

Chapter 1

PROLEGOMENA¹



Rarely has a philosopher caused so much admiration, or invited such opprobrium, as Nietzsche. At one extreme, his devotees elevate him to the topmost rank of thinkers and herald his teachings as true salvation that has finally descended to cleanse our contemporary intellectual horizon from lies, hypocrisy, and pettiness and to direct humankind to a goal that is truly worthy of itself. At the other extreme, many heap on him affront and ridicule, denouncing the philosopher as a preposterous² and sophisticated cynic³ who weaves banalities and contradictions in brilliant lyrical style so he can blind and deceive. An impartial judgment of Nietzsche becomes even more difficult because of the shamelessness and impetuosity of certain supposed Nietzscheans who—as is always bound to happen—have ruinously misunderstood the true meaning of the Teacher’s sermon. Such followers turn out to be of about any stripe—from democratic anarchists to the most authoritarian monarchists. At any rate, they usually turn out plain ludicrous. Showing contempt for the law, or fancying themselves skeptics⁴—these are vain narcissists, would-be Overmen.⁵

The causes of all this confusion and misunderstanding are, on the one hand, the impulsive and incomplete study of certain works of Nietzsche, and on the other hand, the frequent omission, even from complete studies, of an inquiry into two crucial elements, without which it is impossible to comprehend Nietzsche’s teachings: (1) Nietzsche’s times;⁶ and (2) Nietzsche’s character and life.⁷

Even the most truly exceptional philosopher, poet, or artist—not to mention the rare forerunner⁸ of the future—is always a product of his times. In and through his works, an exceptional genius absorbs, sublates,⁹ and cogently formulates all those features of his times’ spirit that remain adrift, unfinished, or disordered. It is, therefore, imperative that we

acquaint ourselves with (a thinker's) times and his times' ideas and general impetus.¹⁰ Only in this way can we assess a philosopher's real worth, thoroughly grasp the way he managed to express the (historical) momentum, and measure the extent of his individual contribution.

But this is not enough. Following our examination of his times we must inquire into the character and life of the "composite"¹¹ individual—be he an artist or a philosopher. If it is true that art is an entirely subjective "externalization of an idiosyncrasy,"¹² Nietzsche thought the same of philosophy. According to Nietzsche, philosophy is not an abstract and objective system that exists outside of the thinking philosopher. It is rather the living reflection of the philosopher's subjectivity, the expansion and systematization of his attributes and predilections.¹³ In one word, it is the objectification of his subjectivity.

For this reason, the only thing the philosopher can and ought to say is this: in what way he has arrived at the discovery of his attributes and inner forces;¹⁴ and in what way he has, subsequently, achieved in this life tranquillity and harmony of the soul. Thus he can be of assistance to his students so they too can, by adapting similar methods according to their specific idiosyncrasies, reach the same goal.

Indeed, Nietzsche's teaching is but the tempestuous history of his soul, which through so many storms always steered toward serenity and light. In other words, it is impossible to understand his teachings without a preliminary survey, not only of the times but also of, the character of Nietzsche.

So, right from the outset and before we proceed to the main part of our study, we see clearly a need to preliminarily examine two things: (1) Nietzsche's times—our times;¹⁵ (a) Nietzsche's character and life.

The Times

Never before have there been times like ours—so fecund when it comes to creating, reversing, and nervously seeking after a stable ideal that can satisfy the material and spiritual needs of a contemplative and struggling humanity.

Yesterday's idol, whatever it may be, totters and is felled today; on its pedestal another one is raised anon, soon again to tumble and be shattered. So, after the fall of Napoleon the Great, exhausted from the long and most calamitous wars, stunned by the unprecedented reversal of fortune, which appeared before them as Nemesis and Divine Providence, the nations huddled together under the comforting wing of religion seeking in it relief and peace. Yet this return to religion was an altogether sentimental and philological affair, the outcome of an instantaneous lack of nerve and nervous exhaustion.¹⁶ By the mid-nineteenth century another idol triumphantly appears on the scene of human consciousness, carrying in its arms rich

promises, proclaiming panaceas for all problems, heralding the fair and impartial satisfaction of every need: Science. Every exceptional mind greeted her with unrestrained enthusiasm as the new and definitive religion of humankind. But, once again, the enthusiasm proved short-lived.

