Nietzsche's Genealogical Critique of Morality & the Historical Zarathustra

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Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (*GM*) embarks upon an ambitious project to account for the roots of, and continued commitment to, the various manifestations of contemporary European morality. In the first of its three essays, Nietzsche proffers a causal story of the origins this phenomenon in terms of the *ressentiment* of an enfeebled social class towards their aristocratic oppressors. The sentiments of hatred and a desire for revenge, Nietzsche claims, eventually led to a subtle but profound *inversion* of the aristocratic values which dominated the social plain. It is out of this mechanism of social oppression and hatred that contemporary values—such as pity, equality, humility, justice, and so forth—were born.

However, there are tensions in Nietzsche's story about when this morality emerged. The first essay of *GM* appears to identify Greek and Roman occupied Judea as the particular historical-geographical context for this 'slave revolt' in values: "with the Jews there begins *the slave revolt in morality*" (*GM*, I: §7; cf. *BGE*, §195). But in a later passage from *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche explains his choice of the name "Zarathustra" for the protagonist in what he considered his crowning achievement. In this passage, Nietzsche refers to the tremendous influence on history that the historical Zarathustra—a late Bronze Age Iranian religious innovator—had as the "first to see in the struggle between good and evil the actual wheel in the working of things" (*EH*, 'Destiny': §3). He claims that "Zarathustra *created* this most fateful of errors, morality" (*EH*, 'Destiny': §3).

If Nietzsche is talking about the *same* moral tradition in both cases, and, further, if Nietzsche's genealogical investigations aim at *truth* rather than acting as fictional heuristic devices, then there is a *prima facie* contradiction

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here; one that has, remarkably, been (almost) entirely overlooked in the secondary literature. The interpretative puzzle before us is this: if (a) *GM* is an exercise in ascertaining the "actual *history of morality*" (*GM*, Pref: §7) and its origins; and (b) Nietzsche believes at least part of what essentially characterises 'morality' precedes the Judeo-Christian tradition, then why does *GM* not extend further back in history to mention Zarathustra or Zoroastrianism?

Any solution to this puzzle will demand close attention to Nietzsche's comprehension of 'morality', and how genealogy selects historical events as relevant to its explanation. This paper aims to proceed in a way that does precisely this, concurrently drawing out exactly why any *solution* to the puzzle—which may on the surface appear as only a minor interpretative peculiarity—matters significantly for understanding (i) fundamental features of Nietzsche's critique of morality, and (ii) his estimation of the historical Zarathustra.

I take both of these issues to be of independent interest in Nietzsche scholarship. Concerning (i), the answer to the puzzle bears upon the question of, for instance, the relation between *ressentiment* and the emergence of moral values. The first essay of *GM* clearly takes Judeo-Christian morality to be born from, and to continue to manifest, *ressentiment*. But would the *EH* passage then suggest that moral values can arise independently of *ressentiment* (making the relation contingent), or perhaps that the historical Zarathustra's revaluation too was a product of *ressentiment*, but towards a different object (maintaining the view that the relation is necessary)?

Concerning (ii), the answer to the puzzle will vindicate or complicate traditional interpretations of Nietzsche's estimation of the historical Zarathustra, and thus the reasons for his use of the name 'Zarathustra' for representing his own counter-ideal. One view is that Nietzsche chose the name in order to draw attention to either the venerable character of Zarathustra, or the plausibility or desirability of his ideas.[1] A contrasting view is that Nietzsche uses the name Zarathustra precisely because of his understanding of him as *antithetical* to his own positive ethical views: the rise of morality begins with him, hence his name is used rhetorically in overturning it. Depending on what the proposed solution to the puzzle raised is, one will be pushed closer towards one of these interpretations in at least some respects.

