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Nietzsche, Kant, the democratic state, and war

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Abstract. This article offers a reconstruction of Nietzsche's critique of Kant's scheme for perpetual peace distilled from his life-long confrontation with Kant's critical philosophy. Through this reading strategy, it sheds light on Nietzsche's controversial and yet surprisingly under-researched reflections on the problem of conflict and war in human affairs. Although Nietzsche embraced many of the basic premises of Kant's critical philosophical project, he considered the ethico-political conclusions Kant drew from these to be both irrational and nihilistic. From Nietzsche's perspective, Kant's thoughts on politics and International Relations rest on a fundamental misunderstanding of the phenomena of agency, statehood, and war that elides both the tragic relationship between politics and culture, and the violence which Nietzsche believes to be latent in all attempts at reconciling individual with collective autonomy. According to Nietzsche, Kant's influential association between liberal republicanism, freedom, and peace contributed unwittingly in ushering in the cult of the nation-state, which Nietzsche warned would engulf Europe into a wholly new kind of organised violence in the coming decades. Although clearly not without their uncritical assumptions and hubristic tendencies, Nietzsche's reflections on war and peace draw attention to some of the more insidious risks and difficulties attending liberal attempts at accommodating cosmopolitan values and principles within the framework of the modern nation state.

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The twentieth century. – Abbé Galiani once said: 'Foresight is the cause of Europe's present wars. If one would take pains to foresee nothing, the whole world would be tranquil, and I do not believe that one would be worse off for not waging war.' Since I do not by any means share the unwarlike views of my friend Galiani, I am not afraid of predicting a few things and thus, possibly, of conjuring up the causes of wars.

Friedrich Nietzsche[1]

The thought of Friedrich Nietzsche looms large on the development of International Political Theory since the end of the First World War. During the last century, realists, neo-conservatives, and post-modernists alike have all in different ways drawn selectively on his work to further and justify various aspects of their competing research and political agendas. More often than not, however, this Nietzschean influence is sifted through the intellectual framework of other key political theorists of the twentieth century – Weber, Freud, Schmitt, Heidegger, Strauss, Arendt, Deleuze, Foucault,

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden* [*KSA*], (eds) G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin, New York, and Munich: Walter de Gruyter and Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1967–77 and 1988), vol. 11 (*Nachlass* 1884–5), 34 [18], p. 427; *The Will to Power* [*WP*], trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968 [1906]), I, § 133, p. 81.

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Derrida, Fanon, etc. – who developed and articulated their own position on the back of an attentive but much customised reading of Nietzsche. This is by no means to belittle the contribution of 'mediated' or 'creative' uses of Nietzsche to our understanding of contemporary world politics, to the contrary. It is only to draw attention to the relative paucity of first-hand engagements with Nietzsche in his own right in the International Relations (IR) literature, despite his looming presence within the field.[2]

The reasons for this near absence are perhaps not so difficult to discern. Nietzsche was above all a philosopher and said relatively little about International Relations as such. His remarks and thoughts on international politics are far and few, and they are scattered across a huge corpus of published and unpublished writings. Nietzsche's philosophy is certainly relevant to the study of politics and IR, but it rarely speaks directly to the traditional concerns of the discipline and in the same conceptual register. There may also be a historiographical explanation for this gap in the literature. After all, IR as an Anglo-Saxon discipline is said to have emerged out of an effort to understand and address the 'causes' of the First and Second World Wars at a time when Nietzsche himself was still naively identified as one of them by many intellectuals and propagandists on both sides of the Atlantic.[3] Anti-rational, immoral, and exuberantly violent – what could Nietzsche possibly have to communicate to a nascent IR discipline whose own 'Wilsonian' coming into being owed so much to a Kantian tradition of thought that he had so mercilessly demolished?

But this simplistic view of Nietzsche's ambiguous legacy has long been dispelled by some of his more perceptive post-WWII interpreters.[4] Most intellectual historians today no longer read his analysis of European nihilism as an instigating rationalisation of the genocidal wars of the twentieth century, but as an attempt to prepare his audience to confront a spiritual crisis that appeared to him to be already inescapable. Likewise, the perception of Nietzsche's relationship to Kant has undergone significant revision in the past decades. Martin Heidegger and Gilles Deleuze first drew attention to the surprisingly Kantian 'roots' of his critique of metaphysics in the early 1960s.[5] Since then, most standard commentaries on Nietzsche have taken note of this complex element of continuity.[6]

As Keith-Ansell Pearson has argued, however, although this revisionist literature offered a much welcome corrective to early readings of Nietzsche as a proto-fascist

[2] The one truly remarkable exception is Stefan Elbe, *Europe: A Nietzschean Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[3] For good overviews see Nicholas Martin, '"Fighting a Philosophy": The Figure of Nietzsche in British Propaganda of the First World War', *The Modern Language Review*, 98:2 (2003), pp. 367–80; Eric Voegelin, 'Nietzsche, the Crisis and the War', *The Journal of Politics*, 6:2 (1944), pp. 177–212; Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich (eds), *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[4] A major turning point in the Anglo-Saxon world in this respect was the publication of Walter Kaufmann's *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950).

[5] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 2 vols (New York: Harper One, 1991 [orig. pub. 1961]); Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la Philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 2010, [orig. pub. 1962]).

[6] See, especially, Keith Ansell-Pearson, 'Nietzsche's Overcoming of Kant's Metaphysics: From Tragedy to Nihilism', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 16 (1987), pp. 310–39; R. Kevin Hill, *Nietzsche's Critiques: The Kantian Foundation of his Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005); Robert Zimmerman, *The Kantianism of Hegel and Nietzsche: Renovation in Nineteenth Century German Philosophy* (Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005).

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agitator, it has also contributed in the emergence of a somewhat toothless, depoliticised, and ahistorical Nietzsche.[7] The most recent wave of Anglo-Saxon studies on Nietzsche as a political thinker has sought to address this particular shortcoming in much of the post-WWII literature. But there is so far very little consensus in this emerging specialised scholarship as to the nature and implications of Nietzsche's aristocratic, and at times disquietingly brutal, response to the political dilemmas of liberal modernity.[8]

This article revisits Nietzsche's critical engagement with Kant's political-philosophical project in light of this recent literature. The aim is to generate a better understanding of Nietzsche's ambiguous reflections on the problem of war, conflict, and political violence under conditions of late liberal modernity. Although Nietzsche rarely ever directly engaged with Kant on politics and International Relations, his belief in the constitutive centrality of conflict in human affairs emerged in the context of a sustained confrontation with the critical philosophical project underpinning Kant's famous sketch for perpetual peace. As Deleuze has argued, there is in Nietzsche not only a Kantian 'lineage' but also a half acknowledged and half concealed 'rivalry'. Unlike Schopenhauer and other neo-Kantian philosophers who sought to free Kantianism from its methodological shortcomings so as to reassert its contemporary significance, Nietzsche worked towards a 'radical transformation of the critique that Kant compromised and betrayed at the same time as he was conceiving it. He wanted a reprise of the critical project, but on a new basis and with new concepts.'[9] The analysis that follows is a reconstruction of Nietzsche's critique of Kant's scheme for perpetual peace distilled and extrapolated from this life-long philosophical engagement. It is above all a 'reading strategy' designed to shed light on controversial aspects of Nietzsche's political philosophy that are surprisingly underresearched and particularly interesting from the point of view of our own neo-Kantian era in world politics.

The narrative proceeds in four parts. The first briefly exposes the basic premises of Kant's project for perpetual peace. Due to limited space, and since Kant's essay 'On Perpetual Peace' is household to most IR readers, the discussion focuses primarily on the less well known but important links between Kant's critical philosophy and his institutional approach to the problem of conflict and war in international politics. The second part then exposes and analyses Nietzsche's critique of Kant's critical philosophy. It demonstrates how Nietzsche turned Kant against himself in a way that vindicated some of Kant's key epistemological moves, while simultaneously undermining the ethico-political conclusions he had drawn from these moves. From Nietzsche's perspective, Kant's thoughts on politics and International Relations rest on a fundamental misunderstanding of the phenomena of agency, statehood, and war that elides both the tragic relationship between politics and culture, and the violence which Nietzsche believes to be latent in all attempts at reconciling individual with collective autonomy.

[7] Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 2. See also Thomas L. Pangle, 'The "Warrior Spirit" as an Inlet to the Political Philosophy of Nietzsche's Zarathustra', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 15 (1986), pp. 140–79.

