

NIETZSCHE'S  
ANTI-DARWINISM

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## Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche's complex relationship to Charles Darwin has been much explored, and readers have placed the two thinkers in conjunction from the very beginning. Nietzsche himself alluded to Darwinian interpretations of his ideas as early as 1888. In *Ecce Homo* (*EH*), he felt compelled to disparage the "scholarly cattle," who suggested that his *Übermensch* reflected Darwinian sympathies (*EH* "Why I Write Such Good Books" 1). In recent years, numerous studies have returned to the Nietzsche–Darwin axis, indicating that they recognize Nietzsche's connection to Darwin reflects a significant component of his thought.<sup>1</sup>

While the first objective of this study is to argue for the pre-eminence of Darwin for the development and articulation of Nietzsche's philosophy, its main thrust is to point to the *antagonistic* character of their relationship and to show how Nietzsche's final critique against Darwin and

<sup>1</sup> Studies in the first wave of critical reception often focused on the Darwinian resonances in Nietzsche, e.g. Alexander Tille, *Von Darwin bis Nietzsche: Ein Buch Entwicklungsethik* (Leipzig: Naumann, 1893); Oskar Ewald, "Darwin und Nietzsche," *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 136 (1909): 159–79; Claire Richter, *Nietzsche et les Théories biologiques contemporaines* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1911); Raoul Richter, *Essays* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1913); and Ludwig Haas, "Der Darwinismus bei Nietzsche" (Ph.D. dissertation, Giessen, 1932). In recent years, scholarly interest in the Darwin angle has revived, and three full-length studies have tackled the question: Gregory Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology, and Metaphor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); John Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Edith Düsing, *Nietzsches Denkweg: Theologie, Darwinismus, Nihilismus* (Munich: W. Fink, 2006). This list does not include individual journal articles, such as Werner Stegmeier, "Darwin, Darwinismus, Nietzsche," *Nietzsche-Studien* 16 (1987): 246–87 and (more recently) Michael Skowron, "Nietzsches 'Anti-Darwinismus,'" *Nietzsche-Studien* 37 (2008): 160–94, or the many studies where Darwin receives significant chapter treatments, such as in George J. Stack, *Lange and Nietzsche* (New York: de Gruyter, 1983); Irving Zeitlin, *Nietzsche: A Re-Examination* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994); Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997); or Robin Small, *Nietzsche and Réé: A Star Friendship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), to name but a few. Then there is Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), which has a separate section dedicated to Nietzsche ("Nietzsche's Just So Stories").

his followers might represent the key to understanding his broader (anti-) Darwinian position. In that sense, this second, much more significant objective will be to clarify the ambiguity behind Nietzsche's own unambiguously expressed final opposition to Darwin.

Of course, this approach entails taking his final opposition seriously. In some ways, my study will start from the end and proceed to the beginning. It will look for the subtle incongruities and the discrepancies between their thought-systems in order to unearth the fault lines between them. If Nietzsche was serious about his final antagonism, which I will argue he was, then this study will explain how a full-blown critique of Darwin could have emerged toward the end of his career after he had initially revealed close affinities with him and his ideas.

In a recent monograph, Ruth Abbey criticizes interpretations that concentrate on Nietzsche's radical late philosophy at the expense of his open-ended, multi-perspectival middle period. She detects scholarly prejudice against the middle period born from a spell that Nietzsche himself has successfully cast: "this image of Nietzsche as an autonomous and wholly individual thinker is accepted partly because we are held captive by the picture he draws of himself, for in his later works Nietzsche repeatedly invents himself as inventor rather than legatee."<sup>2</sup> While I share Abbey's high estimation of the middle period, both for its own sake and as the fertile seedbed of his later philosophy, I am skeptical of her negative assessment regarding the final period.

In the one case of Darwin, for example, the "anti-Darwinian" animus reflected in Nietzsche's late "Anti-Darwin" passages is neither sudden nor unprecedented. It arises from ten years of subtle questioning in the middle period that renders his opposition in the later works both explicable and credible. The best approach to the final period, then, is not to be seduced by Nietzsche's rhetorical hyperbole or Martin Heidegger's stylization of him as the "destroyer of the Western tradition" and "Platonism." It is to try to make sense of how and why he might have arrived at those antagonisms, including his final opposition to Darwin. At the same time, this study will argue for the pre-eminence of Darwin for understanding the transition to the late works, since Darwin, perhaps more than any other modern thinker, made his mature period possible, in effect allowing him "to become who he was."

