



Rezensionen

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Nietzsche: Culture Warrior or a Sign of the Times?

1. Shilo Brooks, *Nietzsche's Culture War: The Unity of the Untimely Meditations*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan 2018, XVIII + 241 pp., ISBN 978-3319615219.
2. Jeffrey Church, *Nietzsche's "Unfashionable Observations": A Critical Introduction and Guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2019, XII + 253 pp., ISBN 978-1474428309.
3. Anthony K. Jensen, *An Interpretation of Nietzsche's "On the Uses and Disadvantage of History for Life"*. New York / Abingdon: Routledge 2016, XVI + 189 pp., ISBN 978-1315746074.
4. Andrew Huddleston, *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press 2019, XIV + 191 pp., ISBN 978-0198823674.
5. Anthony K. Jensen / Carlotta Santini (eds.), *Nietzsche on Memory and History: The Re-Encountered Shadow*. Berlin / Boston: de Gruyter 2021, XIV + 340 pp., ISBN 978-3110671070.

Abstract: A century and a half after the *Kulturkampf* in Germany, and three decades after James Davison Hunter's account of the "culture warriors," this book review examines what Nietzsche might have to say to us today about our understanding of the past and our relation to the future. It considers two studies of the four essays of Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* taken as a whole, one study of Nietzsche's second essay on history, one on Nietzsche's general conception of decadence and culture, and a collection of essays on Nietzsche's views of history and memory. Taken together, these studies not only complement (rather than contradict) each other in respect of their readings of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* and the question of culture, they also throw light on other aspects of Nietzsche by reminding us of the rootedness of Nietzsche's thought in the outlook of Weimar classicism and highlighting the vitalist aspects of Nietzsche's thought. The review concludes that Nietzsche is more timely than ever, not least because of his critique of education, as well as his attention to such key themes as identity politics, *Erinnerungskultur*, and museumization; it is still possible to agree with Nietzsche's sentiments as expressed in a motto from an early notebook of July 1862: "I prefer the past to the present; but I believe in a better future."

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The term "culture wars" was used by the sociologist James Davison Hunter in 1991 to describe the remarkable polarization of public debate that had taken place in American culture and

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politics in the 1980s, and continues to this day.¹ Yet the expression recalled, of course, the *Kulturkampf* in Germany in the 1870s, a campaign undertaken by Germany's Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, in Prussia, Bavaria, Hesse, and Baden to reduce papal influence and to build up a national church, thereby strengthening Protestant power and making the Catholic Church subject to the German state. Described by the parliamentarian and anthropologist Rudolf Virchow as "a struggle for civilization," or *Kulturkampf*, this campaign pitted the government, the Liberals, and most of the Conservatives against the bishops and priests of the Church hierarchy and the Catholic laity. Although Nietzsche had moved in 1869 to Basel, renouncing his Prussian citizenship (and, in fact, remaining officially stateless for the rest of his life), he nevertheless served as a medical orderly for the Prussian forces during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, famously working on *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) as, or so he later recalled in his *Attempt at a Self-Criticism* from 1886, "the thunder of the battle of Wörth was rolling over Europe" (BT, Attempt 1). And on his return to Basel he continued to be a shrewd observer of the Prussian-dominated German *Reich* after the resultant newly-unified nation state came into being in 1871 and Wilhelm I was proclaimed Emperor in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles.

Predictably, Nietzsche found himself in opposition both to Bismarck's modern, militant statism and to the religious dogmatism of Pius IX, but to what extent is it accurate to describe Nietzsche as a cultural warrior at all? This is, in one form or another, a central question in the works that have been selected for review here, which examine Nietzsche's four essays published as *Untimely Meditations* between 1873 and 1876 and, in particular, the second essay in this series, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* of 1874. So the question of culture is bound up with fundamental questions about history, memory, time – as well as (fatally for Nietzsche) more specific questions about knowledge and scholarship. Nietzsche's remark in his letter to Jacob Burckhardt of January 6, 1889 (no. 1256, KSB 8.577) that, "in the end, I would much rather be a *Basel professor* than God," but that "I have not dared to push my private egoism so far as to desist for its sake from the creation of the world," is often read as an indication of his incipient madness, but as James V. Schall has wisely remarked, there is "self-insight and humor here" as well.² A century and a half after the *Kulturkampf* in Germany, and three decades after James Davison Hunter's account of the "culture warriors," what does Nietzsche have to say to us today about our understanding of the past and our relation to the future?

As is clear from their titles, most of the books discussed in this review examine the *Untimely Meditations*, and so this review is structured around their common approaches to this work – and their differences.³ Nearly all agree, however, that these four (of an originally planned thirteen) essays are, in the words of Daniel Breazale cited by Shilo Brooks, "unquestionably among Nietzsche's most widely neglected works" (14), or in Jeffrey Church's words, "under-studied" and "under-appreciated" – "particularly in its ethics" (1–2). Church notes that the first essay is often dismissed as polemical, as lacking philosophical interest, as paling into insignificance within Nietzsche's oeuvre as a whole, or read in the biographical context of his relationship to Wagner – a strategy also deployed in the case of the fourth

¹ James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, New York 1991.

² James V. Schall, "Madness, Nietzsche, and Being a Basel Professor," *Crisis Magazine* 10 (April 2012): <https://www.crisismagazine.com/2012/madness-nietzsche-and-being-a-basel-professor> (accessed 02.02.2021).

³ All translations from the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* are from *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge 1997.

essay, likewise “largely neglected among Nietzsche scholars” (26 and 199), while Andrew Huddleston highlights the first essay in particular, along with *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, as “relatively neglected” (28). Brooks is right to claim that, until his own, “a book length interpretation of the *Untimely Meditations* has never been published in English” (16), and Jensen could, *mutatis mutandis*, make a similar claim for his own study of the second essay. Why should this be the case?

