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Dilthey, Nietzsche and the Two Faces of Culture

Abstract:

This paper compares Dilthey's efforts to confront cultural friction with Nietzsche's philosophy as it impacts such conflicts. Both authors recognize various legitimate claims on behalf of the Romantics, while also admiring certain Enlightenment doctrines as well. While Dilthey recommends cross-cultural understanding, Nietzsche puts forth his Zarathustrian ideal as a general solution to mankind's problems, cultural and otherwise. While cross-cultural understanding holds out promise, it seems not to be able to avert all wars, while Nietzsche's Zarathustrianism offers little utility in achieving its promises.

Keywords:

Wilhelm Dilthey, Friedrich Nietzsche, honor-based, dignity-based, WWI

Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) is by far and away the better known of the two philosophers herein portrayed. His contributions span several disciplines but the one most relevant to this article concerns the Romantic and Enlightenment ideas he held forth throughout his writing career. To the extent that the Romantics were traditionalists and critical of the rationalizing tendency of the Enlightenment, Nietzsche is clearly in agreement, but not so much otherwise. He took issue with the Romantics on various matters, which are however, minor compared to those with which I have identified his agreement.

While Wilhelm Dilthey (the German pronunciation is *dēl-tāy*) (1833–1911) is far from well known, he is relevant to scholars for the insights he made with respect to hermeneutics and historical reckoning – not in the sense of a measurement but in that of its nature and relevance. Speaking of which, he ought to be relevant not just to scholars but to everybody on account of the views he held regarding the two “faces of culture.” This latter phrase can mean either or both of two things: the traditional versus modern approach to dignity, and the role of dignity versus honor in any given person or culture.

I will begin with the two dignities. In the traditional approach (in the cultures that anthropologists study), dignity is the backbone of honor, whereas honor is the face of dignity. Dignity lends gravitas to honor and character; honor reflects and/or expresses the dignity. The modern era of dignity began with the Enlightenment *philosophes*, in particular by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). He felt that humans possessed “inherent worth,” which he called dignity, by which man is valuable “above all price.” Too many moderns and post-moderns have both ignored Kant’s version and have also lost a goodly amount of the traditional dignity, replaced today by the “cult of dignity” wherein groups shout “dignity” from the rooftops while working behind the scenes to secretly abscond with all its benefits and all but deny dignity to the rabble (or outsiders).

The most common site for dignity cult behavior is in the office environment. Offices, when run properly, represent “cults of honor”; they are the next thing to a “calling” and are occasionally just that. In all cases they begin as the best part of a culture, isolated, emulated, and fit up with a set of ethics guidelines. But offices are subject to degradation. British philosopher F. C. S. Schiller made the following true comment: “All human institutions have a way of growing into perversions of their

original purpose that block its attainment... . Those who run the institutions are allowed to acquire interests that conflict with the professed purpose of the institutions they serve.”¹ Since every institution is an office or is constituted of them, the concept applies broadly. Corrupt offices are run by dignity cultists who sing praises of dignity concerning their office and its work, but deliberately impair those whose needs the office exists to fulfill.

If dignity, writes James Rachels, “is ‘beyond all price,’ it follows that rational beings must be treated (quoting Kant) ‘always as an end, never as a means only.’ This means, on the most superficial level, that we have a strict duty of beneficence toward other persons: we must strive to promote their welfare; we must respect their rights, avoid harming them, and generally [again quoting Kant] ‘endeavor, so far as we can, to further the ends of others.’”² Why did it take the Enlightenment to see this notion through to the light of day? Perhaps it is as Nietzsche says: “Do I recommend the love of the neighbor to you? Sooner I should even recommend flight from the neighbor and love of the farthest.”³ It is more “natural” to love the neighbor, more unusual to go beyond with one’s love. Dignity immediately implies the “farthest of all.” It is natural to suppose that one would not expect care for the “farthest” until care for the nearest is secure. Where security is completely taken up in addressing pressing needs for life, there is no mental room for others than one’s immediate relatives.

By the Enlightenment it seems that the immediate needs were for the most part being met and one could now afford to look beyond for one’s responsibilities. But first there must be at least a feeling of regard for the farthest, a feeling which may have first been captured by Pico della Mirandola in the Renaissance period. And perhaps before that an intellectual awareness of the worth of the farthest, achieved for example by Cicero. From the Enlightenment to the present security has come to mean the availability of work, health care, education and whatever else makes a meaningful life possible.

This is the tie between dignity and the promise of human rights. Thus, those who protest against universal doctrines (those expressing or protecting inherent dignity) are arguing against the principles of dignity – and thus of autonomy, individualism,

1) Schiller, *Logic for Use*, 2.

2) Rachels, *Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 116.

3) Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 61.

and human rights – hence of dignity-based cultures. This cannot be stressed enough. The problems complained of are due not ultimately to matters such as individualism (which are admittedly more directly impactful), but rather to the precepts of dignity that ushered in the individualism, autonomy, rights, and so forth. In short, the broad cultural conflicts are those over dignity and, through its cult, the negative effects of false dignity upon traditional, honor-based traits and practices.⁴ The first large-scale reaction to either or both dignities took place as the Romantic movement of the eighteenth century. In some ways it has actually continued down to the present day but without the label. Today, “individualism” seems to be the catchall term of choice; but dignity (both the good and potentially the bad) is its bosom companion.

It was the Enlightenment that saw France and the United States embark on the mission guided by their respective constitutions, documents recording inherent rights.⁵ Nearly every dignity-based country that can be so-called arrived in consequence of the Enlightenment period. Kant’s famous epigram *Aude sapere* – Dare to be wise, dare to speak your mind and take responsibility for it – devolves to the rights of conscience and of free speech, including that of free assembly. Currently France and Germany, perhaps others, have arranged for their legal systems to accept the role of dignity as a factor in law. Dignity possesses “legal standing” in those countries (it does not in the United States).

Kant’s view of society was from the vantage of a reformer who wished to “emancipate” people from the authoritarianism of autocratic government and religion, thus enabling autonomy of person, thought, and conscience. Thus, dignity today is associated both with autonomy (and with that individualism), and with the “rights of man” doctrines. Subsidiary components of the type include a trend toward cosmopolitanism and relativism (each culture has its morality which works for it and which ought therefore to be respected if not necessarily agreed with). The modern and post-modern periods display an increasing discontent over cosmopolitanism, universalist doctrines and a gravitational attraction to relativism (in the form of arguments favoring native or ethnic purity). The issue behind cultural relativism is the extent to which it is taken. Common sense would seem to dictate that immigration be toler-

4) For more on honor-based societies see Herrman, “Honor-Based Society.”

5) The 1947 Declaration of Human Rights listed some thirty of them.

ated up to a pre-set percentage of the native population. Relativism would hold sway, but under definite restrictions.

The *philosophes* also stressed a reliance upon the new technologies of the day – the positive role that sciences should play in the betterment of society for all, and a steadfast and confident optimism that science could and would fulfill such a role (in the context of a democratic and largely capitalistic nation), and the implications of the implicit promise undergirding such a role. The autonomy representing the influence of human rights, along with the change in perspective from traditional to modern approaches to society, together allowed a reasonable consensus on the part of the *philosophes*. Others feared that the modern approach was treating tradition as if worn and threadbare, with little more to offer culture. At any rate, it was the emphasis on rationality and technology (and the sciences representing it) that created the Romantic movement.

Battlelines were drawn: the word encompassing the majority of the Enlightenment ideas was “rationalization,” the feeling (more merely than the intellectual impression), that science was “cold” and “aloof,” out of touch with the traditional practices and ideals.⁶ Several notable poets felt the problem acutely and penned poems elaborating and defending the Romantic doctrine of traditionalism, which included, curiously, a stress upon individuality, to be distinguished from individualism. Individuality implied the creative essence and genius of persons who felt and thus grasped the traditional notions. The Renaissance and Romantic periods were the two known for this individuality. Nietzsche was especially keen on this aspect. In *Zarathustra* he writes:

The delight in the herd is more ancient than the delight in the ego; and as long as the good conscience is identified with the herd, only the bad conscience says: I. Verily, the clever ego, the loveless ego that desires *its own profit* in the profit of the many – that is not the origin of the herd, but its going under.⁷

6) The Frankfurt School, begun in the early 1920's, featured the likes of Max Horkheimer, Jürgen Habermas, Theodor W. Adorno and György Lukács. “Rationalization” was a mainstay of this group, and a significant concern with the issue resounds loudly to this day.

7) Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 59–60. My emphasis.

The Romantics assumed that between Germany and France, only the former could claim “individuality.”

Because the foment against modernism is all ineluctably tied to the modern (Enlightenment) version of dignity, we choose to call those nation-states or peoples who manifest the Enlightenment principles as “dignity-based,” and the other group honor-based, in large part because those favoring traditionalist notions tend to value respect, trustworthiness, and *merited* worth, features I have used to help define this group of honor-based cultures.⁸ A similar triad for the dignity-based peoples is comprised of acceptance, faith, and *inherent* worth.

Please note well: the present stressors which are pitting nations against one another are chiefly over what distinguishes the dignity-based from the honor-based cultures, *and nothing else*. As I have put the matter, Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” will likely occur in the form the clash of honor-based with dignity-based societies.⁹ These two terms are the only ones which correctly situate the elements of the increasingly violent divisions between today’s cultures. All of the anti-modernist complaints are against what modern dignity has provided; the same as argue in favor of cultures that look comparatively honor-based. These are facts (and/or tendencies) that can be checked. When and if checked they will be found valid.

By way of completeness, let me mention the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, who unabashedly avers to “using classicism and romanticism not as aesthetic, literary categories but in a much wider sense as universal metaphysical categories which cover all phases of creativity, perception, moral life, and everything.”¹⁰ “Classicism” is the term referring to the policies and outlook of the Enlightenment period. In today’s terminology, Berdyaev’s “everything” will include the pairs (dignity-based first in each pair) liberal-conservative, individualist-collectivist, democratic-autocratic, less religious-more religious, and capitalistic-socialistic. These are all simple generalities, some weaker and some stronger, but all basically valid. It certainly cannot be forcefully argued that traditional cultures are not at once conservative and collectivistic, or that today’s most honor-based nations are at once more religious and more autocratic.

8) For an examination of the honor-based cultures, see Herrman, “Honor-Based Society.”

9) See Huntington, “Clash of Civilizations?” See also his *Clash of Civilizations*.

10) Berdyaev, *Meaning of the Creative Act*, 120.

Nietzsche, Germany and the Two Faces of Culture: Händler and Helden

As a cultural phenomenon, World War I could be viewed, as Werner Sombart did (paraphrased by Gregory Moore), as “a battle between the rapacious ‘Händler’ of materialistic Britain and the idealistic German ‘Helden,’ between a shallow, degenerate ‘civilization’ and a spiritually profound *Kultur*.”¹¹ In short, it was the conflict between the changes wrought by a dignity-based conception of reality and one that was traditional and honor-based.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) could make an aristocrat proud, lambaste generations of Germans, and offer as a corrective a Zarathustrian figure not entirely fit for emulation. This is the reality, the legacy, of the best writer of his era, a brilliant but disturbed man who saw a bright future only for those who would follow his lead. His social diagnoses were occasionally spot on, as Dilthey was gracious enough to acknowledge: man’s heightened rationality had closed some doors to the traditional values, especially the normative Christian ones to which Nietzsche offered a faint-hearted acknowledgment, remarking as if to mourn that “God is dead,” and “Christ was the first and last Christian.”¹² Kaufmann notes that “Nietzsche never ceased respecting that sincere and ‘genuine Christianity’ which he considered ‘possible in all ages.’”¹³

For a time Nietzsche was all about illusions that would keep slaves in their places (society is best denominated of the aristocracy and its slaves, somewhat like ancient Greece and Rome). By “slaves” one presumes that Nietzsche simply meant the unlettered of his day (and ours) who must work for a living, unlike the wise and eyes-wide-open aristocrats who do not require illusions, possessing a special intellectual strength. A smallish aristocracy of Zarathustrianism must rule the roost. Note that this is not what Nietzsche wants or expects,¹⁴ but it is what would happen in any democracy. People feel the “substance” of a political candidate and vote accordingly.

11) Moore, “Darwinism and National Identity,” 167.

12) “In truth there was only *one* Christian, and he died on the cross,” Nietzsche in Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 338. “Dilthey would agree,” remarks Palmer, “with another life philosopher, Nietzsche, that man is the ‘not-yet-determined animal.’” See his *Hermeneutics*, 116.

13) Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 37.

14) Ibid, 313. “For Nietzsche, the overman does not have instrumental value for the maintenance of society.”

We already have our full bevy of Zarathustrians lording over us, acting the part which Nietzsche describes, absent the *amor fati* and *Bildung* (see below). This is Nietzsche's answer to the budding skepticism of a public increasingly educated away from traditional values. He does not stress the master-slave relation throughout his works, however, redefining the status in terms of power possession, the spiritually powerful versus the spiritually weak.¹⁵ Just as the ideal master is kindly toward his slave, so the powerful is (presumably) kindly to his inferiors.

When it comes to Nietzsche and World War I, it is clear that attributions of Nietzsche's role in justifying German actions were overblown, and in some parts, erroneous. Nietzsche's scholastic advocates, especially Walter Kaufmann, argue that Nietzsche was simply and grossly misunderstood, period. Many will settle for that. I will not, and will accordingly deal more than might be thought necessary with Nietzsche's principal theses. Kaufmann remarked that "*Ecce Homo* failed to prevent far worse mischief,"¹⁶ referring to World War I as if this, Nietzsche's last book,¹⁷ had been an effective damper at some level, which seems doubtful.

Not long after World War I commenced on August 4, 1914, "Ernst Troeltsch (1915) lectured to thousands in Karlsruhe on the essential characteristic of the German people in December 1914 and enthusiastically urged a 'war of culture' (*Kulturkrieg*)."¹⁸ The way Europe saw matters, this arose from a conflict solely between England (and to an extent France) and Germany, and it was culturally rooted, as I will now explicate.¹⁹ The attacks of the early Germans upon Roman schools reflected the Roman decision to re-educate the Germans to Roman standards. When the Germans occasionally fought back, their first target was often the schools, where their culture was, little by little, being annihilated. In the uprisings, Romans of stature might be mutilated,

15) Yet in Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 56, he has Zarathustra say, "Are you a slave? Then you cannot be a friend. Are you a tyrant? Then you cannot have friends." In other words, the overmen cannot befriend the non-overman, creating a firewall between the powerful and the weak in society, as well as an invidious artificial ranking among people. Yet friendship is the very means Nietzsche most prescribes for achieving Zarathustrian status!

16) Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, 326n2.

17) Though *Ecce Homo* was the last book he completed, it was not published until 1908.

18) de Warren, "Dilthey's Dream," 193.

19) The following account leans heavily upon Bridgham, *The First World War*.

being symbols of Roman culture. Some might be sacrificed, indicating a full-throated religious agreement behind the efforts.²⁰

When modern Germany entered France they shelled the cathedral of Rheims, suggesting an attack on French customs and their way of life in general. When the Germans entered Belgium they damaged or destroyed the church of St. Pierre, several university buildings and a famed library known for its “unique collection of early books and medieval manuscripts.”²¹ Belgium was reflecting Enlightenment values, a negating showstopper in Germanic terms.

The early German attacks were culturally motivated, and those that the modern Germans perpetrated upon France and Belgium were likewise. Ancient Rome was nominally dignity-based. Formal rights were recognized throughout the empire, and formal responsibilities extended to promisors and bailors (at one time the formal common law equivalent of a private business “officer” such as a hotelier, watch-maker, etc. – to whomever one’s valuables are left with stewardship responsibilities over them, the neglect of which became the “tort” of modern law).²² The early and modern Germanies were alike honor-based by contrast. WWI was not the first rodeo implicating a conflict of honor with dignity.

Certain concepts which Nietzsche advanced are necessary in order to discuss his role in the World War I contest of cultures. These include *ressentiment*, slave mentality, *Bildung*, fatalism, and Zarathustrianism. French *ressentiment* (Nietzsche had a soft spot for French emotional and intellectual wherewithal), means essentially what English resentment means but as the term is Nietzsche’s choice we will go with his spelling. This word applies principally to jealousy and envy, as well as to ingratitude and wrongful criticism. *Ressentiment* is the common denominator.