[8] For an overview see Herman W. Siemens and Vasti Roodt (eds), *Nietzsche and Power Politics* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2008).

[9] Deleuze, *Nietzsche,* p. 59. Author's translation.

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The third and fourth parts of the article analyse these critical conjectures. They examine the important historical and conceptual links Nietzsche perceived between Kant's influential association between liberal republicanism, freedom, and peace, and the emergence of the nationalist cult of the state that Nietzsche warned would engulf Europe in a wholly new kind of organised violence in the coming decades. Although clearly not without their uncritical assumptions and hubristic tendencies, Nietzsche's reflections on war and peace draw attention to some of the more insidious risks and difficulties attending liberal attempts at accommodating cosmopolitan values and principles within the framework of the modern nation state.

Kant's project for perpetual philosophical and political peace

Kant's 'On Perpetual Peace' is arguably *the* most influential piece of political theory in the history of the study and practice of late modern International Relations.[10] The text in question was one in a short series of essays on politics and history written in his native Könisberg, East Prussia, over a 12 year period around the time of the French Revolution. 'Perpetual Peace' was an attack on what Kant saw as the 'depravity' of the Westphalian order. For this was an order in which 'each state sees its own majesty ... precisely in not having to submit to any external legal constraint', and in which 'the glory of its rulers consists of his power to order thousands of people to immolate themselves for a cause which does not truly concern them, while he need not himself incur any danger whatsoever'.[11] Considering war and lawlessness to be the most significant threats to republican freedom and the rights of man, Kant proposed to address this 'Westphalian predicament' by means of three normative-institutional developments with which students of International Relations have today become very familiar: (1) the universalisation of the rights of man through the voluntary adoption of the republican state form by eventually all political communities; (2) the strengthening and development of international law, along with the establishment of a federation of states that would facilitate the regulation of conflicts and eventually eliminate wars between states; and (3) the institutionalisation of basic cosmopolitan rights that would ensure protection to all foreigners and form the basis of a universal civil society that would complement the development of international law.

Crucially, the cosmopolitan point of view from which Kant articulated his scheme for what he hoped would be the future of world politics rested on an exposition and intimation of what he believed human freedom can achieve, even in the dangerous anarchical domain of international politics. So much he had made clear in his earlier *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). There, Kant had explained that the constitutionalisation and pacification of the international order:

> requires that we should abstract at the outset from the present hindrances, which perhaps do not arise inevitably out of human nature, but are rather occasioned by neglect of genuine ideas in the process of legislation. For there is nothing more harmful, or more unworthy of a philosopher, than the vulgar appeal to an allegedly contrary experience ... For no-one can or ought to decide what the highest degree may be at which mankind may have to stop progressing, and hence how wide gap may still of necessity remain between the idea and its execution. For this will depend on freedom, which can transcend any limit we care to impose.[12]

[10] Immanuel Kant, 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. H. S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 [orig. pub. 1795]).
[11] Ibid., p. 103.
[12] Immanuel Kant, 'Appendix from the Critique of Pure Reason', in Ibid., p. 191.

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This passage draws attention to the important links between Kant's political thought and his ground breaking critical philosophy.[13] For what was truly novel about Kant's critical enterprise, and what impressed Nietzsche deeply, is that it aspired to be both 'total' and 'immanent'. 'Total' in the sense that it purported to scrutinise *all* claims to truth and knowledge in all domains of human activity – theology, politics, philosophy, science, etc. And 'immanent' in the sense that it disallowed postulates that have their sources in feelings, instincts, and all other such instances of sensuous determination that are external to reason. It sought to unveil errors and illusions stemming from the inner functioning of reason as such rather than from experience.[14]

Without going into the fine details of his philosophical system, we can say that Kant's aspiration to critical totality and immanence rested on two important epistemological claims that he set out in the context of his refutation of Hume's empiricism. The first is that whatever it is that we 'know' about the world, we know it through observation and inference, and by way of scientific laws ultimately connected to the possibility of experience of spatio-temporal objects. The second, more controversial claim is that, all the same, a form of philosophical knowledge not justified by appeal to prior direct empirical experience (and other than mathematics) is in fact available to the human mind. For, according to Kant, causality, space, time, and the laws of nature are constructions of the mind that we use for the task of understanding nature, and cannot be made to inhere in the occurrences of the empirical world as such. All experience is only made possible by what we *a priori* require of experience for it to be possible at all – that is, by 'subjective conditions' which he called the forms of intuition (space and time) and the categories (concepts such as substance or causality).[15]

This is why Kant's critical epistemology is so important for his political and moral philosophy. According to Kant, nature and the phenomenal world of things in space and time in which we live (and which natural science has produced so much knowledge about) is mere appearance, an interpretation of the human mind. This is the realm of 'theoretical reason'. 'Behind' this world of appearance is a real world of things-in-themselves, which is absolutely unknowable to science and the human mind simply because it is impossible for us to tear down the cognitive veil that structures and mediates our relations to the world. This is the 'noumenal' realm of 'practical reason'. In this noumenal realm, reason attains perfect freedom from the conditioning of the empirical world. Through the continuous challenging of the merely apparent world, it emancipates men and their goals from natural determination and the experience of the past.

It is this fundamental human freedom that provides a foundation for morality in Kant's system, since it is a purely *a priori* concept based not on empirical circumstances but universally held as a category of reason. According to Kant, practical reason commands men to obey a self-prescribed moral law (a categorical imperative) out of pure respect for the universality of the law itself, and in accordance with their mutual treatment as beings with purposes. Men ought to do so simply because, as beings

[13] For insightful discussions see Karl Jaspers, *Kant* (London: Harcourt Brace & Co.: 1982 [orig. pub. 1957]), pp. 101–20; Michael C. Williams, 'Reason and Realpolitik: Kant's "Critique of International Politics", *Canadian Journal of Political Science Association*, 25:1 (1992), pp. 99–119; Kimberly Hutchings, *Kant, Critique and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[14] Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, pp. 102–8.

[15] Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem* (2nd edn, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 50–2.

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with purposes, they want their purposes to matter, and treating others as means to one's ends is to treat them as beings without purposes. Translated into the language of perpetual peace, this principle reads as follows: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of pure Practical Reason and its *righteousness*, and your object (the blessing of Perpetual Peace) will be added unto you.'[16]

As is well known, Kant's narrative about the historical emergence of perpetual peace draws on Rousseau's account of the transition from a 'purely animal existence' to a state of humanity characterised by moral freedom in civil society.[17] Kant, however, rejects Rousseau's claim that this progressive move from a life governed by a 'leading strings of instincts' in the state of nature to a 'state of freedom' governed by reason and civil relations has had the perverse effect of corrupting man. In his view, the opposition between civilisation and the state of nature that led Rousseau to despair are contradictions expressing the tension between man's moral purpose and his tendency to self-preservation. According to Kant, exploitation, violence, war, luxury, inequality, vanity, greed, and other such evils of civilisation cannot be divorced from moral progress. For these slowly help cultivating the moral capacities of the human beings and progressively wrench them out of their animal state.[18] The 'unsocial sociability' of men pushes them towards one another to fulfil their desire for security and material welfare, but in doing so it compels them to fight and kill each other *en masse* over the distribution and control of social products. In Kant's view, this violent dialectical process guides humanity towards the liberal peace. It does so because 'unsocial sociability' tends toward the adoption of republican governments out of self-interested pragmatism, and because the transparent and rational deliberative political culture of republican institutions is the main source of liberal peacemaking.[19]

Kant's philosophy of history is obviously not a scientific theory but a speculative account supported by reason. What it is telling us is that since the mechanisms of the natural world show that there is purposiveness in parts of the universe, it is by no means irrational to assume that there is purpose and meaning concealed in the blind contingency of history. Because reason can neither legitimately prove nor disprove that such a purpose exists, we can have rational faith that nature contributes in facilitating our own actions in accordance with the moral law.[20] Although Kant does not maintain that men have a moral duty to believe in the eventual realisation of the kingdom of ends, he believes that men have a duty to will those ends and act consistently with this will as long as the unattainability of the universal kingdom of ends cannot be decisively demonstrated.[21]

Nietzsche's critique of Kant's method

Kant did well to insist upon the difficulties, frustrations, disappointments and, not least, time that his project of perpetual peace would necessarily involve. Prussian

[16] Kant, 'Perpetual Peace', p. 123. Emphasis in original.
[17] Immanuel Kant, 'Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History', in *Kant: Political Writings.*
[18] Kant, 'Conjectures', p. 227.
[19] Kant, 'Perpetual Peace', pp. 108–9.
[20] Jaspers, *Kant*, p. 103.
[21] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987 [orig. pub. 1790]), p. 14.