Before proceeding, I will need to establish some of the guiding premises of my study and take issue with some common popular and

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 141.

scholarly misperceptions. My first premise will be to argue that Nietzsche's exchange with Darwin was constant and ongoing and that it framed his philosophy from beginning to end. This perspective might be surprising; after all, Darwin does not appear often in his published work. References to Darwin, for example, are far eclipsed by those to Wagner or Schopenhauer.<sup>3</sup> Also, Daniel Dennett's observation that "Nietzsche probably never read Darwin"<sup>4</sup> is probably not far from the truth. He does not appear to have read *The Origin of Species* (1859) or even *The Descent of Man* (1871), the work with the greatest outward affinity to his project. These two facts alone have compelled commentators either to dismiss his position on Darwin altogether or to classify it as only a minor preoccupation.

The criticisms that Nietzsche did not refer to Darwin enough, or that he had insufficient firsthand knowledge of his theories, are misguided. For one, they fail to take into account that Darwin, whose science had broken with traditional metaphysics and had established a naturalist grounding for morality, quite simply represented the absolute starting point and unspoken framework for *all* of Nietzsche's subsequent investigations from the middle period on. For Nietzsche, *Darwin* represented much more than the theory of "natural selection" or the birth of evolutionary science. More than anything else, *Darwin* signified a radical break with conventional forms of morality. In that sense, Nietzsche's thinking always gravitated within a Darwinian orbit, and an analysis of his engagement with Darwin cannot and should not be reduced to explicit references. It must go below the surface and must examine the broader historical and cultural context of his experimentation with Darwin-inspired, i.e. "genealogical," perspectives in the wake of the "Darwinian revolution" (Himmelfarb).<sup>5</sup>

As far as his knowledge of Darwin is concerned, Nietzsche understood Darwin and the implications of his theories both early and well. If one considers that he and Darwin were roughly contemporaneous, that Darwin's ideas first had to be mediated through a foreign language and culture, and that the scientist's reputation was still in the process of being

<sup>3</sup> In a database search of Nietzsche's works, Wagner received 653 direct hits; Schopenhauer 415; and Darwin merely 21. (This of course does not include related terms such as *Darwinismus* or *darwinistisch*.)

<sup>4</sup> Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, 461.

<sup>5</sup> Düsing claims that Nietzsche's exposure to the Darwinian worldview overturned the comforting religious assumptions he held in his youth: "In all stages of his intellectual development, Nietzsche's explicit or implicit debate with both Strauss and Darwin had left volcanic crater-holes in his philosophical thought and pushed it into the direction of an anti-Christian biologism" (Düsing, *Nietzsches Denkweg*, 12).

solidified, Nietzsche early on grasped his significance.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Nietzsche wrestled with his insights at a far deeper level than many others who considered themselves “Darwinian.” Of course, his interest in Darwin does not mean that he pursued his philosophy as a “Darwinian” or that he subjected his own philosophy and goals to Darwinian objectives. This he expressly did not. It means that he understood him *at least as well as* others who had subscribed themselves with far greater fervor and commitment to Darwin and his cause.

At the same time, Nietzsche’s reservations concerning Darwin were *philosophical*; he did not approach his ideas as unimpeachable science. Thus, those commentators who seek to dismiss Nietzsche’s position – for example, because he supposedly gets “natural selection” or “fitness” “wrong” – or those scholars, in turn, who attempt to place his biological notions on a one-to-one correlation with Darwin’s misunderstand both his approach as well as the originality of his final perspective.<sup>7</sup> His antagonism emerges from his foundational critique of Darwin’s cardinal assumptions, including his understanding of “nature”; his adoption of the altruism–egoism model; his assumptions about “man” and “human nature”; his prioritization and understanding of competition and struggle; his belief in self-preservation; even his belief in causality, to name but a few. His critique was not based on Darwinism qua biological science.

The second premise relates to the question of whether Nietzsche’s polemical stance, particularly in the *Genealogy of Morals* (*GM*), truly incorporates Darwin or instead targets Social Darwinists, who had begun to apply his ideas to all aspects of humanity, including society and morality. This is a thorny question and, unfortunately, Nietzsche himself is not

<sup>6</sup> In *Nietzsche and “the English”: The Influence of British and American Thinking on His Philosophy* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2008), Thomas Brobjer reassesses the importance of the Anglo-American tradition for Nietzsche’s philosophy. One assumes that the “English” influence would be self-evident; yet it still goes underappreciated in most accounts. (On the other hand, there are numerous studies on “Nietzsche and the French.”)