There is consensus about three main challenges posed by the work, beginning with the problem of how to translate its German title, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. The difficulty, as Church points out in his study (one in a series of Edinburgh Critical Guides to Nietzsche that will comprise 14 volumes in total), lies in the fact that the title literally means “not [un] in accordance [gemäss] with the times [zeit],” suggesting “old-fashioned” or “unmodern” (William Arrowsmith), “untimely” or (Church’s preferred choice) “unfashionable” (Richard T. Gray) as possibilities, while *Betrachtung* means “observation” or “examination,” as well as “reconsideration,” “reflection,” or “meditation” (6–7). This difficulty mounts in the case of Nietzsche’s second *Betrachtung*, *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, the central focus of Anthony K. Jensen’s (highly philological) study which surveys a variety of possible translations: *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life* (Richard Gray), which “bestows a certain abstraction where there is none”; *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Peter Preuss), which is “more accurate” but implies “an antonymical parallelism that is not present in the original”; *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* (R. J. Hollingdale), which is “the most natural and fitting to the German,” although still problematic in its use of the plural; leaving *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* as “the most accurate, and minimally inelegant, translation” (11). (In no way, Jensen insists, should *Nutzen und Nachtheil* be rendered “Use and Abuse.”)

Second, there is the challenge that arises from the work’s political context and the fact that these essays are, as Brooks summarizes Nietzsche’s letter to Erwin Rohde of January 28, 1872 (no. 192, KSB 3.279), “inspired by reflections on the political events of his day” (9). In addition, there is its intellectual context, or in Church’s words a philosophical “background” that “remains unstated because it would have been implicitly understood by the philosophical audience of the time” (12), namely neo-Kantianism; Schopenhauer and the fundamental problem of pessimism; Kant, exemplarity and the value of freedom; Schiller and the artistic life; and culture (or *Bildung*) in Kant and Schiller in general (12–25). The choice of David Friedrich Strauß, for example, as the target for the first essay is by no means obvious today; even Strauß’s recent intellectual biographer, Frederick C. Beiser, who describes his subject as “one of the most controversial thinkers of nineteenth-century Germany” and as “the father of modern unbelief in Germany,” recognizes that today Strauß is “a thinker on the brink of oblivion in the anglophone world.”⁴ (Brooks approvingly cites Beiser’s view that Strauß’s “pure unmitigated materialism” fits squarely within “the identity crisis” of nineteenth-century philosophy (31).) Then again, HL 9 is directed against Eduard von Hartmann, a figure of whom Jensen observes with some justice that “even most Nietzsche scholars barely know who [he] was or what he stood for” (135). The conclusion reached by Jensen’s earlier analyses of Nietzsche’s critique of Hartmann – namely, that Nietzsche’s presentation of Hartmann is ironic, as if Hartmann were both an admirable thinker and a buffoon⁵ – is accepted by

4 Frederick C. Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß: Father of Unbelief*, New York 2020, ix and 9.

5 See Anthony K. Jensen, “The Rogue of All Rogues: Nietzsche’s Presentation of Eduard von Hartmann’s *Philosophie des Unbewussten* and Hartmann’s Response to Nietzsche,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 32/1 (2006), 41–61, and *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of History*, Cambridge 2013, 100–4.

Brooks (100) as well as by Church (119, n. 27), who agrees that, if Nietzsche sees Hartmann as a culmination of the Hegelian (and hence modern) project of “rendering its historical process rational to itself,” this culmination is also seen as “itself a *reductio ad absurdum* of any such teleological account” (117). (In the meantime, in the case of both Strauß and Hartmann, and numerous other figures, references, and allusions, the relevant volumes edited by Barbara Neymeyr of the *Nietzsche-Kommentar* now provide essential information to get to grips with the *Untimely Meditations*.)⁶

Third, most of the authors agree on the need to appreciate the structure of the collection and the overarching architecture of the four essays, or the “Untimelies,” as Jensen calls them. Brooks’s account of Nietzsche’s “philosophic *Kulturkampf*” centers on the “Untimelies” because they “focus on the problem of modern culture in a more sustained manner than any of his other published writings” (12), and he argues that the four essays “constitute ‘Nietzsche’s Culture War’ because they present a throughgoing critique of modern culture, and a plan to revitalize that culture and recultivate human nature through the thoughts and works of world-creating and *physis*-improving geniuses,” a plan which “does not come to sight unless the essays are read as sequels and responses to one another” (21). Thus, even though only four of the planned thirteen essays were completed, the *Betrachtungen* as they stand *are* “complete” in the sense that they “not only share common themes” but “also present a unified and coherent philosophic narrative that constitutes Nietzsche’s first practical attempt to diagnose and cure the spiritual ailments of modernity” (15). As such, and “when viewed from the perspective of his later works, the critique of German culture featured in the *Untimely Meditations* and the plan Nietzsche sketches to revitalize it provide a holistic if early blueprint for his later attempt at a reevaluation of all values” (15). Consequently, the four essays must be “read in the context of one another and placed in a dialogue,” so that each essay is considered as “a response to its predecessor, a preparation for its sequel, and therefore as a part of a larger unified narrative” (15) for, “far from being disparate pieces, the *Untimely Meditations* thus admit of an elegant unity which is only revealed when they are treated sequentially instead of separately” (20). Similarly, on Church’s account *David Strauss* comes first in the collection, because it “establishes the acute problem that the remainder [...] must solve,” leading Nietzsche to “develop a theory of the genesis of culture (second essay), and then replace this anti-culture and anti-genius with true culture and genius (third and fourth essays, respectively)” (53–4). Thus the structure of the work is “intentionally mirrored,” moving from “corrupted individual (‘David Strauss’) to corrupt culture (‘History’) to redemptive culture (‘Schopenhauer’) to redemptive individual (‘Wagner’)” (11). This principle licences Church’s approach of “discerning the unifying structure” by “offering a section-by-section commentary on each essay” (1), while the work’s overall argument is said to be that “modern life is dehumanising, and [...] we must create a new form of culture that will foster the best or most exemplary life for human beings” (1).

