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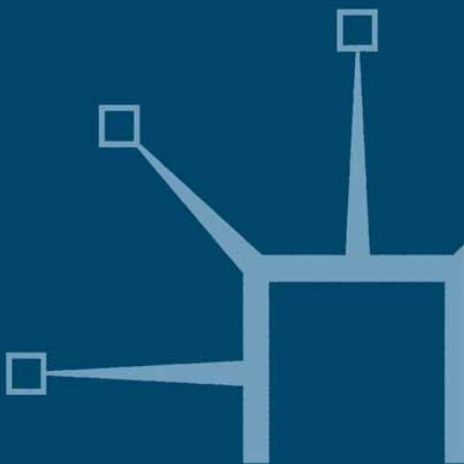
War and Social Theory

World, Value and Identity

Neal Curtis



War and Social Theory

Also by Neal Curtis

AGAINST AUTONOMY: Lyotard, Judgement and Action

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2006 978-1-4039-3371-3

First published 2006 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

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ISBN 978-1-349-51681-0 ISBN 978-0-230-50197-3 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9780230501973

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Curtis, Neal.
War and social theory : world, value, and identity / Neal Curtis.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-349-51681-0
1. War (Philosophy) 2. Sociology—Philosophy. I. Title.
JZ6390.C87 2005
355.02—dc22 2005051281

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06

This book is dedicated to my Grandfather, Henry Curtis,
and to my Great Uncle, Cecil Till,
who had to live having returned without 'Harry'.

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Acknowledgements

This book is indebted to a course entitled 'The Images and Rhetoric of Conflict' that I was fortunate enough to teach at Anglia Polytechnic University. The course was devised by Pat Coyle who was determined that students taking a Communications Studies degree should be given the opportunity to reflect upon one of the most intractable problems of human relations. I would also like to thank the students who between the years 2000 and 2004 tried with me to make sense of the 'election' of George W. Bush, '9/11', the announcement of a war against terror, the invasion of Afghanistan, and the invasion and occupation of Iraq. I would also like to acknowledge the support of colleagues who commented on drafts and helped clarify certain issues. In particular, a word of gratitude should go to William Hutson, Matt Connell, Tanya Horeck, Neil Turnbull, Couze Venn, Joss Hands and Constantina Papoulias. Finally and most importantly, I would like to thank my partner Amber. Without her unbelievable support and commitment this book would not have appeared. At a key point in the writing process a little boy called Noah arrived on the scene and in a wonderful way turned our lives upside down.

Introduction

In the wake of the events of 11 September 2001 and the announcement of the war against terror, there was a flurry of publications from within the social sciences and the humanities on the subject of war. The ensuing debates brought to academic attention the great wealth of writings on war in these fields, and yet at the same time this reinvigoration of an interest in war served to show just how marginal an issue it had been. For Hans Joas (2003) the reason for this lies in our conception of modernity. It is as if war is merely an aberration that modernity would correct. Understood as the road away from immaturity, barbarity and the particularities of tribalism, modernity is a beacon of civility and universality; a relatively autonomous intellectual journey of reason towards enlightenment. In this sense modernity is transcendent, lifting itself and its adherents above the violent and aggressive impulses of earlier stages of human development. However, despite modernity's idealization as pacific progress, it is inextricably tied to the violence of political revolution and the wars that issued from it. In addition, warfare in the modern age has been profoundly shaped by two technical revolutions, the gunpowder revolution of the sixteenth century and the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century that have made it evermore destructive. Despite this intimate history between war and modernity, advocates of the modernizing project have always managed to exempt modernity from its implication in outbreaks of violence precisely because violence is the persistence of that which modernity is charged with overcoming. This logic was very much in evidence at the beginning of the twentieth century in the language of a German *Sonderweg*. This construction of an alternative path taken by Germany ensured that the narrative of an evolutionary, rational modernity might be maintained. And yet while we are told that war is anathema to modernity it appears that today, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue, 'instead of moving forward to peace in fulfilment of this dream we seem to have slipped back in time into the nightmare of a perpetual and indeterminate state of war [which] seems to have seeped back and flooded the entire social field' (2005: 7). War, then, is no longer the exceptional state, but is 'the primary organizing principle of society' (12).

