful and detailed notes of the books he reads than the published works might suggest.

Reception, Interpretation, Influence

Nietzsche was not well known prior to his 1889 collapse. His meteoric rise began shortly afterwards. It was not long before an impressive array of different groups were claiming him. A summary of those influenced by Nietzsche would require something close to a cultural history of twentieth-century Europe (and beyond). There were, amongst others, Nietzschean feminists, expressionists, self-proclaimed 'pagans', dancers, eugenicists, Zionists, socialists, national socialists, postmodernists. During the First World War, Nietzsche's ideas and their supposed grip on Germany were held partially responsible, by Germany's enemies, for the conflict: it was sometimes characterised as Nietzscheanism against Christian Europe, a *headline* Nietzsche would have liked, whatever he would have made of how the terms were defined. Nietzsche's subsequent inclusion in the National Socialist pantheon still leaves its mark on how he is read. Many of his claims and quotations were taken out of context by his promoters in the Third Reich, and were used to bolster, illegitimately, their own needs at the expense of fidelity to his texts. Readers should understand, though, that this is an interpretative practice which is by no means limited to that historical period. In fact, an over-correction undoubtedly followed after the Second World War – a project of rescuing or excusing Nietzsche at all costs.

This, in turn, helped give rise to what is probably another legend, that of Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, as the party responsible for Nietzsche's tarnished reputation. Förster-Nietzsche had many flaws, but on closer examination she was in part a convenient scapegoat for defenders of Nietzsche who wanted to clear his name.⁹

The newcomer should bear in mind two subsequent interpretative trends. First, the 'postmodern' or 'French' Nietzsche – labels which cover a wide variety of different interpretations, but which usually refer to a tendency among some Francophone (and, indeed, non-Francophone) interpreters to emphasise what they saw as Nietzsche's radically sceptical or dismissive remarks about truth and his resistance to dogmatic theorising. Second, and partially in response, a more recent, Anglophone 'analytic' trend which usually offers a less radical reading of Nietzsche's (apparently) truth-sceptical remarks and which produces a Nietzsche of theories and doctrines, of a kind more familiar to analytic philosophy. Stephen Mulhall's chapter looks at Nietzsche's legacy in the light of recent interpretation. In addition to the focus on truth, another (related) focus of the 'analytic' Nietzsche has been on Nietzsche's so-called 'naturalism', that is, on various ways of understanding the 'translation' project mentioned previously (see Christian Emden's chapter in this volume).

The specific details of Nietzsche's reception may be of lesser interest to the *Companion's* reader, but there are important points to take from this brief overview. First, Nietzsche has been subject to an extraordinary range of differing interpretations, many of which have left their mark.¹⁰ None of us comes to Nietzsche without some preconceptions, many of which have been formed by the historical trends already described, as well as by related interpretations of Nietzsche offered by other well-known philosophers like Heidegger, Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida. Second, one should hasten to add that some ways of interpreting Nietzsche are better than others: there is never an excuse for not reading him carefully and contextually, assuming that one wants to understand what he is saying. Finally, and most importantly, the reader should be encouraged to reflect on just why

Nietzsche has been subject to so many differing interpretations. One obvious starting-point is the characteristic way in which his writing hedges its bets: this includes its rhetorical questions, ellipses, fables, mini-dialogues, hints that much is left unsaid, and apparent praise for seeming to be other than you are, not to mention his frequent placement of *Zarathustra*, a fiction of some kind, with fiction's attendant ambiguities, at the summit of his work. Robert Pippin's essay in this volume looks carefully at some of Nietzsche's language, with a focus on *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Themes of Nietzsche's Philosophy

The forgoing remarks will have given a sense of the difficulty of summarising a consensus view on what, if anything, lies at the centre of Nietzsche's philosophy. Some important ideas have been mentioned in the foregoing summary of his works. Others are indicated by the chapter titles: the will to power (Hatab), the affirmation of life (Stern), Nietzsche's understanding of history (Jensen), his moral psychology (Forster), his account of truth (Emden) or the intricate relations he draws between the arts and the sciences (Gardner). Other significant or famous ideas are contextualised within a discussion of a particular work (the 'Superman' via *Zarathustra*) or of a particular theme (eternal recurrence via affirmation). The standard divisions of philosophy – metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics and so on – frequently sit ill at ease with the variety and interconnectedness of Nietzsche's thinking. In BT, for example, tragedy is a political and cultural festival, a quasi-religious experience which symbolises a metaphysical truth and, of course, a form of art with a very particular history. Often, this kind of interconnectedness is further complicated by the variety of critical interpretations: part of the *dispute* about will to power, for example, is whether it is metaphysical, psychological or ethical, or some combination.

