



“We Scholars” According to Nietzsche

Giosuè Ghisalberti

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ABBREVIATIONS

- BGE *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Tr. R.J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973.
- BT *The Birth of Tragedy*. Tr. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.
- D *Daybreak*. Tr. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- EH *Ecce Homo*. Tr. R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books, 1979.
- EI *Anti-Education: On the Future or our Educational Institutions*. Tr. Damion Searls. Ed. with an introduction and notes, Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon. New York: New York Review of Books, 2016.
- GS *The Gay Science*. Tr. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.
- HC "Homer's Contest." Tr. Christa Davis Acampora. Urbana, Illinois: Nietzscheana # 5, A Publication of the North American Nietzsche Society, 1996.
- HH *Human, all too Human*. Tr. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- PT *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the early 1870's*. Ed. and Tr. Daniel Breazeale. New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1979.
- UM *Untimely Meditations*. Tr. R.J. Hollingdale; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- WP *The Will to Power*. Tr. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.
- WPh *We Philologists*. Tr. J.M. Kennedy, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Vol. 8. Ed. Oscar Levy. Edinburgh: T.N. Foulis, 1911.
- Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Tr. R.J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961.



CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Nietzsche, Professor of Philology at the University of Basel, 1869–1879

*One repays a teacher badly
if one remains only a pupil.*
—Ecce Homo

In the section of the 1886 *Beyond Good and Evil* called “We Scholars,” Nietzsche returns again to the very first personal problems he confronted when he found himself with a new life as a university professor of philology and, contrary to what should be self-evident for us, estranged from himself and his new circumstances. The deepest, most personal struggles, as to his self-conception and what he aspired to become, had not been at all settled despite the considerable passage of time since 1869 or the number of writings intended to represent what he called, in this late work on morality and culture, “Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.” Prelude: a preparation of so much of what he envisioned to still be possible, for himself and for his readers—those who had taken the place of his former students in the university and the Gymnasium. Neither the hope nor the affirmation had been given up despite overwhelming pressures since the early days of his tenure. Ill-health, isolation, a threatening exuberance: they had grown, out of proportion, each with their own effects. Meanwhile,

the future, as an idea beyond himself, and for the sake of a different understanding of education as he had always understood it, and put into practice, was still viable and urgent. A pedagogy for the purpose of the excellence of *paideia* and the “self-cultivation” of *Bildung* had been essential to him personally as well as for his students—and, later, for his unknown readers. But before he could move in the direction of a more expansive future, Nietzsche had to take a retrograde step and, as did so often before, return to the familiarity of the classical world, to the Greeks in particular, while at the same time back into himself and his own resources. Individuals remained for him to recall as a memory and a contemporary loss. History continued to advance in time, and yet had regressed in self-conception and actuality. Modernity had diminished itself; culture had lost its vibrancy and its ties to other epochs, too busy rushing ahead in the pursuit of science and progress and that fatal ambition of states—was as he had experienced it as a medical orderly. Could monumental names be made real beyond their historical distance and then internalized to bring modernity, with renewed dynamism, toward the promise of its continuity and a more complete unfolding beyond the material or the many, too-numerous temptations of this or that ideology declaring itself “progressive?” Or was “the self-glorification and presumption of the scholar,” (BGE 129)—in matter not at all related to reading and studying and teaching—on the way to becoming standardized and then a model for later generations? One either/or had been foremost in his mind when he set out to think about the future of education. His experiences, as he recounts them, will also be our own.

Addressing contemporary scholars, his “peers,” and expressly aware of his unknown but certain readers in the future, he writes. “The whole species of a Heraclitus, a Plato, an Empedocles, and whatever else these royal and splendid hermits of the spirit were called, is lacking in our modern world” (BGE 130). Above and beyond any of their specific ideas, their individuality (being *hermits of the spirit*) there was one certainty Nietzsche believed in for himself. Classical philosophers had come to represent the essence of *individuality, language, and truth* and done so as teachers, in schools that were prototypes of the university, to hand on to their students

a way of thinking in relation to oneself, others, and the world.¹ But how was one supposed to be a hermit, *of anything*, while publicly teaching and writing, as a self-defining individual, in a university and in a placid community such as Basel? And how was the impoverishment of the modern world supposed to be remedied by recollecting the ancient ideas of world-historical figures and the excellence of a civilization by a group of scholars such as bibliophile philologists who were less interested in ideas than on the minutiae of ancient writing, of fragments and texts and editions of uncertain provenance or authorship? More than a decisive epoch or the outstanding figures of a singular civilization, however, he had to return to one if not the fundamental experience of his life when he took up his teaching position at the age of 24 and, with no idea of the consequences, he would soon be faced with a profound self-division and then a perpetual struggle. Each would be methodical. An *agon*, a fight was soon declared, inside and out, in himself and against a prevailing time and culture. The intensity of the experience would soon be perceived, reflectively, as both a cultural symptom and part of his own isolated privacy, as an individual and a teacher.