While the question of Nietzsche's knowledge and assessment of the historical Zarathustra is interesting in itself, the task of this paper is also to determine

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1. Jenny Rose (2000: 186), for example, writes that Elizabeth's 'Nietzsche Archive' had many Persian visitors that came to express "their gratitude that Nietzsche had chosen a Persian sage to be the prophet of a new and superior race of man".

the extent to which it may illuminate his understanding of slave morality. My aims are exegetical and explorative. As well as identifying this interpretive puzzle, I seek to offer a provisional solution, making explicit its implications for existing work on *GM* in the secondary literature. I hope to show that the historical Zarathustra, on Nietzsche's view, was a kind of 'proto-moralist' who, in an innovative way, channeled his *ressentiment* towards *life itself* via a moral-metaphysical worldview. This world-view was eventually co-opted, magnified and promulgated by Judeo-Christian morality as a means of discharging *ressentiment* towards an oppressive *social class*. As a result, one ought to view Nietzsche's estimation of the historical Zarathustra—whom he had relatively substantial knowledge of—as far more nuanced than traditional interpretations hold.

1. Genealogy & History

It is necessary to begin by clarifying what a 'genealogy' concerning values entails, and to then elucidate the role of history in this process. I shall argue that there are good reasons to suppose that, for Nietzsche, an *accurate* history of contemporary values is essential to a critique of them. In order for the interpretative puzzle outlined above to surface, it is crucial that this claim is true.

Nietzsche's genealogy has broadly two components: an *explanatory* component and an *evaluative* component. Here I shall address only the former. The explanatory component concerns how our current beliefs, attitudes and practices have historically developed and transformed from earlier origins. Specifically, a genealogical investigation aims to describe the complex conditions, sentiments and processes that *explain* these current beliefs, attitudes and practices, and perhaps also what *sustains* them. This pertains not only to moral beliefs, but also non-moral beliefs—(e.g.) about the self; agency and responsibility; the ontological standing of values; differences or similarities between persons; and so forth—upon which moral beliefs may (and often do) rely. By means of contrast, a genealogy of morals typically demonstrates via this process of gradual transformation that contemporary values are context dependent and contingent, as opposed to unalterable and timeless.

The extent to which Nietzsche's genealogy aims to provide a genuine history is a matter of controversy. There are broadly two traditions of thought. Some commentators—notably Bernard Williams (2000: 148–161; 2002: 34–38), Frithjof Bergmann (1988: 29), and Simon May (1999: 52, 73)—hold that Nietzsche's genealogies, or elements of it, are intended as fictional or semi-fictional: heuristic devices intended to shock or embarrass readers into confronting the fragility and contingency of their values.

A second tradition holds that Nietzsche *does* aim to represent accurate historical facts in his story about the evolution of values, beliefs and practices.[2] According to this view, part of the strength of Nietzsche's genealogical critique is its attention to what has *actually* taken place. This interpretation would position Nietzsche alongside the likes of Herder and Hegel in an established 18th and 19th century German tradition of analysing relevant historical-social conditions as a means of explaining the emergence or disappearance of particular values.[3] It is significant that Nietzsche criticises Schopenhauer as "un-german" (*BGE*, §204) in precisely this respect. Schopenhauer, according to Nietzsche, is an unfortunate exception to the German culture of "refinement of the *historical sense*" (*BGE*, §204; cf. *KSA*, 1885–1886, 2[188]), in so far as his *Weltanschauung* of a pervasive and insatiable will-to-life is explicitly ahistorical.

There are significant reasons to endorse the second view. Nietzsche is clear that previous practitioners of genealogy concerning morality—whom he refers to as the "English psychologists" (*GM*, I: §1)—have produced works of little use, *precisely* because they "lack the *historical spirit* [*historische Geist*]" (*GM*, I: §2). Here Nietzsche must have in mind Darwin, Hume, and Mill, but also Paul Rée's *The Origin of the Moral Sensations*. Although Nietzsche concurred with Rée's naturalistic method, he thought his vindicatory conclusions must be hardened and sharpened "by the hammer-blow of historical knowledge" (*HH*, §37; cf. §2). Since Rée was German, Nietzsche must use "English psychologists" here as an insult to Rée as a *type* of enquirer (namely: one who lacks *historische Geist*).[4]

Nietzsche's *own* investigation is intended as a rigorous examination of the "actual *history of morality*", which concerns only "what is documented, what can actually be confirmed and has actually existed" (*GM*, Pref: §7). He writes that any critique of values requires "a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed" (*GM*, Pref: §6). Later, in *The Antichrist*, he continues his task of exposing contemporary morality, which requires telling "the *real* history [*echte Geschichte*] of Christianity" (*A*, §39, emphasis mine). Thus, Nietzsche positions himself as someone attempting something distinctive: a *real* account of morality's history.