In vain are philosophers and utopians trying to erect a new religious, economic, and political regime on nature as now revealed by Science. Rather, the more Science uplifts the sacred veil of Isis, the more the ideals of love and brotherhood, which humankind has hitherto pursued and of which it has always dreamed, become irreconcilable with the ideals pursued by Nature. The chasm separating Morals from Physiology becomes all the more terrifying. Nature is revealed as something, by standards of human perception, immoral and monstrous—a cruel stepmother for the weak and slender, a blind and savage force that destroys to create and creates so it can destroy all over again.

Everything humanity has hitherto considered noble and moral suddenly appears as something that violates the laws of nature.

An anxiety-inducing, puzzling question¹⁷ rears its head: As a natural being and infinitesimal speck, is a human being¹⁸ morally obligated to submit to, and follow, the laws of the rest of nature? Or is he able—and is he obligated—to constitute an exception, given that a blending of natural and moral laws has, after all philosophic endeavors, proven untenable?¹⁹

From this double fountain of laws spring the two main currents of modern thought—vehement currents, indeed, that flow at cross-purposes. Science is no longer able to step in as aide and conciliator. In vain have people asked her to explain the “what-for” of things, so they can perhaps embrace the other alternative: Science can explain “how,” but not “why” and “what for.”^{20,21} The celebrated Darwinian theory, which once emerged as the answer to humanity’s anguished interrogation of the Unknown, has disappointed all hope. This Darwinian theory explicates the adaptation, the maneuvers, and ingenious combinations that nature invents in order to combat the obstacles that arise in her path; yet, the theory is unable to elucidate the cause of the process and the goal of evolution.²² The bumpy condition of the road and the overcoming or bypassing of obstacles as a matter of fact can by no means explain the beginning or end of the road; adaptation by no means explains evolution.²³

So, implacable criticism has already begun to undermine Science—to subject Science to analysis and slowly overturn it.

Contemporary philosophers and scientists—like [Henri] Bergson,²⁴ [Jules Henri] Poincaré,²⁵ [Edouard] Le Roy in France,²⁶ [Charles] Peirce [Peirce], and [William] James (“Pragmatism” 1906) in America,²⁷ Professor [Ferdinand] Schiller (“Humanism” 1906) in England²⁸—are all denouncing Science for its inability to give answers to any but secondary matters

related to practical utility and material progress. Diagnosing its inability to fulfill its own promises, all these declare Science bankrupt.²⁹

In this way, then, an unprecedented intellectual [or spiritual]³⁰ anarchy has made an onslaught on History. Ideas from the past, as well as systems and laws and morals, are still alive, while the foundations, on which all the above are actually based, have been toppled and overturned by modern analysis and critique. Nowadays, the reigning contradiction of contemporary life is becoming ever more unbearable: A human being now must need submit to laws, in which one can no longer have the slimmest faith; we are following rules for living, which were forged by notions already proven to be wrong— notions that have all but been overturned.

Humanity has not yet succeeded in finding the doctrines that follow from the new notions about the world, on which one can build new ideas about Right and Morality and about laws and morals. Thus, we find ourselves in limbo, in a transitional state. Having destroyed the Temple in three days, Science is to this day unable to raise another one in its place.

The pathological symptoms of this condition astonishingly resemble those of the times of the Sophists—the years of decline of the classical Greek world. As then so today the human spirit, having rejected and shattered the idols of its erstwhile enthusiastic worship, is anxiously awaiting a moral authority that will put an end to anarchy and hesitation. As then so today we have Nay-saying,^{31,32} Epicureanism, Pessimism, Cynicism, wholesale despair, complete absence of inner discipline, denunciation of all social systems.³³ A sense of discomfort, burgeoning from underneath, like a premonition of impending earthquake, threatens to overturn today's society and political systems whose foundations have been unveiled and shown to be decayed and in need of renewal.

But what makes our times today even more frightening is that this state of anarchy and creeping discomfiture is not confined, as in antiquity, to the upper class alone; waxing today ever more anarchic and urgent, [this state] permeates and grips all ranks and strata of society. And all this is due to the compulsory system of education, the public lectures, the books, and the instigation of unscrupulous demagogues and dangerous utopians, whose preaching brings together the workers, the paupers, the victims of injustice, the downtrodden and unites them into unions, companies, political parties, and opposed camps of economic ideology. A desire and need for uplifting have, for all them, become imperative; today, universal suffrage places in their hands the power to satisfy this desire and this need [for elevation and empowerment]. And this sought-after satisfaction is nothing but merciless. For, no higher authority exists today to hinder or overawe the modern crowds: Formless, multiform, and omnipotent—the human mass is stirred up and convulsed throughout the lowest and largest layers of

society, growing ever more savagely enraged by past hatreds, armed with present theories, and having shaken off both the fear and the consoling promise of an afterlife. Future reward or punishment can no longer restrain the instincts today.

