

Nietzsche, the man who took on God and lost!

Russell Grigg

German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche repudiated Christianity and traditional morality, declared God to be dead, and identified himself with Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and excess. In the place of God he postulated an imaginary, all-powerful, amoral Superhuman (German *Übermensch*), exemplified in the 20th century in the person of Adolf Hitler. Although he construed human existence naturalistically, he was severely critical of Darwin's mechanism for evolution, and proposed instead what he called "the will to power". Of his many books, the best known is his philosophical novel *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, in which he uses a semi-biblical style to present his anti-Christian ideas to the world. It is important to understand what Nietzsche himself said, rather than what commentators have said that he said, which is often contradictory.

Friedrich Nietzsche was born on October 15, 1844 in the Lutheran manse in the farming village of Röcken, near Leipzig, in the Prussian Province of Saxony. His parents named him after King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, who turned 49 on the day of Nietzsche's birth, and who had been responsible for the appointment of Nietzsche's father as the local minister. In later life, Friedrich dropped his given middle name of Wilhelm. However, in his autobiography, Nietzsche tells us, "There was at least one advantage to the choice of this day: my birthday was a holiday throughout my childhood."^{1,2}

An early encounter with death

When Nietzsche was four, his father died of a brain ailment, and within six months his two-year-old brother, Joseph, also died. Nietzsche was thus exposed to the calamity of death, as well as to the uncertainty and apparent injustice of life, at a very early and impressionable age. Later, his books would contain many passages about death. Sample: "Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is merely a type of what is dead; and a very rare type."³

He was then brought up as the only male in a household consisting of his mother Franziska, his sister Elisabeth, two maiden aunts, and one grandmother, until he entered Schulpforte, the country's leading Protestant boarding school, on a scholarship at age 14.

Here, events of note were: he was introduced to the literature of the ancient Greeks and Romans; he became familiar with the music of Richard Wagner; he wrote some "music that could be played or sung respectably in church";⁴ he was confirmed at the age of 17; and he read David Strauss's

controversial and demythologizing *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, which had a profound effect on him.

University career

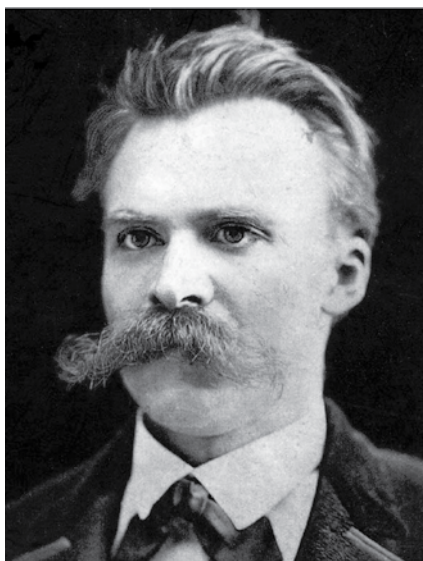
At age 19, Nietzsche entered the University of Bonn as a student of theology and classical philology (the study of language from ancient written texts). After one semester he dropped theology and lost whatever faith he had. He then moved to the University of Leipzig, where he established an academic reputation by his published essays on Aristotle and other classical Greek writers.

When he was 21, he read Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World of Will and Representation*. One commentator says,

"in the place of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good God at the ruling centre of the universe, Schopenhauer substituted a blind, aimless and fundamentally senseless energetic urge that he could describe as nothing more than the blind force of sheer 'will'".⁵

By this time it had been six years since the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in English, and five years since in German.

Approaching the age of 23, Nietzsche enlisted for one year of military service. However, he suffered a severe chest injury while trying to leap-mount a horse; this left him unfit for the army, and he returned to the University of Leipzig. He then met the famous operatic composer Richard Wagner, whose music he had long admired. Wagner shared an enthusiasm for Schopenhauer, he was a former student of the University of Leipzig, and he was the same age as Nietzsche's father would have been. He thus became something of a father-figure to Nietzsche,



Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900).

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only later to be replaced by a figment of Nietzsche's imagination, introduced to the world in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*—the Superhuman (German *Übermensch*), a super-strong (in all respects, not just physical) imaginary individual having his own morality, who would overcome all, replace God, and outlast the opposition of the world to his vision.