One possible concern here is that Nietzsche does not provide a comprehensive account of the historical conditions and events surrounding the period in question. But Nietzsche shouldn't be expected to, for a genealogy is a *specific way* of doing history. As Christopher Janaway has claimed, it is "a highly selective exercise, ignoring vast tracts of history from which our current attitudes do not descend" (2007: 10). In other words, a successful genealogy will ignore events

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2. For defenders of this interpretation, see Nehamas (1985: 246), Migotti (1998), Geuss (2001: 336), Leiter (2002: 180–181), Janaway (2007: 10), Forster (2011: 347–348).

3. Nietzsche, however, does not share either's *teleological* conception of history.

4. See: "Dr. Rée, like all English moral genealogists . . ." (*GM*, I: §4).

which are at best tangential to the causal story of our present-day values and beliefs. With this in mind, my claim that Nietzsche aims to present an "accurate" history of contemporary morality must mean both that (a) his claims are *not* fictional; and (b) do include all *causally relevant* events in explaining it.[5]

A related sceptical concern is that Nietzsche almost never provides documented evidence for his historical claims. This may be surprising if he is to be interpreted as aiming at truth. Without evidence, it is unlikely many will take seriously a proposed historical story, since *possibility* does not by itself entail *plausibility*. This is especially puzzling in cases such as *GM* where both the claim (i.e., that we are mistaken about the origins of our most cherished contemporary values), and the causal story explaining it (i.e., that they are the product of a pernicious inversion of values), are radically revisionary.

Brian Leiter has argued (plausibly, in my view) that this objection overlooks that *GM* is a *polemic* (as it is sub-titled): while it aims to make factual claims, its purpose is to affect a radical change in its readers' outlook, not to have knowledge of the origins of morality *for its own sake*. The style of Nietzsche's polemic is characterised by rhetorical techniques designed to shock, embarrass, disgust, and otherwise provoke an *affective response* from a particular (and rare) kind of reader.[6] Accordingly, scholarly references and formalities would, as Leiter claims, "simply be an impediment" (2002: 180–181) to satisfying *GM*'s aims.

Nevertheless, as it will become clear later in this paper, I am sympathetic to these concerns and their potential force. Part of Nietzsche's motivation is that previous attempts to account for the origins of contemporary values have lacked a sensitivity to historical facts. But this point is exactly what motivates the curiosity of this paper concerning Nietzsche's view of the historical Zarathustra. If Nietzsche is *not* engaged in a real historical project that accounts for the causally relevant features of morality's explanation, then the puzzle outlined above does not surface. Consequently, the conclusions of my investigation here will be limited to the bounds of the 'real history' interpretation.

2. The Origins of Morality: A Puzzle

I will not have time here to give a comprehensive account of Nietzsche's story about the origins of morality, nor the reasons why Nietzsche takes it to have been

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5. (b) is crucial in helping to motivate the question of why Nietzsche's project in *GM* does not extend further back in history, for a genealogical story which only *begins* in the 1st century A.D. is not rightly described as 'inaccurate' or 'fictional'. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for bringing my attention to this point.

6. On the inseparable nature of Nietzsche's provocative style and his philosophical aims, see Janaway (2007: 4).

so successful. In short, the first essay of *GM* describes how initially an aristocratic class of 'nobles' affirmed themselves as 'good', and in consequence considered 'bad' the weak who lacked the kinds of qualities that they embodied. This second (and larger) category of people—the oppressed 'slaves'—unsurprisingly began to develop a vengeful disdain towards the nobles. Being the feebler of the two classes, the 'slaves' were unable to discharge these feelings by openly striking back with force, and so they festered into a bottled-up *ressentiment*. However, in such a tension, *ressentiment* eventually and miraculously "becomes creative" insofar as it "gives birth to values" (*GM*, I: §10).[7] The new evaluative framework which emerged as a result valorised those who were previously considered bad, vulgar, and wretched as manifesting everything *actually* good, while the 'nobles' and their associated qualities—strength, pride, joy, power, physical prowess— became designated as 'evil'. This revaluation, then, *legitimised* the 'slaves' inadequacies: their "impotence" becomes "*goodness of heart*"; their "anxious lowliness" becomes "*humility*"; their "inoffensiveness" becomes "*patience*"; their "inability for revenge" becomes "*forgiveness*"; their hatred of their enemy becomes a "*hatred of injustice*" (*GM*, I: §14, emphasis mine). By way of reinterpreting the existing social power relations, the weak "compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge" (*GM*, I: §10).[8]

