



FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE – A PRECURSOR TO NATIONALSOCIALISM?

Dr. Martin Arndt¹

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Abstract

The article focusses on Friedrich Nietzsche's impact on political intellectuals and advocates of Nationalism.

Key words: Heroism, Nationalism, Philosophy, War

*“Die schlechtesten Leser — Die schlechtesten Leser sind die, welche wie plündernde Soldaten verfahren: sie nehmen sich einiges, was sie brauchen können, heraus, beschmutzen und verwirren das übrige und lästern auf das Ganze.”*² (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches=Human, All Too Human*)

Introduction

It is a tribute to Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) that the interpretation of his books seems to present to each new generation of readers a defining temptation and test. There may have been as many major interpretations of Nietzsche since he slipped into insanity at age 44 in the winter of 1889 as there have been generations who have sought to understand him³ (*Washington Post*/August 2002). *The metaphor-loving philosopher compared himself to a sick animal that hides in a cave, a cave-bear (=“Höhlenbär/1885”)*⁴. *His thinking is a hermit's philosophy (=“Einsiedler-Philosophie“)* that, even if written with a lion's claw, is a philosophy with „Gänsefüßchen“, i. e. quotations marks. Though cave-bears, as Nietzsche knew, looked dangerous, they mainly fed on plants and seeds. Hence, Nietzsche's notions have a twilight-colour (=“Zwielicht-Farbe”/1886⁵). It is this ambivalence that was the feature of Nietzsche's impact on posterity, fluctuating between a Nietzsche-bashing and a Nietzsche-idolisation. In World War I, German soldiers read *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the trenches for

¹ Germany, Email: martarndt@web.de

² “The worst readers are those who are like plundering soldiers: They take what they can use and defile, confuse and defame the whole.”

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/2002/08/18/beyond-good-and-evil/2f1ae671-b0b3-4eb1-b9dc-c4a19ec71945/>

⁴ Letter to Heinrich von Stein from October 15th, 1885. See also <https://books.openedition.org/obp/6174>

⁵ <http://www.nietzschesource.org/eKGWB/index>



inspiration. Later, notwithstanding the withering attacks on German nationalism and the refined praises of Judaism scattered liberally throughout his books, philosophy professors scoured Nietzsche's writings for fragments to show that he was a spiritual father of National Socialism (Peter Berkowitz). Is Nietzsche, as Georg Lukács⁶ influentially proclaimed, the precursor to Hitlerism⁷? This thesis seems to be fairly one-sided: The Jewish philosopher Sarah Kofman, though just having escaped the Shoah, delivered a defence of Nietzsche in 1994 – and committed suicide on October 15th, just on Nietzsche's anniversary. She considered the issue of style, of why Nietzsche wrote as he did, as fundamental, on any level, to reading his texts (Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche et la métaphore*, Paris 1972)⁸, but the range of nationalistic, and fascist Nietzsche-adaptations is, however, very large⁹. But Thomas Mann's warning from 1924 can still be heard that (s) he who takes Nietzsche literally is lost.

Results and Discussion

Nietzsche's fame began to grow as a teacher of *Lebensphilosophie* (philosophy of life) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that sought to liberate life from the stifling clutches of convention and was often combined with a return to nature, its Germanic myths and a *völkisch* world-view. It associated *reason with the shortcomings of civilization and* turned away from purely theoretical knowledge towards the undistorted fullness of lived experience by means of emotion and intuition¹⁰. *Lebensphilosophie* evoked fascination among those who shared deep concerns about 'decadent', modern bourgeois society because of the salutary connotations surrounding the concept of 'life', which seemed to promise 'authenticity', 'youthfulness', 'vitality', 'directness', 'spontaneity' and 'strength'.¹¹ Nietzsche had speculated that innovation is essential for the adaptation and survival of any species, whereas slave moralities suspiciously brand cultural novelties "evil" because they threaten to perturb the existing social order. In truth, however, such instincts are expedient and indispensable to as high a degree as the good ones; their function is merely different. Hence Herbert Spencer's definition of life as adaptation was despised by Nietzsche as degrading it to mere reaction, an activity of secondary nature. Leisure, adventure and excess cannot be justified on utilitarian principles, but are of the utmost value. Denying them means depriving Man of his great character and castrating Man. A living being does not grow, since it eats, but it eats, as it grows. Life in its uncontaminated form was seen as an adventurous enterprise and a courageous invasion into possibilities of being: Nietzsche gave life a new connotation, comparing it to an endless stream that invites to float with without reasoning, calculating and raticionating. New experiments should be made: Nietzsche's favourite deity, Dionysus, is a *Versucher-Gott*, i. e. someone who both seeks and

⁶ Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, Translated by Peter Palmer, Humanities Press Inc., Atlantic Highlands, N.J. and in Great Britain by The Merlin Press Ltd, 1981. Originally as: Georg Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*. 1962:

Nietzsche als Begründer des Irrationalismus der imperialistischen Periode (Nietzsche as founder of irrationalism of the imperialistic period)

⁷ "gedankliche Nähe zum Hitlertum"=ideational affinity to Hitlerism - „einsamer Vorläufer Hitlers“=a lonely precursor to Hitler

⁸ See also: Claudia Crawford, *The Beginnings of Nietzsche's Theory of Language*, Berlin/ New York 1988. Tilman Borsche / Federico Gerratana / Aldo Venturelli (ed.), *„Centauren-Geburten“: Wissenschaft, Kunst und Philosophie*, Berlin/ New York 1994, and last: Detlef Otto, *(Kon-)Figurationen der Philosophie. Eine metaphorologische Lektüre von Nietzsches Darstellungen der vorplatonischen Philosophen*, in: Nietzsche-Studien 27 (1998), S. 119-152

⁹ Bernhard H. F. Taureck, *Nietzsche und der Faschismus*. Reclam Verlag, Leipzig 2000

¹⁰ Jason Gaiger, *Lebensphilosophie*, in: Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, edited by E. Craig. London: Routledge, 1998; also: Max Horkheimer, *Zum Rationalismusstreit in der gegenwärtigen Philosophie*, in: Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, III, pp. 1ff., 1935. The most comprehensive study is Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany: 1890 – 1990*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1992. German translation: Steven E. Aschheim, *Nietzsche und die Deutschen. Karriere eines Kultes*. Was Nietzsche's irrational vitalism an overt summons to reactionary, anti-democratic, anti-socialist, imperialist activity?

