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978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

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FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE AND THE POLITICS OF HISTORY

Friedrich Nietzsche is now widely recognised as being among the most important and influential European thinkers of the past two centuries. In this major new addition to *Ideas in Context*, Christian Emden explores Nietzsche's understanding of modern political culture and his position in the history of modern political thought. Professor Emden surveys Nietzsche's entire intellectual career from his years as a student in Bonn and Leipzig during the 1860s to his genealogical project of the 1880s, and challenges current, exclusively philosophical interpretations of Nietzsche's political thought that tend to pay little attention to the complex historical settings within which his ideas gain momentum. Nietzsche's repeated demand for a "historical philosophizing" that connects our understanding of modern political culture to a critical examination of modernity's historical emergence stands at the center of this study, which combines a detailed contextual reading of Nietzsche's writings and notebooks with a philosophical assessment of his political thought. By focusing on the influence that fundamental themes of nineteenth-century intellectual and political culture exerted on the development of his political thinking – from classical scholarship and German historicism to the rise of cultural anthropology, the growing importance of the life sciences, and the politics of nationalism – Christian Emden argues that Nietzsche's actual position is best understood as an exercise in political realism, which seeks to transcend the traditional ideological faultlines of modern political culture. By contributing to a more historically informed discussion of Nietzsche's critical response to the political predicaments of modernity, this study also sheds new light on the state of historical and political culture in Germany at a time when the ideals of the Enlightenment gave way to the demands of the modern nation state.

CHRISTIAN J. EMDEN is Associate Professor of German Studies at Rice University.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

IDEAS IN CONTEXT 88

Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics
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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.orgInformation on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521155076

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First published 2008

First paperback edition 2010

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library**Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Emden, Christian.

Friedrich Nietzsche and the politics of history / Christian J. Emden.

p. cm. – (Ideas in context ; no. 88)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-88056-5 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, 1844–1900. 2. Political science—Germany—
History—19th century. 3. Political science—Philosophy.
4. Political culture. I. Title. II. Series.

JC233.N52E53 2008

320.01—dc22

2008003908

ISBN 978-0-521-88056-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-15507-6 Paperback

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978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

It is impossible to understand the present without knowing the past, and, to compare them with each other, one would need more time and fewer distractions.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Italienische Reise (January 25, 1787)

I go along the new streets of our cities and think how, of all these gruesome houses which the generation of public opinion has built for itself, not one will be standing in a hundred years' time, and how the opinions of these house-builders will no doubt by then likewise have collapsed.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* (1875)

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> xi
<i>Abbreviations and translations</i>	xiv
Introduction	1
1 The failure of neo-humanism	17
Philologists, liberals, and the nation	20
The Austro-Prussian War in Leipzig	36
The demands of history	42
Toward a cautious materialism	53
Teleology and the laws of history	64
2 The formation of Imperial Germany, seen from Basel	79
Intellectual culture in Basel	80
The practice of cultural history	82
The need for philosophical education	102
The “German spirit” and the Franco-Prussian War	112
3 The crisis of historical culture	129
The crisis of historicism	130
What is orientation in history?	140
The political mobilization of myth	150
“The soul of the antiquarian”	156
The impossible critical historian	163
4 Political lessons from cultural anthropology	174
The view from outside	175
Lessons from anthropology	181
Metaphor, myth, and cultural reality	190
“Survivals” – religion and the nation state	199
Political realism and the “Free spirit”	216
5 Genealogy, naturalism, and the political	229
The path to genealogy	230

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

Contents

A natural history of moral communities	237
Sovereign individuals and the ethic of responsibility	248
The task of genealogy	260
“To translate humanity back into nature”	269
6 The idea of Europe and the limits of genealogy	286
“The creation of the European individual”	287
Beyond the modern nation state	299
Political realities in Imperial Germany	308
Modernity and the limits of genealogy	316
<i>Bibliography</i>	324
<i>Index</i>	366