Wolfgang Müller-Lauter believes that Nietzsche's philosophy is one founded on *contradictions*. Reviewing the German scholarship at the time (before 1971) he comments: "the inherent deficiency of these and other attempts to reconcile *contradictions* [*Gegensätze*] in Nietzsche's philosophy is that they do not take Nietzsche's philosophy of contradictions sufficiently into account. Nietzsche sought to understand contradictoriness

¹His knowledge of Diogenes Laertes and the attention he paid to the *Lives of the Philosophers* (Tr. Pamela Mensch. Ed. James Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) was for Nietzsche of personal significance, as opposed to mere philological interests, because these individuals (and the lives they lived as philosophers and teachers) gave him the sense of a still possible actuality, of being, for himself and for history despite the considerable obstacles for such a fulfillment. That, in itself, is relevant because it differs so drastically from his philological criticism. In the context of a first statement, we can very well see Nietzsche's *objections to himself* as a scholar of antiquity and for becoming an expert in the technique of reading as opposed to the phenomenological transference of one individual to another. In his introductory comments on Diogenes and Nietzsche, James Miller writes. "His research on Diogenes was an important factor in being offered a professorship at Basel," 621. Was that to be in many ways regrettable and a contradiction he would have to live with for a long time—on the one hand, his deep appreciation for the ideas of the philosophers (like Epicurus, so influential for him) and on the other the attention to Diogenes' own research, which he found to be lacking?

[*Gegensatz*] as constitutive of the world.”² My alternative interpretation will instead focus not on any of Nietzsche’s supposed *philosophical* analysis of contradictions, but rather (first of all) on his inheritance from the Greeks in terms of a personal and cultural struggle, against himself as a professional philologist, the institution of the university, and the direction of culture in a still unfulfilled modernity. He aspired to be capable of reevaluating the modern world and, in a work only partly on Greek tragedy and much more on the present, “who, creating worlds, frees himself from the *distress* of fulness and *overfullness* from the *affliction* of the contradictions compressed in his soul” (BT 22). The contradictions were not formal or philosophical; they were, ultimately, psychological and indicative of a conflict within a history he set himself to identifying. His creative metaphysics is unmistakable in force and purpose: “what matters is that it betrays a spirit who will one day fight and risk whatever the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence.” This one “fight and risk” appears, today, to have been predicted with stunning clarity. Did Nietzsche recognize the fight between the free spirit and morality—more exactly, the theoretical man of morality and the metaphysician of truth as they appeared in the post-15 sections *The Birth of Tragedy*? Nietzsche’s *choice*, perceived beyond the Greek tragic, the theatrical, and the opposition between deities, became the foundations of his thought during the decade-long period in the university.

Why did he re-examine his personal experience as a scholar and a professor in a university at the time when he was writing *Beyond Good and Evil* almost 10 years after two of the most decisive events in his life: in 1876, when he separated himself from the spectacles on and off the stage at Bayreuth, followed by the “sabbatical” in Sorrento and the *psychological observations* (his definition) of Volume One of *Human, all too Human*, both as precursors to quitting the university? By that time, a relation had been created: metaphysics, psychology, and the spirit. How he had achieved their inter-connectedness can be traced from his earliest writings, many of them unpublished and in the form of fragments and notes and unfinished essays, and comprehensively to serve the individual, language, and truth, the three over-arching themes of Nietzsche as a philosopher for educators and students. Setting himself free from a number of old attachments had been for a long time necessary. They were internal and

²Müller-Lauter, Wolfgang. *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of his Philosophy*. Tr. David J. Parent. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999, 5.

preceded any connection to both Wagner and Schopenhauer, to music or “metaphysics” (that now oversaturated, twentieth-century word, much too narrowly categorized) or other relations. Any question on “how to approach his thought”³ could not avoid either, in himself more than acknowledged influences, not if we are to recognize the force of his thinking for us today and therefore for reasons that are extra-scholarly and certainly beyond the limits of the university.