In 1869 he renounced Prussian citizenship without taking out any other, so was officially stateless for the last 31 years of his life. That year, at the extraordinarily young age of 24, Nietzsche was appointed professor of classical philology at the Swiss University of Basel, which position he held for ten years. During this time he also served for three months as a hospital orderly during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, where he witnessed the traumatic effects of battle, and contracted diphtheria and dysentery. The battle had another effect also. Dr John Figgis writes:

“Busied with the sick, driven nearly wild with sympathy, he caught sight of a troop of Prussian horse coming thundering down a hill into the village. Their splendour of aspect, strong, courageous, and efficient, at once impressed him. He saw that suffering and sympathy with it were not, as he had thought, *à la* Schopenhauer, the profoundest things in life. It was this power greater than pain which made pain irrelevant—that was the reality. Life began to present itself as a struggle for power.”⁶

Final years, madness and death

In 1879, at the age of 34, he resigned his professorship at Basel because of deteriorating health, involving three-day migraine headaches, eyesight problems close to blindness, violent vomiting, and unrelenting pain.

Because of his illnesses, Nietzsche often travelled to climates that would benefit his health. He had a small pension from Basel and thus lived a modest, wandering, gypsy-like existence as an independent and stateless author in various Swiss, German, Italian and French cities from 1879 to 1888. During this time he wrote the quasi-philosophical and anti-religious works for which he is now famous (or infamous), including *The Gay Science* (1882 & 1887), *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883–85), *The Antichrist* (1888), *Twilight of the idols* (1888), and his autobiography, *Ecce Homo* (1888, but published posthumously in 1908 by his sister, Elisabeth).

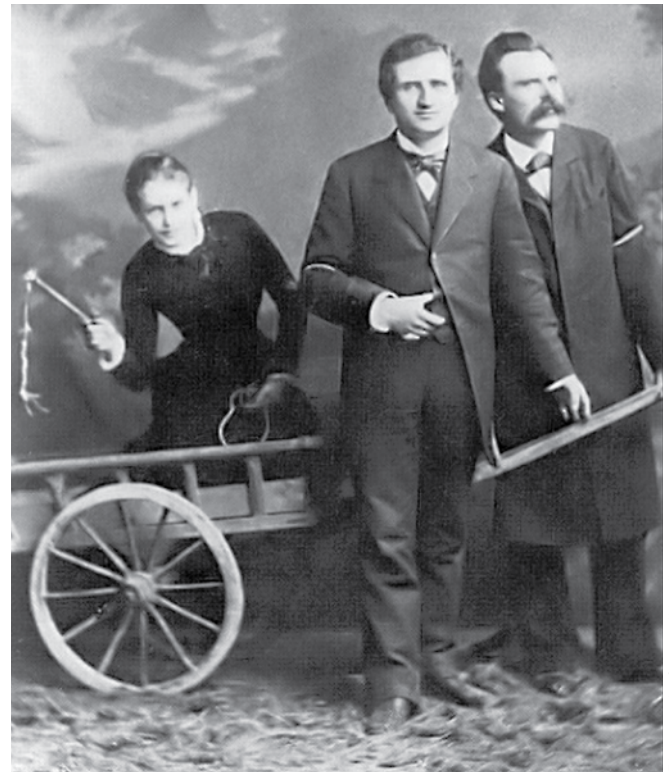
At the age of 44, Nietzsche was in Turin. It is said that he witnessed a horse being whipped by a coachman and threw his arms around the horse's neck to protect it. He collapsed on the ground, and was then insane for the next eleven years, unable to write or communicate coherently, until his death in 1900. Biographer Kaufmann describes it, “he collapsed on the street, recovered sufficient lucidity to dispatch a few mad but strangely beautiful letters—and then darkness closed in and extinguished passion and intelligence. He suffered and thought no more. He had burnt himself out.”⁷ Modern medical diagnoses vary as to the cause of this illness.

He was buried in the Nietzsche family gravesite beside the church in Röchen.