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history during the century standing between his and Nietzsche's mature writings was marked by the Napoleonic Wars, the liberal revolutions of 1848, the Schleswig-Holstein Crisis of 1860, the Austro-Prussian War, the unification of Germany after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1, and the subsequent transformation of this new nation state into an authoritarian imperial state during the 1880s. As Nietzsche himself acknowledged, this series of past and contemporary events had a profound influence on his identity as a philosopher: 'I should not be possible without a counter-type of race, without Germans … without Bismarck, without 1848, without "Wars of Liberation," without Kant, even without Luther.'[22]

Nietzsche came of age intellectually in the midst of a surge of new interest in Kant in German universities in the late 1860s and early 1870s. His knowledge of Kant during this early period was significantly mediated by the exposition of other scholars such as Friedrich Albert Lange, Kuno Fisher, Afrikan Spir, and Arthur Schopenhauer. But Nietzsche eventually went on to develop his own independent interpretation, and recent scholarship has presented compelling evidence to suggest that he did so through a direct engagement with the original texts.[23]

As mentioned earlier, however, nowhere in his published and unpublished material does Nietzsche ever engage explicitly with Kant's text 'On Perpetual Peace'. This should not surprise us. Kant's deep concern with the problem of war and peace between nations would have seemed to him like a banal fixation. Like Marx, Nietzsche saw interstate warfare as only the most extreme manifestation of deeper societal conflicts that transcend national boundaries and lay somewhat suppressed by what is generally referred to as 'peace'. Unlike Marx, however, Nietzsche did not locate the ultimate sources of these conflicts in the ways in which societies organise their productive capacity, but in what he saw as the deeper-lying cultural processes through which individuals and societies nurture or stifle their capacity for agency. This is why, as one commentator has argued, Nietzsche is not so much a bellicose thinker as 'a "pan-bellicose" thinker of all the facets of war as cosmic conflictuality'.[24] War in his work is used both metaphorically and non-metaphorically to designate the whole range of relations of force and adversity that he considered to be constitutive of the social realm: 'Life is a consequence of war, society itself, a means for war.'[25]

Being the meticulous scholar that he was, Kant would certainly have questioned the conceptual rigour of Nietzsche's 'pan-bellicose' ontology of the social. Yet, from Nietzsche's perspective, as we will see, the main issue with Kant's account of war is that it has no ontological status whatsoever. Kant interprets war as a conceptual and institutional problem located in the present ability of human beings to conceive adequately the means and principles by which perpetual peace could be established. In this account, war is read negatively as mere chaos and privation from the teleological standpoint of a fully realised history of reason where the productive and transformative dimensions of war are no longer needed.

[22] Cited in Frank Cameron and Don Dombowsky (eds), *The Political Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche: An Edited Anthology* (London: Palgrave, 2008), p. 1.
[23] George Stack, *Lange and Nietzsche* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyer, 1983); Claudia Crawford, *The Beginnings of Nietzsche's Theory of Language* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyer, 1988); R. Hill, *Nietzsche's Critiques*.
[24] Blaise Benoit, 'Bellicisme, ou La Guerre Selon Nietzsche', *La Politique*, 3 (2005), p. 7. Author's translation.
[25] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 13 (*Nachlass* 1887–89), 14 [40], p. 238; trans. *WP*, I, § 53, p. 33.

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Nietzsche's aversion for the philosophy of history is well known. Although his engagement with Kant's teleology in his formative years is inconclusive, already by the time of the *Untimely Meditations* (1873) he had come to insist, against Kant and his contemporary followers, that there is absolutely no reason to believe that the law-like processes and instances of 'purposiveness' that science observes in nature are *not* independent of human interests – and therefore of broader historical and cultural developments: 'an honest natural scientist believes that the world conforms unconditionally to laws, without however asserting anything as to the ethical or intellectual value of these laws: he would regard any such assertions as the extreme anthropomorphism of a reason that has overstepped the bounds of the permitted'.[26]

As this statement suggests, the essence of the problem from Nietzsche's perspective is not only that Kant does not have a theory of war. More importantly, it is also that Kant failed to make good on his pledge to ground immanently the hypothetical theory of peace from which he then retrospectively interprets the phenomenon of war as a strictly negative moment of historical privation. These two issues are obviously not unrelated. A brief exposition of Nietzsche's engagement with Kant's critical philosophy will help to clarify what is really at stake for Nietzsche in this two-fold *problématique*.

As we have seen, Kant sought to show the dependence of peace on law and of law on a practical reason that has been freed from the dogmatism of uncritical assertions derived from the phenomenal realm of experience, in favour of a scrupulous adherence to what reason could know *a priori* because it constitutes its own reality. For Nietzsche, the trouble with all this is that reason in Kant's procedure lacked an empirical method that would have allowed it to explain its own limits and capacity 'from within' without granting reason the prerogative of judging itself.[27] Unlike Darwin, Kant did not approach human reason as a naturalistic phenomenon that can be studied scientifically. Instead, and consequently, he imposed limitations on the realm of theoretical reason posited, in an illogically circular manner, on the basis of a noumenal world of practical reason itself derived from the conditioned character of the empirical world of appearances: 'was it not somewhat peculiar to demand of an instrument that it should criticise its own usefulness and suitability? that the intellect itself should "know" its own value, its own capacity, its own limitations was it not even a little absurd?'[28]

For similar reasons, Nietzsche maintains that Kant's critical philosophy also failed in its aspiration to 'totality'. Kant conceived of critique as a force that would scrutinise all claims to knowledge, religion, and morality, without ever subjecting the status of these phenomena to the same treatment. In Nietzsche's understanding, Kant has never seriously questioned the existence of the moral law as a synthetic *a priori* judgment (that is, as a proposition that is neither tautological nor contingent on empirical observation, and yet accessible to, and binding on all rational beings).[29] This was his way of pursuing intellectual security in an existential manner: 'To create

[26] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* [*UM*], trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [orig. pub. 1873]), I, § 7, p. 31.

[27] Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, p. 104.

[28] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* [*D*], trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [orig. pub. 1881]), Preface, § 3, p. 3. Cf. *Beyond Good and Evil* [*BGE*], trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 [orig. pub. 1886]), I, § 11, pp. 12–13.

[29] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 12 (*Nachlass* 1885–7), 7 [4], p. 265; trans. *WP*, III, § 530, pp. 286–8.

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room for his "moral realm" Kant saw himself obliged to posit an undemonstrable world, a logical "Beyond" ... he believed in morality, not because it is demonstrated in nature and history, but in spite of the fact that nature and history continually contradict it.'[30]

In sum, Nietzsche agrees with Kant that we cannot, on the basis of experience, ascend beyond the finite and conditioned character of the empirical world. But for him, the fact that we always experience nature under the guidance of unempirical conceptual categories neither means that nature is necessarily structured by these categories, nor that there exists a domain of reality from which we are excluded.[31] Against Kant, Nietzsche insists that our language, words, concepts, and categories of understanding are abstractions from 'the formless unformulable world of the chaos of sensations'.[32] It is our need to subject the world to our empirical forms of life that makes us impose such simplifiers to the diversity of the real. This is why all truth claims and ways of understanding the world always falsify the nature of things: 'Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live.'[33] By opening the possibility of other synthetic *a priori* 'truths' in this manner, Nietzsche raised the issue of the relative value of alternative 'truths' and radicalised Kant's critique from a project of legislation into a genealogical project of valuation: 'we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values should itself, for once, be examined* – and so we need to know about the conditions and circumstances under which these values grew up, developed and changed'.[34]

Beyond the issues of epistemology surveyed above, what really troubled Nietzsche about Kantian philosophy was the fundamentally apolitical interpretation of the social world that followed from the dualism of mind and body that Kant had appropriated from Christian metaphysics. Kant conceived of society in abstract terms as an amalgamation of free and equal 'subject-in-themselves' separated analytically from their naturally conditioned empirical manifestation in thoughts, actions, and emotions, and related to each other strictly as proprietors of their own soul and personhood. This in turn led him to envisage autonomy in terms of a self-legislative obedience to certain moral values to be discerned through rational deliberation, free of all psychological cravings and with little regard for the particular societal context within which willing takes place.