¹¹ See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, University of California Press, Ltd., London, England 1961.

searches (=‘suchen’), tries and attempts (‘versuchen’¹²), but also tempts and seduces (also ‘versuchen’). So he is a searcher, researcher (making experiments) and seducer, inviting his disciples to cross borders. Accordingly, human society is an experiment, not a contract (lat.: *contrahere*) that - in addition of meaning ‘to enter into an agreement and business - still carries the notion of narrowing and compressing’¹³. Zarathustra wants to liberate men from who all conceited (“dünken”) to have known for a long time what is good and evil for humanity. Storms are needed as the shakers of the trees of life that might help men escape the banality of everyday life in modern bourgeois society. The sphere of true existence can only touched and experienced in extreme circumstances. Nietzsche introduces a complete reversal of ordinary feeling. Death as experienced under secure and hence contemptible conditions is an unfree death, death not at the right time, a coward's death. Should not from the love of life a different death be desired, one that is free, conscious, and without accident?

“On Free Death Many die too late, and a few die too early. The doctrine still sounds strange: “Die at the right time!” Die at the right time-thus teaches Zarathustra. Of course, how could those who never live at the right time die at the right time? Would that they had never been born! Thus I counsel the superfluous. But even the superfluous still make a fuss about their dying; and even the hollowest nut still wants to be cracked. Everybody considers dying important; but as yet death is no festival. As yet men have not learned how one hallows the most beautiful festivals. I show you the death that consummates-a spur and a promise to the survivors. He that consummates his life dies his death victoriously, surrounded by those who hope and promise. Thus should one learn to die; and there should be no festival where one dying thus does not hallow the oaths of the living. To die thus is best; second to this, however, is to die fighting and to squander a great soul. But equally hateful to the fighter and the victor is your grinning death, which creeps up like a thief-and yet comes as the master. My death I praise to you, the free death which comes to me because I want it. And when shall I want it? He who has a goal and an heir will want death at the right time for his goal and heir. ...Let them see to it that their dying turns out that much better. Some never become sweet; they rot already in the summer. It is cowardice that keeps them on their branch. All-too-many live, and all-too-long they hang on their branches. Would that a storm came to shake all this worm-eaten rot from the tree! Would that there came preachers of quick death! I would like them as the true storms and shakers of the trees of life... Thus I want to die myself that you, my friends, may love the earth more for my sake; and to earth I want to return that I may find rest in her who gave birth to me. Verily, Zarathustra had a goal; he threw his ball: now you, my friends, are the heirs of my goal; to you I throw my golden ball. More than anything, I like to see you, my friends, throwing the golden ball. And so I still linger a little on the earth: forgive me for that. Thus spoke Zarathustra.”¹⁴

Free Death appears to be nobler than being killed by an accidental and fatal blow of Nature, natural death being the absurd murder of a reasonable being by non-reason; Free Death is better than gradual suicide due to a merely banal, mediocre life whose end is a cowardly death, than death by ‘Zufall’ or by ‘Überfall’ (accident, attack). Nietzsche had predicted in his book *Ecce Homo* that his name will be connected with something formidable („Ungeheures“) and with a crisis („Krisis“), as he is no Man (“kein Mensch”), but dynamite (“Dynamit“)

“a crisis the like of which has never been known on earth, the memory of the most profound clash of consciences, and the passing of a sentence upon all that which theretofore had been believed, exacted, and hallowed.”¹⁵

¹² =to unify and to narrow/restrict

¹³ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/contract>

¹⁴ Translation after: Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche*, Viking Press 1982, p.183f. It was not until much of Kaufmann's work in the 1950s through the 1970s that Nietzsche was able to shed this connection with nationalism and anti-Semitism. Kaufmann stresses the “experimentalist” mode of Nietzsche's philosophizing.

¹⁵ But he added I “am horribly frightened that one day I shall be pronounced , "holy." You will understand why I publish this book beforehand —it is to prevent people from wronging me. I refuse to be a saint ; I would rather a clown. Maybe I am a clown.”

No doubt, Nietzsche was to become a turning-point (A. Mohler). Nietzsche should become true in his statement that with the outbreak of a war the noble ones enjoy the new risk of death which becomes an indirect route to suicide – but with a good conscience¹⁶. The Youth Movement praised Nietzsche as an icon, always willing to find new climates, to give up tents, to learn anew and to fly away - like gypsies.¹⁷ God is dead. May life live (“Gott ist tot! Es lebe das Leben!”/W. Hammer) through dancing, playing, and singing as the counterforces to German mediocrity and philistinism. In the Great War, German soldiers read – in addition to the New Testament and Goethe’s *Faust* – Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in the trenches for inspiration¹⁸. Endurance was expected from the German soldiers of 1918¹⁹, strengthened by Nietzsche’s plea for his belief in masculinization of Europe (*Unser Glaube an eine Vermännlichung Europas/Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* 62)²⁰. Nietzsche knew the forces of the German people that re-emerge in every war, but they should not be wasted for a purely mechanical apparatus („maschinellen Betriebs” (Ernst Gundolf). Nietzsche could easily become the judge of the time²¹, with some publications on him showing the swastika, especially those of the Stefan-George-circle. One of Nietzsche’s favourite drawings was Albrecht Dürer’s *Knight, Death and the Devil* (=Ritter, Tod und Teufel/see below Bertram’s interpretation) shows a knight who keeps on and does not despair. Riding steadfastly through a dark Nordic gorge, Dürer’s knight rides past Death on a Pale Horse, who holds out an hourglass as a reminder of life’s brevity, and is followed closely behind by a pig-snouted Devil. Life is a battle in the name of courage and bravery, against corruption, temptation and worldliness: that is, against death and devil. Nietzsche admired those that can prove today whether one is worth anything or not—that one endures.”²² Notwithstanding the withering attacks on German nationalism and the refined praises of Judaism scattered liberally throughout his books, philosophy professors scoured Nietzsche’s writings for fragments to show that he was a spiritual father of National Socialism (Peter Berkowitz²³).

Propaganda Minister Goebbels held the view that what you read indicates what kind of man you are. He said in his infamous 'total war' speech at the Berlin Sportpalast on February, 18th, 1943 (“Nun, Volk steh auf, und Sturm brich los!”=Nation, Rise Up, and Let the Storm Break Loose) shortly after the German defeat at Stalingrad:

“As we so often have in the past, so again shall we now bear the hardest burdens. And we shall once more justify the words of the philosopher [Nietzsche]: “That which does not kill me makes me stronger.”²⁴

For Goebbels’ reception of Nietzsche it is the pedagogical maxim that who is overprotected, will become sickly²⁵. In his speech (*Der geistige Arbeiter im Schicksalskampf des Reiches Rede vor der*

¹⁶ <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB>

¹⁷ Walter Hammer, *Nietzsche als Erzieher*, Leipzig 1913, p. 25

¹⁸ Christian Niemeyer, *Plündernde Soldaten. Die pädagogische Nietzsche-Rezeption im Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 45 (1999), S. 209-229. 150 000 issues of *Zarathustra* are said to have been handed out to German soldiers.