It is in all instances a serious dissatisfaction with a state of affairs. With jealousy there is either the uncalled for and unjustified risk of loss or of defeat. With envy it is the possession of a good by someone else of which one feels deserving or is otherwise resentful at not having. The matters of ingratitude and criticism entail states in which

20) For these uprisings in general, see Dyson, “Native Revolts in the Roman Empire.”

21) Martin, “Nietzsche as Hate-Figure,” 153.

22) Rome is the earliest dignity-based society I am aware of, followed later by thirteenth century England – the adjustments ushered forth by Henry II were instrumental – the remainder are products of the Enlightenment.

one has not received one's due. The difference from resentment is that *ressentiment* has just a touch of contempt about it.

The master-slave relation in real terms is far more prosaic than the words suggest: the working stiff who is comparatively inexperienced in departments of cultured life (the arts, reading, etc.), who takes their orders from a boss (the "master") for eight hours a day. *Bildung* is a German word which is close in meaning to an educational policy in which one is brought up to represent the best of one's culture and to act in general as a steward, especially of cultural affairs. Always there is a concentration on learning and careful attention to what is important.²³ *Amor fati* is an oft-heard refrain from Nietzsche: love of fatalism, or an attitude that all will turn out well if one eschews dwelling on the unpleasant. His thesis here is clearly that of Leibniz and Pope (though they spoke from a theological vantage).²⁴ Avoiding *ressentiment* is crucial, of course. "My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*" (GM, 258). In other words, Zarathustrianism is nothing if not an apologist for an abiding *amor fati*. It boils down to this: You say Yes to the world or you say No to it. Nietzsche: "Yes-saying life: negating and destroying are conditions of saying Yes" (GM, 328).

Zarathustrianism combines the avoidance of *ressentiment*, being always the "master" in the master-slave relation (being always the powerful one, the strong one), exercising *Bildung* and approaching life as *amor fati*. Such is the Zarathustrian *Weltanschauung*. It is premised on Nietzsche's two more or less epistemological foundations: first, that the basic human instincts are inherently worthwhile and the really good ones deserve to be especially cultivated; second, that the opposite doctrine of overriding instinct for social or political purposes – for ideas – produces a moral outlook anathema to Zarathustrianism and bespeaks a condition he calls "idealism."²⁵

23) Nietzsche says that "It is a small number of old Frenchmen to whom I return again and again: I believe only in French culture and consider everything else in Europe today that call itself 'culture' a misunderstanding – not to speak of German culture." (EH, 243). Kauffmann, the translator, explains at n7, "The word here rendered several times as 'culture' is *Bildung*." As *Bildung* is German, this is indeed ironic.

24) In Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 194, he certainly appears to refer to Leibniz and Pope as follows: "verily, I do not like those who consider everything good and this world the best." But his argument is that such people's tastes are too broad and not selective – which grossly misreads their intent. Nor do I recall such an argument from the works of Voltaire.

25) Nietzsche also applied the word pejoratively to the Hegelian sublimations in which opposites melded into a higher unity.

The issue confronting Nietzsche enthusiasts of the World War I era and since can be reduced to an example of a quite common refrain, summarized by Nicholas Martin: “A Scottish clergyman ... was attempting to prove that Nietzsche’s pagan, anti-Christian attitudes, his contempt for all ordinary morality, his preaching of the Will to Power, and his veneration for Superman had turned the German’s heads and induced them to invade Belgium and to issue four declarations of war in a week.”²⁶

Critics are right to point out the technical errors in such reportage, but by the same token come two other contrary observations, the first of which is that Nietzsche made it absurdly easy to make such false generalizations from his murky phrasing. And second, Nietzsche was not a stupid man; he knew the potential for misunderstandings and defended the use of the technique of referring obliquely to the overman crowd who had the wits to read him aright. Those who would misunderstand are left to their own devices. Either way, he knew precisely what readers could walk away with, and from his numerous works throughout supporting the common themes, it is clear that he held fast to all of the important positions he advanced throughout his thirty-year writing career. “Nietzsche himself never renounced his early theories but only tried to strengthen them.”²⁷

Consider how a German might construe this passage in late 1914: “Independence of the soul – that is at stake here! No sacrifice can then be too great: even one’s dearest friend must be willing to sacrifice for it, though he be the most glorious human being, embellishment of the world, genius without peer.”²⁸ It is true, however, that there is such a thing as an early and a late Nietzsche, the early period in which he lifts Wagner on a Dionysian pedestal and excoriates Goethe as a sentimental Apollinian (his spelling). He later publicly apologized in *The Gay Science*, even referring to him as a significant improvement over the materialistic ring of Darwin’s work – though Goethe was sympathetic to much of the Romantic program, he was nonetheless an advocate for technology and scientific progress, both Enlightenment values. Indeed, he can be considered as a near model of the ideal philosophical split between the two camps, accepting both honor-based and dignity-based elements in his posture.

26) Martin, “Nietzsche as Hate-Figure,” 152.

27) Kaufman, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 175.

28) Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §98.

Continuing with the Dionysian theme, Nietzsche altered his position in a different way. “His [later] ‘Dionysus’ is neither the god of the ancient Dionysian festivals nor the god Nietzsche played off against Apollo in *The Birth of Tragedy*, although he does, of course, bear some of the features of both. In the later works of Nietzsche, ‘Dionysus’ is no longer the spirit of unrestrained passion, but the symbol of the affirmation of life with all its suffering and terror.”²⁹

Nietzsche had no love for the common man (see nos. 25–27 in the following list). Name your pejorative, Nietzsche used it, most often with the ultimate pejorative “canaille” (in *Ecce Homo*, over whose publication details Nietzsche made his last communication ever with his publisher, a day before his collapse). Note the French. I have heard it remarked that Nietzsche’s attitude changed on this point over time. I deny it. *Ecce Homo* was intended as a summary of his oeuvre. Here is a listing of his later remarks on the “herd” and other topics where change might have been thought possible (but in fact was not to be). Page numbers for the edition used are in parens following each excerpt.

- 1) *Nititur in vetitum* [We strive for the forbidden]: in this sign my philosophy will triumph one day, for what is forbidden so far as a matter of principle has always been – truth alone. (EH, 219)³⁰
- 2) That a psychologist without equal speaks from my writings is perhaps the first insight reached by a good reader. (EH, 266)
- 3) Theologically speaking – listen closely, for I rarely speak as a theologian. (EH, 311)
- 4) For I bear the destiny of humanity on my shoulders.³¹ (EH, 325)
- 5) I was the first to discover the truth by being the first to experience lies as lies – smelling them out. (EH, 326)
- 6) I am proud of having this word [*immoralist*] which distinguishes me from the whole of humanity. Nobody yet has felt Christian morality to be beneath him: that requires a height a view of distances, a hitherto altogether unheard-of psychological depth and profundity. (EH, 321)

29) Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 209.

30) EH refers to Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*.

31) This was deleted from the manuscript, presumably under Nietzsche’s instructions.