Nietzsche dismisses the transcendental subjectivism presupposed in this account as a correlative fiction of the fictive objectivism of the noumenal realm of things-in-themselves. As in the case of synthetic *a priori* judgements, Nietzsche maintains that the transcendental subject is a reification of grammatical function that is constitutive of causal explanations.[35] In reality, the reflexive 'I' which Kant takes to be the source

[30] Nietzsche, *D*, Preface, § 3, p. 3.
[31] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* [*TI*], in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005 [orig. pub. 1888]), III, § 2, p. 168.
[32] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 12:9 [106], pp. 395–6; trans. *WP*, III, § 569, pp. 306–7.
[33] Ibid., [38], p. 352; trans. § 507, p. 493
[34] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* [*GM*], trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [orig. pub. 1887]), Preface, § 6, pp. 7–8.
[35] Ibid., I, § 13, p. 26. Cf. *Human All Too Human* [*HAH*], trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [orig. pub. 1878–80]), § 57 pp. 41–2; *BGE*, § 19, p. 20–1 and § 117, p. 165. For good recent discussions of Nietzsche's naturalisation of the self see Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality* (London: Routledge, 2002); Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 54–102.

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of moral action is not a unitary entity but a multitude of different states, antagonistic drives, feelings, and effects formed through the internalisation of social norms, and developed out of the combined judgements of others: 'The body is a great reason, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, one herd and one shepherd.'[36]

By insisting on the disaggregated and relational character of the self in this manner, Nietzsche seeks to overcome the deep metaphysical distinction between an autonomous sphere of reason and a heteronomous sphere of natural necessity that underpins Kant's reductive opposition between morality and politics. According to Nietzsche, Kant's disembodying of rational moral agency from our conscious and unconscious physical experience sought universality 'masochistically' at the expense of the natural and inherently political condition of life. This is why he says that his emancipatory political-philosophical project in fact 'smells of cruelty'.[37] The rigid distinction between moral duty and lived experience in his framework ensures that a reconciliation of the two can never be achieved in this world: 'life *must* constantly and inevitably be proved wrong because life is essentially something amoral'.[38] Kant was what Nietzsche called an 'incomplete nihilist'. Whereas 'a nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought not to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist',[39] an incomplete nihilist is a man who fails to appreciate 'how complete nihilism is the necessary consequence of the ideals entertained hitherto'.[40]

The state and war

We are now in a better position to appreciate the nature of Nietzsche's lack of interests for Kant's institutional approach to the problem of war and peace. Kant believed that war, as a form of irrational alienation from the self, from others, and from the world would be overcome when people would live together in a particular kind of rationally organised community. Nietzsche, by contrast, holds that because our discourses institute and constitute social relations independently of all *a priori* social rationality, all normative order are irreducibly political, exploitative, and therefore potentially prone to violent conflict. Against Kant's noumenal account of moral legislation, Nietzsche maintains that people suppress a sense of alienation by becoming 'tranquilised' by the comforting, ready-made schemes of beliefs and values prevailing in their societies: 'Thus one wants the imperative to be categorical: an absolute master must be constructed by the wills of the many who are afraid of themselves and of each other . . . If one did not have this fear, one would not need such a master.'[41] Because genuine 'sovereign individuality' requires us to disengage ourselves from the ways of the herd, the remedy for self-estrangement is inherently liable to bring us into conflict with each other:

[36] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [*Z*] trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1883), I, § 6, p. 23.
[37] Nietzsche, *GM*, II, § 6, p. 41.
[38] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* [*BT*] trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [orig. pub. 1871]), § 5, p. 9.
[39] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 12:9 [60], p. 366; trans. *WP*, III, § 585, p. 318.
[40] Ibid., 10 [42], p. 476; tr. I, § 28, p. 19.
[41] Cited in Tracy B. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000 [orig. pub. 1975]), p. 43.

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> A virtue needs to be our *own* invention, our *own* most personal need and self-defence: in any other sense, a virtue is just dangerous … A people is destroyed when it confuses its *own* duty with the concept of duty in general. Nothing ruins us more profoundly or inwardly than 'impersonal' duty, or any sacrifice in front of the Moloch of abstraction. – To think that people did not sense the *mortal danger* posed by Kant's categorical imperative![42]

As for rights and legality, Nietzsche does not dismiss their importance for the ordering of intra and inter societal relations under conditions of late modernity. But he is clear that these are not means to put an end to relations of strength and violence but their continuity.[43] It is in this optic that Nietzsche mocks 'Kant's characterisation of the French Revolution as a passage from the mechanical to the organic type of state.'[44] According to Nietzsche, Kant's political philosophy rests on a fundamental misunderstanding of the phenomenon and practice of statehood. Following Jacob Burckhardt, one of his early mentors, Nietzsche argues against the modern tradition of contract theory that neither the existence of the state nor its 'right' to wage war are 'conquered' from the ontologically prior rights of an amalgamation of free and equal beings.[45] Because it is ultimately society and the state that 'create' the individual in the first place, the notion of the modern liberal state, which allegedly exists primarily to provide security to civil society, is just as misconceived as the liberal individual understood as the unitary holder of 'natural rights' in need of protection from other members of society or the state itself.[46] As he explains in a note from 1882:

> Society first educates the single being, forms it into a half or whole individual, it is *neither* formed out of single beings *nor* out of contracts between them … The state therefore does not at its origins oppress individuals: these do not even exist! It makes the existence of humans at all possible, as herd animals; this is where our *impulsions and our passions are taught to us: there is nothing originary about them!* There is no 'state of nature' for them! As parts of a whole we partake in the conditions of existence and functions of the whole and incorporate the experiences and judgements made in that process.[47]

Nietzsche exposed his views on the state for the first time in 'The Greek State' (1871), an early essay written at the time of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) in light of his intellectual exchange with Burckhardt.[48] There, he describes the state in a somewhat Hobbesian fashion as an 'objectivisation of the social instinct' that gives a unifying and relatively predictable form to the otherwise diverse and conflicting elements of the multitude: 'we understand the state only as the iron clamp producing society by force: whereas without the state, in the natural *bellum omnium contra omnes*, society is completely unable to grow roots in any significant measure and beyond the family sphere'. Unlike Hobbes, however, Nietzsche does not see the state as a rational transcendence of the dangerous bestiality of human beings but as a

[42] Nietzsche, *Antichrist* [*A*], § 11, pp. 9–10.
[43] Nietzsche, *HAH*, II, § 26, p. 314; *D*, § 112, pp. 66–7.
[44] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 12, 7 [4], pp. 266–7.
[45] Burckhardt exposed his views on the modern state in his influential *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London: Penguin, 2004 [orig. pub. 1867]), pp. 19–96, and in a lecture series that Nietzsche attended enthusiastically at the University of Basel in the early 1870s. See Jacob Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History* (Whitefish MT: Literary Licensing: 2011 [orig. pub. 1905]). On Nietzsche and Burckhardt see Lionel Gossman's splendid *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000).
[46] Nietzsche, *GM*, II, § 3, p. 58. For an excellent reading of Nietzsche's critique of social contract theory see Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche Contra Rousseau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[47] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 11 (*Nachlass* 1880–2), 11 [182], pp. 509–11. Author's translation.
[48] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Greek State' [*GSt*] (1871), reprinted in *GM*, pp. 164–73.

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mobilisation of this bestiality for its own self-preserving ends, which it then invokes to justify its own existence and domination of society.[49]

Nearly two decades later, Nietzsche reinterprets this sociopolitical phenomenon as a process of psychological transference designed to transmute the painful elements of our emotional conditions into the exhilaratingly pleasurable: 'For example, when our obedience, our submission to the law, attain honor through the strength, power, self-overcoming they entail. As do our consideration for the community, the neighbor, the fatherland, our ''humanization,'' our ''altruism,'' ''heroism''.'[50] Through this process, '[t]he state organizes immorality – internally: as police, penal law, classes, commerce, family; externally: as will to power, to war, to conquest, to revenge.'[51] By transferring their selfishness and egotism to the collective, people get to discharge their repressed vitalist impulses and transvalue their basest instincts into what is now perceived as noble, patriotic, and selfless virtues. In a chilling passage, Nietzsche anticipates the ways in which thinkers like Hannah Arendt and Reinhold Niebuhr would later try to make sense of the genocidal character of intersocietal conflicts in the twentieth century:

> Basic principle: only individuals feel themselves responsible. Multiplicities are invented in order to do things for which the individuals lack courage. It is for just this reason that all communalities and societies are a hundred times more upright and instructive about the nature of man than is the individual, who is too weak to have the courage for his own desires. The whole of 'altruism' reveals itself as the prudence of the private man: societies are not 'altruistic' towards one another … 'Society' has never regarded virtue as anything but a means to strength, power, and order.[52]