¹⁹ William H. F. Altman, *Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche: The Philosopher of the Second Reich*, Lexington Books, Plymouth 2013, p. 7.

²⁰ *The Gay Science*, or: *The Joyful Wisdom*

²¹ Ernst Gundolf und Kurt Hildebrandt, *Nietzsche als. Richter unserer Zeit*, 1923

²² <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/950909-to-those-human-beings-who-are-of-any-concern-to> It was printed in the *Will to Power*.

²³ Peter Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist* Harvard University Press, 1995. Berkowitz characterizes Nietzsche’s thought as full of tantalizing ambiguities, intriguing ambivalences, as an “unresolved contest of extremes.”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/2002/08/18/beyond-good-and-evil/2f1ae671-b0b3-4eb1-b9dc-c4a19ec71945/>

²⁴ „Und darum sind wir denen zu größtem Dank verpflichtet, die uns seit 1918 ununterbrochen immer wieder durch brutale Faustschläge aus unsrer deutschen Traumseligkeit erweckten. Wir bekennen ihnen gegenüber mit Nietzsche: Gelobt sei, was hart macht!“ See: Helmut. Heiber (ed.), *Goebbels-Reden* [Goebbels’ Speeches], vol. 2, 1939—1945 (Düsseldorf 1972), p. 168.

Heidelberger Universität) from July 9th, 1943, 11 months after the decisive battle of Stalingrad (23 August 1942 – 2 February 1943) Goebbels in his ex-university of Heidelberg where in 1921, at the age of 24, he had received a doctorate in literature, the reference to Nietzsche is clearly made.

Goebbels himself had read Nietzsche, as becomes clear from his early novel *Michael Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern* (=Michael: A German Fate In Diary Notes) that praised misery (“Not”) as a path to bliss, and the Youth that has always right over Old Age, as it is united by faith, battle, and work (“Glaube, Kampf, und Arbeit”): The protagonist reads “Mittagsandacht aus dem Zarathustra: Zarathustra has awoken from a deep dream: The world is profound, deep is its woe, but passion/lust (“Lust”) is even deeper, as it wants eternity, deep, deep eternity (“tiefe, tiefe Ewigkeit”/1883/84).

According to Timothy Ryback (*Hitler's Private Library: The Books that Shaped His Life*, 2008) who did research on Hitler's private library of 16 000 books found that Hitler owned a 1st edition of Nietzsche's collected works and *Nietzsche's Political Legacy*, edited by Eitel Fritz Scheiner (*Nietzsches politisches Vermächtnis in Selbstzeugnissen/1934*)²⁶. Hitler gave Mussolini on his sixtieth birthday (1943) a complete, 24-volume set of the works of Nietzsche (=Gesammelte Werke. Musarionausgabe)²⁷. Following the meeting with Nietzsche's sister, Hitler became a convert.

"From that day at Potsdam the Nietzschean catchphrases began to appear more frequently—the will to power of the Herrenvolk, slave morality, the fight for the heroic life, against reactionary education, Christian philosophy and ethics based on compassion," Hanfstaengl confidently recalled though he mistakenly placed the encounter in Potsdam rather than Weimar. "Schopenhauer, with his almost Buddhist gentleness, was buried forever, and the Gauleiters started to take their inspiration from a savage parody of Nietzsche." (Timothy Ryback).²⁸

The propaganda-machine started by Nietzsche's sister who in 1894 founded in Naumburg (then Weimar) the Nietzsche-Archive, proved to be strong, and Nietzscheanism became incorporated into a emergent radicalized right-wing politics (S. Aschheim). An analysis of its origins, impact and reception affords a particularly illuminating perspective on the darker side of Nietzsche's historical legacy²⁹. When copyrights of Nietzsche's works expired in 1930, several compilations were issued, e.g. an edition made by Alfred Baeumler (=Die Unschuld des Werdens und Der Wille zur Macht=The Innocence of Becoming and the Will for Power)³⁰. Ernst Baeumler, having served from 1915 – 1918 as an infantryman in the German army and later in the Freikorps, was shattered by the Versailles-Treaty. The philosophy (›sittlicher Idealismus‹) that accompanied the Bismarck-empire, collapsed in the Great War. This traumatization reappeared when from December, 1st, 1918 until June, 30th, 1930 the left bank of the Rhine was occupied by France. According to Baeumler, Professor of Philosophy at the university of Berlin, the tragic fate of the 19th century was that philosophy and the silent philosophy of soldiers (=“die schweigende Philosophie der Soldaten“) were not in accordance (*Männerbund und Wissenschaft*, Berlin 1934). Baeumler praised Nietzsche as the harbinger of the end of the bourgeois era that does not believe in itself any longer, and which died in the Great War. Nietzsche hoped for the renewal of Greek culture out of the German essence and the destruction of the

²⁵ “Das ist auch aus erzieherischen Gründen gänzlich unangebracht. Wer zuviel geschont wird, der kränkelt, wie Nietzsche sagt, am Ende an seiner Schonung.“

²⁶ Timothy W. Ryback, *Hitler's Private Library: The Books that Shaped his Life*, New York, 2008.

²⁷ See: R.J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini*, London, Arnold, London, and Oxford University Press, New York, 2002, p. 404. Mussolini seems to have been cured from his socialism by Nietzsche, found an eye-opener to the cant of politicians, and was confirmed his antiparliamentarianism and especially fascinated by the motto to live dangerously (“gefährlich leben/Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft §283”)

²⁸ <http://thinkclassical.blogspot.com/2012/04/walter-kaufmann-exercise-in-blame.html>

²⁹ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022009408089028?journalCode=jcha>

³⁰ Colli's and Montinari's critical edition of Nietzsche's works was inspired to destroy the compilation of Nietzsche's works done by the Nietzsche archive of Weimar. For Georg Lukács' he is the official philosophical ideologue Hitler's (“Der offizielle philosophische Ideologe Hitlers).

symbiosis of Christian-Roman Europe, as it was justified by Hegel. Dionysos is the God of the highest intensity of life that feels life in pain and in sacrifice and the affirmation of life in its opposite (=Pessimismus der Stärke=pessimism of strength). The Promethean sacrilegious person (=Frevler) heroically seeks transgressions (e.g. curiosity, guilt, suffering), replacing the Socratic ideal of knowledge and happiness that shuns the agonal character of life of fighting, winning and sacrificing. The person can introduce the era of workers and soldiers (“Arbeiter und Soldaten”). Seeing the new emperor Hitler could mean seeing Nietzsche. A university that is silent about Adolf Hitler and Horst Wessel³¹ is apolitical.