- 7) I have a subtler sense of smell for the signs of ascent and decline than any other human being before me; I am the teacher par excellence for this – I know both, I am both. (EH, 222)
- 8) Seeing morality itself as a symptom of decadence is an innovation and a singularity of the first rank in the history of knowledge. (EH, 272)
- 9) The poets of the Veda are priests and not even worthy of tying the shoelaces of a Zarathustra. (EH, 304)
- 10) *Definition of morality*: Morality – the idiosyncrasy of decadents, with the ulterior motive of revenging oneself against life – successfully. I attach value to this definition. (EH, 333)
- 11) The fight for equal rights is actually a symptom of a disease: every physician knows that. (EH, 267)
- 12) They [Europeans and Americans] want in their own way to “improve” mankind, in their own image; against what I am, what I *want*, they would wage an irreconcilable war if they understood me: all of them still believe in the “ideal” – I am the first *immoralist*. (EH, 280)
- 13) I take the overestimation of goodness and benevolence on a large scale for a consequence of decadence, for a symptom of weakness, irreconcilable with an ascending, Yes-saying life: negating and destroying are conditions of saying Yes. (EH, 328)
- 14) [The] association with people imposes no mean test on my patience: my humanity does *not* consist in feeling with men how they are, but in *enduring* that I feel with them. (EH, 233)
- 15) If I despise a man, he guesses that I despise him: by my mere existence I outrage everything that has bad blood in his veins. (EH, 258)
- 16) You see, I don’t want rudeness to be underestimated: it is by far the most humane form of contradiction and, in the midst of effeminacy, one of our foremost virtues. (EH, 229)
- 17) I am warlike by nature. Attacking is one of my instincts. Being able to be an enemy being an enemy – perhaps that presupposes a strong nature; in any case it belongs to very strong nature. (EH, 231)
- 18) I lack any reliable criterion for recognizing the bite of conscience: according to what one *hears* about it, the bite of conscience does not seem respectable to me. (EH, 236)

- 19) I reproach those who are full of pity for easily losing a sense of shame, of respect, of sensitivity for distances; before you know it, pity begins to smell of the mob and becomes scarcely distinguishable from base manners. (EH, 228)
- 20) The danger of those who always give is that they lose their sense of shame; and the heart and hand of those who always mete out become callous from always meting out. (EH, 207)
- 21) The concept of “sin” invented along with the torture instrument that belongs with it, the concept of “free will,” in order to confuse the instincts, to make mistrust of the instincts second nature. (EH, 334)
- 22) Saying Yes to opposition and war; becoming, along with a radical repudiation of the very concept of being – all this is clearly more closely related to me than anything else thought to date. (EH, 273)
- 23) Nevertheless it is true that almost every letter that has reached me for years now strikes me as a piece of cynicism: there is more cynicism in being kind to me than in any hatred. (EH, 324)
- 24) I tell every one of my friends to his face that he has never considered it worthwhile to *study* any of my writings: I infer from the smallest signs that they do not even know what is in them. (EH, 324)
- 25) Religions are affairs of the rabble; I find it necessary to wash my hands after I have come into contact with religious people. (EH, 327)
- 26) What did I never forgive Wagner? That he *condescended* to the Germans – that he became *reichsdeutsch*. (EH, 248)
- 27) Twice, when an honest unequivocal, perfectly scientific way of thinking had just been attained with tremendous fortitude and self-overcoming, the Germans managed to find devious paths to the old “ideal,” reconciliations of truth and “ideal” – at bottom, formulas for a right to repudiate science, a right to *lie*. (EH, 320)

Numbers 1–9 begin with evidence for an unsettled mind, typified by bipolar illness (or bipolar symptomatology as a component of syphilis – improbable, however, because the bipolarisms stretch across his entire career, which syphilis probably did not).³²

32) For evidence that Nietzsche was likely bipolar, see Cybulska, “Bipolar Disorder and Creativity,” and her “Nietzsche and Bipolar Disorder.” Dr. Cybulska graduated from Gdansk medical school in Poland in the early seventies and received her postgraduate training in London. For other corroborating papers see *Scispace*, “Effects of Nietzsche’s Health on His Philosophy?”

Something to note about bipolars who are also intellectuals: first, a few will always be prone to formulate highly generalized theories from minor patchworks of evidence, and second, they are prone to off-beat theories that have little more to commend them than shock value (or, the philosophical equivalent of yellow journalism – example: world renowned virologist Peter Duesberg’s long declared thesis that HIV is not caused by a virus – and the Nobel laureates who backed him up). Nietzsche qualifies on both criteria – first for propounding a power monism upon scanty evidence, and second for defending “immoralism.”³³ Some have been willing to acknowledge that Nietzsche was likely bipolar. Those who knew Duesberg have anecdotal stories of a charming man with a “planet-sized ego,” grandiosity, and so on.³⁴

The notion that morality is decadent and that real life, a say-Yes to life is the answer, making naturally occurring disasters a non-emotional thing that just “happens” to unlucky folk, a view that hardly jibes with the human reality. Voltaire’s venom was directed largely to flay apart this oxymoron, making it highly ironic that Nietzsche revered him, devoting a book to him (of course, most of this is accounted for by Voltaire’s sacrilegious views on religion). At any rate, communal life defeats some of Nietzsche’s precepts *en toto*. The fact of customs in traditional pre-literate societies defeats others of them. Nietzsche simply had an anxiety-driven axe to grind,

33) Some will doubtless question the wisdom of bringing up the matter of bipolar illness. It does the reader no favors to be ignorant of this reality, for the symptomatology accounts very well for his over-the-top language and behavior. What I do not want to be accused of, however, is the claim that the illness and bad conduct make Nietzsche a figure of no account. This was the regrettable thesis of Paul Johnson’s book *Intellectuals* where he excoriated a host of prominent writers, seemingly because we could not possibly trust their judgement to say anything worthwhile on account of their illnesses. The reality is very possibly the direct opposite.

34) As for the power monism, Herbert Marcuse intoned, “One can dispense with the notion of an innate ‘power-drive’ in human nature. This is a highly dubious psychological concept and grossly inadequate for the analysis of societal developments.” Marcuse wrote in the context of an ongoing revolutionary movement, which a Zarathustrian regime would presuppose (consider, if nothing else, the demand to do away with the State). See Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 45–6. Richard E. Palmer, speaking of/for Wilhelm Dilthey, remarks that “we experience life not in the mechanical categories of ‘power’ but in complex, individual moments of ‘meaning.’” See Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, 101.

Nietzsche is deeply ambiguous in his use of “immoralism.” As he employs it there are two likely meanings: 1) the role of morals in denying strength of spirit and in assuring stultifying conformity, and 2) rejection of truthfulness, where “truth” becomes itself “moral”: “I will not deceive, not even myself: *and with this we are on the ground of morality.*” See Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 358. His emphasis. For Duesberg, see for example, Abrams, “Hero or Heretic.”

led by his Germanophobic posturing and the ideas he associated with it (numbers 25 through 27 above with others that could be mentioned). Most of all was his feeling that the general quality of humanity had been sagging at the hands of a nation-state enforcing an unnatural conformity (Nietzsche's ultimate *bete noire*).

Observe the following remark from the early 1880s: "I have the most beautiful opportunity to prove that for me 'all experiences are useful, all days holy, and all human beings divine!!!! All human beings divine – My suspicion has become very great: in everything that I hear I feel contempt for me.'"³⁵ In reality, this is all just blather. Not for one millisecond would he find it remotely possible to describe his views worthy of what he himself would call "bad conscience."

Evidence of such a bad conscience is evidenced in Dilthey's remark:

Kant's idealism of freedom sweeps on with it Schiller, Fichte, and indeed most of the influential persons of the following generation. The swirling current of inner events, the fortuitous and particular in the content of life's affairs, the uncertain and shifting in cognition, evaluation, and resolution, this inner misery of the naïve consciousness, so falsely extolled by Rousseau and Nietzsche: these are overcome.³⁶

The further one gets into his thesis the further does it veer from reality, as when we investigate our actual Zarathustrian aristocracy paired with Nietzsche's view of the rabble and dislike for rights-based societies such as those typifying Western civilization, not to mention his praise of hierarchical systems of precedence (classes redolent of a caste system). A hundred years ago we would be left with a police state replete with child labor, draconian living conditions, and an oligopolistic plutocracy at the top of the food chain. That is what human nature purchases upon the recipe he offers. It is better now, of course, but this is a democracy, after all. It is absurd in so many ways one must wonder at the cause of his popularity (until his remarks were picked up in the context of the "kultur" war, not a one of his books sold hardly at all, dashing his hopes for fame – he felt sure that Zarathustra would sell like hotcakes only to be rejected again).

35) Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 59.

36) Dilthey, *Essence of Philosophy*, 40.