That said, Jensen makes a compelling case for an especially strong foundational value in the case of the second essay, which receives a book-length treatment all on its own. More than the others, Jensen considers the textual genesis of the essay in some detail, offering a close examination of the manuscripts of the essay, including the intriguing omission of a final paragraph of HL 10 (published in the critical edition as *Nachlass* 1873, 29[196], KSA 7.709), as well as its publication history (and the circumstances of Nietzsche’s publisher at the time, Ernst Wilhelm Fritzsche). Jensen concludes that the history essay was “written quickly”: its

6 See Barbara Neymeyr, *Kommentar zu Nietzsches “Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen” I–II*, Berlin 2020, and *Kommentar zu Nietzsches “Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen” III–IV*, Berlin 2020.

foreword was drawn from two different contexts and sandwiched together; its text brings together two distinct thematic strands (cultural critique and epistemology) from two distinct lines of influence (ancient culture, science, epistemology, and the thought of Schopenhauer and Burckhardt); it absorbs and transforms material from a different project, *On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense*; some of its most noteworthy themes, e. g., objectivity, teleology, memory, the possibility of truth, and the workings of the mind, were added late in the compositional process and dropped immediately thereafter; its unpolished, hastily written concluding section was sent off without a clean copy being made; the text ends a paragraph before Nietzsche had originally intended; and the revisions he made, in the end, never incorporated (30). Jensen's forensic work in the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar, reflected in the reproductions from the original manuscripts, reminds us of Nietzsche's belief in the signal importance – indeed, almost the salvific power – of philology. Less convincing, to my mind, is Jensen's suggestion that there is something unusual about the imperative "consider" (*betrachte*) in the opening of line of HL 1, on the basis that *anschauen* would have been more appropriate. After all, in German one does not use *anschauen* to say one is "just looking," one says *ich schaue mich um*; and later in this chapter Jensen uses the word "consider" in exactly the same sense that Nietzsche uses *betrachten*. (Similarly, Brooks's suggestion that the word *schöpferisch* in the phrase *schöpferische Moral* may be a play of Schopenhauer's name (173, n. 46; cf. 223, n. 76) strikes me as equally dubious, let me add in passing.)

Overall, however, Jensen undoubtedly succeeds in bringing out how numerous themes from the second essay in particular and the "Untimelies" in general persist in Nietzsche's later thinking, and his conclusion is instructive:

No work of Nietzsche's, and almost no page of his writing, is insensitive to the way some aspect of the past informs some aspect of the present: from his vision of the human person, to his conception of morality, his view of truth, of culture, of religion, and of philosophy itself. To understand Nietzsche at all, one must grasp what Nietzsche thought about our relationship to the past was and how we could by means of words and concepts understand it. Therefore, granted *HL* is not Nietzsche's final word on the subject of history, it absolutely deserves serious attention both for its place in Nietzsche's thought and also its enduring insight into philosophy of history. (162)

In fact, Jensen argues that the second essay lays out a preliminary (albeit only a preliminary) version of perspectivism, and that, with his triads of historical interpreter (monumental, antiquarian, critical) and his denial of value-free epistemology, Nietzsche already had all the materials he required for "a roughly perspectival epistemology" (163). Add in his "proto-Neo-Kantian" (an expression whose awkwardness Jensen admits, yet whose utility he defends) or physio-psychological view of cognition and the assumption that judgments are referential but fail to represent adequately their referents, and Nietzsche was well-placed to argue, as he did in D 307, that "so-called world history" amounts to no more than "opinion about supposed actions and their supposed motives" and that "all historians speak of things which have never existed except in representation," and to develop his well-known genealogy of punishment.⁷ In terms of its powerful resonances, Nietzsche's essay on history has been and remains his "most widely influential book for the history of historiography and deserves to be considered alongside the works of Herder, Hegel, Marx, Burckhardt, Rickert, and Dilthey as a classic of 19th century 'Geschichtsphilosophie'" (167).

⁷ See GM II 13.

By contrast, Brooks derives a far more Platonic message from the second and third essays, especially the curious parable in HL 10 – an “enigmatic” parable about classical Greek culture whose meaning Nietzsche “does not explain” (75, 112, 188). Addressing “that first generation of fighters and dragon-slayers” and “that company of the hopeful” (as he envisaged the youth of his time), Nietzsche promises to tell them a parable of “the course and progress of their cure, their delivery from the malady of history” – the parable of how the ancient Greeks “gradually learned to *organize the chaos* by following the Delphic teaching” – i. e., “know thyself” – “and thinking back to themselves [...] [and] thus they again took possession of themselves” (HL 10). Recalling that, in Plato’s *Republic* (414b–415d), Socrates suggests that a “noble lie” about bronze, silver, and golden souls be told to the youth of the just city (110), Brooks reads Nietzsche’s parable as “a blueprint for the cure to the historical sickness that has ravaged Greek culture and life” (75). In other words, “if the Germans want to acquire genuine culture they must interpret practically Nietzsche’s imperative to know themselves, just as the ancient Greeks [...] found their culture by interpreting practically the famous Delphic imperative” (154, cf. 169). *Incipit* Schopenhauer – and the task for contemporary philosophy which, however, is compromised by three major concessions it makes to the modern state: (a) turning over authority to choose those called philosophers to officials from state-run universities, thereby (b) prohibiting the development of true philosophers, and (c) transforming itself into the history of philosophy instead of discovering or creating new truths (165–8; cf. SE 8). By contrast, Schopenhauer serves as an example of a “heroic life,”⁸ perishing for the sake of “something great but impossible (namely, the ‘truth’), *animae magnae prodigus*” (151–2, cf. HL 9), and constellating something best described as “the self” – as “the superior self” (134–5). (As Brooks reminds us, in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche speaks about “tak[ing] two famous and still altogether undetermined types by the forelock [...] in order to say something, in order to have a couple more formulas, sign, means of expression in my hands,” and “it was in this way that Plato employed Socrates, as a semiotic for Plato” (EH, UM 3),⁹ much as Plato himself in his second Epistle admitted to beautifying the figure of Socrates (128).) Even if, in SE 8, Nietzsche’s teaching “appears anti-Platonic because it encourages the conditions under which persecution occurs instead of seeking, as Plato did, to prevent them,” on further consideration “the seemingly anti-Platonic concern of Nietzsche’s message gives way to a pro-Platonic concern for what he thinks is the restoration of Plato’s true intention” – namely, to “foster philosophic and poetic geniuses who rule by means of the culture they create” (169). Hence there is also a link between SE 7, where Nietzsche writes that nature “propels the philosopher into humankind like an arrow; it takes no aim but hopes the arrow will stick somewhere [...] but countless times it misses”, and WB 1, in the opening sentences of which Nietzsche picks up this thread when he laments that “it can also happen that a human of force accomplishes a deed which strikes a reef and sinks from sight having produced no impression; a brief, sharp echo, and all is over” (164, trans. modified). The meaning of the parable on classical Greek culture at the end of the second essay is thus developed by the fourth in its surmise that “its fulfillment can only come about through the creation of new mythical or monumental histories by geniuses and ‘counter-Alexanders’ like Wagner”