Ernst Bertram

Philhellenism played a major role for the Stefan George-circle, Hellas becoming the real Germany which is invoked against the false Enlightenment, the arrogance of Western civilization and civilized dogmatism that had nothing to do with the true German spirit. Ernst Bertram, a follower of George, was one of the most eminent philosophers who tried to integrate Nietzsche into what later was called the ‘deutsche Bewegung’ (=German Movement). He published his book *Nietzsche Versuch einer Mythologie* (=Attempt at a Mythology, 1918, 1st edition, 2nd edition: 1920) with the swastika on the front-page, surrounded by the Stefan-George words ‘*Blätter für die Kunst*’ (Letters for the Art) and published by Georg Bondi where most of George’s work were published³². Bertram's Nietzsche substantially shaped the image of Nietzsche for the generation between the wars. It won the Nietzsche Society's first prize and was admired by luminous contemporaries including André Gide, Hermann Hesse, Gottfried Benn, and Thomas Mann who made Bertram become the godfather of one of his daughters. Before, in 1922 Ernst Bertram had published his book on *Rheingenius und Génie du Rhin*, outlining the fate of the city of Strasbourg (German: Straßburg) that as part of Alsace–Lorraine (German: *Elsaß-Lothringen*) in 1918 was reverted to France.³³ What could be done under those humiliating conditions? Bertram closely referred to Nietzsche’s interpretation of Albrecht Dürer’s engraving *Ritter, Tod und Teufel* (*Knight, Death, and the Devil/1513*)³⁴: Nietzsche, born of the Luciferian Despite, of Promethean hybris³⁵, the semi-blind, music-obsessed Romantic Socrates (“großen Halbblinden, dem tonsüchtigen romantischen Sokrates”), sympathized with the atmosphere of Faust, death and tomb³⁶. In this engraving by Dürer, which accompanied Nietzsche throughout his life and which, on several occasions, he both received and gave others as a gift, the disciple of Schopenhauer and of Wagner sensed a symbol of his own existence, a symbol both of his pessimistic vision of the world, lacking all hope, and of his courage to face up to the terrible secret. It is not accidental that the knight wears a steel-helmet³⁷. What, according to Bertram, appealed to Nietzsche were the ethical atmosphere, the Faustian odour, cross, death and the crypt, thus symbolizing Nietzsche’s verse that only a people that is aware of her dangers produces the genius³⁸. Bertram

³¹ The SA-member Horst Wessel (1907 – 1930), murdered by a Communist, was the composer of a song named after him, beginning with the words: „Die Fahne hoch! Die Reihen fest dicht geschlossen! SA marschiert...“=Raise the flag! The rows narrowly closed! SA marches.”

³² Translated and with an introduction by Robert E. Norton, *Nietzsche Attempt at Mythology*, University of Illinois, p. 209.

³³ According to Armin Mohler, both the Great War and Nietzsche shaped the intellectuals of Nazism (p. 32).

³⁴ See Norton, p. XV. The identification of the Germanic hero with the knight in Albrecht Dürer's 'Ritter, Tod und Teufel' had been popularized in Willibald Hentschel's *Varuna, das Gesetz des auf steigenden und sinkenden Lebens in der Völkergeschichte* [Varuna: The Law of Ascending and Descending Life in the History of the Nations], 1907, Leipzig 4th ed. 1924—25.

³⁵ „des luziferischen Trotzes sind — aber eines Trotzes, der mit göttlichem Heimweh rätselhaft vermischt und beinahe identisch ist; der Erbe alles prometheischen Hochmuts, alles prometheischen Willens zum neuen götterlos göttlichen Menschen, und alles prometheisch stolzen Duldens.“

³⁶ <http://www.f-nietzsche.de/wagner.htm> See William H. F. Altman, *Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche: The Philosopher of the Second Reich*, Lexington Books, Plymouth 2013, pp.6ff.

³⁷ <http://larsgyllenhaal.blogspot.com/2010/08/missing-link-in-helmet-history.html> Later in Wilhelminian times: the spiked helmet, also the Kaiser helmet=Imperial German ‘Pickelhaube’ – different from the ‘Stahlhelm’ which was worn in 1916 for the battle of Verdun for the 1st time). The spiked helmet made out of leather and a metallic point were now considered ineffective.

³⁸ „Ein Volk, das sich seiner Gefahren bewußt wird, erzeugt den Genius.“ <https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/nietzsch/fragmen1/chap018.html> For Carl Schmitt the political sphere should guarantee the seriousness of life (“Garant des Lebensernstes“).

stressed the Germanic attitude toward life („germanischen Lebensernst“³⁹) and German pessimism⁴⁰ prefigured by Martin Luther’s words spoken on the diet of Worms in 1521⁴¹ and continued to Kant and Schopenhauer. It is the basis of the absolutely courageous (“Bild des schlechthin ‘Mutigen’”), akin to Promethean pride, yelling the indormitable ‘Nevertheless’. Such a person does not care about her own happiness nor and she be intimidated, but even looks out for the “Furchtbare“ (=awful? terrible? dreadful? horrible?) and Fragwürdige” (=questionable? doubtful? dubious?) as the yearning for a great enemy (“das Verlangen nach einem großen Feinde.“)⁴²: Blood as self-sacrifice may become the criterion of truth, and the Great Danger (“große Gefahr”) may be praised, as it forces us to be strong (Ethics of Danger).⁴³ In his book on Nietzsche from 1920 he proclaimed that Nietzsche became an ‘advocatus diaboli’ and of immoralism and called Nietzsche’ *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (Beyond Good and Evil/1886) his ‘gefährlichstes Buch’ (most dangerous book). Bertram focussed on Nietzsche’s interpretation of Catiline and his coup d’état as “the preliminary form of the existence of every Caesar. All legitimate greatness must first traverse the stage of disreputable and criminal illegality”⁴⁴

According to Bertram, Nietzsche saw the Overman (Superman?) prefigured in Heraclitus, Mephistopheles and Napoleon⁴⁵ who had already synthesized the monster and the overman, and to whom Bertram devoted a whole chapter (“Napoleon”=12pages) in his book on Nietzsche. Following Nietzsche’s remark on Napoleon as a sign of victory over ‘the merchant and the Philistine’, Bertram stressed Napoleon’s granite antipathy to civilisation that are part of his disdain of Christian virtues and the whole moral hypocrisy⁴⁶, making him become the “Corsican Prometheus chained to his rock.”⁴⁷ Nietzsche had recommended two good books that will survive: *Conversations of Goethe with Johann Peter Eckermann* and the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène, ou Journal où se trouve consigné, jour par jour, ce qu’a dit et fait Napoléon durant dix-huit mois*⁴⁸. Many of the Napoleonic quotes found approval with Bertram (“A man like me is always a god or a devil, *un dio* or *un diavolo*.”⁴⁹).