While the significance of warfare is historically specific, the definition of war has remained consistent. Martin Shaw defines war as 'the clash

of two organized armed forces that seek to destroy each other's power and especially their will to resist, principally by killing members of the opposing force' (2003: 5). To this, Brian E. Fogarty (2000) would add that war is a social enterprise involving an understanding that killing is legitimate, and an agreement that war is engaged; while Jean Baudrillard (1995), with an eye on the ever-increasing discrepancies of military might, adds that war is also a conflictual situation where the outcome is not predetermined. Without this very important rider war is reduced to a form of police action in which a vastly superior force simply arrests activity that is not in its interest. For a number of commentators, Hardt and Negri being among them, the war against terror epitomizes this challenge to the status of war in which the post-Cold War era is no longer split into bipolar superpowers but governed by one militarily massive hyperpower. While this radical shift in the balance of power as well as potentially revolutionary advances in military technology single out the current era of warfare, it is also noteworthy for the fact that the war against terror claims to be a war in defence of modernity as *a way of life*.[1]

Much of the rhetoric used when speaking of Al'Qaeda deploys the image of a modern us, with modern being used as a synonym for 'civilized', 'advanced' and 'free', against a primitive, that is 'barbaric', 'backward' and 'tyrannical' them. This language is problematic for a number of reasons, two of which I wish to highlight here. The first is the assumption already mentioned that modernity is a singular and necessarily pacific phenomenon, and that its history is coterminous with the development of the West. I will approach this in a little more detail below. The second is the failure to recognize what is modern about Al'Qaeda. It is undoubtedly the case that in some respects the practice of martyrdom does indeed correspond to a pre-modern age in which war and warrior-like behaviour was stitched into the fabric of individual and social identity. In the West, pre-modern texts, such as Greek epic poetry and the Celtic saga, speak to us of a time when partaking in battle was integral to a sense of belonging. In a succinct analysis of Homeric (heroic) society, Alasdair MacIntyre (1985) argues that proving oneself in battle was important because it displayed virtues necessary to sustaining a household and a community. Virtues such as courage and fidelity proved someone to be reliable and trustworthy and were integral to kinship structures. In this regard the moral and the social were homologous. A person's identity, the place they were assigned within a society determined what they owed others and what was in turn owed to them. Most importantly, however, narratives of

heroic deeds not only told what happened to men and women but exhibited an exemplary succession of incidents that were to be followed. As MacIntyre notes, 'courage in heroic society is a capacity not just to face particular harms and dangers but to face a particular kind of pattern of harms and dangers, a pattern in which individual lives find their place' (1985: 125). These narratives therefore detailed activities that were to be sought out if a person was to take up their place within a given community. In this sense the practice of martyrdom is a narrative identity in which certain deeds are set before an individual detailing their place and what they owe, in this case to God and to the community of true believers.

Beyond this it is difficult to see what is not modern about Al'Qaeda, unless modernity is tied exclusively to the Western path of secularization, which is increasingly untenable. Al'Qaeda participate in and are made possible by the deregulated flows of capital, images and people across the globe, and as both Paul Berman (2003) and John Gray (2003) have argued, the predecessors of these terrorist cells do not lie in the Muslim tradition but in the very modern European pursuit of a 'new world'.[2] Gray concludes his study of Al'Qaeda and modernity with the claim that it is not the millions of people killed in Nazi death camps, or Soviet and Moaist gulags that is modern. 'It is the belief that as a result of these deaths a new world would be born' (2003: 117). Likewise Berman refers to Islamist leaders from Sayid Qutb and Sati al-Husri to Osama bin Laden as 'hyphenated personalities' (2003: 26), educated in the West with a particular interest in existentialism, German Idealism and Romantic literary fashion, all of which he argues contributed to the European cults of death that plagued late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe culminating in Mussolini and Hitler. As Berman writes, after the devastation of the First World War 'these were the years when "vanguards" of self-sacrificing militants tried to lead mankind out of the corruptions and horrors of liberal civilization into a new kind of life' (118).[3]