Crucial to this story is Nietzsche's distinction between two modes of evaluation: the 'noble' and the 'slavish'. The noble [*vornehm*] mode of evaluation is essentially *self-affirmative*. The noble person, Nietzsche claims, "conceives the basic concept 'good' in advance and spontaneously out of himself and only then creates for himself an idea of 'bad'" (*GM*, I: §11; cf. §2). But what were the *objects* of this affirmation? Nietzsche writes:

> The knightly-aristocratic value judgements presupposed a powerful physicality, a flourishing, abundant, even over-flowing health, together with that which serves to preserve it: war, adventure, hunting, dancing, war games [*Kampfspiele*], and in general all that involves vigorous, free, joyful activity. (*GM*, I: §7)

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7. Nietzsche is less than clear about the nature of this creative act. Consequently there is disagreement about who the orchestrators of the slave revolt are—whether it was the slaves themselves unconsciously, or a third class of priests who used the slaves' *ressentiment* to position themselves as superior to the warrior class. Given my purposes in this paper, I do not take a view on which reading is more plausible. Both face the same puzzle I am proposing.

8. Note that this revenge is "imaginary" in so far as (at least initially) no *actual* change in the balance of power takes place, even though the slaves *perceive* it to via a reinterpretation of the evaluative landscape. Other forms of "imaginary revenge" manifest in substantive Judeo-Christian doctrines. For example, an afterlife of bliss for the blessed (the slaves) and eternal punishment for the wicked (the nobles). In this revenge fantasy, the nobles are humiliated in hell, hence the slaves are given the *feeling* of power, yet not any *actual* power in reality.

The slavish mode of evaluation, by contrast, is essentially *reactive*. While for the noble, 'bad' is an "after-production, a side-issue, a contrasting shade" (*GM*, I: §11), the slave is first and foremost a spectator of the established values of the nobles, and posits the negative—the 'evil'—as everything he is not. The slavish conception of 'evil' is logically prior to their conception of 'good', since the latter is only possible as an opposition to what they resent:

> The inversion of the value-positing eye—this *need* to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself—is of the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all— its action is fundamentally reaction. (*GM*, I: §10)

The "imaginary revenge" of slave morality is made complete, however, with the addition of a descriptive claim concerning the existence of a free will capable of grounding ultimate responsibility. The slaves believe they *choose* to adhere to their values, and that the nobles similarly *choose* to adhere to what is now designated as evil. With the concept of moral responsibility built into the slaves' conceptual framework, the 'evil' can now be *blamed* for being so, and the 'good' *praised* for being so (*GM*, I: §13). The distinction between these essential features of noble morality ('good' vs. 'bad') and slave morality [*Sklaven-Moral*] ('good' vs. 'evil'), will be of particular significance later on in the paper.[9]

The most important aspect of Nietzsche's story in the first essay of *GM* for the purposes of this paper is that he claims this "slave revolt" (*GM*, I: §10) took place within a specific historical-geographical context: Greek and Roman occupied Judea.[10] In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he claims that "It is in this inversion of values . . . that the significance of the Jewish people resides: with *them* there begins the *slave revolt in morals*" (*BGE*, §195). This claim is expanded in *GM:* "It was the Jews who, with awe-inspiring consistency, dared to invert the aristocratic value equation" (*GM*, I: §7), and that "with the Jews there begins *the slave revolt in morality*: that revolt which has a history of two thousand years behind it and which we no longer see because it—has been victorious" (*GM*, I: §7). In a notebook entry two years earlier, Nietzsche similarly writes that "the history of Europe *since the time of the Roman Emperors* is a slave revolt" (*KSA*, 1884: 25[256], emphasis mine).