His “beyond” was more complex than about good and evil as a moral problem; he was not yet on *the other side of himself* and the limits of history; the primacy of psychology, so essential to his philosophy, had not yet been fully intuited in 1869. An obstacle, in himself, had not been overcome; despite all the philosophical work to get ahead of a decade-long experience, there were outstanding remainders, including for the readers he had defined in the recently completed work on the mythic Zarathustra, another individual who was, also, a teacher with students and *disciples*⁴—that is, individuals with fidelity to him and determined to be witnesses. Nietzsche’s readers in the future were not always going to be scholars (as

³The reference is to Jeremy Fortier’s *The Challenge of Nietzsche: How to Approach his Thought*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020. The recent publication once again stresses, against a wave of interpretation of his thought from the last century (especially in France) how Nietzsche’s range of thought has to be considered from out of his personal experiences and, to quote one of Fortier’s sections, “the drive for independence.” In his “Introduction” to the conference proceedings on his work (398–400 *Review of Politics*, Vol. 83, Iss. 3, Summer 2021), Fortier made mention of two important points: Nietzsche’s philosophical developments had to go through the “autobiographical self-assertions that he produced towards the end of his career,” (398) and that “the most important challenge left for Nietzsche’s readers is not to identify one stage of his career or another as the most definite” (399). Nevertheless, beginnings have their own place and validity. Anything “definite” cannot be measured against the whole. Still, the ten years of being a university professor and the writing of the time merits particular attention.

⁴That Zarathustra gathered students around himself was a significant, if understated, necessity of his teaching. One of the self-divisions Nietzsche still struggled against, now as a writer and no longer a university professor, was how much influence he could actually have on any readers. Two moments of Zarathustra are clear echoes of a consciousness Nietzsche had as early as 1869. On the one hand, he writes: “Zarathustra can speak and give again, and again show love to those he loves ... I go new ways, a new speech has come to me” (Z 108). Zarathustra is a quintessential teacher. But not without significant conflict about a belief in the efficacy of pedagogy. The teacher might in fact be superfluous, as Nietzsche seems to indicate in the section called “Of Self-Overcoming,” a passage no one can teach. “Thus life once taught me From out of themselves they must overcome themselves again and again” (Z 139). If we are to highlight these two moments Zarathustra’s teaching—speaking with love, and the ability to learn from existence and to overcome oneself from inner resources—they can also lead us back to the very beginning of Nietzsche’s life as a thinker and so trace the breadth of his experience.

he had understood them over an extended period of time, never sympathetically) nor would they be the fellow-philologists he had so often maligned for their narrow interests. The bitterness is still palpable. Every time he so much as mentions the “philologists and schoolmen,” the descriptions are not the least bit complimentary: he sees them as “the most cultured and conceited of all scholars” (BGE 129). The *reminiscence*, to use a suggestive word, is not merely an objective one; he has not excused himself from a personal involvement and therefore finds it necessary, once again, to return at the same time to his past and a cultural epoch. His relationship to the ancients was an intimate one; as for the present and the nihilism he diagnosed, estrangement and hostility could not be overcome, nor could they be if the opposition had to be sustained and the “risk and fight” prolonged.

Nietzsche’s *psychological observations* are, when they were both a diagnostic and a possible remedy, dynamic and many-sided. His creative impulse extended itself from out of him toward others who were themselves prepared. The turn away from the dogmatic, philosophically speaking, is not as simple as another extreme or a reversal. His phenomenological multiplicity is not merely an intellectual disposition and reduced to his so-called perspectivism. The first and most important observation had to be an individual one: any ideal of overcoming—oneself and the past, and the hard intrusion of *memories and history*, so often unconscious—had to begin with recollections and their lingering effects. Psychology was, before any genealogy of history or morality, primary. The role of his depth-psychological analysis and its metaphysical relation would lead, in *Human, all too Human*, to the free spirit. The autobiographical connections were unmistakable since they could be traced throughout his early writings. “It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir; moreover, that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy has every time constituted the real germ of life out of which the entire plant has grown” (BGE 37). The self-revelation has often been quoted. An interpretation is not superfluous: every *great philosophy* must be a confession, an unconscious memoir, and immoral—the latter understood as antithetical to the prevailing values, and *politicized* morality,

of the world. The “confession” was by no means done for the sake of forgiveness or redemption. None was expected or forthcoming because the message was intended for the benefit of others and had nothing to do with guilt.