⁸ Cf. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, vol. 2, cited in SE 4. Passage quoted in Huddleston, *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture*, 119–20.

⁹ See Plato, *Epistle 2*, 314c: “No treatise by Plato exists or will exist, but those which now bear his name belong to a Socrates become fair and young [Σωκράτους ἐστὶν καλοῦ καὶ νέου γεγονότος]” (Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 7, *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*, trans. R. G. Bury, Cambridge, MA 1966, 417).

(188–9). And the third essay on Schopenhauer, by concluding with a critique of the modern state and a praise of the Platonic city ruled by a philosophic culture creator (SE 8), prepares the way for Nietzsche's reflections on Bayreuth as a cultural "city" (192), as, so to speak, the Athens of south-east Germany.

By reading Nietzsche in SE 8 as "an opponent of modern liberal politics and an advocate for a state whose focus is the maintenance of a cultural aristocracy and a Platonic devotion to the creation of philosophers" (133), Brooks acknowledges that he is opposing his view of Nietzsche's early politics to those of Church in his earlier study of 2015 as well as of James Conant in a study published in 2001.¹⁰ Although Church does not respond in his *Critical Guide* directly to this challenge, he does recognize that, in his reconstruction of Nietzsche's argument in the Schopenhauer essay, he is contributing to "an ongoing scholarly debate" about the work, aligning himself with Conant's "insightful Kantian reading" as opposed to the naturalist readings proposed by some critics (132).¹¹ This contribution is described by Church as being (as it had been in *Nietzsche's Culture of Humanity*) to "show that in this text Nietzsche is neither a democrat nor an aristocrat, but rather defends a meritocracy" (132). Overall, Church argues that the task of the *Untimely Meditations* as a whole is "to retrieve and transform the classical notion of culture" (27), and he tellingly endorses Walter Kaufmann's suggestion that Nietzsche is "a more dialectical thinker than is often appreciated" (57). Church takes issue with "most scholarly readings" when they claim that Nietzsche "follows Plato in arguing that a philosopher-king should rule an ideal polity," but SE 8 "reveals why this interpretation cannot be correct," for Nietzsche himself "challenges Plato and his 'entirely new state'" (193). In short, Nietzsche "does not support the utopian aims of *The Republic*, but he is a follower of Plato on a subtler reading of him," a reading that sees Plato as "identif[y]ing] a perennial conflict between politics and philosophy, expressed most clearly in *The Apology*" (194).

Citing Nietzsche's view that "the great moments on the struggle of the human individual constitute a chain [...] unit[ing] humankind across the millennia" (HL 9) and that there are "a few individuals in whom humanity will culminate" (Nachlass 1873, 29[73], KSA 7.661)¹² and noting – *contra* Jensen's argument about a lack of "an explicit set of criteria by which to judge whether someone is 'great'" (114) – that Nietzsche does develop a theory of exemplarity on which we can ground judgements of greatness, Church makes the important point that Nietzsche "is not a 'relativist' about value, as he is so often understood to be" (79).

The question of "value" is explored at considerable length by Andrew Huddleston in his monograph investigating how the theme of culture is "central to understanding his animating philosophical concerns" (3). For Huddleston, Nietzsche is "an important precursor to the critical hermeneutics of the Frankfurt School" (10), a thinker whose most important "philosophical legacy" is as "a cultural critic and theorist." The Nietzsche one encounters in these pages is "a philosopher of culture, concerned with diagnosing how Western culture has gone wrong and with putting forward an alternative ideal of what it could become" (172). The question of values is raised explicitly in chapter 7, entitled *Nietzsche's Meta-Axiology: Against*

¹⁰ Jeffrey Church, *Nietzsche's Culture of Humanity: Beyond Aristocracy and Democracy in the Early Period*, Cambridge 2015, and James Conant, "Nietzsche's Perfectionism: A Reading of *Schopenhauer as Educator*," in Richard Schacht (ed.), *Nietzsche's Postmoralism*, Cambridge 2001, 181–257.

¹¹ See Thomas Hurka, "Nietzsche: Perfectionist," in Brian Leiter / Neil Sinhababu (eds.), *Nietzsche and Morality*, New York 2007, 9–31, and Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Holding on to the Sublime: On Nietzsche's Early Unfashionable Project," in Ken Gemes / John Richardson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook to Nietzsche*, Oxford 2013, 226–51.