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9. I treat "noble morality" as synonymous with "master morality [*Herren-Moral*]": the latter is perhaps more familiar, but Nietzsche only uses the phrase once in his published works: *BGE*, §260.

10. Consider Nietzsche's claim that Christianity's "mortal enemy is the Roman just as much as the Greek" (*WP*, §195).

Nietzsche's attention to the slave revolt as a 'Jewish' phenomenon pertains to the influence of Judaism upon his primary target, Christianity: "One knows *who* inherited this Jewish revaluation . . ." (*GM*, I: §7).[11] Consider Nietzsche's claim outlined above that slave morality valorises weakness and impotence in the herd; they hold that "the wretched alone are the good; the poor; impotent, lowly alone are the good; the suffering, sick, ugly alone are pious" (*GM*, I: §7). This "sublime self-deception that interprets weakness as freedom, and their being thus-and-thus as a *merit*" (*GM*, I: §13) would find its paradigmatic expression in the mouth of Paul:

> But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (Corinthians 12:9)

However, there is a *prima facie* tension between the claim that the advent of morality was around the 1st century in Judea, and with another important claim Nietzsche makes concerning the historical Zarathustra; the prophet of a religion which pre-dates Christianity and Judaism (of which I shall say more about in the following section). In a late but telling passage—which is worth quoting at length—Nietzsche asks why little attention has been paid to his choice of the name *Zarathustra* for the protagonist in a text he considered to be his crowning achievement:

> I have not been asked, as I should have been asked, what the name of Zarathustra means in precisely my mouth, in the mouth of the first immoralist: for what constitutes the tremendous uniqueness of that Persian in history is precisely the opposite of this. Zarathustra was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the actual wheel in the working of things: the translation of morality into the realm of metaphysics, as force, cause, end-in-itself is *his* work. But this question is itself at bottom its own answer. Zarathustra *created* this most fateful of errors, morality: consequently, he must also be the first to *recognise* it. Not only has he

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11. These passages concerning the Jews must be read with an eye to the historical context. While these remarks may not look that much different to the anti-semitism that prevailed in 19th century Germany, it is crucial to understand the significance of Nietzsche's claim that Christianity was born from Judaism. This is a claim that Christian anti-Semites (i.e., those who are anti-semitic *because* of their Christianity) would have been rather embarrassed to discover. Nietzsche is baiting this demographic using similar rhetoric in order to later reveal their historical and critical deficiencies.

had longer and greater experience here than any other thinker — the whole of history is indeed the experimental refutation of the proposition of a so-called 'moral world-order' —: what is more important is that Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His teaching, and his alone, upholds truthfulness as the supreme virtue — that is to say the opposite of the *cowardice* of the 'idealist', who takes flight in the face of reality; Zarathustra has more courage in him than all other thinkers put together. To speak the truth and *to shoot well with arrows*, that is Persian virtue. — Have I been understood? The self-overcoming of morality through truthfulness, the self-overcoming of the moralist into his opposite — *into me* — that is what the name Zarathustra means in my mouth. (*EH*, 'Destiny': §3)

There are various significant claims in this passage, each of which I shall elucidate and assess as this paper progresses. Most importantly, at this stage, is that Nietzsche explicitly claims that Zarathustra "*created* [*schuf*]" the "most fateful of errors [*verhängnissvollsten Irrthum*]", that is: morality. What gives the historical Zarathustra his tremendous "uniqueness [*Einzigkeit*]", according to Nietzsche, is exactly his innovativeness: he "was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the actual wheel in the working of things". On the surface, Nietzsche here appears to contradict his earlier claims in *BGE* and *GM* that 'morality' begins with the birth of Christianity. Hence, it is necessary to attempt to reconcile these remarks in a way that best represents Nietzsche's considered view.