What were some of the consequences of his *immoral intentions*? My sense of Robert Pippin’s discussion of psychology and “first philosophy”⁵ can be re-stated as: *the unity and development* of metaphysics, psychology, and the free spirit in the edifice of Nietzsche’s thinking; and if precedence is to be avoided, then these disciplines are to be unified for a number of inter-related reasons, for the individual overall and his practice as a reader, that is, a philologist as Nietzsche understood the task. Hermeneutics is appropriate as long as the historical discipline does not restrain his own kind of interpretation. His first philosophy was a pedagogical one, for scholars and students, above all for the latter who had not yet been fully indoctrinated beyond any knowledge learned in a curriculum. The imperative remains; his students are called to become themselves and independently of today’s world-makers who have recently become quite busy with some extraordinary, if ironic, plans. The stunningly named *Meta* is only one.

Returning to the sections in “We Scholars” and other references in *Beyond Good and Evil* with a certain kind of attentiveness should create a sense of unease, discomfort, some personal apprehension; but it seems to me that anyone who is called upon to read the passages have not always done so with an adequate sense of his purpose. The message has been kept at a distance—to protect ourselves, “we scholars,” from his invective. He certainly has never spared anyone’s feelings, least of all the scholarly community, academics and with descriptions that are insulting—like “ignoble species.” Ignoble: hardly the worst one possible. Nietzsche finds us lacking in the extreme, in part because we have made ourselves legislators;

⁵Pippin, Robert B. *Nietzsche, Psychology, First Philosophy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010. Although the relationship between Nietzsche’s psychology and philosophy is indisputable, I disagree with Pippin that the former is going to replace the latter—and, stated by him—“especially metaphysics.” One way of describing the project to follow is to see Nietzsche making the attempt to unify philology (that is, the act of reading) philosophy and psychology into what he will call, and support, *the metaphysics of truth*. My interests are in examining Nietzsche’s works of a definitive period to see how the idea of teaching and learning could lead to the truth about the value of life and as a foundational principle to think, feel, and live by. Equally important, Pippin also points out that Nietzsche had a “resistance” to theory. My analysis will be substantially stronger; because when, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, theory and morality are complicit, the resistance has to become a confrontation.

which forces us to either disavow his repeated addresses or, for once, as more than scholars with objects to study independently of our own make-up, take up what he expects of us *today*. A few well-known Nietzsche scholars have not excused themselves from stating difficult truths. They have addressed fellow scholars and, perhaps more importantly, *students*, a term that in no way should suggest any formal enrollment like “undergraduate.” Calendars, years, and semesters are not the issue.

Nihilism, we should remind ourselves, is no mere intellectual category or a theory about culture; it is also a *medical* diagnosis and one that scholars and academics are obliged to reflect on *for themselves*, for a condition they in fact may have exacerbated if not completely caused. They have played their part. Who are the negligent? Moralizing academics and university bureaucrats have created a new *environment*—which is different than a culture. The former is concerned above all with animal safety and security, like an over-protecting mother with its young who, in the human world, can often be kept dependent forever; being metaphorically surrounded, in one kind of pen or another, is no help to them. As for *pens*, in the ancient world called a *stylus* and used for writing, they are almost obsolete. Academics and bureaucrats are responsible for our situation at the moment, and for turning students into fragile things to be taken care of and looked over. The word neuroses is not unknown in Nietzsche’s analytic vocabulary. So is degeneration as a particular form of regression. The symptoms are many and identifiable.