In this way an era has been molded—an era that obstinately chafes against every kind of spiritual bridle. While, on the one hand, one notices a tendency toward material concentration, on the other hand, one witnesses a large-scale and calamitous spiritual decentralization. This is without precedent in the history of nations. Until now, including throughout antiquity and the middle ages, a higher authority—either religious or political—had always imposed its way of thinking, its religion, and its morality, on everyone under its control; in all other respects, one was free to dispose according to will of his labor and productive power. Today the State raises a claim to the regulation and, if possible, takes over commerce, industrial activity, material production [in all its forms], all the while allowing for individual freedom of thought and freedom of religion. In the old times, spiritual and intellectual [or spiritual]³⁴ expression was enslaved and material expression was free; today material expression is enslaved and only the intellectual expression is free.

Yet, this complete freedom of the intellect is a formidable instrument for demolition; it is in all respects useless for reconstruction. Intellectual freedom proved most useful during the eighteenth century—the century of negation and destruction—but it is dangerous and disastrous in the nineteenth and in the twentieth century, when the need for reconstruction becomes all the more urgent and imperative.

Throughout this era—a period both of overturning but also of attempted building—it was inevitable that many a sophist and destroyer, and many a daydreamer and creator, would be born. In England [Robert] Owen proved the most daring with his “New Harmony,” which he set up in America;³⁵ it proved a grotesque failure. In France, Saint-Simon predicated a universal unity on human ability and work;³⁶ [August] Comte based his “Religion of Mankind” on Science and Love;³⁷ and Charles Fourier would have capital, labor, and intelligence proportionately share in the profits.³⁸ In Germany [David] Strauss, [Ludwig] Feuerbach, and [Max] Stirner labored in the field of religious and ethical studies;³⁹ Karl Marx and [Ferdinand] Lassalle in the field of economic study. The former [Marx] instituted the dogma of socialism, denounced capital as “dripping with blood and slime,”⁴⁰ and forecast as historically inevitable and necessary the triumph of the fourth class and the destined downfall of the bourgeois and the capitalist classes.⁴¹ Whereas socialism was before Marx premised wholly on the sentimental arguments of philanthropy and on the vague philosophic notions of justice and equality, it now drew its weapons

from Science and established the [final] victory of the working class as a self-evident and legitimate outcome in accordance with the natural and inescapable logic of social evolution.⁴²

Lassalle, on the other hand, is the impetuous Saint Paul of modern dogma, having preached to the crowds the new Gospel with prodding activity and eloquence.⁴³

Friedrich Nietzsche ought to be counted both among the destroyers and the creators, as he encompasses both qualities.

Profoundly different from those who are simply anarchists, whose aim is to overturn for the sake of overturning, and from the skeptics who hesitate before everything, Nietzsche makes his appearance in the end of the nineteenth century: a wonderful tragic figure, encompassing within himself, entire, our tempestuous era's anxiety and tragic antinomy, the Tantallean thirst for the truth that always refutes our hopes, the indignation and anarchic flight of our century no less than its disorderly impulse⁴⁴ that propels toward new, more noble, ideals.

His is a double nature,⁴⁵ both negative and positive. We should do well to comprehend it before we can enter into a detailed account of this nature's manifestations.

On the one hand, [Nietzsche is] a most astute critic, never hesitating before he dissolves⁴⁶ and strips bare even those convictions and ideas that have been heretofore deemed sacrosanct; one who destroys with an impulse⁴⁷ so austere, pitiless, and implacable as to stir indignation even among his most devoted champions. On the other hand, [he is] a most profound poet, with an overflowing love for everything beautiful and noble, with a Dionysian joy that flows upward from a chaotic and deranged mind and from a constitution that suffered and in vain sought relief and release in the shores of the Mediterranean or in soothing medications.

Once we have examined Nietzsche's times, our inquiry into his character and life, viewed in their mutual conjunction, will successfully offer us the key to the riddle which Nietzsche's work has posed until now.