¹² Trans. Richard T. Gray, Stanford, CA 1995.

the Skeptical Readings, where Huddleston considers the question about “the status of the underlying values by which Nietzsche celebrates the flourishing of culture and rates certain kinds of lives highly” (9) or “whether Nietzsche takes the values he champions to enjoy a sort of meta-axiological superiority over other values” (126). For, as Huddleston puts it, according to “an influential reading” – he is thinking of Brian Leiter and Nadeem Hussain – Nietzsche does not “accord genuine evaluative standing to *any* values, including his own favored values” (133). Such interpreters typically point to three kinds of evidence: to a passage from the *Nachlass* (Nachlass 1888, 14[116], KSA 13.292), to Nietzsche’s frequent assimilation of value judgments to matters of taste, and to a form of inference to the best explanation (133–5). Yet, as Huddleston reminds us, Nietzsche uses “value”/“values” in two “quite different” senses: first, in a social and anthropological sense; and second, in an axiological sense that is interested in the “*value of these values*” (GM, Preface 6), on the basis of which Huddleston concludes that “even if Nietzsche denies the strong metaphysical objectivity of values, he does not *thereby* undermine the possibility that there might be genuine values” (139). “Through esteeming first is there value [*Durch das Schätzen erst giebt es Werth*],” as Zarathustra declares (Z I, On the Thousand and One Goals) (140),¹³ and even perspectivism has its own kind of value (141–6).

Other passages in Nietzsche about value are, however, more problematic. For Zarathustra also declares: “There are some who threw away their last worth [*Werth*] when they threw away their servitude [*Dienstbarkeit*]” (Z I, On the War of the Creator), and in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche calmly explains that “a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in worth [*Werthverschiedenheit*] between individual and individual [...] needs slavery [*Sklaverei*] in some sense or other” (BGE 257). The problem is, of course, that “when we stray from the comparatively ‘safer’ areas of Nietzsche’s metaphysics and philosophy of mind, the Third Reich is always the white elephant in the room,” as Huddleston puts it (174). Irrespective of the color of the elephant, Huddleston has a point: and (in TI, Skirmishes 36) the “ugly rhetoric about decadence (and its cousin ‘degeneration’) is “another reason the concept of *décadence* is thought by many enlightened readers of Nietzsche to be something that is best ignored” (93). Huddleston bravely undertakes to show that the idea of “slavery in some sense or other” (BGE 257) is “far more subtle than one might first suppose” and thus to defend Nietzsche’s argument that “ironically it is *in being* ‘reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments’ (BGE, 258) that most people – those not part of the tiny aristocracy of Nietzschean great individuals – can come to live what Nietzsche regards as the most meaningful life for them” (98) and “secure the sort of genuine worth and dignity that is possible for them” (113). This theme first emerges in *The Greek State* (1872) and in *The Birth of Tragedy* – in the idea that “all individuals, with their whole activity, are only dignified to the extent that they are a tool of genius, consciously or unconsciously” (CV 3, KSA 1.776) and in the claim that “our highest dignity [*Würde*] lies in our significance as works of art” (BT 5) – and is still present in *The Antichrist* (1888) and its encomium of the “strong and soundly consolidated mediocrity” on which the pyramid of culture is based (A 57) (111–7). And it receives its most telling development in SE 6, where the answer to the question: “How can your life, the individual life, receive the highest value, the deepest significance?”, lies in the answer, “only by your living for the good of the rarest and most valuable exemplars, and not for the good of the majority” – and the two forms or signs of consecration to culture (SE 6). The model for Huddleston here is the conclusion to *Middle-*

¹³ The difficulty of translating the particle *erst* leads to a thought-provoking footnote on gin versus vodka martinis (140, n. 35).

march (1871–72) and its evocation of the multitude who will “rest in unvisited tombs” but who wisely chose to aid in the flourishing of exceptional artists and, as Huddleston wistfully puts it, “in the flourishing of those cultures, like Venice and Florence, that are now themselves their own-visited tombs” (174–5). Even Michelangelo needed someone to mix his paint; or, in Huddleston’s example, a minor merchant in Renaissance Florence might choose to abandon his business and join in the building of Brunelleschi’s *Duomo* (118).

By contrast, Church argues that Nietzsche “rejects [...] a ‘great man’ view of history, according to which individuals alone direct history” and, on the basis of the call to action for his sympathetic audience to assist in the advancement of culture in *WB 1*, suggests that Nietzsche “is quite clear here [...] that the people matter just as much as the great individuals, contradicting many scholars who have concluded that, for Nietzsche, the lives of nobody except the exemplar matter” (201). On this account, there exists “[a] correspondence between deed and receptivity,” and thus one of the conditions for greatness is for the founding individual to create an audience (201). No wonder, then, when “on that day in the May of 1872 the foundation stone was laid on the hill at Bayreuth amid pouring rain and under a darkened sky,” as Nietzsche puts it, Wagner was sitting in the carriage “silent” and “gazing into himself with a look not to be described in words” (*WB 1*), for it falls to us all to support the lucky strikes of nature as much as we can. In the words of a *Nachlass* passage cited above, it is “almost as if a blind hunter were to fire his gun many hundreds of time until he finally, by chance, kills a bird. ‘In the end something comes of this,’ he would say, and then he would go on shooting” (*Nachlass* 1873, 29[73], *KSA* 7.662). Thus, in the end, Huddleston and Church arrive at a similar conclusion, albeit from different directions.