There exists an interesting and largely correct answer: people (including a bevy of philosophers) appreciate those who can shock others intelligent enough to be presumed capable of assessing a brilliant mind in accordance with deep thought with important results, and not the least of factors, with engaging writing styles. Bright highschoolers have catered to Ayn Rand, and Nietzsche is a phase college students go through (the conclusion of a college professor of philosophy I once queried). Nietzsche was brilliant, that no one in their right mind denies. What he did with it is another question altogether. What seems a theory encompassing everything is really a theory that posits two or three claims over very broad terrains none of which pan out. His product does not match his self-conceits. Lay people cannot be expected to know certain trends as do experts. Dilthey is an expert and has reason to pass judgement on Nietzsche, including this: "From ignorance he [Nietzsche] rejected psychology as a science. This stands in quaint contradiction to his presentation of unfounded psychological hypotheses about the development of moral norms as if they were scientific results. He remains a complete amateur in the use of historical facts for the understanding of functional connections within a culture."³⁷

Numbers 10 through 13 describe morality as a negative factor in social evolution. In point of fact, most all of morality does indeed rise above natural dispositions so as to accommodate life in a community. This is a move toward a dignity-based moiety. It is an advance, not a withdrawal to lower depths of the human experience. A dignity-based system presupposes sufficient advancement that not everyone needs to be working for necessities every waking hour of the day. Morals and customs dictate how the populace must get along. Ethics comes of age with dignity; it applies to every office serving a moral need in society, for example. Ethics is a watchdog over the offices in their approach to a moral conclusion. As Swedenborg noted, ethics exists to serve the accomplishment of moral desiderata. Nietzsche is so off-based here as to make one wonder at his motives and rationale. This, along with his self-conceit, shied friends away from him over time with but one exception (Peter Gast).

Numbers 14–24 itemize the personal reflections of Nietzsche touching upon a number of topics. What characterizes each one of these is its inappropriateness. Each

37) Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, 118.

reflects a cavalier, devil-may-care attitude toward civilized behavior, and each one offers additional evidence of “shock value.” Some philosophers give Nietzsche a pass, ostensibly out of agreement that mankind has not lived up to its natural potential. Well, it is time for some realism here: there has never been, and never will be, a time when that complaint cannot be levelled. And nothing that Nietzsche offers will alter that in any meaningful way. On the other hand, some evidence is already in: mankind has become more educated, leading to greater tolerance and a demand for regimes enabling greater freedom (whence the spate of modern democracies).

Numbers 25 to 27 indicate Nietzsche’s position in regard of Germans as people, Germans as such. It is anything but complimentary.³⁸ Yet he can say that they are open, honest and welcoming, a combination that can be redolent of honor-based or dignity-based moieties. In either case the morality or mores Nietzsche takes aim at are anything but harmful, serving to aid inter-personal communication and activity, without which society would be truly savage. Nietzsche does not calm down over time; in some respects he gins up the rhetoric: “The words ‘idiot’ and ‘idiotic’ figure prominently in Nietzsche’s writings, only beginning in 1887.”³⁹ This is all of two years before his last publications.

What Nietzsche did not abide was hyper-nationalistic fervor. But in the Romantic temper of the times, we find the first words of the German national anthem (1922) to be “Germany, Germany above everything.” Such nationalistic fervor would bear fruit come WWI, where Nietzsche was accused of offering the program undertaken by the perpetrators of that war. He would, however, likely approve a war, in part just because it is a war, but further, a war to vindicate an honor-based moiety over the dignity-based, which is what WWI was in its essentials.

There is plenty of blame to go around, and Nietzsche has his share of it. It is his work that sponsored the kind of “yes-to-life” approach which war, to many minds, presupposes (think of Oliver Wendell Holmes’ *excitement* at participating in the American Civil War – where he was shot in the neck); it was a doctrine of probable aristocratic rule that would perpetuate a regime Wilhelm II could approve of, and

38) Kaufmann: “what has changed emphatically in the works written in 1888 is the tenor of Nietzsche’s remarks about the Germans: he sees them as an utter disaster.” In Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, 313n87.

39) Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 319 n4.

it was a doctrine that valued honor-based values, even while Nietzsche was a fan of French culture with all of its rationality, and its mantra of progress and science.

Were it not for his denial of equal rights, his denial of the value of common morality and decency, favoring instead artificial hierarchies of value in people, he could in theory have advocated a rational and workable system – the very one that Western society currently advocates – the Europe whose culture Nietzsche in fact favored.⁴⁰

What does the “revaluing of values” imply for political science? “The concept of politics will have merged entirely with a war of spirits; all power structures of the old society will have been exploded – all of them are based on lies: there will be wars the like of which have never yet been seen on earth” (EH, 327). Here, Nietzsche may seem facetious; he is not. He sees clearly that revaluation of values implies a change too great to be achieved without the incidence of a war of the original versus the revalued values. Of course, we do not know precisely what he means by “war.” But his language is extreme, that is for certain. Other similar remarks suggest that the sentiment is not merely spurious.

And readers of Nietzsche in the early twentieth century would not have been blind to this passage (and others like it) as a justification of the necessity of a war in order to secure the comparatively honor-based value system of romantic Germany as against the rest of Western society. Nietzsche may have questioned European morality while advocating their broader culture. In the meantime German culture was romanticizing, distinguishing and separating itself from France in particular, but also England and the United States. Again, the conflict would become one between honor and dignity. Overall, there was ammunition aplenty in Nietzsche to defend the proposition that his philosophy was, if not a cause, certainly a facilitator in providing a justification to the German leadership that this war was right.

And what, precisely, in terms of honor and dignity, does Nietzsche observe in German society to warrant the work of a Zarathustra? He teaches that humanity in general (modern society, that is) is decadent, filled and emboldened with a Christian morality steadfastly against the Zarathustrian program – emboldened with the notion of rights, especially inherent rights (he has stated his strict opposition to “equal rights” – all dignity-based rights are shared equally), but also common mores into the bargain. Relative

40) What he favored most, however, was the Europe of the Renaissance.

to the rest of modern Western Europe, Germany was in transition: romantic, and at the same time holding steadfastly to selective honor-based traits such as a fanatical devotion to the duel and to scarring.⁴¹ Its morality, generally considered, was predicated upon principles governed more or less equally by honor and Ciceronian dignity – the dignity of man as an elevated animal, not necessarily the dignity that espouses inherent rights.

Thus, practically everything that Western society associates with dignity is at risk by a Zarathustrian mentality. Whence the danger of its message to the modern world. It is not that there are not delightful and useful honor-based traits: the problem is with the dignity traits, especially those of inherent rights, which are placed at risk of abrogation by a Nietzschean polity. The whole notion that morality raised human beings beyond animal propensities of a lower variety was at risk of complete denial. This very process Nietzsche examines, calling it “a declaration of war against the old instincts upon which his [man’s] strength, joy, and terribleness had rested hitherto.”⁴² It was doubtless man’s “terribleness” that communities were organized in order to be protected against, leading to customs that dealt with the irascible types. Of course, Nietzsche will translate “terrible” to the fear-invoking overman or Zarathustra. Yet many a preliterate people would disown this type of authority.⁴³ Only with the advent of tribal organization do overman figures come into prominence.

That Nietzsche, with some exceptions, caters to the honor-based (the traditional values) is indicated here:

He honors by *choosing*, by *admitting*, by *trusting*. He reacts slowly to all kinds of stimuli, with that slowness which long caution and deliberate pride have bred in him: he examines the stimulus that approaches him, he is far from meeting it halfway. He believes neither in “misfortune” nor in “guilt”: he comes to terms with himself, with others; he knows how to *forget* – he is strong enough; hence everything *must* turn out for his best. (EH, 225)

41) Much of Western Europe and the United States knew much of dueling throughout the nineteenth century. See in particular Gay, *Cultivation of Hatred*.

42) Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 85.

43) Nietzsche picked up the term “overman” from the American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson, of whose work he was quite familiar.

This description he continues, is “the *opposite* of a decadent”: in other words, it is the temperament of the overman, the Zarathustra, the ideal.