That war is inextricably tied to modernity and the particular formation of it that achieved hegemony in the seventeenth century is little understood. Stephen Toulmin (1990) is an exception here. He has shown how the very shape of modernity as we have come to understand it was a direct response to a period of protracted and destabilizing conflict in Europe. The effect of the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) was to see the fading of an earlier humanist modernity, epitomized in the writings of Montaigne, and the emergence of a rationalist modernity, or Enlightenment, best represented by the writings of Descartes. 'By 1620', writes

Toulmin, 'people in positions of political power and theological authority in Europe no longer saw Montaigne's pluralism as a viable intellectual option [...]. The humanists' readiness to live with uncertainty, ambiguity, and differences of opinion had done nothing (in their view) to prevent religious conflict from getting out of hand [...]. If scepticism let one down, certainty was more urgent. It might not be obvious what one was supposed to be certain about, but *un*certainty had become *un*acceptable' (1990: 55). Rationalistic modernity, then, is not an inevitable movement of human reason but an urgent response to a devastating war, and if we leap some three hundred years later, yet another war, one that witnessed gas chambers and the atomic bomb, precipitated a commensurate *turning away* from the rationalist project and a reassessment of the embodied, embedded, plural and particularistic philosophy rejected earlier. Observing the European catastrophe that was the Second World War, Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer wrote that 'the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant' (1986: 3). For them totalitarianism was not a departure from enlightened modernity because enlightenment itself behaves as a dictator. It reduces difference to sameness and 'excises the incommensurable' (12). Almost fifty years later the totalitarian spirit of modernity became part of Zygmunt Bauman's post-modern sociology (1989, 1991). For him modernity, where the task of producing order was the archetype of all tasks, signalled 'an era of particularly bitter and relentless war against ambivalence' (1991: 3). In both cases, modernity in its tendency towards abstraction, uniformity and universality, with the concomitant reduction of difference to sameness, was read as inherently violent.

In his study of war and modernity, Joas identifies a number of teleological narratives that encapsulate the modern dream of overcoming war and the violence that undermined progress; and given that it is the avowed intent of the US government to deliver political and economic freedom across the globe it is the republican and utilitarian narratives that are of specific interest in the context of the war against terror. While peace and moderation exemplify the spirit of a republic, for utilitarians these qualities were also carried by free trade. With regard to republicanism Immanuel Kant understood nature in terms of discord, and yet, through an intriguing and eschatological twist, was able to think beyond 'men's inevitable *antagonism*' (1983: 34) only because in the end nature is providential. Through wars man's intentions are over-ridden by nature's objective to bring about new relations and form new bodies from the destruction of older ones. In Kant's essay on perpetual peace, it is the republican aim of international or cosmopolitan right that is

believed to contribute to the curtailment of wars. Here peace is understood as the recognition of each person before the law sharing in a common humanity. Kant's belief in a cosmopolitan idea is supported, he argues, by the homage every nation pays to the concept of right, proving that 'there is in man a still greater [. . .] moral aptitude to master the evil principle in himself [. . .] and to hope that others will also overcome it' (1983: 116). Recognition, then, of every person as a citizen of the world with inalienable rights becomes the republican vision of democracy and the rule of law.