<sup>7</sup> The uncertainty and ambivalence which the Nietzsche–Darwin relationship evokes are reflected in the hedging comments that often qualify that relationship. Not able to accept Nietzsche’s antagonism at face value, scholars try to make sense of it: “It is by no means clear that Nietzsche’s critique of Darwin is either coherent or convincing” (Ansell-Pearson, *Virvid Life*, 105). “Although he says a great deal ‘against Darwin,’ there is no doubt that his thinking was stimulated by Darwinian conceptions and that he creatively adapted its principles to his own interpretation of life” (Stack, *Nietzsche and Lange*, 180). “Nietzsche accepted the validity of Darwin’s theory and understood it well in most respects. He does appear, however, to have missed the significance of Darwin’s work for his own philosophy” (Zeitlin, *Nietzsche: A Re-Examination*, 127). “[A]s we turn to his criticisms of Darwin, we find that many of those are ill informed: Nietzsche attacks him for positions Darwin doesn’t hold. Often, Nietzsche’s ‘corrections’ bring him to points Darwin already holds” (Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism*, 16–17).

entirely clear on the matter. Whereas his texts sometimes address specific sympathizers and their ideas (e.g. Rée, Spencer, as well as other so-called “English psychologists”), at other times they lump Darwin together with the Darwinists and in the final period, they challenge Darwin directly (“Anti-Darwin”). The question is crucial for the following reason. If one believes that Nietzsche’s “polemic” targeted vulgar popularizations but exempted Darwin, one will tend to view the two men as compatible: both trying to establish a new basis for morality along naturalist lines. But if one agrees that Nietzsche also implicated Darwin, and not only his followers, one must clarify as far as possible the procedural basis for this claim.

First, Nietzsche himself chooses not to distinguish between Darwin, his followers, and compatible thinkers. In several passages throughout his works, Nietzsche refers to Darwin in the same critical breath as other British natural-law theorists such as the “English psychologists” of *GM*. The reason for this, to repeat, is that his interest in Darwin was a broader philosophical one. On that basis, Nietzsche clearly saw Darwin operating within the same tradition, school of thought, and perspectives as his British predecessors and contemporaries; many of the latter may not even have considered themselves “Darwinists” in an explicit sense. Nietzsche’s critique of Spencer or Mill, for example – who in their own way both strove to remain independent from Darwin – equally implicated the latter, because his perspective took into account, and sought to challenge, an entire philosophical tradition: a so-called “English” school of thought. Therefore, Darwin could not escape his broader critique of the “English psychologists,” for Nietzsche treated him as an equal partner within a larger philosophical enterprise that attempted to establish morality on a new non-metaphysical, naturalist platform.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> My position here is essentially no different from Robert Young’s, who criticizes Darwinian “exceptionalism” within scholarship: “There has been a tendency on the part of historians of science to isolate Darwin in two related ways. The first is to single him out from the mainstream of nineteenth-century naturalism in Britain and allow ‘Darwinism’ to stand duty for the wider movement of which it was in fact but a part. The second is the tendency to single out his evolutionary theory and to demarcate it sharply from those of his predecessors and contemporaries ... Charles Darwin is thus made to stand out as a figure of comparatively unalloyed scientific status and is treated in relative isolation from the social and intellectual context in which he worked and into which his theory was received” (Robert Young, “Darwin’s Metaphor: Does Nature Select?” *Monist* 55 [1971], 442–43). Edward Manier’s *The Young Darwin and his Cultural Circle: A Study of the Influences Which Helped Shape the Language and Logic of the First Drafts of the Theory of Natural Selection* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing, 1978) discusses Darwin’s debt to a wide range of literary personalities who decisively influenced his thinking in advance of the *Origin’s* publication.

Nietzsche's method here should not surprise us. After all, the *Descent* quotes with approval both current and earlier scientists and thinkers who approached the "moral sense" along compatible lines.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Darwin places himself squarely within the reputable tradition of English empiricists and naturalists; and he further admires the moral examples of Aurelius and Kant,<sup>10</sup> all of whom offered him a congenial conceptual basis for a morality, whose existence he sought to naturalize.<sup>11</sup> One can articulate the correlation between Darwin and his sympathizers in the following way: whereas Darwin had introduced the theory of "natural selection" in the *Origin*, turning it into the "Bible" for evolutionary thought ever since, he wrote as just another "Darwinist" in the *Descent*, where he applied evolutionary insights to human nature. That is not to argue that Darwin did not approach the "moral question" and apply his insights to the matter of man with greater depth, clarity, and sophistication than his supporters; he often did; but his analysis was only one out of the many possible explanations for the emergence and development of the moral sense based on his model of natural selection.