As mentioned, the important values of the honor-based are respect, trustworthiness, and merited worth. Such a one is not apt to meet others halfway, for they have not earned the trust that suggests such a posture as being safe. The dignity-based, on the other hand, prepared on the basis of a projected acceptance, will grant the benefit of the doubt and greet any man halfway. The honor-based is “hyper” realistic, as it were, the opposite of idealistic – life is what it is – he instinctively says Yes to life and living. He knows neither guilt nor misfortune, though he does definitely know of shame. Anthropologist Ruth Benedict, author of the shame-guilt binary in cultural typology, associates the honor-based with shame and the dignity-based (typically a Christian society) with guilt.⁴⁴

“But what is goodheartedness, refinement, or genius to me, when ... he does not account *the desire for certainty* as his inmost craving and deepest distress – as that which separates the higher human beings from the lower.”⁴⁵ The deeply felt need of security and certainty typifies the original honor-based requirements for social organization. Only with the Age of Reason was there security and certainty enough in the world that dignity could win the attention of humanity. Prior to that time every effort of life and living went toward these desiderata. Nietzsche is harkening back to that early era in these remarks.

Some indicants are actually tell-tale signs: for Bible readers, the Old Testament features honor-based culture almost in the extreme; the New Testament ushers in the dignity shared by all men alike, that which Kant addressed. Nietzsche favored without hesitation the Old Testament. “All honor to the Old Testament! I find in it great human beings, a heroic landscape, and something of the very rarest quality in the world, the incomparable naïveté of the *strong heart*; what is more, I find a people.”⁴⁶

The most general indicant is expressed in *Zarathustra*: “Esteeming itself is of all esteemed things the most estimable treasure. Through esteeming alone is their value: and without esteeming, the nut of existence would be hollow.”⁴⁷ And the highest

44) Benedict, *Chrysanthemum and the Sword*.

45) Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, §2.

46) Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Pt III, 22.

47) Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 59.

example is the esteeming of individuals for a job well done. That esteem has a name, and in one of our two cultural systems that word is “honor.”

Nietzsche’s personal honor-based credentials follow from those he respects or reveres: “Goethe’s nobility and lack of envy, Beethoven’s noble hermit’s resignation, Mozart’s charm and grace of the heart, Handel’s unbendable manliness and inner life that does not even find it necessary to renounce splendor and success – are these in any way *German* qualities?”⁴⁸ These are all honor-based traits, the good ones by and large. They do not characterize the German people, yet most Germans of the period would see them as ideals. Certainly, the Romantics among them would agree with such an assessment. We find it useful now to define two types of Romanticism: the traditional, who yearn for the honor-based traits, and the reactionary, those reacting against the entire Enlightenment project. Nietzsche clearly is in the first category.

Nietzsche himself sported another honor-based trait, a demand that he have the freedom to be his own individual (a placeholder in the Romantic mindset). To Nietzsche, nonconformity is “the necessary condition of self-realization.”⁴⁹ He needled science and scientists but honored the experimental method, and had no qualms over reasonable rationality. This position would normally be in the opposite camp, the dignity-based traits. And despite his favoring the French culture, he was in the main staunchly traditional and thus honor-based, with only a few splinters of dignity-based valuations. Were it not for his Zarathustrian musings he would, like Dilthey, be a model of one who could combine traits from the two culture types in a sensible manner. Now for some of the more dubious honor-based traits of which Nietzsche was a proud defender: “A predominance of mandarins always means something is wrong; so do the advent of democracy, international courts in place of war, equal rights for women, the religion of pity, and whatever other symptoms of declining life there are.”⁵⁰

But his Zarathustrians are nothing if not mandarins (power-laden executives or bureaucrats). A man who theorizes what can only become a government run by Zarathustrian wannabes and which is undemocratic and lacks faith in a generalized system of justice, is one who would create a police state not unlike that of Russia or China.

48) Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 177.

49) Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 176.

50) Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Pt III, 25.

The ruling ideology will be sufficiently off-base that many will not accept it and these protesters will have to be dealt with harshly. Nietzsche was smart enough to put this together in a convincing manner (to many, not everybody) but not sufficiently astute as to set limits to his mad quest for saying Yes to life and No to commonsense morality.

Despite what I have argued above, Nietzsche is known to have been cool to the Romantic world-view. This could be due either to the fact that he disliked their anti-science stance, or he may have seen them in light of another of his *bête noirs*, “sentimentalism,” or simply on account of his dismissiveness of Romanticist religious mysticism. Or even their occasional irrationality.

Nietzsche presumes that it was the class of priests and a select group of influencers who put themselves in positions to dictate moral values to their communities. Everyone else just followed their lead, he thinks: “Indeed, this is *my* insight: the teachers, the leaders of humanity, theologians all of them, were also, all of them, decadents: *hence* the revaluation of all values into hostility to life, *hence* morality” (EH, 333). Zarathustra intends to reverse this state with a new revaluation of values back to the original condition – the condition of humanity prior to morals? Every human grouping, every human family, has rules that qualify as “moral.” Is Nietzsche asking us to move backwards beyond the family? One hopes he merely means that mankind reverts to an innocence, not to the actual environmental conditions associated with that innocence. Anything else amounts to theoretical gibberish.

Nietzsche is largely mistaken in most all of this: modern man, whether entrepreneur or artist or scientist, manifests *Bildung*; they all steward their projects and they all say, via these projects, Yes to life and living. These are the nearest approach to ideal Zarathustrians (as we would have them) except for the police state type of governance which will naturally follow from Nietzsche’s precepts. Such governance (from the latter phrase) exemplifies the cult of dignity, not the opposite which we prefer, those of us who like decency and peace – products of true dignity, products equally the ideal of the honor-based society but for different reasons; the latter because necessary for social order, the former as ideals to be aimed at.

To explain: the honor-based society thinks in terms of instrumentalism or prudence; in short, in terms of (traditional) expedience. The dignity-based thinks in terms of necessity or prudence; in short or in other terminology, the (morally) essential. Interestingly, the normative office is a composite of the two separate prudential objec-

tives. The honor-based values are of the “good”; the dignity-based are of the “right.” The concept of right (derived from dignity) extends necessity or prudence to every human being. Respect is necessary, assistance is prudent. The office ethics reflect the expedient prudence, while the moral objective reflects the essential qualities involved.

We have hardly exhausted the questionable passages in Nietzsche’s writings. In the *Genealogy of Morals* he casts broad doubts over the contract theory of Hobbes and Rousseau (and Locke and John Rawls), and yet elsewhere approvingly asserts the basic arguments that undergird that same contract theory. Nietzsche will require the abandonment of the “nation-state” notion on the rather selfishly flimsy grounds that it hinders the fullest individualization possible.⁵¹ Retaining the company of autocrats throughout history, Nietzsche foreswears educating the “rabble”: “That everyone may learn to read, in the long run corrupts not only writing but also thinking. Once the spirit was God, then he became man, and now he even becomes rabble.”⁵²

Altogether, Nietzsche permits himself to come across as a careless theoretician, and a redoubtable curmudgeon. His Zarathustrian figure is a fictional device which normal humans, even of a mandarin disposition, would not likely emulate into worthwhile conduct. Where his creature displays cult of dignity traits humans can doubtless follow along; where he asserts positive traits the question is up in the air how humans would react. Zarathustra knows nothing of *ressentiment*. Can the average human ever say the same?

Zarathustra’s chief elixir in promoting self-overcoming is friendship. “The best that a friend can do for a friend is to help him to gain self-mastery. And that cannot be done by commiserating with him or by indulging his weaknesses.” In short, Nietzsche thought that friends should be educators to one another, and educators must not be sentimental.”⁵³ Nietzsche elaborates somewhat in a note from 1887:

To those human beings who are of any concern to me I wish suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities – I wish that they

51) In Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 169, the author says “the Nation State seemed to Nietzsche the archenemy of nonconformity, self-realization, and the ‘single one’s’ remaking of his own nature.”

52) Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 40.

53) Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 367–68.

should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished: I have no pity for them, because I wish them the only thing that can prove today whether one is worth anything or not – that one endures.⁵⁴

There follows a refrain which makes the point that there is too little offered here: “if only men would choose to make something better of themselves, the world would be a better place to live.” Okay, where do we start? Well, find a friend. And then what? Educate one another without sentimentality. What!? In spite of the efforts expended, the entire concept is simply too loose, too incredulous, or else too extreme and too unworkable next to the promises made on its behalf.