Nietzsche's normative attitude towards the state is deeply ambivalent. As Karl Jaspers argued in his 1936 study, Nietzsche never glorifies the state in itself. But he understands the brutal political reality sustaining state power without illusions, as well as the crucial function of this hierarchical politics as a mechanism through which man is either levelled down or elevated to its highest possibility. Without the tyrannical force that is the state, there can be no society, nor creative individuals.[53]

Jaspers's interpretation relies mainly on Nietzsche's early works.[54] Yet despite what is often suggested by anarchist, post-modern, and other such readings of Nietzsche as an anti-political critic of all forms of authority,[55] there is no compelling textual evidence anywhere in his corpus indicating that he ever abandoned this position. In an important chapter on modern statehood in *Human All Too Human* (1878), Nietzsche does indeed speculate about the possibility that secularisation and the increased power of market actors could eventually lead to the disappearing of the state. But he also immediately warns against the dangers of trying to hasten this process through rash political action: 'let us therefore put our trust in ''the prudence

[49] Ibid., p. 170.
[50] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 12, 10 [10], p. 459; trans. *WP*, IV, § 889, pp. 474–5.
[51] Ibid., 11, 11 [407], pp. 187–8; trans. III, § 717, pp. 382–3.
[52] Ibid., 13, 14 [196], p. 381; trans. *WP*, § 716, p. 382.
[53] Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: Introduction à sa Philosophie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), p. 260. See also Tasmin Shaw, *Nietzsche's Political Skepticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 12–35.
[54] See, especially, Nietzsche, *GSt*, pp. 169–73.
[55] See, for instance, H. L. Mencken, *The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Port Washington: Kenikat, 1964); Alan Schrift, 'Questioning Authority: Nietzsche's Gift to Derrida', *Kritika & Kontext*, 2 (2007), pp. 88–99; Thomas H. Brobjer, 'The Absence of Political Ideals in Nietzsche's Writings', *Nietzsche Studien*, 27, pp. 300–19.

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and self-interest of men" to preserve the existence of the state for some time yet and to repulse the destructive experiments of the precipitate and the over-zealous'.[56] Nietzsche then goes on to issue another warning in the following aphorism, which he reiterates three years later in *Daybreak* (1881). This time, however, it is against the 'danger there lies in all accumulations of state power' and the intrusive expansion of state control sought by his socialist contemporaries that he agitates: '*As little state as possible*. – Political and economic affairs are not worthy of being the enforced concern of society's most gifted spirits: such a wasteful use of the spirit is at bottom worse than having none at all.'[57]

It is in this same spirit that Nietzsche criticises Bismarck's pseudo-democratic *Machtstaat* in his later writings. Even in his most vociferous attacks, what he abhors is not the state *per se* but the modern bureaucratic state that prioritises universal security and national unity over the development of high culture and the formation of human excellence.[58] For Nietzsche, there is only one criterion by which we ought to evaluate different forms of state. And that is the extent to which these put themselves at the service of culture, without ever exceeding this ancillary role.

Three brief clarifications will help us to better understand the nature and full implications of Nietzsche's controversial position. First, as in Kant, Nietzsche's politics are nested in philosophical reflections about the value of human existence. For epistemological reasons that we have seen earlier, Nietzsche rejects the anthropomorphic teleology that allows for liberal justifications of human life in terms of the moral-purposive character of each species being. According to Nietzsche, 'the goal of humanity cannot lie in its end' but only 'in its highest exemplars'.[59] This is so simply because what allows our species to go on and deal with the meaningless absurdity of the world is the cultural events and art forms through which we comprehend and make sense of the tragic nature of the human condition.[60] From this, Nietzsche concludes that the primary task of politics is not to address the predicament of the destitute and the oppressed, but to allow humanity to prosper as a whole by legislating the conditions favourable for the emergence of strong creative types. As Daniel Conway puts it, through the extraordinary deeds of its most creative representatives, who paradoxically hold no intentional stake in the lives of others, humankind perpetually reaches beyond itself. But it does so without *telos* or pre-established goals: 'each successive transfiguration further limns the unknown depths and reaches of the human soul'.[61]

That said, it is important to recognise that when Nietzsche claims that culture 'in some sense needs slavery', he is not 'naturalising' the existing political and socio-economic class structures.[62] Quite to the contrary, what he is calling for is the pro-active construction of a 'physiological hierarchy' – that is, a society ruled by, and for the benefit of, an elite who stands for life-affirming values against the ascetic moral codes of the rest of the social body. As he explains in his late notebooks:

[56] Nietzsche, *HAH*, I, § 472, pp. 170–3.
[57] Ibid., § 473, p. 174; *D*, III, § 179, p. 107. Inter alia.
[58] Nietzsche, *Z*, I, § 13, pp. 34–6; *BGE*, § 240–56, pp. 131–50; *TI*, VIII, § 4, p. 188.
[59] Nietzsche, *UM*, II, § 9, p.111.
[60] Nietzsche, *BT*, § 5, p. 33.
[61] Daniel W. Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 9.
[62] Nietzsche, *BGE*, § 257, p. 151.

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> I bring war. *Not* between peoples: I do not find words to express my contempt for the abominable politics of interests of the European dynasties, which makes a principle, indeed almost a duty, out of the exasperation of the egoism and antagonistic vanities of the peoples. *Not* between classes. For we do not have superior classes, and consequently, no inferior ones either: those who, in today's society, sit on top, are physiologically condemned and so impoverished in their instincts, they have become so uncertain, that they profess without scruples the *principle opposite* to a species of superior human beings. I bring war, a war that rages across all of the absurd coincidences that are people, class, race, profession, education, culture: a war as in between ascent and decline, between the will to live and the *will to avenge oneself* against life, between *sincere* and insidious *dissimulation* . . .[63]

Secondly, when Nietzsche insists on the need to preserve a distance between rulers and ruled he is not endorsing the naked power of one social force over another. Rather, he is offering a strategy to preserve the communal practices of contestation and adversity that he considers to be essential for the stimulation of autonomous individuality and the maintenance of a genuinely pluralist public sphere.[64] Nietzsche's conception of individuality and pluralism, however, is the inverted mirror reflection of Kant's. Kant had argued that freedom 'can transcend any limit we care to impose' and that 'each may seek his happiness in whatever way he sees fit, so long as he does not infringe upon the freedom of others to pursue a similar end which can be reconciled with the freedom of everyone else within a workable general law'.[65] In Nietzsche's view, the problem with this apparently limitless conception of freedom is not only that it eclipses the necessity of an order of rank among values. It is also that it wrongly assumes that the ends that we choose to strive for and that constitute our identity as individuals exist prior to or independently of our interaction and conflicts with others.[66] For Nietzsche, freedom cannot be conceived in abstraction from the substantive ends of that freedom, or what Zarathustra calls a 'dominating thought': 'You call yourself free? Your dominating thought I want to hear, and not that you escaped from a yoke . . . Free from what?'[67]

Nietzsche's point is that freedom depends on our capacity for agency. And this agency is inevitably shaped and motivated by the thoughts and actions of others. For these exert pressure on the pursuit of our goals and desires, and thereby give unity to the plurality of antagonistic inner drives and feelings that we are as individuals. They act as stimulants to creativity and deeds and compel individuals to come up with the 'dominating thoughts' needed for the exercise of their freedom, just as they impose limitations on those deeds and cultivate a sense of self-control in front of the hubristic 'thrill of the infinite and unmeasured' animating liberal narratives of freedom.[68] For Nietzsche, the Kantian freedom abstracted from all empirical relations of adversity is the meaningless, despiritualised freedom of the 'last man':

[63] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 13, 25 [1], p. 637. Author's translation.
[64] Nietzsche, *UM*, III, § I, p. 127.
[65] Kant, 'Appendix from "The Critique of Pure Reason"', p. 191; 'On the Common Saying: "This may Be True in Theory But Does Not Apply to Practice"', p. 74. Both texts reprinted in *Political Writings*.
[66] David Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1995), pp. 132–8; Herman Siemens, 'Nietzsche contra Liberalism on Freedom', in Keith Ansell-Pearson (ed.), *A Companion to Nietzsche* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 437–53.
[67] Nietzsche, *Z*, I, § 19, p. 46.
[68] Nietzsche, *BGE*, § 225, p. 116. Cf. *UM*, III, § 8, p. 183.