Taken together, these studies by Brooks, Church, Jensen, and Huddleston not only complement, rather than contradict, each other in respect of their readings of the *Untimely Meditations* and the question of culture, they also throw light on other aspects of Nietzsche. For one thing, they remind us of the rootedness of Nietzsche’s thought in the outlook of Weimar classicism. After all, the foreword to the history essay opens with a quotation from a letter written to Schiller on December 19, 1798, by Goethe, whom Jensen describes as “a key interlocutor,” as someone who was “for Nietzsche, and not only for Nietzsche, the greatest of Germans” (40). Indeed, Jensen argues that Nietzsche’s model for “life” mirrors Goethe’s science of “morphology” (with its attendant notions of *Bildungstrieb* and *Steigerung*), and that “history serves this Goethean model of life [...] by offering a morphology of the growth of historical individuals worth studying” (43): in fact, Nietzsche’s “affirmative model of historiography” reflects precisely “this Goethean ideal” of “history as the battle ground of competing forces for the sake of the intensification of an individual’s most healthy qualities” (44). Huddleston concurs that behind Nietzsche’s ideal of *Bildung* lies a concept of “totality” explicitly associated in *Twilight of the Idols* (1889) (TI, Skirmishes 49) with Goethe (37–8). And Church points out how, in Nietzsche’s use of *Weltgericht* in *HL 6*, the Stanford University Press translation misses the resonance of Schiller’s poem “Resignation” (*die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*), a text famously appropriated by Hegel in 1820 in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (103), while also noting how, in the 1870s, Nietzsche was wrestling with the problem of pre-reflective and reflective art¹⁴ or, in Schillerian terms, the distinction between the “naïve” and the “sentimental” (63). Along with Rousseau and Schopenhauer, Goethe serves in the third essay as one of three “geniuses who have set up competing images of [...] the modern human being” or “philosophic image creators” who could “save Europe from its impending spiritual crisis” by “pursu[ing] ‘truth’ and cultivat[ing] the image of that pursuits

14 Cf. *Nachlass* 1870/71, 7[126], *KSA* 7.183–4, and *Nachlass* 1874, 29[126], *KSA* 7.688.

in others” (Brooks, 147 and 152–3), figures corresponding in Church’s view to the three types of history discerned in the history (and, in Goethe’s case, to its antiquarian mode) (160). This “classical” Nietzsche relies on Weimar classicism’s distinction between first and second nature when he argues that, where nature does not succeed in creating the great individual, culture can and must.¹⁵

For another, they highlight the vitalist aspects of Nietzsche’s thought. In the history essay, Nietzsche defines life as “that dark, driving power that insatiably thirsts for itself,” something whose “sentence is always unmerciful, always unjust, because it has never proceeded out of a pure well of knowledge” (HL 3), returning later in the essay to the idea that “all living things require an atmosphere around them, a mysterious misty vapour” (HL 7). Brooks points out how, in the foreword and HL 1, Nietzsche proposed to make his own judgments of German historical culture from the viewpoint of “life” and “the antithesis between life and wisdom,” explicitly taking – like all critical history – not knowledge, but life, as the standard against which the history of historicism in Germany would be judged; the essay’s critical character is evinced by the phrase, as opposed to “for knowledge” or “for justice”, of “for life” (107). Jensen (53) and Church (67) both highlight the notion in HL 1 of life as a “plastic” or “shaping” power (*plastische Kraft*), defined by Nietzsche as “the capacity to develop out of oneself in one’s own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken moulds.” Whereas Church (67) relates this notion to the “universal law” discerned by Nietzsche that “a living thing can be healthy, strong and fruitful only when bounded by a horizon,” and links (184–5) the definition of life in HL 3 to the passage in SE 6 where Nietzsche, in allusively Goethean tones, laments how, in “a species of *misemployed and appropriated culture*,” “that drive which does not know its goal, that celebrated obscure impulse [*den gerühmten dunklen Drang*]” can be directed onto paths that lead away from “the supreme goal, the production of the genius.”¹⁶ For his part, Jensen is less certain, suggesting that “what precisely Nietzsche means by ‘life’ is not clear in HL, though it doesn’t seem quite so brutalistic as in his mature work,” for which he chooses GS 16 as an example (43).¹⁷ The importance of memory and forgetting is a topic to which we shall return when considering the papers Jensen has recently co-edited with Carlotta Santini.

Oddly, one figure is given fairly short shrift by all four commentators – Heidegger. Although Jensen notes that it was Foucault who “most forcefully adopted Nietzsche’s leads in narrativity” – in part from HL, in part (as in *Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire* of 1971) from his later genealogy (176–7)¹⁸ –, that one of the most influential French interpretations of HL was a lecture by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in 1983, translated into English in 1990 (62, n. 30),¹⁹ he is less than convinced by Heidegger’s argument in *Sein und Zeit* (1927), § 76, that “the triad of history is augured in the historicity of Dasein,”²⁰ and that the three forms of history (antiquarian, critical, monumental) are three modes of temporality (the past, the

15 On first and second nature, see HL 3, and Brooks, *Nietzsche’s Culture War*, 108.

16 See SE 6, KSA 1.387.

17 Or see Nietzsche’s phrase about the “party of life [*Partei des Lebens*]” in EH, BT 4.

18 Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire,” in *Hommage à Jean Hippolyte*, Paris 1971, 145–72.

19 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, “History and Mimesis,” trans. Eduardo Cadava, in Laurence A. Rickels (ed.), *Looking After Nietzsche*, Albany, NY 1990, 209–31.

20 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford 1962, 448.

present, the future) (78). So it comes as no surprise that Jensen is also coolly sceptical about Heidegger's lecture series on HL given in the winter semester of 1938/39.²¹ For Jensen, the mere fact of Heidegger's decision to base "the lion's portion of his lectures on Nietzsche upon the non-book 'The Will to Power' [...] by itself disqualifies it from being taken seriously as an interpretation" (182, n. 77), and he would not be the first to say that Heidegger's lectures are often more informative about Heidegger than they are about Nietzsche (173–4). Church mentions that HL anticipates Nietzsche's genealogical method and Heidegger's account of the historicity of human beings (55), that Heidegger's lectures on HL trace the notion of personality back to Kant (97, n. 20), and that they offer extensive treatment of Nietzsche's description of justice in HL 6 (102, n. 27); Brooks only mentions Heidegger once in the context of a passing reference to *Sein und Zeit* (178), while Huddleston does not mention Heidegger at all. Nevertheless, Jensen recognizes that three major Heideggerean theses – the marking of human existence by historicity, the sense of temporality as a distinctive mark of humanity, and the imperative that historiography remember the intimate connection between historical accounts and their authors' present-day conditions – "each has its roots" in HL (174). Moreover, he also acknowledges that, thanks to Heidegger, the main ideas of HL are mediated to such thinkers as Buber, Jaspers, Arendt, Levinas, Patočka, Ricoeur, and Stambaugh, who explore the "existential dimension" of historicity (174). Nevertheless, one senses that, despite their incomplete preservation, Heidegger's lectures *Zur Auslegung von Nietzsches II. Unzeitgemässer Betrachtung* await the fuller attention they deserve, and that their detailed examination remains a desideratum of Nietzsche scholarship.