The first of many references to our own “self-examination” (to use a Platonic dictum and one related to Apollo as the god of medicine) is provided by two well-known Nietzsche scholars who, on this occasion, cooperated for our benefit. Others, for more than their expertise on Nietzsche (their honesty and courage), will add to the arguments ahead. “Nietzsche’s psychological analysis of the scholar is extraordinarily perceptive and, like most of his psychological analyses, it has disturbing aspects.”⁶ Nietzsche made it “disturbing” on purpose in order not to allow us to be complacent or give ourselves undue credit. How the philological is augmented, over

⁶Acampora, Christa Davis and Pearson, Keith Ansell. *Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil: A Reader’s Guide*. London: Continuum, 2011, 138. Specifically writing on “We Scholars,” they add. “The title of this part of the book is intriguing and can be read as a sign that Nietzsche wishes to enlist scholarship in the service of the noble ends of genuine philosophy,” 132. How he did so, and with what success, is a question we are called to answer at the present time. One other point: while “noble ends” are one aspect of his thinking, there is no way to ignore the equally necessary difficulties of a confrontation.

time, by the psychological will have to be traced in Nietzsche's early writings. The relationship of writing and consciousness is at the heart of his philosophy. "One would be hard pressed to deny that the psychology (and the conclusions Nietzsche develops from it) are tough to stomach, even, it seems, for Nietzsche scholars."⁷ The psychology will be much harder to "stomach" once the analysis is directed not only toward politics or culture, but toward the psychological characteristics of "we scholars" and how we have been actors in an exclusive drive in society. Are we surprised to now see morality and nihilism as one movement, each reinforcing the other? Freud's description of "hyper-morality,"⁸ a century ago, is exacting since it analyzes the unconscious motives of morality. Once the pathologies of the super-ego were exposed, the "goodness" of morality was a superficial effect of a more concealed motive; some of it has turned out to be something far removed from the good and with consequences now becoming all too well-known. Sean Kirkland believes that "once psychology becomes fundamental, the question of the value of the truth becomes the question of the will to truth, a psychic drive."⁹ Granted, but before any such question can be satisfactorily raised, never mind answered, we have to follow Nietzsche as he presents us with the diagnosis of what he recognizes as one of the most obvious symptoms of nihilism and the origin of a psychic drive. His psychology was inseparable from its foundations in a metaphysical truth. How he reaches the point when they are inter-related is one of the most consequential events, over time, of his emerging philosophy.

In *Daybreak*, a work sub-titled "Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality," he adds a concluding suggestion at the end of the one of the early aphorisms. "O observers of mankind, learn better to observe yourselves" (D 17). It was, of course, much easier to become infatuated with *rhetoric* in the late twentieth century, for one, than to turn his analysis on us, as philosophers, scholars, and academics (which is, for Nietzsche, a matter of *rank* where equality, as a "right," makes no sense whatsoever) and to admit how much harm we were doing to ourselves and to many departments in the university: the identities produced by a number of

⁷ Muldoon, Paul. "The Power of Forgetting: Ressentiment, Guilt, and Transformative Politics," 669–683 *Political Psychology*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2017, 672.

⁸ For example, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. SE 18:65–143. For an analysis of morality, thoroughly Nietzschean in content and execution, see especially the "Postscript."

⁹ Kirkland, Paul E. "Nietzsche's Honest Masks: From Truth to Nobility Beyond Good and Evil," 575–604 *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 66, Iss. 4 (Fall 2004), 588.

departments have become self-propagating and completely immune because safeguarded by ideological self-references. The conversations are closed and off-limits to anyone but the self-defined or proclaimed members. That has strictly defined group psychology in departments; not many have asked if any production of thinking has met the criteria of scholarship. As for excellence, that has been superseded by morality.

The cloisters ensure their own validity and positions are endlessly re-confirmed, which does nothing for the truth and *lies* in the humanities; the latter are ubiquitous because ideological. In-coming students have no chance to avoid the one-dimensional manipulation of thought; they are not so much educated as directed toward this or that imperative to be critiqued and negated. Meanwhile, the chosen (for their identities) are given all the attention. Any comparison of a scholar or an academic—they are not, of course, the same—to Nietzsche's *individual* will leave us with a deep sense of inadequacy. "We scholars" should ask ourselves about our values, our interpretations, and our creativity and see how they match this description.

The individual is something quite new which creates new things, something absolute; all his acts are entirely his own. Ultimately, the individual derives the values of his acts from himself, because he had to interpret in a quite individual way even the words he has inherited. His interpretation of a formula at least is personal, even if he does not create a formula: as an interpreter he is still creative. (WP 403)

So much of Nietzsche's vocabulary is present here: enumerating every single one requires an extended commentary, which will be deferred because *The Will to Power* will not be part of the coming interpretation on his early writings. The study to come does its best to represent how the individual, language, and truth are integrated into a system of values as it pertains to a creative interpretation, ideals Nietzsche developed as a professor of philology (that is, as a reader and interpreter) and then applied them to *metaphysical* questions, for life, our lives. These were his private ideas; his creative energy was essential to the process of thinking as it was for teaching. Educators and students are given everything necessary for the task to pursue on their own; there are no shortages of concepts and avenues for a personal inquiry.