For example, Nietzsche concludes that no one can know by sight or association a Zarathustrian – a true human being – whence it were wise to treat everyone as if they were a potential human being. This observation alone raises serious questions about Nietzsche’s knowledge of human psychology, since it is quite apparent that most everyone can identify either “noble” individuals or “mandarins.” We all carry at the very least a vague notion of what to expect in each type. Kaufmann now places this in perspective: “It is one of Nietzsche’s most serious shortcomings ... that he failed to give any emphasis to this common human potentiality and did not consider the possibility that this potentiality might be quite sufficient to re-establish that ‘cardinal distinction between man and animals’ which Darwin seemed to Nietzsche to have denied.”⁵⁵ For Nietzsche, no moral sensibility was going to fix this issue. He is just plain wrong.

Ideally, Zarathustra marks mankind’s escape from reality into a higher state of consciousness and achievement. Apart from expectations served by *Bildung*, there is no stated pathway, no stated means, no stated course, just the message to expand beyond current horizons. All very nice and well, and all very murky and difficult to emulate. Like saying, “c’mon, you can be better! Now get to it!! Commit to self-overcoming!!” What we know for sure, however, is that we must dismantle the nation-state, give up friends and relatives for even meager levels of intellectual honesty, heed one’s inner power, and say Yes to life and its destructive measures. And do not abuse your

54) Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §910.

55) Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 286.

strength and power; be kindly to your inferiors! And none of this mushy and effeminate inherent rights business!! For God's sake, be strong, be a man!! Nietzsche: "a real man wants two things: danger and play."⁵⁶

The "strong" spiritual person is a Zarathustrian, and s/he carries a get-out-of-jail-free card in what the ancient Greeks knew as *ate*, where sudden flashes of anger or unwarranted conduct productive of disasters are attributed to the will of the gods.⁵⁷ In *Dawn* (§371) Nietzsche allows the strong person to be a dignity cultist of a brand. Under the influence of dignity cultists others get hurt, but Nietzsche will blame physiology for the bad conduct. "The evil of the strong harms others without giving thought to it – it *has* to discharge itself."⁵⁸ Thus those in power unthinkingly abuse others through a seemingly innocent use of that power. This is how the dignity cults (whether governmental and/or industrial) maintain a state of persistent poverty throughout the United States.

And what can we expect of happiness under the Zarathustrian regime? "The weak who hope that their conformity to traditional morals may in the end assure their happiness will, as a matter of fact, not find ultimate happiness; those, on the other hand, who have attained that happy state of being [plenary power] toward which we all strive will *eo ipso* be gracious and kindly."⁵⁹ Since when, one may ask, has power not attempted to beget more power, and since when has power hunger not been associated with ill will toward those who are feared as competitors? "Gracious" certainly does not describe this condition. In sum, the circumstances native to Zarathustrianism

56) Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 66.

57) "*The immortals furnish gains for mortal men.* But *ate* (disaster) comes from them, disaster which attends now upon one man, now upon another, when Zeus sends it to *tinesthai* [to punish]." See Adkins, *Moral Values and Political Behaviour*, 53.

58) See also the alternate title *Daybreak*, §371. His stress.

59) Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 266. Nietzsche: "when the exceptional human being treats the mediocre more tenderly than himself and his peers, this is not mere courtesy of the heart – it is simply his *duty*." From Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, §57. This sentiment, while noble, does not jibe with the other several cardinal requirements set forth by Nietzsche for his Zarathustrians. The specter of a cult of dignity is inconsistent with such nobility of spirit. It is as if he could create a cult of honor which could never degrade into the dignity cult. And it is difficult to see how he can avoid the cult given his requirements (no democracy, a questionable judicial system, no State mechanism, together with a personality configuration opposite to that of nobility, etc.). Just imagine Nietzsche as the ideal Zarathustrian, and you will get my drift (and no, he was not always kind, let alone tender, to his intellectual inferiors or competitors).

simply do not conduce to the cheery prospects Nietzsche has in mind. Too much of human nature gets in the way.

No amount of his “sublimation” theorizing (he prefigured Freud’s use of the term) will make this work. The cult of dignity will be alive and well. Only when the unfavored rise up and vote out the miscreants at the polling booths will the best available morality of a Zarathustrian kind prevail (the laudable honor-based traits of laughing and dancing included), and not until that time. It is up to the democracy which Nietzsche shuns. The common person must be rightly educated in the cultural basics. My wager is that they are happy enough where they are for the time being. They fear that any attempt to improve upon matters will bring larger problems down the road. They must be disabused of this worry. The wealthy cults will not commit either suicide or insurrection when made to pay their fair share of taxes in support of a true regime of dignity.

Only that regime will win the day against the honor-based folk who refuse to adopt new ways after the fashion of those who finally see the light. For the end result of a true dignity regime is to finally realize the ultimate honor-based desiderata: work and security for one and all. Not just the security for necessities, but for a meaningful existence. This is what constitutes the satisfaction of power and the attitude of kindness toward one and all. It has nothing whatsoever to do with some fictional Zarathustrian figure.

After all this, it may seem that I have nothing positive to say about Nietzsche. *Au contraire*. Nietzsche sounded alarm bells, to be sure, his chief message being a response similar to that of Herbert Marcuse, who wrote:

By virtue of the way it has organized its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian. For “totalitarian” is not only a terrorist political coordination of society, but also a non-terrorist economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests. It thus precludes the emergence of effective opposition against the whole. Not only a specific form of government or party rule makes for totalitarianism, but also a specific system of production and distribution which may well be compatible with a “pluralism” of parties, newspapers, “countervailing powers,” etc.⁶⁰

60) Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 3.

Nietzsche's thesis adequately points to a "spiritual" (psychic) lacking as the cause and result of what Marcuse so accurately described as modern industrial society. The issue I have is with his solution, which would likely have only added to the problems.

The Liberal Scholar

Dilthey saw war as, in general, a conflict of worldviews or *Weltanschauung* antagonisms. "The formation of a worldview in its threefold configuration as knowing, valuing, and acting crystallizes within the incandescent light of an existential attunement toward what Dilthey calls the enigma of life. Worldviews are attempts to resolve the enigma of life."⁶¹ How would this combine with cultural antipathies? We have already addressed the question and answered it: a reduction to the conflicts between the dignity-based and honor-based types. And world War I, begun just a very few years after Dilthey's passing, by and large boiled down to the same thing – the honor-dignity binary.

Many, like Kant, Goethe (1749–1832), and Schiller (1759–1805) were middle-of-the-roads, maintaining a healthy regard for tradition while emphasizing the role of autonomy and optimism regarding technology. Wilhelm Dilthey was one of these. Speaking of Dilthey, it cannot be overstressed how important religion was as a component of the traditional *Weltanschauung*. Son of a Reformed minister, in whose footsteps he initially followed, Dilthey was one to value religion, but from a modernist vantage – one maintaining the faith but with less of the baggage. Even for this posture he was roundly criticized by the Romantic crowd.

Dilthey was a member of the left of center National Socialist Party. As a good liberal he supported woman's rights and, like the German-American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942) in the United States, actively supported women scholars.⁶² Eric S. Nelson: "Due to Dilthey's commitments to a multifaceted civil society – that encompassed the free self-formation and cultivation of individuality, the intimacy of family life, the solidarity of free associations, and a cosmopolitan historical and

61) Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher*, 191.

62) Boas introduced Ruth Benedict and her student Margaret Mead to the world. Together they formulated the shame-guilt typology of cultures. It quite conveniently falls under the honor-dignity typology, shame correlated to honor and guilt to the dignity-based societies.

cultural pluralism – Dilthey was critical of radical forms of statism and ethnically based collectivism.”⁶³

Note the balance of honor-based and dignity-based concepts. The intimacy of family life is coveted by both cultural moieties, but the honor-based families are larger units than the core family of the dignity-based groups. The cultivation of individuality implies the honor-based stress on the individual and the dignity-based stress on autonomy; the solidarity of free associations finds the latter associated with dignity-based groups⁶⁴ and the solidarity is an honor-based trait associated with their groups.

Both of these illustrate that a dignity-based society can and will have honor-based components and vice versa. It is the relative strengths across the cultural divide that creates the distinctive cultural groupings of honor here and dignity there. Statist and ethnically based collectivism are clearly honor-based formulations; dignity-based societies are almost always democratic and favor reasonably open immigration policies that are intended to discourage ethnic collectivism, and at which they sometimes fare poorly.

