

## Foreword by Walter Kaufmann

Most books die before their authors. Some are stillborn, others scarcely outlive the newspapers that acclaimed their arrival. Rarely, books come into their own only after the author's death. Kafka's two great novels are obvious examples, but they were published only after his death. Even then, however, it took a long time for them to be discovered by the world. *The Trial* first appeared in German in 1925, and it took roughly twenty-five years before Kafka was widely recognized as one of the greatest novelists of the twentieth century, an estimate that still stands.

Nietzsche's case is peculiar. He himself published more than a dozen books and toward the end kept hoping every time that his latest effort might finally be recognized for what it was. None of them was. He was discovered in the 1890s, after he had collapsed, insane; and before he died in 1900 he was world-famous without knowing it. What is most unusual is not that his *fame* has grown and grown but that his *stature* has. He is still being discovered. One keeps finding that there is more to him than had been noticed in the ever spreading literature on him. Even those who wrote on him with admiration usually discounted his exalted claims about his own importance. Either one ignored them or one charged them to incipient madness or, more rarely, to his loneliness, frustration, and desire to attract attention. Gradually, however, it appears that he was right in thinking of his writings as a major crisis in Western philosophy. We are only now beginning to explore this turning point.

This book makes a significant contribution to this exploration. It is not merely a translation of some early writings that Nietzsche himself did not see fit to publish. Nor is it sufficient to note that Professor Breazeale has selected exceptionally interesting texts and that he has supplied a very large number of helpful notes. All that would be enough to earn our gratitude, but one might still say something like this:

Nietzsche's writings can be divided into four parts: his books, his other publications, his letters, and his *Nachlass*, meaning the notes, fragments, and a few finished essays that he himself did not choose to publish. He said repeatedly that his importance rested on his *books*, and he was right. His other publications are not of remotely comparable significance. His letters are, like those of almost all great writers, quite uneven, though the

best of them are fascinating insofar as they show us the human being who wrote the books. Nietzsche was a very unusual person, but the most exceptional feature of his life is that he wrote the books that he wrote in the eighteen eighties. To be sure, it used to be the fashion in the literature about him to give references to his collected works, citing volumes and pages, without indicating whether the reference was to one of his books or to the *Nachlass*. And Alfred Bäumler, a very minor Nietzsche scholar on whom the Nazis bestowed a professorship at the University of Berlin, actually claimed that the books, with their savage attacks on nationalism, anti-Semitism, and “the Germans,” were written for effect while the “true” philosophy of Nietzsche had to be sought in the *Nachlass*, or rather in Bäumler’s selections from that, seeing that the notebooks contained as much objectionable material, from a Nazi point of view, as did the books. Also during the Nazi period, Martin Heidegger applauded and accepted Bäumler’s approach to Nietzsche, down to the absurd claim that *The Will to Power* was Nietzsche’s *magnum opus*, but Heidegger, of course, insisted on making his own selections and on basing his own interpretations on them. This whole approach is a methodological scandal. Anyone who wants to understand what Nietzsche thought must take the trouble to follow his train of thought by reading his books carefully from beginning to end instead of merely browsing in them or sampling his notes, perhaps even in tendentious selections. And one might conclude that anyone who wishes to read only a few things by Nietzsche and not everything should surely read some of his major works, complete, instead of substituting for them material that Nietzsche himself had in a sense rejected.

Professor Breazeale is not unaware of this objection. In fact, he argues most plausibly for a view very much like this. Nevertheless, he makes out a very strong case for this book and does it so convincingly that it would serve no purpose to summarize his argument here. But it may not be inappropriate to supplement it.

What we are offered is not notebook jottings that are dressed up to look like aphorisms but mainly six pieces, including some more or less finished essays, that Nietzsche wrote when he was about thirty, soon after the publication of his first book. At least one of these essays has attracted so much attention in France one hundred years after it was written that many professors elsewhere, used to taking cues from France, have become interested in it. This essay, “On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense,” also contains passages whose stylistic brilliance at least equals the best prose in Nietzsche’s early books and is actually closer to the style of his later works. In fact, it is not only the style that brings to mind *The Gay Science* and the books of the mature Nietzsche; the essay raises the problems that we associate with his later philosophy. Why, then, did Nietzsche not publish it or at least use parts of it in one or another of his books? Again, Professor Breazeale offers a plausible answer.

This book shows how truthful Nietzsche's own interpretation of his first book was, and how a theme of which it is widely believed that it emerged only in his late works was in fact central in Nietzsche's thought from the beginning. In the "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," which Nietzsche added as a kind of preface to the 1886 edition of *The Birth Tragedy*, he said of his first book:

What I then got hold of, something frightful and dangerous, a problem with horns but not necessarily a bull, in any case a *new* problem—today I should say that it was *the problem of science itself*, science considered for the first time as problematic, as questionable.