Dale Wilkerson sets out with a work that "examines the lesser-known and under-appreciated work of Nietzsche's early career, looking for

evidence in those works suggesting how this period held sway in Nietzsche's later thought."¹⁰ Although my interests are also with the "lesser-known" works, starting from the public lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, the overall intent of the project is not so concerned with the persistence of themes and philosophical arguments all the way to the last productive year. Rather than look beyond the time-frame of my study (from the beginning of his tenure at the University of Basel in 1869 to his "retirement" in 1879—which essentially splits his life into two and may be a better dividing line than one consensus on early, middle, and late as distinct periods of writing) my concentration is wholly on the development of himself, and his philosophy, during an original and sustained period of creativity when the metaphysics of truth and his depth-psychology led to the being of the free spirit. His conception of truth remains outstanding. "This thought elevates me: how should it not be true" (BGE 141)? His elevation is immanent, in the here and now of existence as opposed to the transcendental dreams of the past in either the limits of religion or the fantasy of philosophy. Asking himself the question on Nietzsche "becoming" a philosopher, Laurence Lampert writes. "While Nietzsche held very early that it was important to learn that philosophers existed, it was only late in his own career, just two and a half years from its end, that he himself began to report explicitly on his own existence."¹¹ Research into his early unpublished writings of the 1872–1874 period (including a plan for a book with various titles, including *The Philosopher*) shows him to be preoccupied with such an achievement from the beginning. Returning to Nietzsche's first writings should also *serve us* and much more than as a scholarly endeavor. A re-appraisal of our interpretations (and the history of scholarship) should be a periodic undertaking. Each generation has its own responsibilities: being discerning about previous interpretations and how formidable they appeared at the time is one. For another generation, they may be irrelevant; or worse, detrimental for us now, like the late twentieth century and what they left for us to now better evaluate with determination and independence. Popularity has faded; so much better for us who were not (and are not) swayed by the fads of theory.

¹⁰Wilkerson, Dale. *Nietzsche and the Greeks*. London: Continuum, 2006, 2. His first chapter is "Classical Studies for the Benefit of the Time to Come."

¹¹Lampert, Laurence. *What a Philosopher Is: Becoming Nietzsche*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017.

On the subject of “We Scholars,” Douglas Burnham reminds us that “*Wir Gelehrten*” is related to “*Lehrer*,” a teacher. The title, whether teacher or professor, researcher or scholar, will not be without its persistent *agon* for Nietzsche, as all the early writings will show. The conflict wavers between self-loss and creative work, estrangement and the discovery of his originality while developing himself as an educator. The *metaphysics* of such an occupation are also filled with uneasy consequences; a teacher is a medium of transmission and assumes the task in a context that is not always conducive. Education can be an interference; certain kinds of instruction can impede, as can the nature of an institution such as colleges and universities where norms are guiding and, too often, mandatory and restrictive. Compulsions have their own impeccable logic; rationalizations are endless. Implied authority can so easily conceal itself behind the façade of care. Every child knows how solicitude can be suffocating. And yet, despite the certainty of a *feeling*, oppressive and damaging to the sense of self, today many seem to enjoy being defined according to a frailty and then accepting extra-curricular care as their due and entitlement and right. There are universities with entire departments devoted to everyone’s “protection” and safety. The security patrols on campuses are the most visible but not the most effective, or autocratic, of our guards. Martha Nussbaum once wrote on “the fragility of goodness” in the Greek world; today its truth runs in both directions at once, and far differently than in Athens. *Fragility* has itself become a *good*. A work on “ethics” today could easily be given a title like “the goodness of fragility.” The humorous metaphor of *snowflake* is not out of place on North American campuses. Bureaucrats, in the meantime, are continually watching for the weather and making sure the wind blows in the right direction.