What were Nietzsche's exceptional qualities? How were such qualities intensified to the point of risk-fraught paroxysm due to the most profound influences of his youth? How did his [ideas or qualities] receive systematic form and, from negative and pessimistic, how were they transformed into optimistic and positive and joined to form well-defined moral-philosophical, social, and political ideals?⁴⁸ In the subsequent brief overview of the inner and external life of Nietzsche, we undertake a general inquiry into the above [themes], to the extent only that is required in order to understand Nietzsche's philosophic system, with a focus on [his views of] Right and the State.

The Character and Life of Friedrich Nietzsche

Nietzsche has two exceptional qualities—his *facultés maitresses*, as Taine would say:⁴⁹ an ingrained and implacable sense of sincerity, and an ego beyond measure.

His sincerity caused him to anxiously seek after the truth, scrutinize ideas, forge ahead and penetrate. He would draw conclusions but always remain unsatisfied—ever fearful lest this is not the truth he has reached, lest he still needs to remove yet another mask. Always incredulous and insatiable, even when he finally lets an idea rest on final analysis, he still regards it with uneasiness, wondering if the face he has bestowed on it is not itself but a mask.

This fundamental quality of character compels Nietzsche to always forge ahead and overcome himself. As a consequence, he is constantly uneasy and, objectifying his subjectivity, he is finally compelled to consider self-overcoming as humanity's ultimate goal. Without end or cessation, humanity, [according to Nietzsche], always seeks to overcome itself, [in the process] creating ever more perfect types.

On the other hand, Nietzsche's strong ego explains and reinforces the acuity of his other, previously mentioned, quality [sincerity]: He will abide no bridle; he always strives with renewed passion to find something novel and unprecedented. Consequently, he often falls into incongruity⁵⁰ and cynicism—even if only for the sake of appearing unique and superior to everyone else in audacity of philosophic exposition.

From this union of sincerity with conceit stems Nietzsche's altogether feminine and hysterical daintiness toward everything he considers to be a lie or something unsound; also the passionate impulse⁵¹ with which he defends the new idol he is bringing to humankind—the *Übermensch*.⁵²

Having now acquainted ourselves with these dominant qualities of Nietzsche—the sincerity, the egotism, the sensitivity, and the passionate impulse⁵³—we can easily try to fathom the resounding impact of the influence he has exerted.

Raised by a family of priests and pious folks, he retained forevermore, alongside his hatred of Christianity, a morality that is wholly Christian.⁵⁴ As a true Protestant, he believed, to begin with, in a complete harmony between Science and Christianity; this is the reason he would find in [the study of] religion satisfaction of his exceptional quality—his sincerity and worshipful devotion to the truth.⁵⁵ And only when, by the time he was twenty years old, he began to waver and doubt this supposed harmony between truth and Christianity, only then did he take the first steps away from religion. He did this not by abandoning his previous notions⁵⁶ but, on

the contrary, as one solidly possessed by those notions: To the extent that he had been a believer in religion, he believed because he identified religion with the truth; therefore, as soon as he began to discern that the two⁵⁷ diverge and are separate, it was inevitable, given the bent of his character, that he would reject religion and follow the truth.

Nonetheless, Nietzsche's sensitivity did not allow him to sever himself from religion easily or painlessly. "How easy it is for one to destroy," he roars, "yet, one must subsequently build too. And, I think, destruction seems easier than it really is. Unto our soul's innermost parts we are so profoundly affected by the impressions of our childhood, and by our parents' and teachers' lasting influences, that our deeply rooted prejudices cannot be easily removed with logical argument or by a command of the will. The force of inured habit, the need for an ideal, the rupture with our times, the ongoing dissolution of all social forms, our anguished disbelief that, for two thousand years, humanity could have been the victim of such deceit—all these sentiments are wrestling within the soul and threaten to tear it apart!"⁵⁸

To such a struggle was Nietzsche subjected, striving to reconcile irreconcilables. Only when powerful influences of a different sort were imposed on him from outside did he definitively sunder himself from religion. He then began to ascend, as he himself says, "the solitary and painful path of the researcher who no longer seeks after happiness and peace but is bent on discovering the truth, no matter how many sacrifices it takes, even if this truth is dreadful and repulsive."⁵⁹

Two influences prodded Nietzsche to take this ultimate step of renouncing religion—influences that deeply shook his soul: [Arthur] Schopenhauer⁶⁰ and [Richard] Wagner. A detailed comparison between the philosophical systems of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche falls outside the scope of our present study. Such a study would convince us that the philosopher and prophet of Nirvana [Schopenhauer] exercised a strong influence on Nietzsche's life and spirit. Yet, a few words on this subject are necessary for a full understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy.