For utilitarians, war and commerce were contradictory principles. As Michael Howard notes, the utilitarian belief was that no one benefited from wars except for a few contractors and arms manufacturers. War depleted rather than increased wealth. 'Trade should be free, they argued, since economic rivalry was a powerful contributory cause of wars. [. . .] The laws of nature dictated harmony and co-operation. Providence had linked mankind by a chain of reciprocal needs which made impossible, *a priori*, any clash of economic interests. It was only a misconception of such interests [. . .] that lead to conflict and war' (1986: 25). Free trade was thus the path to both power and peace. While it is undoubted that international trade has played an important role in intercultural dialogue, setting up new lines of communication where none previously existed, and that the United Nations, the political result of the cosmopolitan spirit, is the most important tool we have to engage in constructive debate rather than destructive confrontation, both the utilitarian and republican traditions have their dark side. For republicanism, the dark side is the failure to see what is particular in its supposedly universal vision of freedom. For utilitarianism, the dark side is the history of colonialism and imperial expansion. In this instance the civilizing aspect of commerce went hand in hand with all manner of barbarous acts, from slavery and genocide, to suppression and persecution. Of course, proponents of utilitarianism would like to distinguish between the economic and the political, that is between, let us say, mercantile exchange or free trade, and the aspirations of state power, but it is very difficult to separate the market, no matter how idealized, from the realism of foreign policy. From the events in Bolivia in 1999 where six people were killed and 175 injured during demonstrations following the US engineering firm Bechtel's acquisition of Bolivian water (Roy, 2002: 136–7), to the genocidal war in the former Yugoslavia that John McMurtry argues resulted from the planned elimination of its socialized economy and its forced entry into the free market (2002: 37–8), the relationship between finance, trade and

violence is becoming increasingly hard to mask. Of course, the benefits of trade are evident if one considers the improvement to be made to developing economies if trade regulations were not flagrantly set to the advantage of the already developed world, but again this only highlights how difficult it is to separate issues of trade from issues of power. And with modernization now being a euphemism for the unfettered expansion of the global market, Western neo-liberal modernity is becoming increasingly embroiled in a value war that recognizes plurality only as a set of differing consumer practices to be administered by the market.

That market forces are seen as the panacea for global problems is wonderfully illustrated by US national security proposals contained in the FutureMAP project. As a weapon in the war against terror, which is a deregulated war against a networked enemy, working within the managed disorder of deterritorialized capital flows, globalized mediascapes, and a transnational criminal economy of money laundering and drug trafficking, the US Department of Defense decided to combat this deregulated risk by fighting fire with fire, proposing that market-based methods of assessment should be deployed to predict future threats:

> FutureMAP will concentrate on market-based techniques for avoiding surprise and predicting future events. Strategic decisions depend upon the accurate assessment of the likelihood of future events. [...] There is potential for application of market-based methods to analyses of interest to the DoD [Department of Defense]. These may include analysis of political stability in regions of the world, prediction of the timing and impact on national security of emerging technologies, analysis of the outcomes of advanced technology programs, or other future events of interest to the DoD. In addition, the rapid reaction of markets to knowledge held by only a few participants may provide an early warning system to avoid surprise.[4]