Nietzsche experienced two simultaneous conflicts: they were personal and professional, at once divided by a discipline, philology, while finding himself within the university and alienated from its confinement. How could he both struggle and work, as a teacher and writer, without being paralyzed by the barriers he saw, visibly and in other ways? Burnham adds: “Nietzsche, as we know, was a one time university professor ... but he and the expectations of both university and the discipline found themselves variously at odds.”¹² “At odds” is one way of putting it. One of the plans ahead will be to examine a number of published and unpublished writings

¹²Burnham, Douglas. *Reading Nietzsche: An Analysis of 'Beyond Good and Evil.'* London: Routledge, 2007, 135.

on the discipline of philology, the university as an institution (in his time and ours), and himself as a teacher—a responsibility he took seriously, for his students, despite a considerable estrangement from the profession. “We Scholars” and other notes in *Beyond Good and Evil* has been chosen as a beginning since it reveals so much of Nietzsche’s motivations for his future readers. Some of his more astute interpreters have given us a number of statements on the matter; psychology has been rightly emphasized. Biographers have not been indifferent to his experience.

Although the entirety of Nietzsche’s work could have been analyzed from our perspective (that is, his own evaluation of what “we scholars” meant to him all the way to January 1889—when he signed postcards with the name of other teachers, mythological ones among them, like Dionysos, or historical ones like the man first called a rabbi and later Christ), a historical experience has been chosen instead so as to better concentrate on his actual beginning as a scholar and teacher, when he took up his position at the University of Basel, until the time when he made the final decision to withdraw and become an independent thinker and writer. Many have been attentive to Nietzsche’s experience. Biographers have little to disagree with each other. We have, from Rüdiger Safranski, “Overture: The Drama of Disillusionment.”¹³ Julian Young, in a similar part of his biography, uses the title “The Reluctant Professor.”¹⁴ In Richard Schacht’s edited collection of essays, a brief introductory section refers to him as “the rebellious professor” and also adds that “unconventional interests and writings antagonized his colleagues” and, to emphasize one of our themes, we will spend time thinking about the reasons why he was “struggling with academic life.”¹⁵ Ronald Heyman writes that Nietzsche’s “vocation was to teach, but he did not intend to go on indefinitely working in a university.”¹⁶ One hesitates to call his time as a teacher a “vocation,” at least in the traditional sense. In any case, many others could follow with similar observations. But before any attempt at a *phenomenological* category for him, including the once-used “dynamite,”¹⁷ and prior to making

¹³Safranski, Rüdiger. *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. Tr. Shelley Frisch. New York: W.W. Norton, 2002.

¹⁴Young, Julian. *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

¹⁵Schacht, Richard (Ed.). *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, xv.

¹⁶Hayman, Ronald. *Nietzsche: A Critical Life*. London: Quartet Books, 1980, 132.

¹⁷Prideaux, Sue. *I am Dynamite: A Life of Nietzsche*. London: Faber & Faber, 2018.

any attempt to look directly *at him*, the obligation here will be to allow him to, also, look *at us* and ensure a measure of self-consciousness and analysis. Nietzsche implicates us, in his life and thinking; there is no avoiding the fact of his address to us, as a community, however disparate, and as individuals. The appeal to students remains as forceful as ever. The references have been too many to avoid, and yet scholars have done their best to ignore him when he was writing, directly, to us. Perhaps the insults directed at academics were—and are—too close to home, biting, like the one reference to “hypocrisy” and “how much falsehood was concealed under the most honoured type of morality” (BGE 143). *Falsehood and morality*. Nietzsche made one of his truths a contemporary reality for us to perceive without illusions. Admitting as much may take more time; the present seems unable to notice anything but its own obsessions and self-justifications.

James Porter, a scholar who has provided us with a number of important leads, writes. “The work of interpretation needed to unearth and evaluate his early thinking remains a glaring lacuna in Nietzsche scholarship.”¹⁸ For our purposes, selected writings from the period beginning with his university appointment in 1869 to the writing and publication of the first volume of *Human, all too Human* in 1878 will be our focus. They will be more than sufficient time to allow Nietzsche to examine *us*, personally, psychologically (and, above all, morally) and our contemporary situation. That he anticipated an age of nihilism is, now, no longer controversial, or a surprise—except for those who sense themselves to be part of a moral transformation of university life and, ultimately, liberal democracies as a whole and for the good of all. At the same time, however, we will not lose sight of Nietzsche himself and how he turned himself into a witness and with a testimony that has very few parallels. Freud, as always, comes to mind. Our consciousness of him has to be more than biographical; his self-analysis can be at the origin of our own personal reflections. A question by Claudia Crawford has not (as far as I know) been asked before in the way she does. “Why was Nietzsche in the position of leading an essentially double life at the time? That of the young, idealistic, yet critical professor of philology ... with that of ... one who ‘hid

¹⁸ Porter, James I. *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

away' the thoughts closest to him?"¹⁹ *Double-life*. We can venture an answer: the attempt will be made to at least partially trace Nietzsche's experience of writing, for himself, and for others during the time he was a teacher. Taken together, the writings to be presented here can be incorporated into more of the whole as an on-going process for him. His unpublished writings, in fragments, notes, and unfinished essays, will not be underemphasized. They remained private for a reason; only carefully selected parts went from calligraphy to print.