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

This book is much longer than I originally thought it should be. While it started out as an article, a short addendum to my *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness, and the Body* (2005), since I felt that I had not paid enough attention to the historical strategies Nietzsche employed throughout his writings, it quickly grew into a much larger project. One of the reasons for this was the prominent role Nietzsche's intellectual and political environment played for both his historical thought and his understanding of the political. In short, the topic of this book is Nietzsche's response to the historical and political culture of Europe in the age of the modern nation state. As such, it seeks to fill a notable gap in recent, and not so recent, scholarship and seeks to situate Nietzsche firmly in the history of modern political thought.

From the initial stages of this project I was privileged to receive support from many sources. As a Fellow at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, I was able to rely on the College's generous support for research in Germany, and I also have to thank the Trustees of the Tiarks Fund at Cambridge University's Department of German. At Rice University three President's Faculty Research Awards made the completion of this book much easier than anticipated and facilitated, among other things, a crucial trip to the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, Germany.

Work in an area such as intellectual history is possible only because of the hard work of librarians, locating and making available even the most obscure sources. I wish to express my gratitude, once again, to the enormously helpful staff at the university libraries in Cambridge, Konstanz, Göttingen, and Basel, at Harvard, Rice, and at the Goethe-und-Schiller Archiv in Weimar, Germany. In the final stages of this project, Anna

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

Acknowledgments

Shparberg at Rice's Fondren Library jumped over every administrative hurdle to make available publications in German intellectual history more quickly than any university library could normally do.

The final version of this book owes much to discussions with friends, teachers and colleagues, whose personal encouragement, intellectual example, and wit contributed a great deal to the completion of this book. For many critical interventions, surprising hints and uncomfortable questions, I am grateful to Aleida Assmann, Nicholas Boyle, Thomas Brobjer, Peter Burke, Peter C. Caldwell, Steven Crowell, John Flower, Ulrich Gaier, Duncan Large, Anthony LaVopa, David Midgley, David Mikics, Gregory Moore, Hugh Barr Nisbet, David Owen, Gabriele Rippl, Richard Schacht, Quentin Skinner, Uwe Steiner, James Tully, Sarah Westphal, Joachim Whaley, Harvey Yunis, John H. Zammito, and Rachel Zuckert. The argument has also benefited from passing conversations with Maudemarie Clark, Jean Grondin, Paul Michael Lützeler, John Richardson, and Dermot Moran, which took place at conferences or during guest lectures.

Most importantly, though, Steven Crowell, David Mikics, David Owen, and James Tully have been extraordinarily generous in reading, dissecting and commenting upon several drafts; their keen attention to detail has forced me to readdress central issues and prevented several mistakes that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to the two anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press, whose criticisms and suggestions were of considerable help, and to my enormously patient editor, Richard Fisher, who had to wait for several months until all revisions were completed. Finally, I have to thank Jodie Barnes, Rosanna Christian and Sue Dickinson, my copy-editor, for guiding me through the entire production process.

The Master and Fellows of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge provided the ideal environment for finishing an early draft of this book, as did the Department of German at the University of Cambridge. The congenial atmosphere at Rice University, especially the debates in the History of Philosophy Workshop at the Center for the Study of Cultures, now the Humanities Research Center, allowed me to learn much from neighboring disciplines and sharpened my understanding of issues I might have simply overlooked. Likewise, I have profited greatly from discussions

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Acknowledgments*

xiii

with colleagues in the research group Cultural History & Literary Imagination at Cambridge, some of which took place within the context of a two-year collaboration between Rice and Cambridge on “Changing Perceptions of the Public Sphere.” In an increasingly specialized academic environment it is all too rare to be able to exchange ideas with colleagues from other fields, and many of these exchanges – often over lunch or dinner – have made academic life more bearable and the argument of this book, I hope, more lucid.