This passage, and its significance for Nietzsche's genealogical critique, has been overlooked in the secondary literature. Scott Jenkins acknowledges the *possibility* of the issue arising. He asks whether *ressentiment* produces the moral content which comes to be designated as 'good' and 'evil'. He writes that "a very late remark on the historical Zarathustra (Zoroaster) does grant primacy to the ethical sphere" (Jenkins 2019: 246), and cites *EH*, 'Destiny': §3 as evidence. Jenkins claims that if this passage reflects Nietzsche's considered view, then it follows that "the birth of 'good' and 'evil' during the first Jewish-Roman war, as recounted in the first essay of the *Genealogy*, would not be their first appearance in the world" (2019: 246). The consequent of this claim and its implications is precisely the concern of this paper.

We must proceed with caution in deducing a contradiction to be at work here. A number of exegetical questions arise in the passage which must be addressed before we can commit to such a view. For example, was Nietzsche's knowledge of Zarathustra both comprehensive enough to endow the *EH* passage with enough force to generate a tension in his historical claims? Is the *harmful* 'morality' that is the subject of Nietzsche's critique the *same* 'morality' that he refers to with respect to Zarathustra? Does Nietzsche allow that 'morality' emerged prior

to the birth of Christianity in Zarathustra, but was only *established* as a causally efficacious phenomenon (and hence, harmful) by events in the 1st century?

In what follows, I shall consider answers to these questions, and find them lacking in potency to alone dismiss the proposed tension. I shall then present my own view on how it can be accounted for while preserving the integrity of Nietzsche's project in *GM*.

3. Possible Answers to the Puzzle

3.1. Nietzsche's Knowledge of the Historical Zarathustra

An initial response to the interpretive problem outlined above would be to question Nietzsche's knowledge of the historical Zarathustra: perhaps Nietzsche didn't know enough about him to be making a genuinely credible claim about his contributions to the emergence of morality. If this is correct, we would have to view *EH*, 'Destiny': §3 as either metaphorical—perhaps as a rhetorical device of sorts—or alternatively as an unfounded assertion which wasn't foreseen to be in tension with the earlier claims of *GM*. Both positions are undesirable, so we would be doing Nietzsche a great service in distancing him from them. It is fortunate, then, that there is compelling evidence that Nietzsche likely had a significant (though by no means comprehensive) understanding of the historical Zarathustra, and Zoroastrianism more broadly. It is prudent to first elaborate briefly on who Zarathustra was and the views he is traditionally taken to have endorsed.

The historical Zarathustra resided in Central Asia—what is now North-Western Iran, Northern Afghanistan and Turkmenistan—and is traditionally thought to have lived in the second millennium B.C., though this is a matter of controversy.[12] The primary evidence for this claim has been linguistic: the oldest Zoroastrian texts, which are contained in the *Avesta*, are remarkably comparable to the Rigveda hymns from around 1500 B.C. Zoroastrianism shares elements with the Vedic religion that also has its origins in the prehistorical Indo-Iranian period (perhaps around 5000–2000 B.C.), that is, to the time before the mass migrations led to the Indians and Iranians becoming distinct peoples (Boyce 1984: 8).[13]

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12. Mary Boyce (1996), approximates somewhere between 1400–1200 B.C. While this is conventional among many scholars of Zoroastrianism, there are exceptions. Gehrardo Gnoli (1980: 165), for example, argued for Zarathustra's date being 620–550 B.C., an account shared by R. C. Zaehner (1961: 33).

13. One simple example of this is the usage of the Avestan term *Haoma* and Vedic term *Soma* referring to the mysterious plant simultaneously utilised in ritual. Both derive from the proto-Indo-Iranian **sauma*.

The Iranian society of which Zarathustra was a part was a pastoral community with two major divisions of social class: warrior-herdsmen and priests—Zarathustra himself falling into the latter class. From what can be reconstructed of the pre-Zoroastrian religion, central to it was an extensive hierarchical pantheon, members of which were either an anthropomorphised representation of a natural phenomenon or abstract idea, or deity possessing an associated power. For instance, *Vāyu-Vāta* is the god of the natural phenomenon of wind, and *Ardvi Sura Anahita* is goddess of undefiled waters and fertility. The gods *Verethraghna* and *Mithra* are associated with abstract concepts: victory and contracts, respectively.[14] The balance of order—*Aša* (Vedic. Ṛ*ta*)—over chaos—or *Druj*—was a central feature in the Indo-Iranian religion, and these deities were invoked through ritual worship and offerings in order to ensure order within the cosmos and community.