At the same time, Nietzsche *did* estimate Darwin higher than his followers and accord him greater respect. One can detect here an inherent tension between these two poles: that is, seeing Darwin as just one member of a larger "English school" and, simultaneously, granting him *primus inter pares* status. Part of that tension results from Nietzsche's tacit admiration for the "Darwin" of the *Origin*, i.e. the major historical and philosophical innovator who had placed the thinking about man and his relationship to nature on a new footing – and therefore impelled Nietzsche to place his own philosophy on a new footing. But at another level, Nietzsche's final critique of Darwin reflected a highly stylized form of personal opposition which separated and elevated founders of historical "movements" from their "lesser" followers. Both positions emerged from a common insight: Nietzsche understood that the new evolutionary theories were decisive and were beginning to form the basis for a challenging, original, though competitive explanatory model in the realm of morality and beyond.

<sup>9</sup> "Mr. Bain gives a list of twenty-six British authors who have written on this subject [the 'moral sense'], and whose names are familiar to every reader; to these, Mr. Bain's own name, and those of Mr. Lecky, Mr. Shadworth Hodgson, and Sir J. Lubbock, as well as of others, may be added" (Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981], 71fn).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. <sup>11</sup> Darwin, *Descent*, 71.



The third major premise suggests that *GM* is Nietzsche's first sustained and systematic critique of Darwin. *GM* represents a problematic case study; after all, Darwin does not loom prominently within the text, and Nietzsche seems to polemicize against a broader collective of "English psychologists." But according to my previous argument, Nietzsche *does* recognize him as a member of this latter school of thought; it is only that he challenges the larger issue of Darwinian perspectives on morality in *GM*, whereas he begins to single out Darwin, the individual, in the post-*GM* *Twilight of the Idols* (1889) and in his notebooks.

What motivated Nietzsche's shift to a more personal style of critique? The issue is complicated, and I will explore it in greater detail in my analysis of his late thought in [Chapter 3](#). However, I will show there that *GM* subverts Darwin's arguments themselves; it does not treat them as separate or superior. In fact, I will challenge the impression that his late "Anti-Darwin" passages are somehow sudden, unprecedented, or out of character with the rest of his philosophy. Indeed, if one treats *GM* as the first major installment of his larger emerging critique of Darwin(ism); and one understands, further, how these arguments compromise Darwin himself, not only his many late-century followers and imitators, then the "Anti-Darwin" passages merely become a logical, natural consequence, a stylistic variant, of his earlier preoccupations.

The fourth and final premise is that *GM* should not only be viewed as a direct challenge to Darwin as well as Nietzsche's first major theoretical assault on him; I will also contend that its arguments only truly make sense and reveal their hidden meanings in their function *as* polemic. By this, I do not mean to suggest that one can read *GM* in only one way. I also do not wish to deny that it is a fruitful, rewarding, and engaging work on many different levels and for many different audiences and disciplines. I merely suggest that one should recognize how its arguments have a provisional character and serve a subversive function. In such a reading, the text does not offer an alternative naturalist platform or build further on naturalist premises. Nietzsche's only means to challenge the historical supremacy of naturalism, I will argue, is to enter into its discursive parameters and engage it from within, to offer credible alternatives and hypotheses, to point out weak spots and inconsistencies, and to assume the guise of a naturalist in order to discredit naturalism.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> In the Preface to *GM*, he writes that it befits "a positive mind" "to replace the improbable with the more probable and in some circumstances to replace one error with another" (*GM* "Preface," 4).

But how can *GM* – a text so informed about and so infused with “naturalist” rhetoric – seriously be considered “anti-naturalist”?<sup>13</sup> Does not Nietzsche’s style of argumentation, his use of biological tropes and metaphors, and many of his central positions in the text prove that he was a naturalist through and through? These are serious objections, to which I will need to respond. Once again, Nietzsche adopted the discourse of both the naturalists and the Darwinists, because it was the only means to subvert their framework and to challenge their mounting success. According to Nietzsche’s understanding of the ascetic ideal, which he formulates most fully in *GM* III, the naturalization of morality proved morality’s great adaptability and flexibility as well as its ability to enter into new guises according to the “historical” circumstances. It was entirely consistent, then, for Nietzsche to tackle the issue of morality in the most recent contemporary arena, where it offered the most credible, powerful, and persuasive explanatory paradigm: nineteenth-century biological naturalism as exemplified by the success of Darwin and his paradigm.