In a news release of 29 July 2003, after the 'market in death' had been met with incredulity in the international media as well as hostility within the US Senate, DARPA announced their withdrawal from FutureMAP and thereby its cancellation. FutureMAP remains, however, testimony to the mindset of the world's pre-eminent economic and military power, both in terms of their faith in marketized solutions and in their vision of an anonymous foe, and as such it is a defining statement regarding the logic of war and peace at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The fact that the market is currently seen as the global solution for all social ills reveals an important truth about war that was not included in the brief definitions from Shaw, Fogarty and Baudrillard given above. The claim that terrorists are at war with modernity, understood as political, social and economic freedom demonstrates how wars are as much a matter of interpreting and valuing as they are about fighting. Wars may be physical conflicts, but they are also about ascribing, defending and furthering particular worlds. It is therefore important to recognize that valuations are not separate from the violence of war, rather valuing itself is conflictual and potentially warlike. Joas writes: 'For all the differences, there are in fact parallels or structural homologies between the experience underlying the constitution of values and the experience of violence – whether suffered or perpetuated. The experience of violence is the "perverted twin" of the experience of value commitment' (2003: 18–9). And it is this claim that wars, as interpretation-intensive activities, are as much about preserving and perhaps extending a sense of worldhood that is the main theme of this book. This means that while the physics or logistics of warfare are addressed, my main concern is what might be called the metaphysics or ontology of war, that is the organization of good and evil, order and chaos, self and other, human and inhuman, subject and object, identity and difference, life and death, that are central to the grammar of warfare and central to the making and preserving of worlds. What follows, then, are eight studies of war from within sociology, philosophy and psychoanalysis. Each chapter seeks to give a full account of the theoretical positions being addressed and can be read independently of the rest of the book, but an attempt is also made to draw out those components that might contribute in a preliminary way to this ontology of war. Given that the war against terror is used to legitimize the extension of a very specific set of values across the globe, a consideration of this theme is therefore both apposite and urgent.

1
Power and *Polemos*

One of the most significant statements concerning the nature of war is to be found in Heraclitus. Fragment 53 reads as follows: 'War [*polemos*] is father of all, and king of all. He renders some gods, others men; he makes some slaves, others free' (Heraclitus, 1987: 37).[1] On face value this fragment proposes that war is the determining principle in the flux of the cosmos; that life is in essence a conflictual struggle. But while history certainly testifies to the centrality of conflict in human affairs, and this chapter assumes that conflict is a central aspect of our being-in-the-world, this fragment will be used to argue against the simple equation that life is a violent struggle between competing forces. For Heraclitus, polemos is father and king; it is generative (father) and governing or ruling (king); it is productive and it is preserving; it brings things into being and maintains them in their being. Taking such a reading, polemos is not simply a violent struggle of becoming between already existing beings, it is the very possibility of one being standing against, alongside and even *with* another. It is the very exposition of beings. It is world-creation, and it is in this sense that this fragment will be important for us.

In a lecture course entitled *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Martin Heidegger interprets the fragment in the following way:

> The *polemos* named here is a conflict that prevailed prior to everything divine and human, not a war in the human sense. This conflict, as Heraclitus thought it, first caused the realm of being to separate into opposites; it first gave rise to position and order and rank. In such separation cleavages, intervals, distances, and joints opened. In the conflict a world comes into being. (Conflict does not split, much less destroy unity, it is a binding-together, *logos*. *Polemos* and *logos* are the same). (1959: 62)

In a fascinating study of the importance of polemos in Heidegger's philosophy, Gregory Fried (2000) shows how this reading describes two fundamental aspects of our involvement with the world. First, it reveals the manner in which beings become present, how they come to be and how they pass away, and secondly, and most important for our concerns here, polemos also describes the way in which beings are constantly an issue for us, and nowhere is this more in evidence than in the questions we have concerning our *own* being. Heidegger opens the lecture course by stating that the question of why there are beings rather than nothing is the first of all philosophical questions. Each one of us is touched by this question at some point, he contends, especially at times of despair when 'all meaning becomes obscured' (1959: 1). Our capacity to be touched by the question means that the question can best be answered by interrogating the nature of our own being-in-the-world. Thus in *Being and Time* Heidegger argues that 'to work out the question of being adequately, we must make an entity transparent in its own Being. [. . .] This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term "*Dasein*" ' (1962: 27). The enquiry into why Being rather than nothing starts with an enquiry into Dasein, that is, our being-there.