With the great Pessimist, Nietzsche accepts that the essence of the world is the Will, which is the same in quality and different only in quantity throughout the whole universe. This Will is nothing else but a most painful desire, which propels humans to an eternal struggle—so replete with despair as it is accompanied by a certain presentiment of defeat. "To want to permanently suffer for no good cause, and then to perish, and so on, eternally, until the [time comes when] earth is shattered to smithereens."⁶¹ In this way, the world is seen to be unjustifiable and no salvation is left besides the obliteration of this very Will itself, which alone is still preserving life on our planet.

In a soul as sensitive and aristocratic as Nietzsche's—a soul that recoiled from the hubbub of the street and the vulgar contacts of daily life—the incalculable influence of such doctrines was evident. In addition, Wagner's acquaintance and music further accentuated Nietzsche's pessimistic overexcitation. In lethal doses he savored the enchantment of that music, which, under its pompous exterior and primitive drive,⁶² encompasses everything neurotic and decadent that possesses the modern soul.

In this way, and until he was twenty-five years of age, Nietzsche fell under pessimistic and neurotic influences. Due to an accentuation of his own qualities and in the absence of systematic direction, Nietzsche came to be a peculiar hero, at once hankering after life and struggle but also reduced to hysteric tears as soon as he would come in sudden touch with reality. He came to be at once hardened as well as tender, both inclined to mystical flights as well as scientifically minded. In a state of nervous excitation, his whole psychic constitution was yearning for revelation of an ideal that could encompass and harmoniously intensify all his qualities and drives.⁶³

The revelation finally came. For Nietzsche, it was Greece. Appointed professor at the University of Basel, in Switzerland, when he was only twenty-five years old, he was given the opportunity to study Greek tragedy and the Greek philosophers with diligence. To these influences we should add certain secondary ones—[Friedrich] Hölderlin,⁶⁴ and, first and foremost, [Ralph Waldo] Emerson. The former conveyed to Nietzsche a lyrical enthusiasm for the civilization of the Greeks—a civilization widely free and deeply humanistic, in contrast to the narrow and pedantic civilization of modern Germany. Emerson, on the other hand, conveyed to Nietzsche the cult of great heroes, which Carlyle so much praised (*Hero Worship*);⁶⁵ also an enthusiasm for resoluteness and luxuriating life, and contempt for material goods and for the narrow joys of the bourgeois.⁶⁶

Whether he perceived [classical] Greece correctly or falsely—the consequences are still the same: Greece became for Nietzsche the ideal for which he was looking; she became a broad conception that could encompass both pessimism as well as an impetuous⁶⁷ love of life; she alone could guide humanity toward its true destination. The soul that, according to Nietzsche, permeated Greek tragedy throughout, became the beginning and the end of his philosophy. He received the inspiration for his first philosophic work from Greek tragedy and at the end, after the long series of his subversive writings, it was from Greek tragedy that he extracted the ideal of life and humanity. So, it is necessary, even if briefly and in passing, to see how Nietzsche understood ancient tragedy.

According to Nietzsche, by means of pity and fear, Greek tragedy can bring a human being to a state of Dionysian ecstasy; emancipated from the

confines of narrow individual life, in this way he partakes, so to speak, of the eternal and creative force of the living Universe. In the melody of dance, by the side of Thymele, the deep soul of the Greek drew her strength—a soul that was exquisitely sensitive even to the lightest sorrows. With her acute eyesight, the Greek soul took stock of the atrocious calamities of universal history and detected the cruelty and blindness of nature. And, then, Art appeared and proved true savior Goddess; she saved the Greek soul from Buddhist pessimism and transformed the spectator's sentimental aversions to an idealized and two-dimensional spectacle: Tragedy and Comedy.