The cultural divide showed up in literature and in art. Here again, Dilthey saw benefits and deficiencies in both the Romantic and classicist ventures of the day, and tried to offer something in between. Nelson: “Dilthey consequently reinterprets both Romanticism and realism as revealing two sides of the tensions of reality and feeling, resistance and will, and the objectivities of social life in the context of individual lived experience (*Erlebnis*).”⁶⁵

Dilthey put *Erlebnis* on the map. It was his answer to the need of a ground for examining the humanities or, as he put it, the “human sciences.” As a rough approximation, this *Erlebnis* seems tantamount to his “acquired psychic nexus” [APN]: “this acquired psychic nexus entails that new experiences are informed by past experiences without being constrained by them.”⁶⁶ Said differently, “the continuum or nexus of psychic life is an original or basic given.”⁶⁷ This nexus is like a fulcrum for the arms of a lever. It is at once foundational and regulative.

63) Nelson, “Introduction,” 6.

64) Alexis de Tocqueville noted the tendency of Americans to form associations of innumerable kinds. See his *Democracy in America*, 630ff. “Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions.”

65) Nelson, “Introduction,” 15.

66) Dilthey, in Makkreel, “Dilthey’s Conception of Purposiveness,” 39.

67) de Mul, “Dilthey as a Philosopher,” 45.

Correlative to the APN is reflexive awareness: “It stresses the rootedness of any form of knowledge ... that precedes any form of self-consciousness. Here there is ... but an immediate and certain relation to what is there-for-me.”⁶⁸ Note how closely this parallels Heideggerian *Dasein* (being-there). Reflexive awareness and APN together all but constitute *Erlebnis*, the fulcrum. All we now require is the nut: the “historicity of psychic life” to complete the *Erlebnis*. It is “the historicity of psychic life as it is manifested in every system of culture produced by human beings” that constitutes “the most fundamental fact of the human sciences.”⁶⁹

The only problem with this thesis is that it cannot explain the natural sciences, whose *Erlebnis* is constituted of the experiment and the methodology behind the eventual analysis. He wanted the core of the life sciences to accommodate the natural sciences for a full and seamless theory of hermeneutics.

Dilthey was a strong advocate for cross-cultural understanding, presumably to ward off the specter of war around every corner. But as Stefan Manz relates regarding World War I, “Intercultural transfer per se is not a guarantee for peaceful coexistence but just one factor in a complex historical framework.”⁷⁰ Here the framework is essentially the honor-dignity binary. What cannot be resolved by cross-cultural relationships and understandings is revealed when writings can be utilized to justify war in the warmongering crowd, which is precisely what happened in WWI.

Frederick C. Beiser summarizes the case:

Dilthey saw that the fundamental problem of modern culture arose because the average educated man knew the results of historical criticism: the anarchy of worldviews, the loss of faith in seeing the historical limitations of all morals, religion, and philosophy. In admitting this problem ... Dilthey is much closer to our moral convictions than Nietzsche. We are all today not Nietzsche’s but Dilthey’s heirs.⁷¹

68) Bambach, “Hermeneutics and Historicity,” 87.

69) Dilthey, in *ibid*, 90.

70) Manz, “Peacemaker and Warmonger,” 227.

71) Beiser, “Dilthey’s Defense of Historicism,” 114.

In short, Dilthey is adopting an honor-based talking point. But in today's reality, the case is hardly as stark as it is made out to be. Modern persons have sources of illusion aplenty between television and the movies. And they are broadly wiser and sharper than before, perfectly capable of gazing at the stars and declaring that there must be a god (as did Einstein). The working stiff may be comparatively uneducated but is street smart and able to read the tea leaves as regards their family's welfare. What is more, one can wager a guess that they are as or more religious than previously thought (the figures pointing to increasingly non-religious persons doubtless come predominantly from the more educated populace).

Conclusion

Dilthey was born eleven years prior to Nietzsche (1844–1900) and survived him by the same amount. Two full contemporaries, both passing away just before the Great War, and both with something to say about war and society. In fact, without using the terms much, each of these writers speaks to honor-based and dignity-based principles, both taking much the same position. Only one of them is remembered for being a part of the WWI conversation, though Dilthey would have had a lot to offer that conversation. Here they are brought together as parts of a different but related conversation: the “cultural” conversation.

In the first of three sections of this paper, honor and two sorts of dignity (traditional and modern) are introduced. In the specifically modern context, there are again two sorts of dignity: the one normative, the other a cultish phenomenon which is difficult to defeat (the cult of dignity). There is a cult on the honor-side as well, which describes the normative office and its stewardship, and which tends to degrade into a cult of dignity. Zarathustra's storyline parallels in the main the translation of the first cult into the second.

In the second section an overview is offered of Nietzsche's principal theses, namely *ressentiment*, slave mentality, *Bildung*, fatalism, and Zarathustrianism. Where there has been confusion over Nietzsche's ideas, I list twenty-something statements which illustrate commonalities throughout his work. Nietzsche's work was indeed aptly utilized to justify Germany's *kulturkrieg*, if also to a degree falsely. Nietzsche fully knew what readers could likely take from his work, and that could possibly include

events that did in fact happen. He was even accused of being responsible for the war itself, which is categorically false – a willful twisting of Nietzsche's texts. Nonetheless, he did offer boatloads of culturally oriented ammunition despite his evident distaste for German nationalism.

In the last section Dilthey is portrayed as a typical liberal (in the American sense of the word). In other words, a person well inured to the dignity approach. But, like others before and since, he could identify with the Romantic school of life in many ways, and he would defend many of these same traits and emulate them himself. He counsels mutual understanding between cultural systems, perhaps knowing what proved to be the case, that such as there existed intercommunication, it could not forestall let alone prevent war. That would require that the dignity-based nations entirely adopt true dignity in their policies.

Nietzsche presents us with a fictional account of the three stages of the spiritual development: the camel, where religion sways all else and defines all values; the lion, which rebels against this, and the child, who "overcomes," realizing a new, presumably more adequate match between expectations and reality. A more realistic interpretation has mankind going through the stages of childhood in which security is the chief desideratum, then adolescence, in which independence is the desideratum, and finally adulthood, in which overcoming assures a more realistic posture toward reality and the challenges of life.

Nietzsche's "child" is actually the adolescent with a firmer grasp of the humor and sarcasm that allows one to be the permanent creator, fully independent but needful of a new attitude, that of saying Yes to reality; but this is feigned, a made-up reality of Nietzsche's fecundity. It is not the reality of the adult. It is all a gigantic piece of fine fiction. Life cannot and should not reflect the ideal Zarathustrian. It never has and doubtless never will. Nietzsche's fantasy world offers the specter of grown-up bipolar bullies with a sense of sarcastic humor. Perfect for the cultists of dignity. Which is all the sadder because Nietzsche himself valued French culture, including its notion of dignity.⁷² This dignity is nowhere in evidence in the overman. Absence of *ressentiment*, a fine goal, is too high a goal for most humans. Dignity is

72) "Hah! Come up, dignity! Virtuous dignity! European dignity! European fervor, European ravenous hunger." Nietzsche, Zarathustra, 309.

not too high. It is well-nigh available for those who are in a more ideal adult world: in the actual reality.

Will my suggestions defeat the war drums? Probably not. But true dignity-based policies will make the United States and Western Europe the collective beacon to the world. Those honor-based nations urging themselves upon the world stage will argue that they find it untenable to be surrounded by their enemies (as Putin has stated). It was, according to a few pundits at the time, Germany's excuse going into World War I. If world opinion settles with the beacon states, as it no doubt will (but not, however, under the present regimes)⁷³ it will be because the West elected to respect the honor-based world and pursue true dignity-based policies nationally and internationally. Winning in the grand political scheme requires putting the right face to the world. If war proves inescapable, Dilthey would be fully satisfied – and vindicated – at these results. Zarathustra, on the other hand, requires lessons in engaging with adulthood.

73) It will be an honor-based country which fires the first nuclear weapon, one which flies undetected, to which the receiving country will not respond in kind but will prefer to take the controversy straight to the United Nations.

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