But what about a general entry-point into Nietzsche's thought? For the newcomer, one starting place would be this: Nietzsche's writings, throughout his life, tend to assume that *something is wrong* with

modern life (often as opposed to the past or future, however idealised). This 'something' infiltrates modernity's politics, art, science and philosophy. It is something which Nietzsche sees clearly, and which his reader is invited to view with him – or, the other way around, that his reader *already* sees, and has therefore chosen to read Nietzsche. So, what is it? There are different answers in Nietzsche's writings (and those of his interpreters), but two stand out above all. First, the most common focus, early to late, is the uncritical way in which we moderns seek truth, either for its own sake, or on the assumption that it will, unfailingly, be good for us. On his diagnosis, we are looking to truth-seeking activities like philosophy, science or scholarship for a succour they cannot provide. Sometimes, Nietzsche also seems to say that truth simply *cannot* be found – on the face of things a provocative and perhaps self-contradictory claim, which has been the subject of wide-ranging debate. One point of critical consensus is that, in this regard, Nietzsche was drawing on various, often broadly Kantian thinkers: Schopenhauer, Lange and other, more obscure figures. In that context, his remarks are at least less mysterious and unsubstantiated.¹¹

A second focus for the *wrong thing*, in the middle, and especially in the later Nietzsche, is the dominance of 'morality' or 'Christianity', above all in the sense which Schopenhauer understood and praised those things. This morality is characterised by pity for others, self-denial and the corresponding love of one's neighbour at one's own expense, hostility to natural desires, an aversion to seeking power – or a hypocritical, merely *professed* aversion, as Nietzsche would 'sometimes' see it. Morality's adherents are also peculiarly unaware of how atypical and how historically contingent their values really are: the Greeks, as Nietzsche understands them, provide an obvious contrast. This connects with both the will to power and the affirmation of life: if power-seeking (of some kind) is fundamental to all life, and 'Christian' morality at least claims to oppose it, then Christianity appears hostile to life. The *something wrong* can therefore be described in terms of this hostility to or denial of life, to which Nietzsche opposes his ideal of affirmation of life, frequently understood in terms of power.

Nietzsche connects morality and truth: on the one hand, truth-seeking of an excessive and harmful kind is said to be an outgrowth of a self-denying morality; on the other hand, Christian morality is threatened by the relentless search for truth, for which it is partially responsible.

My descriptions so far have suggested that the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy lies in the detail of his philosophical doctrines and arguments concerning truth, morality and so on. This is undoubtedly an important part of the story, and it receives the most emphasis in this volume (reflecting recent scholarly approaches and contemporary consensus). As indicated earlier, though, some interpreters have found a very different Nietzsche, one I described earlier in terms of the 'mask': a Nietzsche *not* committed to any particular claim he makes, and, perhaps, one who finds philosophical significance in trying out different, even conflicting stances.

There are at least two independent thoughts in play here. One is Nietzsche's (purported) idea that our subjective, cognitive faculties, varying from person to person, constitute fundamental properties of (apparently objective) reality. Consequently, my reality and your reality differ: there is no neutral or independent perspective, but trying out different perspectives might be valuable. This is just one way of filling out Nietzsche's so-called 'perspectivism', a term he hardly uses, but one which subsequently became attached to his philosophy (in this volume, see Pippin's and Emden's chapters).¹² Second, there is the idea that philosophy is (for Nietzsche) a form of self-expression and self-creation, with no one 'philosophy' being appropriate for all. The correct question, when confronting a philosophy, is not therefore 'is this true?' but rather 'does this work (for me, for her)?' If this is right, it does not mean that there is no point in analysing those of Nietzsche's philosophical experiments which produce his most influential 'doctrines'. They may well be interesting in their own right. But it might suggest that our focus should also, and perhaps especially, be on the experimental stance that lies behind them.

'Doctrinal' interpreters can argue, against both of these thoughts, that Nietzsche's remarks on perspective and on philosophical self-expression are in fact *grounded* in philosophical doctrines: for example, about an individual's psychology, the impossibility of truth, or individual variation in the construction of fundamental features of reality. But it would also be open to the anti-doctrinal opponent to counter that such doctrines are, themselves, a mode of self-expression, embedded in highly ambiguous prose, indicative only of Nietzsche's perspective and so on. Moreover, middle ways between these two positions have been sought, according to which Nietzsche's writings blend doctrine and mask, intentionally or otherwise. None of these options allows us to bypass a close examination of the texts.