Not only should we be able to endure life, proclaims Nietzsche inspired by his discovery of the Greek world; we should also love and passionately embrace life, disdainfully rejecting pessimism and romanticism and Christianity—and all and sundry variants of suicide and calumny of life. “I want man to be, as far as possible, most proud, vibrant, and passionately yearning for life. And I long for the world and I want it to be exactly as it is, and I want it now and eternally; and I will be screaming insatiably: *bis!*”

Yet, this perception entails mortal antagonism, implacable struggle, and dangers that lurk in every step. To be more precise: “Believe me, the only way one can reap an abundant yield is by sowing abundantly, by living dangerously. Build your homes at the foot of Vesuvius. Send out your ships to the distant, unexplored seas. Live in a state of constant belligerence against those who are like you—and against yourselves too.”⁶⁸

In this way are the idols, which Nietzsche had hitherto worshiped, toppled. Those idols taught him romanticism and heightened sensitivity, they inspired him with mistrustfulness and hatred of life. And, lo and behold, he now discovers a race that is free, light-hearted and joyful as well as profound, that loves life and is not fearful of death, Apollonian in her moments of serenity and Dionysian in its arousal and holy enthusiasm, Olympian in its totality. The idols had taught Nietzsche pessimism; and, lo and behold, he comes across a race that is not only optimistic but also applies pessimism as an instrument of optimism, in this way eliding the tragic antinomy by means of a heroic acceptance of life in all its manifestations—manifestations both of grief and sensuous pleasure.

The struggle that, as we saw above, preceded Nietzsche's severance from religion also took place before his detachment from the new idols. He did not shake off his most endeared pessimism and romantic view of the world without going through convulsions. “When I embarked all alone on the way, I began to tremble. After some time, I grew sick, exhausted by the disappointment I received from the ideas I had loved until then; exhausted by the contemplation of a dreadful hint: I had a foreboding that, following

this disappointment, I was doomed to become more and more distrustful, more deeply contemptuous, and more isolated.”⁶⁹

Indeed, from that point on, his life became a disconsolate struggle and an assault of unprecedented severity against everything he had up to then loved, admired, and respected. After the discovery of such a wonderful civilization, Nietzsche cast his eye on contemporary Europe and would instantly be seized by indignation and a destructive frenzy. And he raised the anguished question: What is the cause of such a decline of the contemporary world? Nietzsche discovered the cause in the fundamental ideas that are embedded in the foundations of contemporary society. And he assaulted those foundations with a vehemence that was constantly exacerbated by his burgeoning illness. Resigning his professorship for reasons of poor health, he began to wander on the shores of the Mediterranean, anxiously anticipating the happy occasion of a momentary lull in his bodily distress so he could work, think, and write. Without a family, without shelter, wandering in foreign lands, with no friends, ignored and diseased, he began from that time on to live the most tragic drama of his life. Every day he waged a desperate struggle against his burgeoning insanity. During its luminous intervals of health, his sinking and fading brain generated ideas, songs, and sermons of marvelous beauty and force.⁷⁰

Our philosopher's works deeply show the effects of his tormented life—a life harshly tested by illness and tried by the struggle toward health and light. What a difference between his first work [*Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 1869–1871] and the ones that immediately followed. In his erstwhile work, and in a spirit of youthful enthusiasm and lyrical frenzy, he discloses the secret of holy Thumele⁷¹ and raises before our eyes an enchanting, unrivaled ideal of Greek life. In his subsequent works, on the other hand, he attacks with irony and indignation every religious, moral, and political regime. No aspect of contemporary life is spared by him. He compares himself to an undermining force—someone who digs deep underground tunnels to undermine the foundations of the mightiest doctrines; one who methodically, assiduously, and patiently labors underground, away from light, time, and humanity.⁷²

Similarly, in the *Human, All Too Human* [*Menschliches Allzumenschliches*, 1876] Nietzsche attacks romantic pessimism⁷³ and, more specifically, the pessimism of his most endeared teacher Schopenhauer,⁷⁴ whom he denounces and condemns.⁷⁵ He no longer accepts the universal Will as what “truly is.”⁷⁶ He condemns pity,⁷⁷ self-abnegation,⁷⁸ self-sacrifice.⁷⁹ He no longer accepts that the goal of humankind is the generation of genius⁸⁰—for he no longer concedes any goal to humankind or to the universe.⁸¹ Art? Poetry? Underhanded creators of dangerous chimeras.⁸² In his next work, *The Wanderer and His Shadow* [*Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*, 1880] he ventures to penetrate

into the shadow that all objects cast when the sun of knowledge falls on them. Without guide or compass, the wanderer chanced to be to the north of his shadow. Defenseless and listless, he is led by his shadow to roam over deadly peaks and to the verges of abysses. Whatever dreams, convictions, notions he had thought to have shaken off and slain are now presenting themselves in front of him as phantoms to perturb his ailing imagination. He is like a murderer who sees his victims during hallucinatory fits.

