

TH. 529: NIETZSCHE AND CHRISTIANITY

Boston College
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Office Hours: Mon., 1:15-2:00
Tue ~~Wed.~~, 1:00-2:00
Thu., 1:30-2:30
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The course will deal with Nietzsche's devastating attack on Western thought in general and Christianity in particular. Nietzsche is, in the words of his greatest "disciple," Martin Heidegger, the first philosopher to have "cried out of the depths." The philosophy that he originated and that was later repackaged in bastardized form under such labels as "existentialism," "deconstructionism," and "postmodernity" is not only a new philosophy but a new *type* of philosophy, which has come to rival modern science as the dominant intellectual force in the modern world. That philosophy may be regarded as the culmination as well as the radical transformation of the entire tradition of western religious and philosophic speculation. It presents us, among other things, with what is perhaps the most penetrating analysis ever given of the pervasive influence of biblical religion on virtually every phase of modern life and thought. Paradoxically, Nietzsche is in large measure responsible for both the discredit into which religion has fallen in our century and the renewed interest of which it has lately become the object. He himself predicted that his name would one day be associated with a crisis the like of which had never been seen on earth (*Ecce Homo*, "Why I Am A Destiny," 1), the "total crisis" of our civilization, as he calls it elsewhere. His works are intended at once as a diagnosis of that crisis and a passionate search for a solution to it. As such, they provide a key to the understanding of most of the major theological, philosophic, and political issues of our day.

SCHEDULE

Jan. 24: General Introduction

Nietzsche and the contemporary crisis of Western civilization. Life and works. Nietzsche today. The various approaches to the study of his thought. Method of procedure.

READINGS: Nietzsche, *Letters* 164, 168, 171, and 177 Middleton.
Id., *Ecce Homo*, BWN, 673-725.

Recommended: W. Dannhauser, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, 13-41.
Id., "Nietzsche in His Letters," *Commentary* 48
(Dec.,1969), 86-93.
Id., "The Trivialization of Nietzsche," *The American Spectator* 15/5 (May,1982).

PART I: THE NIETZSCHEAN REVOLUTION AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE FUTURE

Jan. 31: The Basic Premise of Nietzsche's Thought. Philosophy and History

The quarrel between dogmatism and skepticism. Truth as prejudice and truth as creation. The notion of "horizon." The problem of interpretation. Philosophy as psychology. Nietzsche's art of writing.

READINGS: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Parts I and II.
Id., *The Gay Science*, No. 344, PN, 448--450.

Feb. 7: The Will to Power and Its Antecedents

The "will to truth" and the "will to power." The will to power as "art." Self-overcoming and self-preservation. Nietzsche and the so-called "philosophy of life." Nietzsche and Freud. The fulfillment and transformation of the Western tradition.

READINGS: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nos. 13, 19, 36, 62, 186.
Id., *Zarathustra*, Part II, "On Self-Overcoming," PN, 225-28.
Id., *Twilight of Idols*: "How the True World Finally Became a Fable," PN, 485-486.

Feb. 14: Nietzsche and Socrates

Aestheticism and its rejection. The Apollinian and Dionysian polarity. Greek versus modern pessimism. Socrates and Socratism. Reason as the fate of the West.

READINGS: Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Ch. 1-15.
Id., *Ecce Homo*, BWN, 726-731.
Id., *Twilight of Idols*: "The Problem of Socrates"
PN, 473-479.

Recommended: W. Dannhauser, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, 42-139.

PART II: THE ASSESSMENT OF MODERNITY

Feb. 28: Nietzsche's Critique of Nineteenth-Century Thought

The rise of historicism. The Hegelian legacy. Historicism as a "deadly" truth: the conflict between science and life. Contemplative versus radical historicism.

READINGS: Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*.

Recommended: W. Dannhauser, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, 140-55.

Mar. 14 & 21: European Nihilism, Its Nature and Its Sources

Nietzsche's concept of nihilism. Liberalism, democratic egalitarianism, and the semi-barbarization of the West. The religion of pity. The notion of sublimation. Intellectual probity and the "historical sense." The retranslation of man into nature.

READINGS: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Parts V-IX.

Recommended: Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Part I: "European Nihilism." Kaufmann ed., 7-82.

PART III: THE NEW ATHEISM AND THE REGENERATION OF MODERN MAN

Mar. 28: The Genesis of Moral Ideas

"Good and evil" as distinguished from "good and bad." Slave morality and master morality. The revolt of the slaves and the notion of "ressentiment." The triumph of Judea over Rome. The origins of the notions of justice, responsibility, guilt, and conscience.