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> *My idea of freedom*. – Sometimes the value of a thing is not what you get it with but what you pay for it, – what it *costs*. Here is an example. Liberal institutions stop being liberal as soon as they have been attained: after that, nothing damages freedom more terribly or more thoroughly than liberal institutions. Of course people know *what* these institutions do: they undermine the will to power, they set to work levelling mountains and valleys and call this morality, they make things small, cowardly, and enjoyable, – they represent the continual triumph of herd animals … As long as they are still being fought for these same institutions have entirely different effects and are actually powerful promoters of freedom. On closer inspection it is the war that produces these effects, the war for liberal institutions which, being a war, keeps *illiberal* institutions in place. And the war is what teaches people to be free.[69]

Nietzsche's occasional praises for war must be read in this context. And this here is my third and last point. Contrary to what his critics have often argued, Nietzsche never glorifies war for its own sake. For, like nature, war is completely indifferent to the value of the creative individual at the heart of his political vision. As he explains in his notebooks: 'All the better if we could dispense with war. I would have a much better use for the 12 billion that armed peace costs to Europe each year; for there are other means to honour physiology than with military hospitals …'.[70] War, however, is the concrete reality out of which the state emerges and makes society and the creative individual possible. Although war does not make us better human beings, it makes us more profound ones: 'Against war it can be said: it makes the victor stupid, the defeated malicious. In favour of war: through producing these two effects it barbarizes and therefore makes more natural; it is the winter or hibernation time of culture, mankind emerges from it stronger for good and evil.'[71]

To be sure, Nietzsche's tendency to account for the debasement of the political sphere and many other such effects of modern social structures in cultural-physiological terms, which he posits more or less independently of the material dynamics of the mode of production, will always remain one of the most significant weaknesses of his political thought. Unlike Marx, Durkheim, Weber and other such influential sociologists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Nietzsche never developed analytical categories appropriate for the study of late-modern societies organised as markets and bureaucracies.[72] Yet, as naive and repugnant as they will certainly appear to twenty-first century readers, Nietzsche's martial rants against the risk-aversive materialism of the bourgeoisie were not motivated by a lust for blood but by his concern for the tragic relation between politics and culture. And it is precisely for this reason that he also repeatedly insists on the limits of warfare and geopolitics as a source of sociocultural regeneration.[73]

Had Nietzsche lived to witness the scientific, genocidal character of total warfare in the twentieth century, he would certainly not have welcomed the latter as the return of the 'Dionysiac'. Indeed, it is precisely the seed of such a quantitatively and qualitatively new kind of organised violence that Nietzsche detected in Kant's political philosophy from the retrospective vantage point of the late nineteenth century. As he suggested in his notebooks, the age of Kant's despiritualised and limitless freedom will also be an age of despiritualised and limitless violence: '*Externally*: age of tremendous wars, upheavals, explosions. *Internally*: ever greater weakness of men,

[69] Nietzsche, *TI*, IX, § 38, pp. 213–14.
[70] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 13, 25 [19], p. 646. Author's translation.
[71] Nietzsche, *HAH*, I, § 444, p. 163. Cf. *HAH*, I, § 477, p. 176; *Z*, I, § 12, p. 33.
[72] Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 226–45.
[73] See, for instance, Nietzsche, *BT*, § 23, p. 111; *HAH*, I, § 481, pp. 177–8; *TI*, VIII, § 4, p. 188.

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events as excitants.'[74] 'The concept of politics', Nietzsche argues elsewhere, 'will have then merged entirely into a war of spirits, all power structures from the old society will have exploded – they are all based on lies: there will be wars such as the earth has never seen.'[75] The remainder of this article will try to shed light on Nietzsche's analysis of this coming crisis in the context of his philosophical confrontation with Kant.

'We have entered a warlike age'

Although he is not at his clearest when exposing his views on this, Nietzsche appears to be locating the sources of this new kind of organised violence in the opposition and passage between forms of what he calls 'passive nihilism' and 'active nihilism'. Whereas passive nihilism is a 'decline and recession of the power of the spirit', active nihilism is 'a sign of increased power of the spirit' but which remains incapable of creative deeds and is therefore relentlessly destructive.[76] According to Nietzsche, the play between these two modes of nihilism in the nineteenth century hinged on the transmutation of the epistemological nihilism of enlightenment metaphysics, into a political nihilism which would have brought the abstract idealisation of freedom down to earth during the Napoleonic Wars and transmuted it into the concrete aspirations to freedom of the new nationalism.[77]

In more concrete sociopolitical terms, Nietzsche's account of this process anticipates much of Carl Schmitt's narrative about the rise and fall of enlightenment politics during the period between the Treaty of Westphalia and the early twentieth century.[78] According to Nietzsche, the moralising character of the enlightenment's revolt against the authoritarian politics of the absolutist state prevented its agents from establishing a new, viable model of the political that acknowledged the limits and finitude of the human condition. In his view, things could not have been otherwise since enlightenment thought conceptually drew from the very same *political* categories – for example, power, the state, coercion – that it tried to subvert in practice. This is what Nietzsche means when he says that 'liberal institutions stop being liberal as soon as they have been attained'. For as we have seen, according to Nietzsche, *all* demands for equality and rights from below cannot be anything else than an effort to subvert existing hierarchies of power and assert new relations of domination.[79] This is why he sees a contradiction between the desire for political power of his liberal and socialist contemporaries and the concern for the absoluteness of rights and equality underpinning their competing claims to universal justice.[80]

According to Nietzsche, the heterogeneous factions of civil society that emerged out of the progressive secularisation and democratisation of the political sphere could only be kept together as long as the 'civil society versus state' line of antagonism existed and provided an agonistic stimulant and mode of social integration. When

[74] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 10 (*Nachlass* 1882–4), 24 [25], p. 659; trans. *WP*, I, § 130, pp. 79–80.
[75] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* [*EH*], XIV, § 1, p. 144.
[76] Cited in Shane Weller, *Modernism and Nihilism* (London: Palgrave, 2011), p. 36.
[77] Nietzsche, *UM*, III, § 4, p. 149; *BGE*, § 240 to § 256, pp. 131–50.
[78] Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, trans. George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein (Westport: Greenwood, 1996 [orig. pub. 1938]).
[79] Nietzsche, *D*, § 112, pp. 66–7.
[80] Nietzsche, *HAH*, I, § 453, p. 166.

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this strict opposition progressively dissolved, enlightenment critique could no longer succeed as a mode of social integration without itself becoming a political means through which the forces of civil society sought to acquire control of state institutions in order to mobilise the masses in pursuit of their own self-interested motives:

> In the Middle Ages the hostile forces were held together by the church and, through the strong pressure it exerted, to some extent assimilated with one another. When the bond broke, the pressure relaxed, they rebelled against one another. The reformation declared many things to be *adiaphora*, domains where religion was not to hold sway; this was the price at which it purchased its existence: just as Christianity had already to pay a similar price in face of the much more religiously inclined world of antiquity. Nowadays the crudest and most evil forces, the egoism of the money-makers and the military despots, hold sway over almost everything on earth. In the hands of these despots and money-makers, the state certainly makes an attempt to organize everything anew out of itself and to bind and constrain all those mutually hostile forces: that is to say, it wants to men to render the same idolatry they formerly rendered the church ... The revolution is absolutely unavoidable, and it will be the atomistic revolution: but what are the smallest indivisible basic constituents of human society?[81]

Kant had pinned his hopes for a reconciliation between individual and collective autonomy on a European programme of public enlightenment that would facilitate the emergence of a transnational public sphere in which people will be able to regard themselves and others as free and equal 'citizens of the world'.[82] He saw this as some sort of substitute for a world government that would unify the human community at the global level and supersede the potentially conflicting standards of local laws without unduly preying on cultural diversity. By contrast, Nietzsche argues that the advances of secularism and rationalism under the guidance of enlightenment metaphysics have forever undermined the possibility of an uncoerced consensus on a set of normative principles that could ground such transformations. Nietzsche comes to these conclusions by way of three main observations which tie into his critique of Kant's critical philosophy.