“J’ai refermé le gouffre anarchique et débrouillé le chaos. ... J’ai ... ennobli les peuples ...”
(=I have closed the chasm of anarchy and unraveled the chaos. ... I have ennobled the peoples”⁵⁰)

The overcoming of chaos and the ennoblement of people were expected by Bertram. On May 3, 1933, some 2 months after Hitler’s assumption of power, Bertram introduced his lecture series for the University of Cologne’s summer semester with a formal speech, titled “German Awakening,”

³⁹ Used by Nietzsche in a letter to Richard Wagner from 1869. Michael Großheim: *Politischer Existenzialismus. Subjektivität zwischen Entfremdung und Engagement*, Tübingen 2002. In his book from 1931 Baeumler he spoke of „realistische Besonnenheit“.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche, letter to Richard Wagner of 22 May 1869. Cited in Bertram, Nietzsche, p. 39.

⁴¹ „Widerrufen kann und will ich nichts, weil es weder sicher noch geraten ist, etwas gegen sein Gewissen zu tun. Gott helfe mir, Amen.“ =‘my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me’)

<https://www.mdr.de/reformation500/luthermythen-martin-luther-verfechter-der-gewissensfreiheit-refjahr-100.html>

<http://www.zeno.org/Philosophie/M/Nietzsche,+Friedrich/Menschliches,+Allzumenschliches/Zweiter+Band/Vorrede>

⁴³ <http://www.zeno.org/Philosophie/M/Nietzsche,+Friedrich/G%C3%B6tzen-D%C3%A4mmerung/Streifz%C3%BCge+eines+Unzeitgem%C3%A4%C3%9Fen/38.+Mein+Begriff+von+Freiheit>

⁴⁴ Bertram/Norton, p. 11. Especially since Ibsen’s *Catiline (Catilina)* Catiline was associated with rebellion, amorality and decadence.

⁴⁵ Bertram/Norton, p. 174. Don Dombowsky, *Nietzsche and Napoleon. The Dionysian Conspiracy*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff 2014.

⁴⁶ <http://www.thenietzschechannel.com/notebooks/german/nachd/nachd25b.htm>

⁴⁷ Bertram/Norton, p. 182.

⁴⁸ Bertram/Norton, p. 181.

⁴⁹ <https://www.bartleby.com/344/293.html> Bertram/Norton p. 182

⁵⁰ Long version: “J’ai refermé le gouffre anarchique et débrouillé le chaos. J’ai déssouillé la révolution, ennobli les peuples et raffermi les rois. J’ai excité toutes les émulations, récompensé tous les mérites et reculé les limites de la gloire. Tout cela est bien quelque chose!” I have closed the chasm of anarchy and unraveled the chaos. I have sobered up the revolution, ennobled the peoples and strengthened the kings. I have excited all emulations, rewarded all merits and pushed back the limits of glory. All this is something!”

celebrating what he called the “Germanic miracle” of recent political developments. More than an exercise in academic phrase making, Bertram’s speech exhorted his students to take active part in the transformations taking place in the name of German values. In urging his listeners to join the struggle, Bertram reminded them that the stakes were high – either victory or the end of the White World, chaos or a planet of termites. When the war was over, Bertram was unsurprisingly classified as politically compromised; he lost his job and was prevented from publishing or speaking publicly. He caricatured the denazification commission by writing a play *Goethe, entnapoleonisiert oder Exzellenz vor der Entnapoleonisierungskammer beim Weimarer Wohlfahrtsausschuss anno 1817, im Frühjahr*⁵¹.

Alfred Baeumler

Among the Nazi thinkers who seized on Nietzsche was Alfred Baeumler (1887–1968). Alfred Baeumler presented Nietzsche as the envoy of a new spirit of 'heroic realism' which was a crucial counterpoint for the Nietzsche reception in the Third Reich (Mark Whyte⁵²). It is based on Nietzsche ‘formula for greatness in a human being’, the amor fati:

“that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it—all idealism is mendacity in the face of what is necessary—but love it.”⁵³

Life is seen as a battle – in line with Heraclitus whose world is, according to Alfred Baeumler, the proper designation for Nietzsche. In line with Nietzsche (*Homer's Wettkampf. Vorrede zu einem ungeschriebenen Buch/1872*) he could proclaim that battle means salvation which includes the real Dionysian joy of destruction („die echt dionysische Lust an der Vernichtung einschließt.”⁵⁴). A professor at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Berlin, Baeumler embraced the Nazi cause around 1930 and was granted an hour-long audience with Hitler himself in 1931, the same year he published his influential Nietzsche: *The Philosopher and Politician*. Baeumler called his simplified Nietzschean doctrine “heroischer Realismus” (heroic realism): Enmity and war were not unfortunate facts of the human condition, but its essential and perpetual characteristics. Violent conflict was the only path to ennobled human life. The aim of education is the attitude of a soldierly Man.