Do I mean to suggest, then, that Nietzsche did not subscribe to the biological and physiological rhetoric in *GM*? No; I will argue that one part of that terminology was conditioned by the discursive requirements of nineteenth-century “naturalism,” by its implicit rules and assumptions; the other part *did* form the basis of his philosophical repertoire. But one must learn to distinguish between using biological and physiological insights as a means to realize non-naturalist, anti-metaphysical objectives and using them as building blocks for a broader naturalist agenda. With “naturalism,”<sup>14</sup> I mean a self-contained philosophical program and school of thought, a paradigm of nature, in which the naturalization of morality assumes a prominent position; or, as D.H. Monro has stated, “to give an account of morality without invoking any moral facts or entities.”<sup>15</sup> Whereas Nietzsche viewed the clear-eyed naturalization of discourse in his times as a great victory over philosophical idealism, he remained skeptical of how remnants of that idealism still informed the terminology and

<sup>13</sup> Brian Leiter proposes an alternative assessment: “The *Genealogy*, and Nietzsche’s mature philosophy generally, proposes a *naturalistic* explanation, i.e., an explanation that is continuous with both the results and methods of the sciences” (Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality* [New York: Routledge, 2002], 11).

<sup>14</sup> For Leiter, “[n]aturalism in philosophy is, typically, in the first instance, a *methodological* view about how one should do philosophy: philosophical inquiry, on this view, should be continuous with empirical inquiry in the sciences” (Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 3). Leiter’s linkage of the empirical sciences with “naturalism” (as exemplified by Darwin’s theories) is precisely the understanding of “naturalism” that this study will question.

<sup>15</sup> D.H. Monro, *A Guide to the British Moralists* (London: Fontana, 1972), 23.

the objectives of contemporary “naturalism.” In that sense, Nietzsche’s use of terms such as weak and strong wills, sickness, health, and decadence can be entirely consistent with an overall anti-naturalist stance.

My study is situated between two dominant traditions. On the one hand, many scholars ever since Heidegger have approached his works as “pure” philosophy and have not seriously explored the philosophy’s connections to science. As a result, they have neglected to give an adequate explanation for its biological and physiological resonances. Heidegger himself disparagingly referred to “Nietzsche’s alleged biologism”<sup>16</sup> in an effort to counter the powerful first wave of reception which prioritized the biological traces in the wake of Darwin’s incredible influence at the turn of the century. Nietzsche’s thought clearly seemed to coalesce with notions drawn from eugenics and the theories of degeneration and decadence dominating the fin-de-siècle and beyond.<sup>17</sup> Thus, Heidegger’s efforts to rescue the “philosophical” core of Nietzsche from a vulgar, one-dimensional “scientism” are to some degree understandable.

Many studies have followed Heidegger’s lead. They have approached Nietzsche’s works as a complete philosophical system, with his three main concepts – the *Übermensch*, the will to power, and the eternal return – serving as its foundational pillars. Despite these works’ valuable insights, they often reveal two core deficiencies: they extract Nietzsche’s work from its immediate historical context – though Nietzsche more than most philosophers emphasizes his (antagonistic) cultural contingency; and they tend to ignore, and therefore fail to make sense of, the “scientific” dimension of his thought. In attempting to extract a “pure” philosophical agenda from Nietzsche’s disparate texts, they disregard significant components of that philosophy’s totality.

On the other hand, a second scholarly lineage *has* taken the scientific dimension seriously. Whereas some interpreters explore how the natural sciences of the time left their traces on his philosophy,<sup>18</sup> others go further. They suggest that Nietzsche’s project was “scientific” in its very orientation and it incorporated findings from the sciences to legitimize

<sup>16</sup> The title of a section of Heidegger’s influential two-volume Nietzsche study (Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* [Pfullingen: Neske, 1961]).

<sup>17</sup> Some recent studies on these late-century cultural currents include: Moore, *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor*; Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race, and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002); and Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> For example, Moore again; but also the studies by Robin Small, *Nietzsche and Rée* and *Nietzsche in Context* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001).

its objectives. In their views, his thought does not become more philosophically significant as a result of its isolation from science, but, on the contrary, because it recognizes that it must square with the “higher” truth standards of science.<sup>19</sup> While their approach offsets some of the limitations that arise from the philosophical “purists,” it falls short in another regard: it fails to make adequate sense of Nietzsche’s explicit *antagonism* toward science.<sup>20</sup> Here, too, this group willfully disregards a major component of his philosophy.