The pain of unrequited love

On a visit to Rome in 1882, Nietzsche, then 37, was introduced to Lou von Salomé, a Russian woman student of philosophy and theology (later an associate of Freud), by a mutual friend, Paul Rée. She and Nietzsche spent the summer of that year together, mostly chaperoned by his sister Elisabeth. Salomé later claimed that both Nietzsche and Rée had proposed to her (although this is disputed). Nietzsche wrote to a friend, “This year ... has been made much more beautiful for me by the radiance and charm of this truly heroic soul. I wish to acquire a pupil in her, and if my life should not last much longer, an heir and one who will further develop my thoughts.” And somewhat curiously he added, “Incidentally: Rée should have married her; and I for my part have certainly urged him all I could.”⁸

In the following months, Nietzsche's relationship with Salomé soured, much to his distress. He wrote to her of “the situation I have reached after taking an immense dose of opium—from despair”.⁹ And to his friend, Overbeck, he wrote, “This last *bite of life* is the hardest I have chewed yet ... I am being broken on the wheel of my own feelings. If only I could sleep! But the strongest doses of my opiates help me no more than my six-to-eight hour marches. ... I have the *most beautiful* opportunity to prove that for me ‘all experiences are useful ...’”¹⁰



Photography from <wikipedia.org>

A playful photo taken in 1882, shows Lou von Salomé with reins and whip in hand, sitting in a cart drawn by “cart-horses” Nietzsche (on right) and Paul Rée!

Kaufmann comments, “All experiences *were* useful for Nietzsche, and he turned his torments into his later books from *Zarathustra* to *Ecce Homo*.”¹⁰

Thus *Spake Zarathustra* is Nietzsche’s best known book. It is a philosophical novel in which the fictional prophet Zarathustra, representing the Persian founder of the 6th century BC religion of Zoroastrianism, presents Nietzsche’s ideas to the world. In his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche says, “I have not said one word here that I did not say five years ago through the mouth of Zarathustra.”¹¹ These ideas include “God is dead”, the eternal recurrence (i.e. that all events that have ever happened will happen again infinitely), and the will to power. In the original, Nietzsche used a semi-biblical style to proclaim his opposition to Christian morality and tradition, with many blasphemous references to God.

Nietzsche and the “death of God”

Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God occurs in its fullest form as an anecdote or parable in *The Gay Science*, as follows:

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

“The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. ‘Whither is God?’ he cried; ‘I will tell you. *We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? ... Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

“How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? ... Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto.

“Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. ‘I have come too early,’ he said then; ‘my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the

stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves.”¹²

Not surprisingly, this passage has prompted much discussion about what Nietzsche meant. He is not referring to the death of Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, on the cross. Such a proposition was true, of course, for the three days that Christ was in the tomb, but any such ongoing premise has been forever falsified by Christ’s Resurrection from the dead.

Some have sought to qualify Nietzsche’s “God is dead” by pointing out that these are the words of a “madman”. However, Nietzsche used the term other times in his own voice, not that of a madman. In section 108 of the same *The Gay Science* Nietzsche wrote: “*New struggles*.—After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown.—And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.” And again in section 343 of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche explains what he meant: “The greatest recent event, that ‘God is dead,’ that the belief in the Christian god [sic] has become unbelievable—is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe.”

In fact, Nietzsche believes that God has never existed. This is his reaction to the concept of God as “a single, ultimate, judgmental authority who is privy to everyone’s hidden and personally embarrassing secrets”.¹³ But this produces its own problem, if God is dead, who will save us now? Nietzsche’s solution is threefold. He says in *Twilight of the Idols*:

1. “We deny God; in denying God we deny accountability ...”¹⁴
2. He invokes the Greek god Dionysus, through whom “one obtains mystical release from the inhibition of reason by entering into a drunken orgiastic stupor”.¹⁵
3. He puts forward the Superhuman, who would overcome the need for God because (in Nietzsche’s view) God is an illusion of the mind.

Philosophy lecturer Giles Fraser writes, “The fight Nietzsche is conducting is not ... atheism vs. Christianity; it is, as he clearly says it is, Dionysus vs the Crucified. It is about the spiritual superiority of Nietzsche’s faith to that of Christianity. It is not, as so many commentators readily assume, a battle against faith, but a battle between faiths, or rather a battle between competing soteriologies.”¹⁶

Nietzsche against Genesis

In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche unleashes a torrent of abuse at God and the account of Creation, the Fall and Noah’s Flood in Genesis.