The Old Companion and the New

This *New Companion* is intended to reflect developments in Nietzsche scholarship, which has flourished in all directions since the publication of the first *Companion*. Closer in time to the 'National Socialist Nietzsche', to his 'rehabilitation', and to the 'French Nietzsche', the original *Companion* devotes considerable resources to discussing Nietzsche's biography, his historical influence, the general style of his philosophy, and his legacy of appropriation and misappropriation. Generally, the *New Companion* gives more attention to particular texts, since these have come to be increasingly differentiated in the minds of readers.¹³ The most obviously self-contained works – BT, Z, GM – clearly warrant their own discussions, hence the chapters by Daniels, Johnson and Acampora, respectively. But to leave things at that would be to ignore the challenge presented by the aphoristic works, or would perhaps imply a negative answer to the question of whether they can be read as self-contained. Robert Pippin's examination of *Beyond Good and Evil* takes this question seriously. The *New Companion* does not, however, restrict itself to introducing each text.¹⁴ It also spends more time analysing particular doctrines, which have been the subject of intense critical and philosophical scrutiny in the intervening years. While

specific chapters reflect some of these developments in our thinking about these ideas, the more notable development may be that, during the intervening time, the idea that he *has* doctrines to offer has become mainstream.

A second notable development is the increased attention to, and understanding of, Nietzsche's intellectual context. Those writing about Nietzsche now tend to have, and are expected to have, a better understanding of what Nietzsche was reading and how we know about it. Some of this information has been available for long enough (usually in German), but, increasingly, one has the sense that Anglophone philosophical commentary can no longer ignore it. To quote Thomas Brobjer (writing close to the publication date of the previous *Companion*), whose work has been so important in this regard: 'Nietzsche's reading history and library are not used and almost never even mentioned in the standard books about Nietzsche, such as those by Kaufmann, Schacht, Clark, Danto, Heidegger, Deleuze, Lowith, Nehamas, Jaspers, and Lampert.'¹⁵ Simply put: it has become harder to get away with this, as will be apparent in the pages of this volume.

Looking at the different 'Nietzsches' described in this introduction – the phases of his writing, the varying interpretations, textual complexities, stylistic challenges and the likely unfamiliarity of his historical context – the non-specialist reader may be tempted to despair of ever finding a stable, satisfactory view of his ideas. One could offer many responses to such perfectly understandable despair: that Nietzsche may have cultivated it, and certainly to some degree deserves it; that some ideas nonetheless appear often enough, and with sufficient force, to be ascribed to him; that often there is, if not critical consensus, at least a shared sense of the available options, with their strengths and weaknesses. But perhaps the best reply would be that, whatever Nietzsche thought, the confrontation with his texts and his interpreters has repeatedly proven itself to be enormously fruitful. When reading his works, or a *Companion* such as this, you will probably meet *some* thought which lights you up. And it might even be one of Nietzsche's.¹⁶

NOTES

1. On Nietzsche's description of his reading of Schopenhauer, see Sommer, this volume.
2. Lange (1866).
3. Stack (1983); Wilcox (1989: 81–9); Brobjer (2008: 32–6); Blue (2016: 236–43). For a discussion of Lange in the context of contemporary debates about materialism, see Beiser (2014: 53–132).
4. Compare Volz (1990); Huenemann (2013: 63–82).
5. In preparing this short biography, I have consulted: Hayman (1980); Nietzsche KSA vol. 15; Brobjer (2008); Safranski (2003); Young (2010); Blue (2016). I have also consulted the relevant volumes of the *Nietzsche-Kommentar* series.
6. *Twilight of the Idols* is the last book that Nietzsche himself saw printed, although it was published shortly after his collapse. *The Anti-Christ* and *Ecce Homo* are included in this section because, although he did not publish them, they are considered authorised for publication.
7. One composition, 'Hymnus an das Leben', was actually published in 1887.
8. See Brobjer (2006: 278–94); Sommer (2013: 3–8).
9. Holub (2002: 215–34); Diethel (2003).
10. See e.g. Allison (1985); Aschheim (1992); Gemes (2001); Golomb and Wistrich (2002); Reckermann (2003); Woodward (2011).
11. Anderson (1998); Green (2002); Hill (2003); Hussain (2004); Scheibenberger (2016).
12. Notable passages relating to his so-called perspectivism include: HH P 6; GS 354, 374; GM III: 12.
13. For studies of specific works and periods, see, e.g., Porter (2000) and Daniels (2013) on BT; Jensen (2016) on UM II; Cohen (2009) on HH; Higgins (2000) on GS; Abbey (2000) and Franco (2011) on the middle period; Luchte (2008) and Loeb (2010) on Z; Acampora and Ansell Pearson (2011) on BGE; Janaway (2007), Conway (2008) and Hatab (2008) on GM; Conway (1997) and Stern (2009) on TI; Conway (2019) and Jaggard (2013) on A; More (2014) on EH. See, too, the relevant volumes of the *Nietzsche-Kommentar* series.
14. For an introduction of that kind, see Pippin (2012).
15. Brobjer (1997: 669).
16. My thanks to Andreas Urs Sommer and Sebastian Gardner for important corrections to an earlier draft of this chapter.