Zarathustra is traditionally thought to have reacted against the existing priestly order and significantly reformed these established religious practices and beliefs into a new faith. The oldest of the Avestan hymns—the *Gathas* (Av. *Gāθās*)—are believed to have been composed by Zarathustra himself, and thus are generally considered to hold the authentic kernel of Zoroastrianism. In these hymns, Zarathustra sought to reform the established Iranian religion in at least two major ways: (1) a shift from polytheism to (some form of) monotheism; (2) the introduction of a strict *ethical* dualism.

Concerning the first reform, there was a revaluation of the deities worshipped up to that point, with Ahura Mazda (Pahlavi. *Ohrmazd/Ormuzd*)—an important deity in the old pantheon—elevated to a privileged status as sole creator and sustainer of the world.[15] This status was, according to Norman Cohn, one more exalted "than any deity in the ancient world had ever occupied" (1995: 81). Mary Boyce observes that Zarathustra ". . . in a startling departure from accepted beliefs proclaimed Ahura Mazda to be the one uncreated God" (1979: 19–20).

A second reform—which holds significant relevance for the purposes of this paper—concerns mankind's moral role in contributing to the order of the universe in the fight against chaos. In the *Gathas*, great emphasis is placed on an ethical dualism in which the order of *Aša* is upheld through truth in thought, word and deed, and the chaos of *Druj* though lies and deceit. The principle of *Aša* is associated with a benevolent spirit called 'Spenta Mainyu'; and *Druj* with the malevolent spirit 'Angra Mainyu' (Pahlavi. *Ahriman*). Mankind, in Zarathustra's

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14. On this point, see Foltz (2004: 13).

15. See in particular *Yasna* 31:8, where Zarathustra refers to Ahura Mazda as "the very first and last"; "the father of the Good Mind"; "as the veritable creator of truth and right"; as "the lord judge of our actions in life".

view, has free will to choose between these two opposing forces by acting justly or unjustly.

The status of these two 'spirits' in Zoroastrian theology is a matter of controversy. Whether Ahura Mazda *created* the evil spirit has implications for the problem of evil, which R. C. Zaehner claims sparked an interpretation considered a heresy by Zoroastrians, namely, Zurvanism (1972). This view interprets Ahura Mazda and Ahriman to be equally powerful deities fighting for control of the world, both sons of the primordial (and ethically neutral) 'Zurvan' or *time*.[16] This understanding of Zoroastrianism became the interpretation familiar to Europe, partly due to this theological ambiguity in the text, but also due to efforts to attribute this view to Zoroastrianism from 19th century Christian missionaries intent on the conversion of Zoroastrian communities residing in European colonies.[17] However, although this 'dualist' interpretation was popular in 19th century Europe, it has since been fiercely criticised as unrepresentative of Zoroastrian orthodoxy.[18]

In the Zoroastrian *Weltenschauung*, man is caught in a battle between the opposing forces of good and evil, and has free will to decide how they will contribute to the fight, the consequences of which will be met with eschatological judgement. The parallels with Judeo-Christian beliefs are clear enough. These beliefs and practices came to be endorsed (in varying forms) by three major Iranian empires: the Achaemenids (550–330 B.C), the Parthians (247 B.C.–224 A.D), and the Sassanids (224–651 A.D). As a result, Zoroastrianism was deeply influential in the region, particularly from the mid-late Sassanian period onwards in which hostilities with the Roman Empire spiked as a result of its Christianisation. Up until the Muslim invasion of the Sassanian Empire from 633–654 A.D.,

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16. Ahriman being considered as an equal deity on behalf of evil has led to the popular view that the devil or 'Satan' of the Judeo-Christian tradition has its roots in Zoroastrianism. As I come to mention shortly, this is precisely Schopenhauer's understanding of Zoroastrianism. Zurvanism appears to be the form of Zoroastrianism Hegel too was familiar with: "Among the Persians, *Ormuzd* and *Ahriman* present the antithesis in question. Ormuzd is the Lord of the kingdom of Light—of Good; Ahriman that of Darkness—of Evil. But there is a still higher being from whom both proceeded—a Universal Being not affected by this antithesis, called *Zeruane-Akerene*—the Unlimited. The All, i.e. is something abstract; it does not exist for itself; and Ormuzd and Ahriman have arisen from it" (Hegel 2004: 178).