For this reason, my account differs from the most recent work on the subject, John Richardson’s *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism* (2004). Though Richardson acknowledges Nietzsche’s antagonism, he believes that Nietzsche misunderstands specific points of Darwin’s arguments – for example, that Darwin retains an implicit teleology, which he, Nietzsche, overcomes with the “will to power.”<sup>21</sup> Richardson’s study then goes on to show how many of Nietzsche’s thoughts merely transfigure Darwin’s findings – to the point that Darwin’s science, in Richardson’s view, becomes the infrastructure for Nietzsche’s philosophical project<sup>22</sup> – while he systematically downplays the significance of Nietzsche’s objections to Darwin and his theories or criticizes them as misguided or “wrong.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> For example, Richardson: “[Nietzsche] prides himself in his naturalism – in his study of contemporary science, and in his philosophy’s incorporation of its truths. He claims to know what the science knows – and something else besides” (Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism*, 4). Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality* are also prominent proponents of readings sympathetic to science.

<sup>20</sup> Leiter, referencing Clark (*Nietzsche on Truth*) (22), tries to explain away Nietzsche’s numerous skeptical comments regarding “science” (21–22), “causation” (22–23), “materialism” (23–25), and “human nature and essence” (25–26) and asserts that “in his later works, Nietzsche’s skepticism vanishes and he repeatedly endorses a scientific perspective as the correct and true one” (Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 21) Aside from the fact that there are hardly any indications to back up such an assessment (and Leiter’s explanations are unpersuasive), my study will show that, in fact, the modern scientific enterprise becomes one of Nietzsche’s most significant polemical targets in the final period.

<sup>21</sup> Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism*, 23. Richardson believes, however, that Nietzsche still adheres to those teleological assumptions, and he makes much of the preposition “to” in the “will to power,” as though the concept itself revealed Nietzsche’s teleological tendencies: “What can that towardness be, if *not* an end-directedness” (Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism*, 21)?

<sup>22</sup> “[Nietzsche] sets something distinctively his own *on top of* (explanation by) natural selection. He proposes a kind of selective mechanism – likely nonindividual and largely noncognitive – that operates *over* human societies” (italics mine) (Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism*, 4).

<sup>23</sup> “Nietzsche’s criticisms and amendments are wrong not about Darwin, but about the facts, as we now know them; on these points Darwin has been confirmed, and Nietzsche’s doubts carry no weight” (Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism*, 17). But where is there any indication that Nietzsche truly *cares* about the “facts” of evolution? By failing to detect the radical nature of Nietzsche’s implicit critique of natural science, *including* evolution, Richardson continues to judge Nietzsche on the basis of traditional criteria of being “right” or “wrong” about the objective science of Darwinism.

This approach raises some serious questions;<sup>24</sup> but perhaps the most serious one is this: what does one make of, and how does one explain, Nietzsche's explicit later antagonism if that critique is not merely an issue of being "right" or "wrong" about Darwin's theories? In short, what is the purpose behind Nietzsche's "anti-Darwinism" if its "truthfulness" is no longer an issue? Because of his allegiance to the scientific truth standards of Darwin's model, Richardson fails to uncover the truly radical core of Nietzsche's fundamental Darwinian critique.

Finally, I wish to say a word about my "strategy" in regard to the texts. Over the years, scholars have argued about the status and ranking of the texts, more specifically, the role and the value of the unpublished notebooks, i.e. the so-called *Nachlass*, much of which his sister, Elisabeth, compiled in a separate posthumous volume entitled the *Will to Power* (*Wille zur Macht*). The latter "work," which Walter Kaufmann subsequently translated into English, has endured a stubborn and influential afterlife in the Anglo-American Nietzsche world despite the fact that it has proven to be an editorial "forgery."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Heidegger's preference for the "philosophy" of his unpublished notebooks – he famously stated that the "true" Nietzsche resided in the *Nachlass* – has encouraged many scholars to prefer the notes to the published work.<sup>26</sup>

When Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari published their landmark German-language edition of the complete works in 1967, the so-called *KSA*, they not only gave scholarship a critical apparatus of the highest

<sup>24</sup> Why would Nietzsche wish to construct his philosophy on a Darwinian infrastructure if he does not even agree with Darwinian insights? Or, if Nietzsche misunderstands those insights, i.e. gets them "wrong," what philosophical relevance would his enterprise have if it misrepresented "nature" and scientific "truth" in such a fundamental way? Then again, if Nietzsche creatively applies Darwin's findings to his own philosophical project, making it irrelevant that he misrepresents the "facts" of Darwinism, would not that turn him into just another Social Darwinist? Finally, why should we study him as an original thinker at all, and not just as a cultural artifact, if he belongs to that category?