First, as hinted in the long citation above, Nietzsche sees that the transformation of individual subjectivity that accompanied the Reformation and the objectification of state power under the absolutist doctrine of *raison d'état* has led to the emergence of reflexive individuals who no longer submit uncritically and 'without prejudice to their own interests' to state authority.[83] Modern state power needs legitimacy, and this legitimacy must increasingly be derived from rational rather than theological discourses. But whereas Kant envisaged reason as the tendency in all human thought towards greater unity, system, and necessity, Nietzsche sees reason as a source of fragmentation and pluralism. According to Nietzsche, rational reflection opens up a nihilistic gulf between the private desires and convictions that constitute one's subjectivity and the sociopolitical demands of collective life: 'the remarkable antithesis between an interior which fails to correspond to any exterior and an exterior which fails to correspond to any interior – an antithesis unknown to people of other times'.[84]

Secondly, Nietzsche maintains that the great majority of his European contemporaries lack the intellectual courage and self-discipline to live under the conditions

[81] Nietzsche, *UM*, III, § 4, p. 150.
[82] Kant, 'What is Enlightenment?', in *Political Writings*.
[83] Nietzsche, *HAH*, I, § 441, p. 162. See also Shaw, *Nietzsche's*, pp. 12–35.
[84] Nietzsche, *UM*, II, § 4, p. 78.

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of epistemological uncertainty generated by these developments.[85] They suffer from a self-deluding need for transcendent meaning and certainty that does not necessarily 'create sundry religions, forms of metaphysics, and convictions but does – preserve them'.[86] Nietzsche insists that these metaphysical cravings are not an innate feature of the human condition but have grown exponentially throughout human history under the tutelage of the Judeo-Christian tradition of metaphysics with which he associates Kant and Hegel's philosophy of history: 'Having unlearned faith in that, one still follows the old habit and seeks *another* authority that can *speak unconditionally* and *command* goals and tasks.'[87]

Thirdly, and most importantly, with the slow but steady withdrawal of an omnipotent God from the public sphere, Nietzsche sees that human beings have been left solely responsible for the status of their political existence. This has led to a significant shift in the legitimation mechanisms of state authority. For under conditions of secularisation and democratisation, the state no longer derives its political authority from the authority *ex nihilo* of theological traditions and the continued presence of the past into the present, but from the personal charisma of political leaders and the ideological projects with which the latter promise to shape the future. The state, in other words, continues to dominate and organise society. But the source of its authority ceases to be distinct from those who exercise that authority. It is no longer conditioned by the existence of a prior source of authority relayed by mediating institutions like the church, the commune, the corporation, and the family, but instead emerges spontaneously out of the acts and leadership of those who rule the state.[88] There is authority here not because it is 'produced' through democracy – a democratic election does not 'generate' authority, it only confirms it – but because those who exercise authority benefit from the authority generated by their ideological projects.

For Nietzsche, the upshot of all this is that our ambitions for normative self-governance have made us more vulnerable to the mobilising power of the state, not less, as Kant expected.[89] As Mark Warren explains, 'Because the loss of Christian-moral culture occurs without the formation of a sovereign self, the opportunity exists for the state ... to exploit reflexive needs directly by providing a vicarious identity for the self in relation to the community.'[90] This is what Nietzsche means in the famous passage of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883) where he says that the democratic nation-state 'lies coldly' when it proclaims itself to 'be' the people. The nation state uses the ever-expanding bureaucratic apparatus at its disposal, along with the printing press, educational institutions, and other such seemingly independent institutions of civil society, to manufacture the nationalist beliefs to which it then appeals to legitimise its own domination of society – all the while claiming that this is the will of the people. In its attempt to reproduce the intimacy and trust-based character of face-to-face community relations at the macro level, the state insists on the organic and emotional comfort of kin-like relationships at the very moment that such relations

[85] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* [*GS*], trans. Josephine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001 [orig. pub. 1882]), I, § 2, p. 30.
[86] Ibid., V, § 347, p. 205.
[87] Nietzsche, *KSA*, 12, 9 [43], pp. 355–6; trans. *WP*, I, § 20, p. 17.
[88] Nietzsche, *HAH*, I, § 472, pp. 170–3; *Z*, I, § 13, pp. 34–6.
[89] For a more detailed discussion see Shaw, *Nietzsche's*, pp. 137–52.
[90] Warren, *Nietzsche*, p. 220.

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are disintegrating.[91] It first turns assimilation into disassociation by nurturing the dictates of individual interests and impersonal market relations, and then reabsorbs the atomised masses into fabricated nationalist narratives that it subsequently legitimises by luring the educated elite with its patronage of the arts. Hence, although it promises the unification of power and people, this 'new idol' in fact denies the community any form of genuine unity and the individual any form of genuine individuality: 'The state lies in all tongues of good and evil, and whatever it may tell you, it lies – and whatever it has, it has stolen.'[92]

Notwithstanding the similarities of their analyses of enlightenment politics, Nietzsche would therefore never have endorsed Schmitt's nationalist political-theological response to this crisis. For Nietzsche, nationalism is just another form of 'incomplete nihilism' – a 'metamorphosis of the cross' designed to avoid the anxiety of meaninglessness by relocating the old transcendental certainties of religion onto the planes of human historicity.[93] Because the values that it manufactures do not stem from any real form of life, Nietzsche contends that the nationalist culture of the democratic nation-state is the institutional embodiment of the 'will to death and nothingness' afflicting European societies at the turn of the century: 'Just look at how it lures them, the far-too-many! How it gulps and chews and ruminates them! … State, where the slow suicide of everyone is called – "life".'[94]

In 'The Greek State', Nietzsche had voiced strident complaints about the ways in which the European bourgeoisie was mobilising support for pacifist, commerce-driven state policies, and emancipatory discourses of national self-determination that allowed it to establish its hegemony on the changing political scene.[95] But his analysis began to change soon after in the mid-1870s and early 1880s when the middle-classes across Europe began to rally behind a much more belligerent mode of nationalist politics, at the same time as European colonialism was entering its new imperialist phase. By the mid-1880s, Nietzsche had concluded that Europe had left the pettiness of bourgeois politics behind: 'the next century will bring the struggle for the domination of the earth – the *compulsion* to great politics'.[96]

What Nietzsche was observing here was the culmination of a process by which the principle of national self-determination gradually lost its status as an emancipatory liberal ideal invoked against the rights of the European monarchies. Instead, nationalism became an aggressive strategy and a means to marginalise unpopular social and ethnic groups and fight the alleged internationalism of the social democrats. The increasing emphasis on ethnic and cultural homogeneity in nationalist discourses gave impetus to efforts at imposing uniformity on ethnic minorities through authoritarian educational policies, administrative measures, and forced settlement policies. During the last years of his rule, Bismarck launched a series of harsh Germanisation policies against the Poles in East Prussia, the French-speaking population of Alsace Lorraine and the Danes in Northern Schleswig. National Liberals embraced the interpretation of German nationality based on language and ethnicity and therefore

[91] For a more detailed analysis of Nietzsche's critique of nationalism see Elbe, *Europe*, pp. 41–64.
[92] Nietzsche, *Z*, I, § 13, pp. 34–5.
[93] Nietzsche, *KSA*, vol. 12, 7 [26], p. 305. Author's translation.
[94] Nietzsche, *Z*, I, § 13, p. 35. Cf. *HAH*, II, § 87, p. 332; *EH*, XIII, § 2, pp. 139–41.
[95] Nietzsche, *GST*, p. 170.
[96] Nietzsche, *BGE*, § 208, p. 102.

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offered support for these harsh illiberal measures. In turn, the stigmatisation of Catholics, socialists, Jews, Slavs, and other minorities served as a potent vehicle for the construction of the 'national interest' of a new German empire in which a new middle-class militarism was quickly gaining momentum.[97]

Kant's scheme for a cosmopolitan peace was an attempt to address the contradiction between the universalism of the rights of man and the national basis on which these rights were accommodated. He envisaged the reconciliation of unity and difference through the spread of the republican state form and the institutionalisation of a basic cosmopolitan law that would allow linguistic and religious diversity to thrive in a balance of power between nation states.[98] Writing a century later, Nietzsche sees how relocating sovereignty in the nation as a matter of abstract principle instead led to the transformation of the institutional function of statehood in the eyes of the different nationalities. They ceased to see the state as a general provider of security and justice, and instead began to reappropriate its institutions as a means for the achievement of a particular people's collective rights. Paradoxically, Nietzsche's account suggests that it is precisely the perceived rationality of republican institutions and popular identification with them that can encourage the citizens to abandon his individuality to state-directed mobilisations of identity and difference through social stigmatisation, foreign policy, and war.