The essence of Dasein lies in its existence, its characteristics are not properties but are 'possible ways for it to be' (67). And it is in this important understanding of human being as the creation of possible worlds that the concept of polemos will be important for understanding the nature of war. What is central for human being is that as Dasein it cannot be indifferent to its being, rather its being is an issue for it. It is always *mine* to be in one way or another, that is, Dasein always makes decisions about its own possibility, 'it *can*, in its very Being, "choose" itself and win itself' (68). In this sense Dasein's existence can be said to be hermeneutic; it is a matter of each Dasein interpreting and (possibly) creating the world anew. Human being as Dasein is 'thrown' into a world, into a history and a language, into a world that is never simply given but always given *as* something. Once thrown into the world Dasein projects its own possibilities and potentialities through an interpretation of itself and the other beings with which it is involved. This involvement is an *interpretive confrontation* through which a world becomes meaningful. As Fried notes: 'For Heidegger, the task of this polemos is never merely an academic controversy, the topic of entertainment, or even victory in war, but rather that which is given to us in our historicity as *what matters to us* [. . .]. This Being-at-issue of the polemos

is ultimately what underlies Heidegger's ontological politics' (2000: 31–2). To understand Heidegger's treatment of polemos, and to develop a conception of interpretive confrontation relevant to our context, it is important to work through Heidegger's engagement with Nietzsche. This will provide a means for understanding the persistence of war as well as a possible critique.[2]

Power

Nietzsche's philosophy can only be understood as a response to what he saw as the nihilism pervading Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. Consequently, in *The Gay Science* he states:

> I welcome all signs that a more virile, warlike age is about to begin, which will restore honor to courage above all. For this age shall prepare the way for the one yet higher, and it shall gather the strength that this higher age will require some day – the age that will carry heroism into the search for knowledge and that will *wage wars* for the sake of ideas and their consequences. To this end we now need many preparatory courageous human beings who cannot very well leap out of nothing, any more than out of the sand and slime of present-day civilization and metropolitanism – human beings who know how to be silent, lonely, resolute, and content and constant in invisible activities; human beings who are bent on seeking in all things for what in them must be *overcome* [. . .]. For believe me: the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is – to *live dangerously*! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! (1974: 228)

For Nietzsche, the person that epitomizes the virile future and higher age to come is Napoleon, representing neither the 'blooming universal exchange of hearts' (318) promised by the French revolution, nor the pettiness of national movements that were leading Europe into chaos. With Napoleon 'we have entered *the classical age of war* [which] the coming centuries will look back on with envy and awe for its perfection' (318).

Note, however, that Nietzsche does not celebrate war for the sake of war. When war breaks out, he writes, people will rapturously 'throw themselves into the new danger of *death* because the sacrifice for the fatherland seems to them to offer the long desired permission – to *dodge*

their goal; war offers a detour to suicide, but a detour with a good conscience' (270). In other words, military heroics is often a way of avoiding the need to be heroic in life, it can too often serve the preservation of the status quo when in fact this is what we should be at war with. The war Nietzsche advocates is not for the homeland, but a war that renders one homeless. He loves neither universalism nor does he support the chauvinisms that counter this universal brotherhood. Those who live dangerously and love adventure 'do not love humanity; but on the other hand we are not nearly "German" enough, in the sense in which the word "German" is constantly used nowadays, to advocate nationalism and race hatred [or] the national scabies of the heart and blood poisoning that now leads the nations of Europe to delimit and barricade themselves against each other as if it were a matter of quarantine. For that we are too openminded [. . .] too "travelled" ' (339). With regard to his homelessness Karl Löwith argues that Nietzsche understood his life in terms of a fateful decision taking place between the old and the new; he was 'a human being at the limit' (1995: 204).