Portions of this book have been presented on different occasions at the University of Cambridge, England, at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, at the University of Sussex in Brighton, England, and at the Annual Conference of the German Studies Association in Pittsburgh, USA. I am grateful to the audiences, whose critical questions forced me to rethink central arguments. Some of the themes I could only touch upon in Chapter 1 are discussed in more detail in “Learning How to Read: Nietzsche in Leipzig,” *Oxford German Studies* 35 (2006), 97–110. An abridged version of Chapter 3 has been published as “Toward a Critical Historicism: History and Politics in Nietzsche’s Second *Untimely Meditation*,” *Modern Intellectual History* 3 (2006), 1–31, and parts of Chapter 6 have been published as “The Uneasy European: Nietzsche, Nationalism and the Idea of Europe,” *Journal of European Studies* 38/1 (2008), 27–51. I am grateful to the editors for their permission to reuse and reshape this material.

Over the last years my students at Cambridge and Rice had to listen to what must have seemed to them a variety of obscurities about German and European intellectual history, which they often forced me to clarify. A seminar on German nationalism and another seminar on Nietzsche, the latter of which I had the pleasure of co-teaching with Steven Crowell, left them sufficiently bewildered. I hope they continue to have patience with my digressions.

As always, this book is for Carla, a proper *Wissenschaftlerin*, who has tolerated, often with her eyes rolling, the many late nights it took to turn a wild draft into a readable book. Without her smile, patience and intelligence it would not have seen the light of day. But it is also for my parents, who have made these intellectual travels possible.

Houston, USA
Winter 2007/8

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Abbreviations and translations*

Friedrich Nietzsche's writings and notes are quoted according to the following abbreviations:

- AC* *The Anti-Christ*, in "Twilight of the Idols" and "The Anti-Christ," trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 113–87. Quoted according to section.
- BAW* *Werke und Briefe: Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Hans Joachim Mette (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1933–40). Quoted according to volume and page number.
- BGE* *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Judith Norman, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Quoted according to section.
- BT* *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, trans. Ronald Speirs, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1–116. Quoted according to page number.
- D* *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Quoted according to section.
- EH* *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989). Quoted according to part and section.
- GM* *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Quoted according to essay and section.
- GS* *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Quoted according to section.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Abbreviations and translations*

xv

- GSA** Unpublished Notes in the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv, Weimar, Germany. Followed by signature and page reference.
- HA** *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, intro. Richard Schacht (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Quoted according to volume, part and section, except for vol. 1 which has no parts.
- KGB** *Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975–). Quoted according to volume and page reference.
- KGW** *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, founded by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, ed. Volker Gerhardt, Norbert Miller, Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, and Karl Pestalozzi (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967–). The *Philologica* are quoted according to volume and page number. The *Nachlaß* is quoted according to volume and fragment number.
- TGS** *The Greek State* in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 176–86. Quoted according to page number.
- TI** *Twilight of the Idols*, in “*Twilight of the Idols*” and “*The Anti-Christ*,” trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 19–122. Quoted according to part and section.
- TL** *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*, in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, trans. Ronald Speirs, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 139–153. Quoted according to page number.
- UM** *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Quoted according to part and section.
- Z** *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody*, trans. and ed. Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Quoted according to part and section.

All translations from Nietzsche’s *Philologica*, correspondence, and *Nachlaß* are my own, although other translations have been consulted whenever possible.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-15507-6 - Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of History

Christian J. Emden

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi

Abbreviations and translations

As a general rule, I have simply referred to, or quoted from, standard English translations of any given source when they were available. In some cases, I have also referred to sources in their original language, for instance, when it was necessary to clarify a particular passage. On a very few occasions I have quoted from the original source even though an English translation is available. I have done so for three reasons: either the text was translated only partially, the translation was seriously out of date, or I found the translation to be somewhat misleading. When no English translations are available, I have quoted from standard editions in the original language. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

For reasons of consistency, all titles in a language other than English have been left in the original. This includes all references to Nietzsche's writings.