<sup>25</sup> Walter Kaufmann's *Will to Power* (*WP*) translation is still in print and popular (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann [New York: Random House, 1967]), and Nietzsche scholars in the English-speaking world still readily quote from it. Part of the problem is that Anglo-American scholarship does not yet have access to a complete English translation of the Colli–Montinari edition (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke*, 15 vols. [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980] [from now on, *KSA*]) and must continue to work with citations from *WP*.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Schacht, defending the use of *WP*, argues that working with it is permissible as long as one treats the material therein as having no higher value than anything else in the notebooks (Richard Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche: Reflections Timely and Untimely* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995], 124). But then the question arises: why draw from the fictional *WP* at all if one can take the citation directly from the notebooks? By "quoting" from *WP*, one supports the illusion that there is a coherent authorial "system" behind a posthumously compiled collection of thought-fragments, i.e. one creates an "author" where there is none.

editorial standard;<sup>27</sup> they also helped demarcate the published works from the unpublished fragments, which now appear in strict chronological order (and not in the form of an illusory separate “work”).<sup>28</sup> Their edition demolished the myth of the *Will to Power*. And yet, they did not put the debate completely to rest, for it has since shifted to philological questions such as whether to draw from the notebooks at all or how far to work with the fragments versus the published works. As a result, an author feels compelled to clarify the philological procedure before tackling the subject.

Stated simply, I argue for the priority of Nietzsche’s published works, and I will draw almost exclusively from them.<sup>29</sup> Adopting such a practice in no way means that I ignore the *Nachlass* or find it immaterial; when it helps my argument, I will turn to it. But there are two persuasive reasons to emphasize the published work. For one, I believe it is philologically suspect, in Nietzsche’s case or any author’s, for that matter, to prioritize a writer’s notebooks over work he intended to publish – or even to treat them as equal. Although one must consider everything a thinker such as Nietzsche has written when one evaluates his philosophy, one should not disregard the author’s very clear intention of introducing only certain of his ideas to the public for a reason. By placing precedence on his published word, one does not “fetishize” the author or treat him as an “idol”;<sup>30</sup> one merely wishes to respect the author’s distinction between public persona – which is what published works represent – and thought fragments and private jottings, which lack the conscious systematization and coherence of a published oeuvre.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> “We shall forever be in Mazzino Montinari’s debt for his enormous labor of love, which left to us what is likely to remain the best possible presentation of Nietzsche’s legacy to us ... He put nearly the whole of Nietzsche’s written legacy at our disposal, as faithfully and authoritatively as anyone could” (Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, 117).

<sup>28</sup> “What Montinari made available to us, in definitive form and clearly demarcated fashion, is not merely the body of work Nietzsche published or readied for publication, but also that immense and diverse mass of material he left upon his collapse” (Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, 117).

<sup>29</sup> Here I differ in methodology from Moore and Richardson, the two most prominent recent interpreters of the Nietzsche–Darwin connection, who draw rather indiscriminately from both published and unpublished works to make their case.

<sup>30</sup> Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, 119.

<sup>31</sup> The recent pioneering philological efforts of Marie-Luise Haase, Montinari’s former assistant, have rendered excessive reliance on the “notebooks” even more problematic. Her philology, an expansion of Colli–Montinari’s, has shown that even the great editors had taken considerable liberties with their compilation of “notebook” entries, which they placed in chronological order and to which they gave a “neater” systematic appearance. As the careful philological work on the manuscripts now reveals, many of these entries were random jottings and marginalia over time, which did not at all exhibit the sense of coherence or chronology that the Colli–Montinari edition seemed to indicate. This “new” evidence should render the published work even *more*