This warlike philosophy, which does not advocate dying for the fatherland or hating one's neighbours, can only be understood in relation to Nietzsche's philosophy of value. The important sentence in the passage quoted from *The Gay Science* regarding the coming virile and warlike age is his call for human beings to seek in everything that which must be overcome. Life, if it is to be meaningful, must be understood as a struggle to practice what is most essential to human beings, namely to give value. In pursuit of this overcoming, Nietzsche does advocate a hardness that many readers and commentators quite rightly find difficult to accept. For example, again in *The Gay Science*, he challenges his readers to seek strength and greatness but to understand they can only do so if they are prepared to inflict great suffering. 'Being able to suffer is the least thing', he argues, 'not to perish of internal distress and uncertainty when one inflicts great suffering and hears the cry of this suffering – that is great, that belongs to greatness (1974: 255). Such statements regarding suffering are often cited as evidence that Nietzsche was immoral, not just amoral in the sense that he may have transcended good and evil, but immoral in the sense that he purposefully turned a deaf ear to the suffering of others in favour of his own will. He does indeed implore us to turn away from suffering in order to affirm joy, and to not get caught up in the pitying discourses of the virtuous and the moralists, that is, to live 'in seclusion so that you can live for yourself' (271), but this is also an argument against becoming involved in the noise of war. Throughout Nietzsche's work there is an

ambiguity to war. Warfare is too imbued with the 'religion of pity', or conversely too caught up in the identity of a fatherland, and more often than not it is the work of tyrants, not masters with an understanding of their fateful decision, but men who simply want to breed passivity and extend their domination. If we are to understand the relevance of Nietzsche for an analysis of war, it is necessary to move away from the direct issue of militarized war itself and focus instead on the use of war as an analogy for the struggle to affirm values, or the will to power that is the motor of Nietzsche's overcoming.

In understanding the struggle that was Nietzsche's life and that was so central to his philosophy, the language of conflict is never far away. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the book published in 1883, a year after *The Gay Science*, and the book in which for the first time he explicitly set out his philosophy of the will to power, he calls on us not to work but to do battle, and to love peace as a means to new wars. 'You should be such men', he announces, 'as are always looking for an enemy – for *your* enemy' (1969: 74). A little later Nietzsche argues that friendship is too often used as a means to hide weakness, as a means to compensate for a lack. We find in others those qualities in which we are most deficient, or we seek in a friend something that confirms our current identity, beliefs and values. Friendship, conventionally understood, is anathema to risk and more closely allied to comfort. For Nietzsche, however, in your friend you should possess your best enemy. Your friend ought to be the locus of the confrontation that will lead each seeker of knowledge onto their *own* path. 'Your heart should feel closest to him when you oppose him' and you should be to him 'an arrow and a longing for the Superman', for 'O my friend, man is something that must be overcome' (83). The enemy like the good warrior is the person that breaks with uniformity and satisfaction, and commends us to this highest of ideas. As Peter Berkowitz has noted, 'Zarathustra believes that loving the friend is identical to loving what is farthest away, because the friend's purpose is precisely to symbolize unachieved freedom and mastery' (1995: 173). To commit oneself to the struggle to overcome and to the conflicts that ensue, this is good, and in a polemical overturning of the logic of the just war Nietzsche mocks those who say it is the good cause that hallows war, when in fact 'it is the good war that hallows every cause!' (1969: 74).

The relationship of struggle is most powerfully expressed in Nietzsche's Foreword to *Ecce Homo*. Here he declares his business to be the overthrow of idols. Nietzsche's philosophy is an undoing of the 'beyond', for him it is the immanent that matters. Thus there is no excuse in the