This is something Hegel had also flagged in his *Philosophy of Right*.[99] According to Nietzsche, however, Hegel was just as guilty as Kant of having contributed in fostering this destructive form of politics. Whether in its Kantian or Hegelian forms, German Idealism had cultivated a self-deceptive feeling of power by uncritically tracing all that is other, strange, unknown, and unintelligible to something that is known, intelligible, 'evil', and morally antithetical to the (allegedly) rational structure of the world.[100] This tendency to deal with the uncertainty of human interaction by escalating the absoluteness of moral claims is what Nietzsche famously called 'slave morality'. As he explains in the *Genealogy of Morality* (1887), slave morality hinges on the 'demoralisation' and 'antagonisation' of otherness to secure the essentiality of one's own identity. Whether it is the values of the noble and powerful or those of other religions and cultures, 'slave morality' is parasitic on what it must first negate in order to affirm itself.[101]

As Chris Emden argues, for Nietzsche, it was only a short distance between the interpretation of evil as the self's 'unintelligible other' in German Idealism to the social stigmatisation of the 'political other' as evil in late nineteenth-century nationalist

[97] Wolfgang Mommsen, *Imperial Germany 1867–1918: Politics, Culture and Society in an Authoritarian State* (London: Arnold, 1997), pp. 42–3, 63–4; Katharine Anne Lerman, 'Bismarckian Germany', in James Retallack (ed.), *Imperial Germany 1871–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 3–38. See also Christian J. Emden, *Nietzsche and the Politics of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), chap. 6.

[98] Kant, 'Perpetual Peace', pp. 113–14.

[99] Georg Wilhelm Fredrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Rights*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 [orig. pub. 1821]), § 5, pp. 38–9. See also Robert Fine's excellent *Cosmopolitanism* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 29–38.

[100] On this particular issue, see Susan Nieman, *Evil in Modern Thought* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 57–112.

[101] Nietzsche, *GM*, I, § 10, p. 20.

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discourses.[102] As the democratisation process slowly gained momentum on the European continent, each state progressively sought to secure its identity by transmuting the otherness of domestic and foreign 'others' into the familiar moral categories of the majority culture. As each state came to take its own moral standards in contrast and comparison with that of other states, it became increasingly difficult for all states to accept in good conscience the legitimate political existence of other cultures without negating the truth and absolute moral value of their own legitimating narratives. Secularisation and democratisation thereby fuelled a culture of 'ressentiment' as each community came to hold other communities responsible for its own insecurity and frustrated expectations. Through this process, Nietzsche anticipated that the political space between different cultural communities would gradually disappear and inter-societal conflicts acquire an increasingly limitless and existential character.[103]

Conclusion

Like Kant, Nietzsche believed that the democratisation of Europe was both inevitable and irreversible. Unlike Kant, however, he harboured no hopes that democracy would necessarily bring more peaceful international relations. As he explained in *Human All Too Human*: 'That which now calls itself democracy differs from older forms of government solely in that it drives with *new horses*: the streets are still the same old streets, and the wheels are likewise the same old wheels. – Have things really got less perilous because the wellbeing of the nations now rides in this vehicle?'[104] To the extent that he saw pacific potential in democratisation, he did so thinking that it could hurry along the collapse of nationalism in Europe and lead to the emergence of a more benign post-national order.

Nietzsche's vague intimations of what this new European order would ideally be like are beyond the scope of this discussion.[105] Suffice to say that his vision of the future Europe looks nothing like the permanent federation of state envisaged by Kant. For Nietzsche understood too well that Kant's federalist vision would be forever marked by the historical conditions out of which it emerged. If anything, what Nietzsche's engagement with Kant teaches us is that we cannot solve the problem of political violence simply by appending cosmopolitan institutions to a Eurocentric 'international society' whose normative fabric remains so deeply constituted by the politics and metaphysics of the sovereign nation-state. Nietzsche's lesson is not as original today as it was then, but it remains just as prescient as ever. By trying to reconcile the transformative project of cosmopolitanism with the framework of the nation-state, the law of nations and an idealised idea of Europe from which the latter are derived, contemporary liberal cosmopolitanism ends up rationalising rather than confronting the structuring exclusions on which these are based.[106]

[102] Emden, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, pp. 241–2.
[103] Nietzsche, *HAH*, II, § 284, p. 380.
[104] Ibid., II, § 293, p. 384.
[105] See Elbe, *Europe*, pp. 89–108; Nicholas Martin, '"We Good Europeans": Nietzsche's New Europe in *Beyond Good and Evil*', *History of European Ideas*, 20 (1995), pp. 141–4; Graham Parkes, 'Wanderers in the Shadow of Nihilism: Nietzsche's Good Europeans', *History of European Ideas*, 16 (1993), pp. 585–90.
[106] For recent sophisticated variations on this argument see James Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key, Vol. II: Imperialism and Civic Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Fine, *Cosmopolitanism*.

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This is why, for Nietzsche, any serious plan for an institutional transformation of the international had to start with a radical transformation of the modalities of interaction between individuals and between individuals and their world. Whereas Kant saw perpetual peace as the most pressing task of humanity, Nietzsche saw the greatest task of humanity as one of deliverance from the resentment of slave morality and its source, revenge.[107] As Heidegger argues in one of his lectures, Nietzsche's thoughts on war and peace were a bridge beyond man himself:

> It focuses on a spirit which, being the freedom from revenge, is prior to all mere fraternization, but also to any mere desire to mete out punishment, to all peace efforts and all warmongering – prior to that other spirit which would establish and secure peace, *pax*, by pacts. The space of this freedom from revenge is prior to all pacifisms, and equally to all power politics. It is prior to all weak do-nothingism and shirking of sacrifice, and to blind activity for its own sake. The space of freedom from revenge is where Nietzsche sees the superman's essential nature. That is the space toward which he who crosses over is moving – the superman – 'Ceasar with the *soul* of the Christ'.[108]

It is in this strange way that Nietzsche's aristocratic and 'pan-bellicose' political philosophy rejoins Kant and the tradition of thought issued from the Enlightenment. When Nietzsche ranted against liberal rationalism he did not support irrationalism in the sense where he would have maintained that thought must give way to unconscious forces. More like Freud, he maintained that consciousness had to free the affects. When Nietzsche embraced war and brutality he did so thinking that, once men will have freed themselves from slave morality instincts and from all repressions of destructive affects, then these effects will have lost their violent character.[109] Instead of the man of ressentiment, who is bad since he cannot embrace his destructive affects, there will come the sovereign individual who will neither be good nor evil since there will no longer be anything to repress:

> And perhaps there will come a great day on which a nation distinguished for wars and victories and for the highest development of military discipline and thinking, and accustomed to making the heaviest sacrifices on behalf of these things, will cry of its own free will: '*we shall shatter the sword*' – and demolish its entire military machine down to its last foundations. To *disarm while being the best armed*, out of an *elevation* of sensibility – that is the means of real peace, which must always rest on a disposition for peace . . .[110]

Needless to say, in the end, Nietzsche's vision was no less hubristic than Kant's. As Theodor Adorno has argued, however inspiring, Nietzsche's creative desire to affirm life against the dialectical negativity of German Idealism led him to the implausible position of calling for a new order of values that would take into consideration the rise and fall of Christianity, but that at the same time would have no existing foundation in society – 'as if his critique of bourgeois civilisation did not bear within itself the violence of its own historical and social facticity'. This may have prevented him from having to make any *self-conscious* concessions to the existing social order. But it also rendered his work easily amenable to political misuse.[111]

[107] Nietzsche, *Z*, II, § 7, p. 77.
[108] Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004 [1954]), p. 88.
[109] Paul-Laurent Assoun, *Freud and Nietzsche* (London: Continuum, 2006).
[110] Nietzsche, *HAH*, II, § 284, p. 380.
[111] Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Hans Georg Gadamer, 'Nietzsche et Nous', in Gadamer, *Nietzsche L'Antipode: Le Drame de Zarathoustra* (Paris: Allia, 2007), p. 56. Author's translation.

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Pace the Marxist historian Arno Meyer, Nietzsche's anti-Christian and supra-ethical 'Übermensch' was far from being and ideal perfectly suited for the preservation and rejuvenation of the old regime's traditional order.[112] But the disembedded character of his *Kulturkritik*, along with the warrior rhetoric through which much of it was articulated, certainly made this critique attractive to many 'conservative revolutionaries' around Europe who shared Nietzsche's revulsion against the levelling aspirations of socialism and the effete, abstract existence of Kant's last man.

[112] Arno Meyer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (London: Verso, 2010 [1981]), pp. 292–3.

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