But beyond that, I think the question of publication holds especially true for a writer like Nietzsche – more so, perhaps, than for most published authors.<sup>32</sup> Aside from the significant fact that literary style and the art of rhetorical presentation are paramount for Nietzsche and his meanings, a point to which most scholars now readily accede,<sup>33</sup> I believe that a major part of his philosophy is revealed in the *fact* of publication, that is, in the objectives he pursues *through* publication. As my study will reveal, the polemical, antagonistic character of his late works in particular is inseparable from the “message” of his final philosophy as a whole. To divorce the thoughts from the overt polemical strategy – as well as from the complex personality of its strongly opinionated author – means to *distort* the meanings of that philosophy. Indeed, Nietzsche emphasized the importance of the personality behind the work *throughout* his literary career – namely, the “human, all too human” character concealed behind expressions of “genius” – and he sought to strip away the accretions of interpretation that had collected around flesh-and-blood historical individuals.<sup>34</sup> That rhetorical practice, too, was an extension of hard-won *philosophical* insights.

definitive, being the only “corpus” which Nietzsche himself chose to systematize, sign off on, and publish under his name (and therefore less prone to philological “tampering”). See Stephan Günzel, “Review of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Neunte Abteilung, *Der handschriftliche Nachlass ab Frühjahr 1885 in differenzierter Transkription*, Vol. 1–3, ed. Marie-Luise Haase and Michael Kohlenbach,” *Nietzscheforschung* 10 (2003): 348–53; Renate Reschke, “Review of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Neunte Abteilung, *Der handschriftliche Nachlass ab Frühjahr 1885 in differenzierter Transkription*, Vol. 4–5, ed. Marie-Luise Haase and Martin Stingelin in Verbindung mit der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften,” *Nietzscheforschung* 13 (2006): 287–95; and Marie-Luise Haase, “Nietzsche und ...,” *Nietzscheforschung* 10 (2003): 17–36.

<sup>32</sup> On this point I disagree with Schacht, who correctly starts by saying: “I readily grant that, as a general rule, in interpreting an author’s thought primacy should be given to things the author is prepared to say in things intended for publication”; but then concludes with: “Here, however, as in so many other respects, Nietzsche is a rather special case” (Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche*, 118).

<sup>33</sup> For example, Christopher Janaway: “Nietzsche’s way of writing addresses our affects, feelings, or emotions ... I argue that this is not some gratuitous exercise in ‘style’ that could be edited out of Nietzsche’s thought” (Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche’s Genealogy* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 4). Whereas earlier reception often questioned the philosophical value of Nietzsche’s writings *because of* their rhetorical brilliance, a new generation of scholars now acknowledges that the “style” of his writings does not detract from the philosophy but, quite the contrary, serves as an integral part of its meanings; see, e.g., Daniel Conway, “For Whom the Bell Tolls,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 35/36 (2008): 96–98.

<sup>34</sup> “[W]ho knows if this is not just what has happened in all great cases so far: the masses worshipped a God, – and that ‘God’ was only a poor sacrificial animal! Success has always been the greatest liar, – and the ‘work’ itself is a success. The great statesman, the conqueror, the discoverer – each one is disguised by his creations to the point of being unrecognizable. The ‘work’ of the artist, of the philosopher, is what invents whoever has created it, whoever was supposed to have created it. ‘Great men,’ as they are honored, are minor pieces of bad literature, invented

Nietzsche's philosophy, I will argue, can only be understood on the basis of his antagonisms, both personal and cultural. One of the most significant in his last phase was his antagonism toward Darwin and his science. To repeat, I do not mean to suggest that Nietzsche builds his entire philosophy around this antagonism alone, since his work develops other significant and productive rivalries – such as with Wagner, Schopenhauer, Plato, Pascal, Spinoza, and Kant, to name but a few. They too reveal key dimensions of his thought. But his ongoing involvement with Darwin led him to develop his innovative theory and practice of polemical philosophy in the first place, which evolved into his signature style in the important final years.

My approach will require us to think differently of what constitutes Nietzsche's "philosophy." While his earlier period developed into a critique of traditional metaphysics based on Darwin-inspired insights, his mature work became what I will refer to as a philosophy of "creative antagonisms." In the end, Nietzsche even includes Darwin and his genealogical practitioners in that polemical circle once he understands how his critical reassessment also implicates them. My study will seek to do justice to Nietzsche's philosophy in its totality; but it will seek to do so by making sense of the undisputed "scientific" components of his thought, particularly its widespread biological and physiological resonances.

after the fact; in the world of historical values, counterfeit *rules*" (BGE 269) (reprinted in *Nietzsche contra Wagner* "Psychologist" 1).