The scope for further work on this aspect of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche is confirmed by several of the contributions to the collection of papers arising from the 29th International Nietzsche-Congress held in Naumburg in October 2018 and jointly edited by Jensen and Santini. After all, as Jensen and Santini note in their introduction, Heidegger assumed as the most fundamental characteristic of *Dasein* the Nietzschean insight that the human being is intrinsically temporal – "an imperfect tense that can never become a perfect one" (HL 1) (9). In his contribution, Christopher Schuringa defends the position that Nietzsche's three-fold division of the modes of history reflects the structure of *Dasein* and, noting how HL opens with a quotation from Goethe's letter to Schiller of December 19, 1798, argues that the essay "harks back to an ideal that Nietzsche finds in Goethe and Schiller, according to which *historia* must always ultimately be *magistra vitae*" (23). While in his paper on Nietzsche's typologies of histories Jensen remains unconvinced of this mapping of the three kinds of history onto the three modes of temporality (46), Aleida Assmann focuses on Nietzsche's introduction in HL's final section of "the unhistorical" and the "suprahistorical," and on his definition of the latter as "the powers which lead the eye away from becoming towards that which bestows upon existence the character of the eternal and stable, towards *art* and *religion*" (HL 10). If historiography (*Geschichtswissenschaft*) served as the central impulse behind a first modernity because it "sees everywhere things that have been, things historical, and nowhere things that are, things eternal" (HL 10), the "eternalizing powers of art and religion" serve as the central impulse behind a second or counter-modernity, a second modernity which, in Assmann's view, "from Nietzsche to Heidegger builds itself up, allies itself with being against becoming, and sees their common goal in the overcoming of the historical,

²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Interpretation of Nietzsche's Second Untimely Meditation*, trans. Ullrich Haase and Mark Sinclair, Bloomington, IN 2016, and Martin Heidegger, *Zur Auslegung von Nietzsches II. Unzeitgemässer Betrachtung* "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben", ed. Hans-Joachim Friedrich, Frankfurt a. M. 2003.

in the rediscovery of the superhistorical” (my translation). And in his contribution on the relation between memory and the corporeal, Luca Guerreschi notes the proximity between corporeality and memory in Nietzsche²² and Heidegger’s view in his lectures on Nietzsche that “our being embodied is essentially other than merely being encumbered with an organism.”²³ Yet this is not intended as a volume on Heidegger and, unlike the other titles reviewed here, it is intentionally much broader in its range of topics: including contributions on genealogy as a mirror image of Judeo-Christian myths of origins (Aviezer Tucker), on “active” forgetting in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Richard J. Elliott), on history and memory as civilization-building processes in *The Anti-Christ* (Carlo Chiurco), the role of cruelty in shaping the historical emergence of normative social order (Christian J. Emden), and the hidden allusions to Schopenhauer in Nietzsche’s notebooks from 1867/68 (Simona Apollonio), as well as an exploration of the phrase *blaue Vergessenheit* (“blue oblivion”) in one of the *Dionysus-Dithyrambs* (1888) and Nietzsche’s “poetics of memory” (Hubert Thüring), the question of memory and eternal recurrence (Didier Franck), the problems of writing, memory, history and the “paternal shadow” in Nietzsche’s autobiographical writings (Hans Ruin), the anti-identitarian ethics of Nietzsche’s conception of the self (Martin Saar), the “feeling of power” (D 23) and its temporalities (David Simonin), the meaning of “being allowed” and “being able” to promise in the *Genealogy* (Kota Taniyama), the relation between history and memory in Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacob Burckhardt, and Aby Warburg (Santini), and an analysis of Aleida and Jan Assmann’s reception of Nietzsche (Felix Denschlag and Jan Ferdinand). Taken as a whole, and as this brief survey shows, however, it decisively confirms the centrality of the themes of memory and historicity in Nietzsche’s thought in general and in the *Untimely Meditations*, especially HL, in particular.

In fact, returning to the “culture wars” and the topicality of Nietzsche with which we began, there is good reason to believe that Nietzsche is more timely than ever. In the first essay, for instance, Nietzsche’s “basic complaint about Strauss and his worldview” and how it “gives voice to self-satisfied bourgeois values” anticipates, as Huddleston points out, “the specter of the ‘last man’ that comes a decade later in Nietzsche’s work” (32). Equally, in HL 9 and its portrait of modern culture, for instance, Church sees “a remarkable anticipation of his portrait of the ‘last men’ in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*” (123), while something that Nietzsche recognizes in SE 4 chimes with the later, “harrowing” passage about the Last Man, namely that “egoism is remarkably resilient” (158) – an insight that tends also to be confirmed by everyday life. As Leo Strauss put it in his seminar on *Zarathustra*, the Last Man means “the withering away of the state, no government of men but only administration of things,” so that “the whole human race is a single association of production and consumption” and “everyone is a cog in the machine; there are no disturbing aspirations any more.”²⁴

As Nietzsche already sensed in 1874, the battleground for culture was education. After all, the historical context of immense change in which Nietzsche was operating as an academic – between 1841 and 1881, enrollment in philology (ancient languages), philosophy, and history in arts and humanities faculties at universities declined from 86 % to 63 %, while enrollment in mathematics and the natural sciences (or what today we would recognize as belonging to STEM subjects) increased from 14 % to 37 %, as Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon

22 Cf. Nachlass 1884, 26[374], KSA 11.249.

23 Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. David Farrell Krell, New York 1991, vol. I, 138.

