

NIETZSCHE'S STRUGGLE AGAINST PESSIMISM

On what grounds could life be made worth living, given its abundant suffering? Friedrich Nietzsche was among many who attempted to answer this question. While always seeking to resist pessimism, Nietzsche's strategy for doing so, and the extent to which he was willing to concede conceptual grounds to pessimists, shifted dramatically over time. His reading of pessimists such as Eduard von Hartmann, Olga Plümacher, and Julius Bahnsen – as well as their critics, such as Eugen Dühring and James Sully – has been underexplored in the secondary literature, isolating him from his intellectual context. Patrick Hassan's book seeks to correct this. After closely mapping Nietzsche's philosophical development on to the relevant axiological and epistemological issues, it disentangles his various critiques of pessimism, elucidating how familiar Nietzschean themes (e.g., eternal recurrence, aesthetic justification, will to power, and his critique of Christianity) can and should be assessed against this philosophical backdrop.

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Many of the key issues that Nietzsche grappled with, and that are the subject of this enquiry, are close to my own philosophical interests. The

question of the value of life; the function of beauty and sublimity in framing the worth of things; the roles of religion, art, and the sciences with respect to how we address pervasive suffering, and if those roles are compatible; the existential implications of a wholly naturalistic worldview; the dangers of individual or cultural nihilism of various forms – all are areas about which I continue to find Nietzsche both a provocative and an enlightening source for thought. I have enjoyed discussing such issues more broadly with friends as the years have passed, and I take such discussions to have contributed in small but significant ways to this project. There are too many to mention, but special thanks to the engaging company and insight of Staffan Snitting, Tomas Hubbard, Max Bienkowski, Reham El-Morally, Kev Walsh, Max Mitchell, Anna Zehnpfund, Kevin Chaffey, Panos Paris, Orestis Palermos, and my two brothers.

Parts of Section 1.2 incorporate a portion of an article published elsewhere: Patrick Hassan (2021), “Individual vs. World in Schopenhauer’s Pessimism”, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 59(2): 122–152.

A Note on Primary Sources

Works by Nietzsche and Schopenhauer are cited by section and/or page number. I use the following abbreviations and translations (except where I occasionally have modified the translation as I have felt appropriate):

Works by Nietzsche

- A* *The Antichrist*, R. J. Hollingdale (trans.), London: Penguin, 2003.
- ASC* *An Attempt at Self-Criticism*, Shaun Whiteside (trans.), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993.
- BGE* *Beyond Good and Evil*, R. J. Hollingdale (trans.), London: Penguin, 1990.
- BT* *The Birth of Tragedy*, Shaun Whiteside (trans.), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993.
- CW* *The Case of Wagner*, Walter Kaufmann (trans.), New York: Vintage, 1966.
- D* *Daybreak*, R. J. Hollingdale (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- EH* *Ecce Homo*, Walter Kaufmann (trans.), New York: Vintage, 1989.
- eKGWB* *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe*, Paolo D'Iorio (ed.), based on G. Colli and M. Montinari, (1967), Berlin: de Gruyter, Entries marked 'BVN' refer to letters. Entries marked 'NF' refer to notebook fragments. www.nietzschesource.org.
- GM* *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (trans.), New York: Vintage, 1989.
- GS* *The Gay Science*, Walter Kaufmann (trans.), New York: Vintage, 1974.
- HH* *Human, All Too Human*, R. J. Hollingdale (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

- x *A Note on Primary Sources*
- NCW *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, Walter Kaufmann (trans.), New York: Viking, 1954.
- TI *Twilight of the Idols*, R. J. Hollingdale (trans.), London: Penguin, 2003.
- UM *Untimely Meditations*, R. J. Hollingdale (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, R. J. Hollingdale (trans.), London: Penguin, 2003.

Works by Schopenhauer

- FR *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, in *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings*, David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann, and Christopher Janaway (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- FW *On the Freedom of the Will*, in *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, Christopher Janaway (ed. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- GB *Arthur Schopenhauer: Gesammelte Briefe*, Arthur Hübscher (ed.), Bouvier, 1978.
- HN *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vols. 1–5, Arthur Hübscher (ed.), Frankfurt am Main: Kramer, 1970.
- MR *Manuscript Remains*, Arthur Hübscher (ed.), E. F. J. Payne (trans.), Oxford: Berg, 1988, vols. 1–4.
- OBM *On the Basis of Morals*, in *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, Christopher Janaway (ed. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- PP1 *Parerga and Paralipomena*, vol. 1, Sabine Roehr and Christopher Janaway (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- PP2 *Parerga and Paralipomena*, vol. 2, Adrian del Caro and Christopher Janaway (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- WN *On the Will in Nature*, in *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings*, David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann, and Christopher Janaway (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

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- WWR1* *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- WWR2* *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway (eds. and trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

For the original German:

Schopenhauer: Sämtliche Werke, ed. Arthur Hübscher, 7 vols., 3rd ed.; Wiesbaden: F. A. Brockhaus, 1972; 4th ed., 1988.

For abbreviations of primary texts by other authors, see the Bibliography.