“Has the famous story which stands at the beginning of the Bible really been understood—the story of God’s mortal terror of *science*? ...

It has not been understood. This priest's-book begins, as is only proper, with the priest's great inner difficulty: *he* has only *one* great danger, consequently 'God' has only *one* great danger.

"The old God, all 'spirit', all high priest, all perfection, promenades in his garden: but he is bored. Against boredom the gods themselves fight in vain. What does he do? He invents man—man is entertaining But behold, man too is bored. God's sympathy with the only kind of distress found in every Paradise knows no bounds: he forthwith creates other animals. God's *first* blunder: man did not find the animals entertaining—he dominated them, he did not even want to be an 'animal'.—Consequently God created woman. And then indeed there was an end to boredom but also to something else! Woman was God's *second* blunder.—'Woman is in her essence serpent, Heva'—every priest knows that; 'every evil comes into the world through woman'—every priest knows that likewise. 'Consequently, science too comes into the world through her'.... Only through woman did man learn to taste the tree of knowledge.—What had happened? A mortal terror seized on the old God. Man himself had become God's *greatest* blunder; God had created for himself a rival, science makes *equal to God*—it is all over with priests and gods if man becomes scientific!—*Moral*: science is the forbidden in itself—it alone is forbidden. Science is the *first* sin, the germ of all sins, *original* sin. This alone constitutes morality.—'Thou shalt not know'—the rest follows.—God's mortal terror did not stop him from being shrewd. How can one *defend* oneself against science?—that was for long his chief problem. Answer: away with man out of Paradise! Happiness, leisure gives room for thought—all thoughts are bad thoughts? Man *shall* not think.—And the 'priest in himself' invents distress, death, the danger to life in pregnancy, every kind of misery, age, toil, above all *sickness*—nothing but expedients in the struggle against science! Distress does not *allow* man to think And none the less! oh horror! the structure of knowledge towers up, heaven-storming, reaching for the divine—what to do! The old God invents *war*, he divides the peoples, he makes men destroy one another (—priests have always had need of war ...). War—among other things a great mischief-maker in science!—Incredible! knowledge, *emancipation from the priest*, increases in spite of wars.—And the old God comes to a final decision: 'Man has become scientific—*there is nothing for it, he will have to be drowned!*'"¹⁷

One's first reaction is, how could anyone in their right mind write such gibberish? Perhaps the kindest answer is that this irrational invective was an incipient precursor to the insanity of Nietzsche's last 11 years.

Nietzsche contra Darwin

In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche introduces his Superhuman to the world in the evolutionary words of his prophet: "*I teach to you the Overhuman. ... You have made your way from worm to human, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now the human being is still more of an ape than any ape is.*"¹⁸

However, contrary to what we might expect, Nietzsche, though obviously an evolutionist, strongly opposed Darwin and Darwinism. If anything he leaned (slightly!) towards Lamarck's theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics.¹⁹ Actually Nietzsche had his own theory to explain evolution—what he called "the will to power", which was really a will to overpower.

For Nietzsche, the quantity of offspring produced by an individual or species was not the important factor, as it was to Darwin, but the *quality* of those offspring. And Darwinism very obviously did not supply or even influence this. Nietzsche said Darwin was wrong in four fundamental aspects of his theory.

1. *Nietzsche challenged Darwin's mechanism of the production of new organs by means of small changes, because he realised that a partly formed organ was of no survival use at all.*

In *The Will to Power* he wrote:

"*Against Darwinism.*—The utility of an organ does not explain its origin; on the contrary! For most of the time during which a property is forming it does not preserve the individual and is of no use to him, least of all in the struggle with external circumstances and enemies."²⁰

2. *Nietzsche challenged Darwin's view of natural selection, because in real life he observed that the weak survive rather than the strong.*

In *Twilight of the Idols* he wrote:

"*Anti-Darwin.*—As regards the celebrated 'struggle for life', it seems to me for the present to have been rather asserted than proved. It does occur, but as the exception; the general aspect of life is *not* hunger and distress, but rather wealth, luxury, even absurd prodigality—where there is struggle it is a struggle for *power*. One should not mistake Malthus for nature.—Supposing, however, that this struggle exists—and it does indeed occur—such a struggle for existence—and, indeed, it occurs—its outcome is the reverse of that desired by the school of Darwin, of that which one *ought* perhaps to desire with them: namely, the defeat of the stronger, the more privileged, the fortunate exceptions. Species do *not* grow more perfect: the weaker dominate the strong again and again—the reason being they are the great majority, and they are also *cleverer*. ... Darwin forgot the mind (—that is English!): *the weak possess more mind*. To acquire mind one must need mind—

one loses it when one no longer needs it. He who possesses strength divests himself of mind. ... One will see that under mind I include foresight, patience, dissimulation, great self-control, and all that is mimicry (this last includes a great part of what is called virtue).²¹

3. *Nietzsche challenged Darwin's theory of sexual selection, because he simply did not see it happening in nature.*

In *The Will to Power* under the heading *Anti-Darwin* he wrote:

"One has so exaggerated the selection of the most beautiful that it greatly exceeds the drive to beauty in our own race! In fact, the most beautiful mate with utterly disinherited creatures, and the biggest with the smallest. We almost always see males and females take advantage of any chance encounter, exhibiting no selectivity whatsoever."²²

4. *Nietzsche said there were no transitional species.*

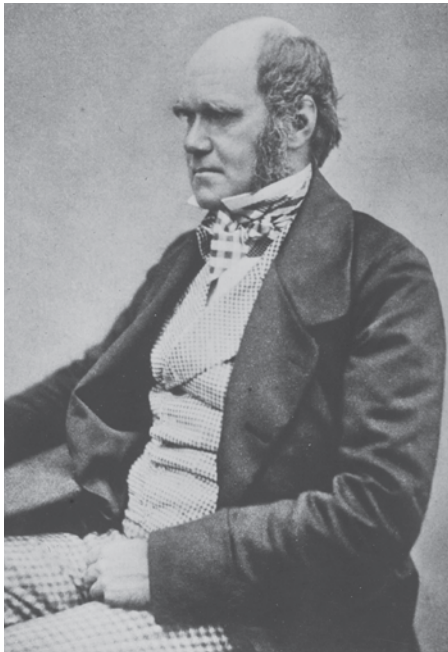
In the same *Anti-Darwin* section he continued:

"There are no transitional forms.— ... One asserts the increasing evolution of creatures. All grounds are lacking. Every type has its limits; beyond these there is not evolution. Up to this point, absolute regularity.

"Primitive creatures are said to be the ancestors of those now existing. But a look at the fauna and flora of the Tertiary merely permits us to think of an as yet unexplored country that harbors types that do not exist elsewhere, while those existing elsewhere are missing."²²

Nietzsche then gave us another lengthy section again headed *Anti-Darwin*:

"*Anti-Darwin*.—What surprises me most when I survey the broad destinies of man is that I always see before me the opposite of that which Darwin and his school see or *want* to see today: selection in favor of the stronger, better-constituted, and the progress of the species. Precisely the opposite is palpable: the elimination of the lucky strokes, the uselessness of the more highly developed types, the inevitable dominion of the average, even the *sub-average* types. If we are not shown why man should be an exception among creatures, I incline to the prejudice that the school of Darwin has been deluded everywhere.



Photography from <wikipedia.org>

Charles Darwin, whose mechanism for evolution via natural selection was vehemently opposed by Nietzsche.

"That will to power in which I recognize the ultimate ground and character of all change provides us with the reason why selection is not in favor of the exceptions and lucky strokes: the strongest and most fortunate are weak when opposed by organized herd instincts, by the timidity of the weak, by the vast majority. My general view of the world of values shows that it is not the lucky strokes, the select types, that have the upper hand in the supreme values that are today placed over mankind; rather it is the decadent types—perhaps there is nothing in the world more interesting than this *unwelcome* spectacle. ...

"I see all philosophers, I see science kneeling before a reality that is the reverse of the struggle for existence as taught by Darwin's school—that is to

say, I see on top and surviving everywhere those who compromise life and the value of life.—The error of the school of Darwin becomes a problem to me: how can one be so blind as to see so badly at *this* point?