READINGS: Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essays I and II. Id. *Ecce Homo*: "Why I Am a Destiny," BWN, 782-791. Solomon, R., *A Collection of Critical Essays*, 243-57.

Recommended: W. Dannhauser, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, 188-90.

Apr. 4: The Self-Transcending of Christianity

Artists, philosophers, and saints. The psychology of the priest. Sin and the religious experience. The biblical foundations of science. The counterideal and the notion of post-Christianity.

READINGS: Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay III.
Id., *Zarathustra*, Part I: "On the Thousand and One Goals," PN, 170-172.

Apr. 11: The Death of God and the Emergence of the Superman

The stages of the death of God. Nature and ground of Nietzsche's atheism. Modern atheism and its competing forms. The new aristocracy and the transvaluation of values. Caesar with the soul of Christ. Nietzsche and Marx.

READINGS: Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, Prologue and Part I.
Id., *The Gay Science*, No. 125, PN, 95-96.
Recommended: Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, PN, 569-656.

PART IV: THE DILEMMA OF NIETZSCHEAN PHILOSOPHY

Apr. 25: The "Enigmatic Vision" and the Notion of Eternal Recurrence

Nietzsche's absolute moment. The hierarchy of perspectives. Nature and the limitations of the will to power. The past and the spirit of revenge. Redemption as total affirmation. Freedom and necessity. Creation and contemplation.

READINGS: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, No. 341, PN, 101-102.
Id., *Zarathustra*, Part II: "On Redemption," PN, 249-254;
Part III, "On the Vision and the Riddle," PN, 267-272, and "The Convalescent," PN, 327-333.

Recommended: Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Kaufmann ed., 544-550.
W. Dannhauser, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, 240-274.

May 2: The Nietzschean Heritage

Heidegger and Husserl. The "night of the world." Cruelty and the eternal return as rooted in the spirit of revenge. The problem of nature. The abyss of freedom and the experience of nothingness. Sincerity and authenticity.

Nietzsche and twentieth-century theological and philosophical thought. The hermeneutical problem and its applications. The new synthesis of Hegelian, Marxist, and Nietzschean thought. Western Marxism and the critique of ideology. The rediscovery of classical thought and the reopening of the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns as the most significant intellectual development of our time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grad students: one term paper, 12 to 15 pages, preferably dealing with one of the texts studied in class or a related text.

Undergrads: one final examination; optional term paper of ca. 6 pages.

TEXTS

The following books, which will be read in the course of the semester, may be purchased at the Boston College Bookstore:

Kaufman, W., ed., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Modern Library Giant.

(Complete text of *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *The Case of Wagner*, and *Ecce Homo*.)

Kaufman, W., ed., *The Portable Nietzsche*. Viking P-62.

(Complete text of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *The Twilight Idols*, *The Antichrist*, and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, along with selections from other works.)

Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and the Disadvantage of History for Life*. Hackett.

EDITIONS

Nietzsche, *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. G. Colli and M. Montinari, eds. 1967ff. (Published simultaneously in German, French and Italian.)

Nietzsche, *Werke*. K. Schlechta, ed. 4 vols., 1965. (All of Nietzsche's completed works, along with a selection of posthumously published essays and letters; valuable index.)

Nietzsche, *Complete Works*. O. Levy, ed. 18 vols, 1909-1911. Reissued by Russell and Russell, N.Y. 1964. Indexed. Unreliable translations.

The following works by Nietzsche are also available in recent translations:

The Will to Power, W. Kaufman ed. Vintage V-437.
The Gay Science, W. Kaufman, ed. Vintage V-985.
Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks. Regnery Gateway.
Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche. Transl. C. Middleton. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969. (Contains ca. 1/10 of N's correspondence.)
Untimely Meditations. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale. Intro. by J.P. Stern. Cambridge U. Press, 1983.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Nietzsche's thought has been the object of some very penetrating if somewhat controversial commentaries by MARTIN HEIDEGGER. See especially:

{ *Nietzsche*, 2 vols., 1961. (English translation in 4 vols by D.F. Krell, N.Y., 1979-86).
 What is Called Thinking? Harper Torchbook.
 "The Word of Nietzsche, 'God Is Dead'," in *The Question Concerning Technology*. W. Lovitt, transl., N.Y. 1977.
 "Who Is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?" in *Letters and Addresses*, Harper and Row, 1967 (also published in *Rev. of Metaphysics* 20 (1967)).