Nietzsche went on to say how *impossible* the book seemed to him now and in how many ways he disliked it now, but he insisted that he had even then posed the question of the relation of science to art and to life. That is not what most readers have found in it, but it does not follow from this that most readers have been perceptive or that Nietzsche's self-interpretation was disingenuous.

Obviously, the problem of science was very much on his mind in 1872, when *The Birth of Tragedy* appeared, and it continued to occupy him during the following years while he wrote the *Untimely Meditations*. Accepting Nietzsche's account of himself involves much more than giving him high marks for honesty or self-knowledge. For the problem with which he claims to have dealt even in his first book is a problem that most philosophers have not reached more than a hundred years later.

One well-known German philosopher has edited a volume of Nietzsche's "epistemological writings" (*Erkenntnistheoretische Schriften*, 1968), proving in the process his own unawareness of much of the most relevant material in Nietzsche's writings. *The Gay Science* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in which Nietzsche's mature position is developed at length, are ignored completely along with all of the *Nachlass* of the eighteen eighties that is *not* included in Karl Schlechta's mini-edition of "Nietzsche in 3 Volumes." As it happens, Schlechta, whose edition has been widely overestimated, merely rearranged *The Will to Power* under the title "From the *Nachlass* of the Eighties," while omitting all of the material in volumes X, XI, XIV, and XVI of the Musarion edition of Nietzsche's collected works, though this was also written in the eighties. Nor did Schlechta include all of the material in the present volume. But let that pass. Would it make sense to publish a better and more comprehensive edition of Nietzsche's "epistemological writings"?

The very idea seems pre-Nietzschean and brings to mind the editors of the early editions of his collected works in which the *Nachlass* was usually arranged by topics, including epistemology. But if Nietzsche was right in claiming that "the problem of science" was central in *The Birth of Tragedy*, then it would seem that the book on tragedy belongs among his "epistemological writings"! And which of his books doesn't? Those who still

think in such categories as “epistemological writings” are likely to take refuge in the notion that one must carve up the books no less than the *Nachlass* to assemble the passages that are “epistemological.” They bring to mind Goethe’s Mephistopheles, advising a new student:

Who would study and describe the living, starts  
 By driving the spirit out of the parts:  
 In the palm of his hand he holds all the sections,  
 Lacks nothing, except the spirit’s connections.

In a way we are brought back to Bäumler and Heidegger who also had no use for Nietzsche’s books and his own trains of thought. Bäumler read his own ideas into Nietzsche, and Heidegger cast him in a role that Nietzsche would have found completely uncongenial. Those who want to study Nietzsche’s “epistemological writings,” as distinguished from his writings on art, morality, and, say, the Greeks, are at one with Heidegger and Bäumler in refusing to hear the distinctive voice of Nietzsche who actually could teach them a great deal; among other things, that some of the most crucial problems regarding knowledge become clear only when we relate knowledge and science to art, morality, and life. This, according to Nietzsche, can be done especially well when we focus on the ancient Greeks and contrast what he called the pre-Platonic philosophers with Plato and subsequent Western philosophers.

Professor Breazeale has not settled on the *Nachlass* to manipulate it, as most editors have done, nor is he intent on offering a volume that can boast of completeness and a total lack of all discrimination. He has chosen a few pieces of some bulk and weight, allowing the reader to follow Nietzsche’s thought through each of them, from beginning to end, with the help of many editorial notes. And in this way he clearly establishes the thesis just offered. It should be noted how different this is from saying that at some points Nietzsche is not that far from what various recent philosophers have said who are perhaps more congenial to the reader. The point is not to assimilate Nietzsche to some more or less popular model, playing a game that interpreters have played with him ever since the eighteen nineties when he was seen as a Darwinist. In this volume every effort has been made to let Nietzsche speak, and Professor Breazeale has placed his skills as a translator and editor at Nietzsche’s disposal to help him to be heard.

To avoid misunderstanding, I should say expressly that the translator and editor did not study with me, and that the idea for this book was his and not in any way suggested by me. Nor did I help with its execution, beyond offering a few comments and suggestions when the manuscript was finished. Of course, Professor Breazeale’s approach closely resembles mine. Yet, I should have thought that Nietzsche’s *books* of the early seventies, the *Untimely Meditations*, were in greater need of a good new translation than his *Nachlass* fragments. I had to be convinced that this book was

worth doing at this time. It is a great pleasure to be able to say that Daniel Breazeale has convinced me.

This is an outstanding contribution to Nietzsche studies. Those who read this book should get a much better understanding of Nietzsche, and some of them may also be led to think more profoundly about the problems that occupied the young Nietzsche. These problems are still with us but for the most part not understood clearly. This volume may help to bring some urgent problems into focus and may thus advance not only scholarship but also philosophy.