"That *species* represent any progress is the most unreasonable assertion in the world: so far they represent one level. That the higher organisms have evolved from the lower has not been demonstrated in a single case."²³

As Kaufmann aptly puts it:

"[Nietzsche] has in mind the 'fortunate accidents'—Socrates or Caesar, Leonardo or Goethe: men whose 'power' gives them no advantage in any 'struggle for existence'—men who, even if they outlive Mozart, Keats, or Shelley, either leave no children, or in any case no heirs. Yet these men represent the 'power' for which all beings strive—for the basic drive, says Nietzsche, is not the will to preserve life but the will to power—and it should be clear how remote Nietzsche's 'power' is from Darwin's 'fitness'."²⁴

In light of the above, it is not surprising that in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche describes as "oxen" those scholars who think that his Superhuman is a product of Darwinian evolution.²⁵

Nietzsche, of course, was a philosopher, not a scientist, and he does not explain the intimate details of just how his "will to power" works in an evolutionary scenario—other than that superior individuals have had and will have the power to rise far above their contemporaries in the journey from the past ape to the future highly-evolved Superhuman.

This has resulted in some modern commentators scrambling to reconcile Nietzsche and Darwin, e.g. in books such as *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* by John Richardson.

Nietzsche, Darwin and Hitler

Nietzsche could not have foreseen events of the 20th century, but the supreme modern example of his Superhuman, the strong man who lived by his own morality, was Adolf Hitler. Hitler embraced both Darwinian “science” and Nietzschean philosophy. For him, the Darwinian notion of the strong dominating the weak, was the highest good. At the same time, he considered himself to be the superman of Nietzsche’s philosophy, and he also applied Nietzsche’s idea of superior individuals to persuade the German people that they were the “master race”.

Hitler carried the ideas of both men to their logical conclusion, namely a morality that resulted in the pillaging of Europe and the murder of over six million innocent civilians in the Holocaust.

What motivated Nietzsche?

In his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche leaves us in no doubt about his opinion of himself and his books. The title “Ecce Homo”, meaning “Behold the man”, he lifted from Pilate’s description of Jesus in the Gospel of John 19:5. The book’s four chapters are “Why I Am So Wise”, “Why I Am So Clever”, “Why I Write Such Good Books”, and “Why I Am a Destiny”. In the chapter headed “Why I Am So Wise” he wrote, “I am warlike by nature. ... The task is *not* simply to master what happens to resist, but what requires us to stake all our strength, suppleness, and fighting skill—opponents that are our equals.”²⁶

So Nietzsche selects as his “equal” opponent no less than Almighty God! Compare the first temptation of Eve by Satan in the Garden of Eden, to “be like God” (Genesis 3:5). In the course of this “contest” Nietzsche champions Dionysus. He wrote, “I am a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus: I should prefer to be even a satyr²⁷ to being a saint.”²⁸ In fact, Dionysus was not a philosopher but was the Greek god of wine,²⁹ and the inspirer of ritual madness and ecstasy or orgiastic excess. Dionysus represents most of the things the Apostle Paul calls the “sinful nature”:

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy: drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19–21 (NIV)).

This identification of himself with Dionysus paves the way for Nietzsche to call himself the first Immoralist, and it undergirds as well as summarises his anti-God, anti-Christian, anti-the-cross morality theology. The very last

sentence of *Ecce Homo* reads, “Have I been understood?—*Dionysus versus the Crucified*.—”³⁰

We know that he filled his mind with the writings of atheists and skeptics such as Strauss and Schopenhauer. He also tells us that he had “no welcome memories whatever from my whole childhood and youth”³¹ Some have argued that Nietzsche’s rage against Christianity conveys his unconscious feelings, repressed since childhood, towards his “do-good” maiden aunts and other females in his childhood home. One commentator goes so far as to say, “We need only substitute ‘my aunts’ or ‘my family’ for the word ‘Christianity’ for his vehement attacks suddenly to make sense.”³²

Be that as it may, in the chapter Why I Am So Clever, of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche tells us:

“It has escaped me altogether in what way I was supposed to be ‘sinful’. Likewise I lack any reliable criterion for recognizing the bite of conscience. ...