The term *heroischer Realismus* (=heroic realism) can be traced back to the jurist, legal advisor to the GeStaPo, a collaborator of Reinhard Heydrich and Senior SS and Security Police Leader Karl Rudolf Werner Best (10 July 1903 – 23 June 1989)⁵⁵ who defines the corresponding attitude as the affirmation of fighting a lost battle for a lost cause: What counts is fighting well, not the ‘good cause’ and the success, following Zarathustra’s advice (*Vom Krieg und Kriegsvolke=War*

⁵¹ Ulrich Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister Stefan George Nachleben*, Ch. H. Beck Verlag, 2009, p. 379 In his *Ritter, Tod und Teufel: Der heldische Gedanke* [Knight, Death and the Devil: The Heroic Idea] (Munich 1924, 4th edition, 1935), Hans F. Günther — later to become the chief racial theorist of the Third Reich — stressed the *völkisch* characteristics of the knight: heroism, loyalty, honesty and, crucially, racial purity and reworked the tradition of German *völkisch*-nationalist Romanticism into a form of "biological nationalism"

⁵² Journal of Contemporary History Vol. 43, No. 2 (Apr., 2008), pp. 171-194

⁵³ <https://www.orionphilosophy.com/stoic-blog/amor-fati-meaning-stoicism>

⁵⁴ <https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/nietzsch/aufvorna/chap004.html> „Denken wir uns die schwer zu athmende Luft des hesiodischen Gedichtes noch verdichtet und verfinstert und ohne alle die Milderungen und Reinigungen, welche, von Delphi und zahlreichen Göttersitzen aus, über Hellas hinströmten: mischen wir diese verdickte böotische Luft mit der finsternen Wollüstigkeit der Etrusker; dann würde uns eine solche Wirklichkeit eine Mythenwelt erpressen, in der Uranos, Kronos und Zeus und die Titanenkämpfe wie eine Erleichterung dünken müßten; der Kampf ist in dieser brütenden Atmosphäre das Heil, die Rettung, die Grausamkeit des Sieges ist die Spitze des Lebensjubiläum.“

⁵⁵ Christoph Schweer, *Nietzsche und der Heroische Realismus der Konservativen Revolution*, In: Sebastian Kaufmann, Sebastian Sommer, Andreas Urs, *Nietzsche und die Konservative Revolution, Nietzsche-Leküren*, Walter de Gruyter 2018, S. 87. The Bible of Heroic Realism is often seen in Ernst Jünger’s *Der Arbeiter*: War as a irreplaceable school. It is even more interesting than hunting a tiger. Seeing only negation in war is a slave’s perspective. (*Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis/1926*). The Heroic Realist can die and views in destruction an affirmation of order.

and warriors) that the good war hallows everything and that war and courage are more beneficial than charity⁵⁶.

“The fight itself is essential and permanent; the aims of the fight are temporary and interchangeable. There can therefore be no question of success in our fight... the yardstick of the new code of morality, therefore, is not its content – not ‘what’ but ‘how’.”⁵⁷

Baeumler focussed on Nietzsche’s antidemocratic and antisocialist polemics and his negation of bourgeois ideology, and Christian morality. In 1931 his *Nietzsche, der Philosoph und Politiker* appeared: The proclaimed Death of God has deprived the world of its gravity (“Schwergewicht”/Nietzsche 1885⁵⁸). Baeumler supports the idea of de-bourgeoisification (“Entbürgerlichung“). The German elite should be trained in a political soldiery (“politischen Soldatentum“). As the editor of Nietzsche’s works he already in 1930 claimed that Nietzsche strived for the rebirth of the Greek world from the deepest instincts⁵⁹ of the Germanic essence and a return to its Dionysian homeland (“dionysischen Urheimat”) and that Nietzsche aimed at the image of the heroic Man who is willing to fight, to be victorious and to sacrifice himself („das Bild des heroischen Menschen, des Menschen eines Tribes, des Tribes zu kämpfen, zu siegen und im Siege sich zu opfern“)⁶⁰ Shortly after the publication of this book, Baeumler also went public politically when he joined the National Socialist *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*, founded by the Nazi party’s ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg who appointed him as head of the office’s division for science (*Amtsleiter des Amtes Wissenschaft des Beauftragten des Führers für die Überwachung der geistigen Schulung und Erziehung der NSDAP*). Already on the occasion of the bookburnings on May 10th, 1933, Baeumler gave a speech to the Nazi students⁶¹ (“*Wider den undeutschen Geist*”) at the University of Berlin. Many of the students were wearing the SA-uniform.

"Meine Herren! Ich vertraue darauf, daß Sie nicht ausgezogen sind, weil Sie die strenge wissenschaftliche Arbeit fürchten, sondern nur deshalb, weil Sie in dieser Arbeit keinen Sinn mehr fanden, weil Sie diese Arbeit nur tun wollen in einer Schule, die Ihrer Vorstellung von der Größe und Einheit des deutschen Volkes entspricht. Die stille, zähe Arbeit, das Wissen und Können, das an den deutschen Hochschulen noch immer zuhause ist, wird von Ihnen, ich weiß es, geachtet. Sie waren nur politische Menschen genug, um sich nicht durch den Hinweis auf diese Arbeit von der geschichtlich notwendigen Tat zurückhalten zu lassen. Denn diese Tat, die Veränderung des Gesichts unserer Hochschule, mußte geschehen. Und hier liegt der letzte Grund des Konflikts: wenn man von Ihnen immer wieder die Anerkennung der stillen Arbeit verlangte, dann war in dieser Forderung schließlich doch der Gedanke verborgen, daß es einer tiefer gehenden Veränderung des Gesichts unserer Hochschule nicht bedürfe. Der Konflikt mußte mit dem Ausbruch der Revolution auf den Höhepunkt kommen, denn nun tauchte in vielen Ihrer Lehrer der Wunsch und die Hoffnung auf, es würde nun wieder wie vor dem Jahre 1918. Aber die Geschichte kennt kein Zurück - weder vor das Jahr 1918 noch zum Jahre 1818, in welchem Hegel an dieser Stelle seine Vorlesungen eröffnete. (...) Diejenigen, die in diesen Tagen die Freiheit des Geistes gegen uns glauben verteidigen zu müssen, berufen sich wohl manchmal auf die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus, die ja eine Philosophie des Geistes gewesen ist. Aber wenn Fichte und Hegel Freiheit forderten, so forderten sie nicht Freiheit für jede Meinung, auch nicht für jede gut begründete Meinung.(...)"