Concentrating on the time of his tenure for a 10-year period gives us the opportunity to re-visit writings that have not received sufficient attention and others (starting with the public Basel lectures of 1872 titled *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*) less well-known; on the subject of teaching and students, they deserve closer attention. Initial ideas will persist for Nietzsche as a professor of philology if not as a scholar in any conventional sense. One finds it difficult to think of him as *early* and/or *late* except as a matter of dates. Chronology has little to do with his direct experiences. He defines himself as timeless for a reason. The word "mature" makes little sense for his philosophy unless one is convinced that later, quintessentially Nietzschean concepts—for example, the eternal recurrence, the *Übermensch*, or the will to power—are culminations and deserve to be interpreted as such. In any event, none of these later ideas will figure in the work to come. There are more immediate problems to reflect on. Early ones, hardly self-evident, were decisive for the theme of education: *strength*, for example, was a recurring theme long before will and power became ontological realities and as a precondition for an unavoidable necessity. One character virtue became defining for his entire philosophy. There was no way for the individual to relate himself to language and truth without the strength to fight any would-be "rivals."

In the Introduction to his 1872 lectures, and our first chapter to come, he writes. "We do not envy the people who feel completely at home in the present and consider contemporary conditions 'self-evident'—neither for this belief of theirs nor this scandalously intellectual term 'self-evident' so in vogue nowadays." Today no one even needs to mention the hyphenation; the two terms are assumed and not so much as mentioned when it comes to the moral rectification of the world. "Nietzschean agonism is, of

¹⁹Crawford, Claudia. *The Beginning of Nietzsche's Theory of Language*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988, 12.

course, rooted in his doctrine of the will to power.”²⁰ General consensus can be readily found. “That the notion of the will to power already entails the concept of struggle (*Kampf, Streit*) can be easily shown.”²¹ However, long before the will to power was created as a principle of being, it was a personal reality for Nietzsche as a teacher. Educating his students in strength was as important as developing their intelligence. In his early writings, he constantly related himself to his struggle against a limited conception of history and culture; his pedagogy therefore included the development of a particular kind of strength. One of his preoccupations, as soon as he entered a place for teaching, was going to remain one of his most important values. How many, inside the university today, struggle with silence, or acquiescence? Surely, speaking up has not become so dangerous that everyone believes it is prohibitive unless sanctioned? Have we become as cowardly as that?

He knew us almost before we came to know ourselves. “Somewhere between these ‘self-evident’ types and loners stand the *fighters*” (EI 91). His distinctions and its many-layered relationship to strength, confrontation, enemies, and fighters will be omni-present: the themes will be stressed, for his readers (us today) as preparations that may also be necessary to defend what he considers universal principles of being; for if the individual, language, and truth have been systematically undermined by some academics (those especially infatuated with twentieth-century theories and complicit with social norms and their theoretical rationalizations) one has to then ask the difficult question—most especially when the moral, all too moral has come to be dominant as the only inviolable truth of being and social life. In the meantime, the “loners” Nietzsche referred to, the ones who have withdrawn for a time of reflection, may hear a call and an appeal to return and participate in the struggle. Hermits may, perhaps, become less anonymous. Scholars who have, recently, decided to be silent out of prudence (for fear of being ostracized by colleagues who claim moral superiority and wield the power to show it) may find that the times call for a new *engagement*. *Free speech*, after all, was a Greek invention. *Parrhesia* was a bold and free speech; such boldness was no less true for

²⁰Zurn, Perry. *Curiosity and Power: The Politics of Inquiry*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021, 54.

²¹Aydin, Ciano. “Nietzsche on Reality as Will to Power: Towards an ‘Organization-Struggle’ Model’.” 25–48 *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Spring, 33, 2007, 33.