present; there is no *other world* of truth. Man must wrestle for the truth here and now. In the Foreword he states: 'How much truth can a spirit *bare*, how much truth can a spirit *dare*? That became for me more and more the real measure of value. Error [...] is not blindness, error is *cowardice* (1979: 34). Nietzsche's struggle, then, is epitomized by his capacity to suffer and his will to risk all, with the key qualities for an understanding of man and his world shown to be strength and courage. Most notable, however, is Nietzsche's claim that error is not blindness, meaning it is not a question of faulty observation or measurement, it is cowardice. With this one gesture towards the will Nietzsche sums up his entire critique of science as the mode of thought in which truth is to be most fundamentally expressed. For Nietzsche, scientific thinking or what he also refers to as the will to truth is presupposed by an even more fundamental, and one must say primitive, drive to knowledge. Behind every claim to truth is a prior valuing of that truth. A very good example of this is given in Heidegger's essay, 'Nietzsche's word: "God is Dead".' In the essay Heidegger notes how for Nietzsche 'the thought of value is more fundamental than the fundamental thought of certainty in Descartes' metaphysics, since certainty can only count as right if it also counts as the highest value' (2002: 183). Descartes's epistemological reduction failed to recognize the antecedent value given to this search for a secure ground.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche imagines the many 'strange, wicked, questionable questions' (1990: 33) the will to truth has set before us. Is it any wonder, then, that we should turn impatiently away and ask: What is the value of this will? Consequently, he does not 'believe a "drive to knowledge" to be the father of philosophy, but that another drive [...] has only employed knowledge (and false knowledge!) as a tool' (37). To understand this drive the philosopher needs to examine human instincts, to embark upon a psychology that supposes the moral prejudices and timidities of what has passed as psychology before. Even here the language is of conflict and struggle for each of the human drives practices philosophy, and 'each one of them would be only too glad to present *itself* as the ultimate goal of existence and as the legitimate *master* of all the other drives. For every drive is tyrannical: and it is as such that it tries to philosophize' (37). The tyranny of the will to truth is best seen, Nietzsche argues, when philosophers rapturously claim to have derived their law from nature when in fact these self-deceivers want only to prescribe their morality and their ideal *to* nature. As soon as a philosophy begins to believe in itself, he argues, it 'always creates the world in its own image, it cannot do otherwise;

philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, to "creation of the World", to *causa prima*' (1990: 39). This is a hazardous truth, but a truth that only Nietzsche is brave enough to think. Truth is not the objective correspondence between thought and world, but rather the subjective *creation* of a world. Truth is nothing other than an interpreting, evaluating will to power.

The will to power incorporates a constellation of Nietzschean concepts including valuation, revaluation, master and slave, becoming, overcoming and the superman. It is often interpreted as a will to domination, and, as has just been shown, such a reading is not entirely incorrect. The will to power is tyrannical and does seek to create in its own image. It is also an expression of strength, indifferent to suffering and is best conceptualized through analogies of battle, conflict and war. All this lends itself quite easily to a very belligerent reading of Nietzsche's philosophy, and yet to see it purely in terms of power understood as strength or might does greatly reduce its complexity. In this regard I tend to favour Walter Kaufman's (1992) reading of Nietzsche which seeks to draw out the less violent or aggressive aspects of this thinking that are too often forgotten. Kaufman gives the example of a note on Goethe written at the time of *The Gay Science*. It runs as follows: 'The Germans think that *strength* must reveal itself in hardness and cruelty [. . .] That there is *strength* in mildness and stillness, they do not believe easily. They miss strength in Goethe . . .!' (in Kaufman, 1992: 92–3). On this reading strength is not domination but creativity. It is having the imagination to invent and the courage to risk all, to see in everything that which must be overcome.

The context or horizon against which Nietzsche's philosophy of the will to power emerges is set out in the parable of the madman in *The Gay Science* who runs into the marketplace shouting incessantly that he seeks God. He then asks the gathering crowd where God has gone, and realizing they do not know he tells them: God is dead and we have killed him! The importance of this statement is contained in its two phrases. The first, God is dead, comments upon the condition of the times whereby, as Heidegger argues in his interpretation, 'the supersensory world has no effective power. It does not bestow life' (2002: 162). The ideal has died. There has been a devaluation of the hitherto highest values and nihilism, to be precise incomplete nihilism stands at the door. The second phrase, stipulating that it is we who have killed him, is the means to complete nihilism, to the realization that it is human beings who create and that we are at the dawn of a new dispensation of values. Complete nihilism is the grasping of this normative phase, an