⁵⁶ der gute Krieg ist es, der jede Sache heiligt ... Krieg und der Mut „My brethren in war! I love you from the very heart.... I know the hatred and envy of your hearts. Ye are not great enough not to know of hatred and envy. Then be great enough not to be ashamed of them!... Ye shall love peace as a means to new wars—and the short peace more than the long... Ye shall only have enemies to be hated, but not enemies to be despised. Ye must be proud of your enemies; then, the successes of your enemies are also your successes. ”

⁵⁷ <https://padresteve.com/tag/werner-best/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/nietzsch/fragmen5/chap010.html>

⁵⁹ „eine Wiedergeburt der hellenischen Welt aus den tiefsten Instinkten des germanischen Wesens“

⁶⁰ Alfred Baeumler, *Nietzsche/1930*, in ders., *Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte*, Berlin, Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1937, S. 244-280, hier: 250, 258, 259;

⁶¹ <https://journals.openedition.org/ejpap/1524>

Die Gefolgschaft Adolf Hitlers kennt das Symbol, die Darstellung der Idee in einem Menschen, in einer Fahne. Das Führerprinzip und die Symbole des Nationalsozialismus haben den Begriff der Idee neu geprägt. (...) Als ob wir nicht, weil wir Heil Hitler sagen, Heil Deutschland meinten! Aber wir meinen es konkret, wir meinen es eindeutig, wir meinen es politisch. Hitler ist nicht weniger als die Idee - er ist mehr als die Idee, denn er ist wirklich. (...) Die pazifistische Propaganda der letzten Jahre konnte sich nur deshalb so hemmungslos verbreiten, weil der soldatische Typus in unserem geistigem System keinen festen Ort hatte. Die eigentliche Geistigkeit des Soldaten, Soldatentum als Lebensform war nicht erkannt. (...) Eine neue Epoche beginnt. Die Epoche der Seelenbindung und Seelenführung liegt hinter uns. Wir erkennen keine Macht an, die geistig und politisch zugleich ist, wir haben nicht einen Papst, wir haben einen Führer. Wer nicht mit uns leben und sterben kann, der wird nicht als Ketzer verbrannt. Er bleibt unbehelligt, wenn er uns nicht angreift. Hinter uns liegt aber auch die Epoche der Neuzeit, die Epoche der Gewissensfreiheit, des Individualismus. Wir stellen es dem Einzelnen nicht frei, die Symbole anzugreifen und zu verwerfen, in denen sich unsere Einigkeit offenbart. Sie ziehen jetzt hinaus, um Bücher zu verbrennen, in denen ein uns fremder Geist sich des deutschen Wortes bedient hat, um uns zu bekämpfen. Auf dem Scheiterhaufen, den sie errichten, werden nicht Ketzer verbrannt. Der politische Gegner ist kein Ketzer, ihm stellen wir uns im Kampfe, er wird der Ehre des Kampfes teilhaftig. Was wir heute von uns abtun, sind Giftstoffe, die sich in der Zeit einer falschen Duldung angesammelt haben. Es ist unsere Aufgabe, den deutschen Geist in uns so mächtig werden zu lassen, daß sich solche Stoffe nicht mehr ansammeln können. Wir dürfen nicht auf Verbote bauen. Aus uns selber heraus müssen wir den undeutschen Geist überwinden. Das Welttheater, das vor uns liegt, das politische Welttheater, das Welttheater des Sozialismus, es wird nicht ein Welttheater des Cäsaro-Papismus sein. Die deutsche Universität wird niemals das geistige Durchführungsinstrument eines außer ihr liegenden Willens werden. Sie hat ihre eigene Beziehung zum Ganzen. Politik und Geist sind vereinigt in den Symbolen, aber getrennt in den Organen. In der Deutung der Symbole sind wir frei."⁶²

At the end he proclaimed:

“Politik können nur die machen, die sie auch zu verantworten haben. Es gibt wohl eine Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Politik, aber nicht eine wissenschaftliche Politik und ebensowenig eine politische Wissenschaft. Der Gedanke muß sich vor dem Gedanken verantworten...Mit einem Wort läßt sich hier sagen, was Nationalsozialismus geistig bedeutet: die Ersetzung des Gebildeten durch den Typus des Soldaten. “Die „Epoche der Gewissensfreiheit, des Individualismus “sei vorbei. „Sie ziehen jetzt hinaus, um Bücher zu verbrennen, in denen ein uns fremder Geist sich des deutschen Wortes bedient hat, um uns zu bekämpfen. [...] Was wir heute von uns abtun, sind Giftstoffe, die sich in der Zeit einer falschen Duldung angesammelt haben”^[7]

Then he went with torchbearers to the Opernplatz, a public square in the central district of Berlin, the capital of Germany where students had gathered to burn 30,000 works of literature, ideology and science. On January 1st, 1934 on the occasion of the *Reichsgründungsfeier* (Celebration of the Foundation of the Reich) he delivered a speech, warning against internal poisoning („innere Vergiftung“), supporting the purity of the race (“Reinerhaltung der Art“) and contrasting a people without a state (e. g.: gypsies and Jews) and a state without a people (e. g. the Republic of Weimar)⁶³.

⁶² http://www.buecherverbrennung33.de/10mai1933_3.html *Antrittsvorlesung in Berlin*. Gehalten am 10. Mai 1933, in: ders.: *Männerbund und Wissenschaft*, Berlin 1934.

⁶³ Here one should further explore Nietzsche's attitude towards the Jews as e.g. expressed in his letters to his sister who was married to anti-Semite L. Bernhard Förster which reveal an anti-Semitic stance. Weaver Santaniello, *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews: His Critique of Judeo-Christianity in Relation to Nazi Myths*, State University of New York Press, 1994. An early reception by Jews occurred in *Jahrbuch für jüdische Geschichte und Kultur* (1906ff.); cf. Caesar Seligmann, *Judentum und moderne Weltanschauung. Fünf Reden*. J. Kauffmann, Frankfurt am Main 1905. Seligmann worked on Nietzsche's prioritizing the 'Old' over the 'New' Testament', drawing on *Beyond Good and*

According to Baeumler, the state and culture are based on inequality. Nietzsche's Great Politics is hostile to democracy, liberalism, bourgeois society and the increasing levelling ("gegen die zunehmende Angleichung"), mediocrization („Vermittelmäßigung") and miniaturization of European Man ("Verkleinerung des europäischen Menschens"). He justified his political duty by a comparison between humans and animals. Humans are like animals part of the natural world. Hence, according to Baeumler, humans also have to submit to the laws of nature which is in accordance with Hitler's view of Nazism as applied biology, justifying his gain of *Lebensraum* ('living space') that could be gained only in the east, and specifically from Russia (Timothy Snyder).