“‘God,’ ‘immortality of the soul,’ ‘redemption,’ ‘beyond’—without exception, concepts to which I never devoted any attention, or time: not even as a child. Perhaps I have never been childlike enough for them.

“I do not by any means know atheism as a result; even less as an event: it is a matter of course with me, from instinct I am too inquisitive, too questionable, too exuberant to stand for any gross answer. God is a gross answer, an indelicacy against us thinkers—at bottom merely a gross prohibition for us: you shall not think.”³³

Did no one explain to the young Nietzsche that this world is not the way God originally created it—that sin entered and caused a cursed world—that God the Judge, whom Nietzsche hated so much because he was accountable to Him, was also the loving God who sent His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross and rise again, so that He could justly forgive us for our sins?

Yes, in his book *The Anti-Christ*, as well as in many other books, Nietzsche shows he was quite familiar with these concepts but vehemently rejected them. Many people have sought to counteract the concept of future judgment, e.g. by claiming that there are no absolutes of right and wrong. Nietzsche had a more fundamental approach: he announced the death of the Judge! “We deny God; in denying God we deny accountability.”¹⁴

Conclusion

In the final chapter of *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche unleashes a crescendo of vituperation against “God”, “truth”, “Christian morality”, “salvation of the soul”, “sin”, etc. He then summarizes all this with the clashing climax, “Have I been understood?—*Dionysus versus the Crucified*.—”³⁰

But wait a moment, Nietzsche, the “equal” opponent you chose to take on was Almighty God. It would seem that in your final *coup de grâce* against God you have in

fact extended the final homage to Christ by (unwittingly?) acknowledging that He, the Crucified, is Almighty God.

Nietzsche shook his fist at God, but Nietzsche is dead and God is not. So the last word belongs to God.

“The fool has said in his heart there is no God”
(Psalm 14:1).

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise: the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate’”
(1 Corinthians 1:18–19 (NIV)).

Popularity of Nietzsche

Nietzsche was not widely read during his lifetime. Only 400 copies of the first edition of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* were printed. However, since his death and the rise of evolution-based atheism in the 20th century, he has become one of the most widely read philosophers, due to exhaustive translations of his books, and the use of his books by others for their own advantage. Modern political leaders said to have read him include Mussolini, Charles de Gaulle, Theodore Roosevelt and Richard Nixon.

Encyclopaedia Britannica says, “The association of Nietzsche’s name with Adolf Hitler and Fascism owes much to the use made of his works by his sister Elisabeth” who had married a leading anti-Semite. And, “Although he was an ardent foe of nationalism, anti-Semitism, and power politics, [Nietzsche’s] name was later invoked by the Fascists to advance the very things he loathed.”³⁴

During World War 1, 150,000 copies of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* were printed by the German Government and given to their soldiers, along with copies of John’s Gospel. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* wryly comments, “It is difficult to say which author was more compromised by this gesture.”³⁴

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- Nietzsche, very obligingly, wrote his works in numbered sections (sometimes the whole of a book; sometimes chapter by chapter), thus making it easy to find a quotation in any translation or in any edition by any publisher, merely by searching the section number. We shall conform to this practice in this article for books written by Nietzsche.
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- Nietzsche, ref. 20, section 685.
- Kaufmann, ref. 8, p. 329.
- Nietzsche, ref. 2, chapter 3: Why I write Such Good Books, section 1, trans. by W. Kaufman.
- Nietzsche, ref. 2, chapter 1, section 7.
- In Greek mythology a satyr was “a lustful drunken woodland creature characterized by pointed ears, two horns on the forehead, and a tail. Satyrs attended the god of wine, Dionysus”, *Hutchinson Encyclopedia*.
- Nietzsche, ref. 2, Nietzsche’s Preface, section 2.
- Elsewhere, e.g. in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche calls Dionysus a “god”.
- Nietzsche, ref. 2, chapter 4, section 9. Note this one sentence constitutes the whole of Nietzsche’s section 9 here. Curiously Nietzsche loved to use dashes, especially after full stops.
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