In other works, *The Daybreak* [*Morgenröte*, 1881] and *The Genealogy of Morality*⁸³ [*Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1887], he attacks morality and attempts to show that morality does not originate from above, nor is it meaningful as an absolute “categorical imperative.”⁸⁴ There is no general and certain rule that defines and demarcates good and evil. Morality is nothing but the impositions of the weak and the decadent. In his remaining works—*The Gay Science* [*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 1882], *Beyond Good and Evil* [*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 1886], and *The Twilight of the Idols* [*Götzen-Dämmerung*, 1889]—he fells today’s false idols with ever greater force⁸⁵ and cynicism. From exceeding love of the truth, he boldly rejects truth herself: His analysis showed that, given the superlative destiny of humanity, both truth and falsehood are perhaps equally worthy of acceptance and respect.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, underneath the resounding boisterous sarcasm of these works, one feels Nietzsche’s disconsolate pain and sorrowful travail guiding all negations to a triumphant affirmation. Already in 1882, his health had begun to improve. Moved by joy, he cries out in the *Gay Science*: “This book is a shout from joy, following long days of misery and incapacity; it is a hymn of joy, in which sing reawakened powers⁸⁷ and a reborn faith in life. Suddenly I feel open in front of me pending future adventures, free seas, and new purposes toward which I must extend my powers.”⁸⁸

He was feeling the sweet intoxication of convalescence⁸⁹—a feeling of joy and hope, resembling the arrival of spring after a long winter. And, then, in Nietzsche’s thought there rises the thundering figure of Zarathustra who, after relishing his thoughts and seclusion in the desert,⁹⁰ descends to humankind to announce to them the religion of the *Übermensch*.⁹¹

“I am announcing to you the *Übermensch*.⁹² Humanity is something that we are obligated to overcome. What have you done in order to overcome humanity? All creatures have hitherto created something higher than themselves; and you, contrary to all nature, would even return to the animal rather than overcome man? What is the ape for man? An object of laughter and shame and grief. So is today’s human being for the *Übermensch*: An object of laughter and shame and grief. Behold, I am bringing you the glad tidings of the *Übermensch*. Behold the *Übermensch*, the purpose of the earth.”⁹³

This new ideal of Nietzsche perfectly resembles the ideal that was realized by the Greeks of the pre-Socratic years: that is, the heroic acceptance of life with all its joys and sorrows, pessimism thus subjugated under optimism to serve as a springboard toward a deeper enjoyment of eternal life.⁹⁴

And from this pinnacle, which Nietzsche had reached after so many struggles and so many tribulations, he suddenly fell into insanity, mentally dead, nevermore able to finish his abandoned half-finished *Wille zur Macht*, in which he was planning to systematically and philosophically expound his theory that he had lyrically and symbolically outlined in *Zarathustra*.

Such was, in broad outline, Nietzsche's life and intellectual development. In anguish he sought the truth on forbidden and deadly peaks.⁹⁵ In his own words: "Isolated, far away from humankind, having wandered in every labyrinth of the future, I resemble a bird of augury—head facing backward, I am prophesying the future."⁹⁶

Nonetheless, his tormenting life notwithstanding, he does not lose heart and does not succumb. "No," he declares—and, contemplating his life, we read these lines deeply moved by emotion, "no, life has not deceived me. On the contrary, I find life all the more rich, more mysterious and more desirable ever since the day when a redeeming thought was revealed to me—that life might actually be a trial for him who seeks after the truth. Let this truth be, for the rest, a couch of repose or a way leading up to rest, entertainment, or delectation. For me, it is a world replete with dangers and victories and heroic feats. Life was given us so that we may find the truth. With this conviction at heart we are able not simply to endure life but to actually live in bliss."⁹⁷

We now know the two components that are indispensable for a comprehension of Nietzsche's philosophy: (1) Nietzsche's times, and (2) Nietzsche's character and life. Bearing both of the above in mind, we intend to duly justify, and also duly critique, Nietzsche's excesses and aberrant turns, without at all overlooking his noble bravery and his heroic efforts to raise our intellect and life to higher and purer peaks.

Needless to say, a soundly founded, logically consistent, system cannot be extracted from Nietzsche's teaching. Nevertheless, we will attempt to expound, in as systematic a fashion as possible, Nietzsche's teachings specifically with respect to the philosophy of Right; his teachings on human nature and destiny; on the family; on society; on morals; on justice and legal right; and on the state.