Among the more recent works on Nietzsche, the following may be mentioned:

Ackermann, R.J., *Nietzsche: A Frenzied Look*. Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1990.
Alderman, H., *Nietzsche's Gift*. Ohio Univ. Press, 1977.
Allison, ed., *The New Nietzsche*. Delta Book. (Articles by well known Nietzsche scholars)
Aschheim, S.E., *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990*. U. of Calif. Pr., 1992.
→ Barrett, Wm., *Irrational Man*. Doubleday Anchor.
→ Bloom, A. *The Closing of the American Mind*, N.Y. 1987.
→ Dannhauser, W., *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*. Cornell U. Press, 1974.
Id., "Friedrich Nietzsche," in L. Strauss and J. Cropsey, eds., *History of Political Philosophy*. 3rd edit. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987. 829-850.
Id., "Nietzsche in His Letters," *Commentary* 48 (Dec., 1969), 86-93.
Id., "The Trivialization of Nietzsche," *The Amer. Spectator* 15/5 (1982).
Id., "Spiritedness in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*," in C.H. Zuckert, ed., *Understanding the Political Spirit*. Yale Univ. Pr., 1988.
Danto, A., *Nietzsche as Philosopher*. New York 1965.
Darby, T., Egyed, B., & Jones, B., eds., *Nietzsche and the Rhetoric of Nihilism*. Ottawa, 1989.
Deleuze, G., *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Columbia U. Pr., 1983.
Detwiler, B., *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*. Chicago, 1990.
Fortin, E.L., "Nietzsche and the Crisis of Nihilism," in L. Rouner, ed., *Meaning, Truth, and God*, Notre Dame and London, 1982, 195-215.

- Hayman, R., *Nietzsche: A Critical Life*. N.Y., (1980) 1984.
- Hollingdale, R.J., *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy*. Baton Rouge, 1965.
- Hunt, L.H., *Nietzsche and the Origin of Virtue*. London, 1991.
- Jensen, P., "Nietzsche and Liberation: The Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future," *Interpretation* 6 (May, 1977), 79-106.
- Kaufmann, W., *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. 4th ed., 1974.
- Id., *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*. Doubleday Anchor.
- Id., *Existentialism from Dostoevski to Sartre*. Meridien.
- Jaspers, K., *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of his Philosophical Activity*. Univ. of Arizona Press, 1965.
- Id., *Nietzsche and Christianity*. Regery Gateway.
- Lampert, L., *Nietzsche's Teaching: an Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. New London and London, 1986
- Lavrin, J., *Nietzsche: A Biographical Introduction*. London, Studio Vista.
- Löwith, K.M. *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought*. Doubleday Anchor.
- Magnus, B., *Nietzsche's Existential Imperative*. Indiana Univ. Press, 1978.
- Nahamas, A., *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. Harvard U. Pr., 1985.
- Pangle, T., "The Roots of Contemporary Nihilism and Its Political Consequences according to Nietzsche," *The Review of Politics* 45 (1983), 45-70.
- Id., "The 'Warrior Spirit' as an Inlet to the Political Philosophy of Nietzsche's Zarathustra," *Nietzsche-Studien* 15 (1986), 1409-179.
- Id., "Nihilism and Modern Democracy in the Thought of Nietzsche," in *The Crisis of Modern Liberal Democracy*. State Univ. of N.Y. Press, 1987, 180-211.
- Pletsch, C., *Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius*. New York, 1991.
- Rosen, S., *Nihilism: A Philosophic Essay*. Yale Univ. Pr., 1969.
- Schacht, R., *Nietzsche*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.
- Solomon, R., *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Anchor, 1973. (Pieces by Heidegger, Th. Mann, Max Scheler, Hesse, G.B. Shaw, and others.)
- Strauss, L., "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," *Interpretation* 3 (Winter, 1973), 97-113.
- Strong, T.B., *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*. Berkeley, 1975.
- Warren, M., *Nietzsche and Political Thought*. Cambridge, MA, 1988.
- White, A., *Within Nietzsche's Labyrinth*. Routledge, 1990.

For the earlier literature on Nietzsche, see the *International Nietzsche Bibliography*, H.W. Reichart and K. Schlechta, ed., Chapel Hill, 1960.