24 Leo Strauss, *Leo Strauss on Nietzsche’s “Thus Spoke Zarathustra”*, ed. Richard L. Velkley, Chicago 2017, 33 and 99.

have explained²⁵ – prompted him to consider the purpose of history in a way that speaks directly to the question of how *Bildung* (the neo-humanist ideal of self-development) relates to scholarship (*Wissenschaft*) and research (*Forschung*) that is being asked, in an almost existential way, by those in the arts and humanities today.

In HL 7, Nietzsche regrets

the need to make use of the jargon of the slave-owner and employer of labour to describe things which in themselves ought to be thought of as free of utility and raised above the necessities of life; but the words “factory,” “labour market,” “supply,” “making profitable,” and whatever auxiliary verbs egoism now employs, come unbidden to the lips when one wishes to describe the most recent generation of men of learning,

whom he describes as “exhausted hens” who “can only cackle more than ever because they lay eggs too quickly.” Then again, in SE 6, he opposes to the two signs of consecration to culture various counterforces, beginning with “*the greed of the money-makers*,” which “requires the assistance of culture and by way of thanks assists culture in return, but at the same time, of course, would like to dictate its standards and objectives,” offering “the seductive formula” of “as much knowledge and education as possible, therefore as much demand as possible, therefore as much production as possible, therefore as much happiness and profit as possible.” Jensen notes that HL received its “most lengthy and most serious review” from the historian Karl Hillebrand (1829–1884), who wrote that “Mr Nietzsche speaks as if the entire German nation enjoyed an academic education and was smothered in historical knowledge” (159–60),²⁶ and Brooks suggests that “Nietzsche’s claim that the modern world was ripe for a cultural re-Hellenization is likely to strike contemporary readers as odd” (207). Were he by some unimaginable miracle to return, Nietzsche might be dismayed to learn that over the last two decades books have been written with such titles as the “university in ruins,” “the alienated academic,” and “how to market your university,” but he would not, I suspect, be surprised.²⁷

At the same time, HL as an act of (culture) war already treads the precarious line between dark despair and almost hysterical optimism that characterizes the later *Zarathustra*. Although most critics highlight the horizontality of Nietzsche’s image (borrowed from Schiller) in his account of monumental history of “a chain unit[ing] humankind across the millennia like a range of human mountains peaks” (HL 2) and his image (borrowed from Schopenhauer) of a “republic of genius” in which “one giant calls to another across the desert intervals of time” (HL 9),²⁸ there is an important verticality in Nietzsche’s thought as well. In the remark-

25 Paul Reitter / Chad Wellmon, “How the Philologist Became a Physician of Modernity: Nietzsche’s Lectures on German Education,” *Representations* 131/1 (Summer 2015), 68–104.

26 Karl Hillebrand, “Ueber historisches Wissen und historischen Sinn,” *Neue freie Presse* 3542 and 3544 (1874); cited in Hauke Reich, *Rezensionen und Reaktionen zu Nietzsches Werken 1872–1889*, Berlin 2013, 460–73.

27 See Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, MA 1996; Andrew McGettigan, *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets, and the Future of Higher Education*, London 2013; John Smyth, *The Toxic University: Zombie Leadership, Academic Rock Stars, and Neoliberal Ideology*, London 2017; Richard Hall, *The Alienated Academic: The Struggle for Autonomy Inside the University*, Cham 2018; and Teresa M. Flannery, *How to Market a University: Building Value in a Competitive Environment*, Baltimore, MD 2021.

28 Cf. Neymeyr, *Kommentar zu Nietzsches “Unzeitgemässen Betrachtungen” I–II*, 438–40 and 551–5.

able passage in HL in which he describes the modern condition – “the ground sinks away from you into the unknown; there is no longer any support for your life” – Nietzsche writes that “it is true you climb upon the sunbeams of knowledge up to heaven, but you also climb down to chaos” (HL 9). It is notable how often in these essays Nietzsche uses the image of the chain, sometimes in the sense of something on which one can move up or down, sometimes in the sense of something from which one seeks liberation, as when he writes that we are “the outcome of earlier generations [...], their aberrations, passions and errors, and indeed of their crimes” and “it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain” (HL 3). In this second sense, a related image is that of the cave, which occurs several times in his essay on Schopenhauer. Here Nietzsche talks about “the inward cave, the labyrinth of the heart” (SE 3), about how the singular individual who decides to encumber himself with the chain of “a productive uniqueness within him as the core of his being” will discover “the desert and the cave” (SE 3), and about how the heroic individual realizes that “a kind of agreement exists to kidnap him out of his own cave” (SE 4). In his essay on Wagner, Nietzsche returns to this image when he imagines the artist as “the new bringer of light” who promises modern humankind: “I lead you into a realm that is just as real, you yourselves shall say when you emerge out of my cave into your daylight which life is more real, which is really daylight and which cave” (WB 6).

Under the guise of *Kulturkritik*, Nietzsche engages in the *Untimely Meditations* with fundamental issues that have never been more timely, not least those controversial questions about memory and history that are the heart of Jensen’s and Santini’s collection and that underpin key themes in identity politics, *Erinnerungskultur* (culture of remembrance), and museumization, and it is telling that the founding volume in a series dedicated to “Post-human Studies” is entitled *Nietzschean Meditations: Untimely Thoughts at the Dawn of the Transhuman Era*.²⁹ Even in the midst of a global pandemic, it is still possible to agree with Nietzsche’s sentiments as expressed in a motto from an early notebook of July 1862: “I prefer the past to the present; but I believe in a better future” (Nachlass 1862, 13[10], KGW I 2.444).

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²⁹ Steve Fuller, *Nietzschean Meditations: Untimely Thoughts at the Dawn of the Transhuman*, Basel 2019.

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