Conclusion

When *Reichspräsident* Hindenburg died in 1934, his coffin and that of his wife, were placed there and three books were added: Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Rosenberg's *Mythus des XX. Jahrhunderts* – and Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. On the entrance of the Nietzsche-archive in Weimar the words were engraved *To the Memory Friedr. Nietzsche Built under Adolf Hitler in the 6th year of the Third Reich* (Friedr. Nietzsche Zum Gedächtnis erbaut unter Adolf Hitler im VI. Jahre des Dritten Reiches). The choice between 'an end with horror or horror without end' would be decided and Nietzsche's phrase that the 'tree that would grow to heaven must send its roots to hell' would become true. Mussolini had donated a statue of the Greek Dionysos for the philosopher's 100th birthday to the archive which arrived in Weimar in 1943 8 years after Elisabeth's death, and as the Italian train was under the attack by the British air force, had to be transported by the German army officer and archivist for the "Nietzsche-Archiv" Max Oehler, carrying the statue through the hellish bomb-ridden streets of Weimar⁶⁴. The end of the appropriation of Nietzsche by the Nazis was marked by Alfred Rosenberg's birthday-speech on October, 15th in 1944 on Nietzsche's 100th birthday, four months after the landing - on the beaches of Normandy - of 150 000 soldiers of the western Allies' whose end as result of degeneration and decline Nietzsche had predicted. Rosenberg claimed that Nietzsche's fundamental question was how greatness, nobility and distinction (=Größe Größe, Adel und Vornehmheit) might still be possible⁶⁵: Nietzsche was the Prometheus of his times, setting flames to outmoded forms of life. Rosenberg quoted from Nietzsche's early work on the *Birth of Tragedy*, evoking Germany's mythical homeland whose energetic power could kill the dragon and the vicious dwarfs (=mythische Heimat... dann wird er Drachen tödten, die tückischen Zwerge⁶⁶/*Geburt der Tragödie*) and, as Rosenberg said, everything alien (=überwuchernden Fremdpflanzen). He also quoted from Nietzsche's very early letter to Carl Gersdorff from June 1871, expressing his willingness to fight against France and the French-Jewish levelling ("französisch-jüdischer Verflachung" and 'elegance' ("Eleganz").

Evil. In the Jewish 'Old Testament' men and speeches in a great style appear, and you are amazed and awed by the formidable relics of what Man once was and look down on petty Europe that pretends to be a progress, but is only a thin, tame domesticated dog. To have glued the 'Old' and 'New' Testament together in one book is, perhaps, one of the greatest audacities, a 'sin against the spirit.' Nietzsche demand to expel the antisemitic noisy troublemakers („antisemitischen Schreihälse des Landes"). Cf. the most recent book Robert C. Holub, *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem: Between Anti-Semitism and Anti-Judaism*, Princeton, University Press, 2006.

⁶⁴ It was exhibited in the Nietzsche Archiv, Weimar, as a symbol of the cult of "Dionysos-Nietzsche". After the Second World War it was moved to the Pergamon Museum, East Berlin, and in 1991, following the reunification of Germany and claims for its repatriation by the Italian government, it was returned to Italy. Max Oehler had in 1921 edited a compilation of essays on Elisabeth's 75th birthday.

⁶⁵ Since 1903 Nietzsche's birthday was celebrated in the archive where he had died, and which (as *Nietzsche-Gedächtnishalle*=Remembrance Hall) had been redesigned by Hitler and his principal architect Albert Speer. The celebrations were always accompanied by *Lieder des Prinzen Vogelfrei* from 1887 and mainly composed in Sicily which were an addition to the 2nd edition of *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (=Gaya Scienza=Gay Science). The celebration followed Nietzsche's motto: "Einsam zu denken – das ist weise.

Einsam zu singen – das ist dumm!" (Thinking alone is wisdom. Singing alone is stupid). The word „vogelfrei" had received a special undertone from Nietzsche, suggesting a feeling of bird-like freedom, bird-like altitude, bird-like exuberance that correlates with Nietzsche's immoralism. Already the young Nietzsche had composed about being a lark that could rise high above valley and forest („Ich möchte eine Lerche sein Dann stiege ich beim ersten Schein Des neuen Tages in die Luft Hoch über Thal und Wald und Kluft" (May/June 1859)

⁶⁶ Nietzsche professed to have meant by this term the 'Christian' priests, whereas Richard Wagner used this term for the Jews.

Is Nietzsche a precursor to National Socialism? As early as 1945, the Jewish-born philosopher Hannah Arendt, however, declared that the Western, and especially the German, tradition

“Luther or Kant or Hegel or Nietzsche . . . have not the least responsibility for what is happening in the extermination camps. Ideologically speaking Nazism begins with no traditional basis at all, and it would be better to realize the danger of this radical negation of any tradition, which was the main feature of Nazism from the beginning. It was first, after all, the Nazis themselves who were the first to surround their utter emptiness with the smoke-screen of learned interpretations . . . they realized that there is no better hiding-place than the great playground of history and no better bodyguard than the children of the playground, the easily employed and easily deluded ‘experts’”.⁶⁷

Though the thinkers mentioned cannot be held responsible for the atrocities, Nietzsche opened semantic gates through which later Nazis could march. Words can be poison (Victor Klemperer). Nietzsche’s writings can be said to have created a climate that allowed certain ideas to be voiced (Karl Löwith).⁶⁸

What Nietzsche loved were wit, fire, and the high-spirited mind⁶⁹ Every final interpretative effort, however, has to meet the seemingly endless variety of stylistic effects that Nietzsche deploys. “I have many stylistic possibilities—the most multifarious art of style that has ever been at the disposal of one man” (*Ecce homo*). Nietzsche often deploys *different* “voices”, different narrators, in his different books. Hence it is no wonder that Nietzsche exerted an influence even on strictly anti-Nazi-intellectuals (e.g. Albert Camus, Karl Jaspers) that make it hard to find a direct line from him to Hitler. But, to be sure, Nietzsche is not yet dead. A recently published book on him, *A New Politics for Philosophy: Essays on Plato, Nietzsche, and Strauss* (2020), edited by George Dunn and Mango Telli, sees him as a counterweight to the rise of herd totalitarianism. Many thinking people can sense a despotic spirit in modernity—especially from within the democratic states where human rights and equality are the only language of politics. Dissent is treated as anathema, “cancel culture” runs amok. With Russia’s invasion the ‘darker’ of Nietzsche re-emerges. His philosophy is a crucial ingredient in the Eurasianism of Lev Gumilyov (1912 1992) and Alexander Dugin that represent some of the thinkers said to represent Putin’s ideology.

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⁶⁷ See her *Approaches to the ‘German Problem*, in: Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, New York, 1994, p. 108. The essay was first published in *Partisan Review* 13.1 (Winter 1945).

⁶⁸ Karl Löwith, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Stuttgart, 1960, pp. 130, 131.

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