17. The Scotsman John Wilson (1804–1875) and his *The Parsi Religion: As Contained in the Zand-Avastá, and Propounded and Defended by the Zoroastrians of India and Persia, Unfolded, Refuted, and Contrasted With Christianity* (1843/2018) is but one example.

18. Martin Haug, an influential Indo-Iranian scholar during Nietzsche's time, did much to rescue Zoroastrianism from this interpretation. Haug argued that the *Gathas* contained a monotheistic theology that had been somewhat lost due to this confusion. Haug remarks that "a separate evil spirit of equal power with Ahuramazda, and always opposed to him, is entirely foreign to Zarathustra's theology" (1878: 303). For a contemporary defence of a 'monotheistic' view, see Hintze (2014).

Zoroastrianism remained a major world religion, and Christianity's most significant competitor in the region.

With this brief overview, we are now in a position to ask how much of this Nietzsche can reasonably be believed to have known. There are good reasons to suppose that Nietzsche had an informed understanding of the historical Zarathustra and his ideas. One immediate indication is Nietzsche's use of the Avestan 'Zarathustra' as opposed to the more popular western version 'Zoroaster'. Although there are two references to 'Zoroaster' in Nietzsche's early period (*KSA*, 1870, 5[54]; *eKGWB/PHG*, 1873, §1), he prefers to use—as he states in an 1883 letter to Heinrich Köselitz—the "genuine" [*ächte*] and "uncorrupted" [*unverderbte*] (*eKGWB/BVN,* 1883, 418) Avestan name, which first appears in 1882 in passage §342 of *The Gay Science*. This itself is significant, for the Avestan name would have been familiar at the time only to philologists specialising in Indo-Iranian languages.

It is important to note as a supplement to this point that the 18th and 19th centuries were a period of tremendous enhancement in Indo-Iranian philology in Europe. In 1771, the French philologist Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron published a three volume translation of the *Zend Avesta*, bringing Zoroastrianism to the attention of European intellectuals. In Germany, Martin Haug published *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsis* in 1878, in which he was the first to argue that the *Gathas* alone were attributable to Zarathustra himself. Prior to this, Haug was a major intellectual presence at both the University of Bonn, and the University of Leipzig—institutions Nietzsche attended shortly after Haug's time there.[19]

As a philologist himself, it is highly probable that Nietzsche would have been aware of Haug, even if we cannot be certain he read his work on Zoroastrianism. Moreover, Nietzsche would certainly have been familiar with the rapidly growing trend in Indo-Iranian studies and Zoroastrianism in Germany, which—in addition to Haug—saw important contributions to the field from Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel, Johann Friedrich Kleuker, Franz Bopp, Johann Gottlieb Rhode, Karl Friedrich Geldner, Friedrich von Spiegel, and Max Müller, not to mention Nietzsche's lifelong friend Paul Deussen, whom he first met at *Schulpforta* in 1859. Further still, it was at the house of Hermann Brockhaus—Wagner's brother-in-law—that Nietzsche first met Wagner in 1868. Brockhaus was a leading authority in Sanskrit and Persian languages at the time, and had published an edition of the *Vendidad* (Av. *widaēwa-dāta*, Pahl. *jud-dēw-d*ā)—an important Zoroastrian ecclesiastical text—in 1850.

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19. Haug published significant work at both institutions: his dissertation in 1855 *The Religion of Zarathushtra According to the Ancient Hymns of the Zend-Avesta* while at Bonn; and *The Five Gathas or Collections of the Songs and Sayings of Zarathustra, His Disciples, and Successors,* published in two volumes by the German Oriental Society in Leipzig in 1858 and 1860.

Given Nietzsche's background in philology, he would have had the means to learn about the historical Zarathustra through the pioneering work of these scholars; some of which he knew personally. In addition, a variety of other sources which Nietzsche certainly did read contained references to Zarathustra, providing him with varying perspectives on his historical context and values. One example is Herodotus. It is telling that Nietzsche claims that "Persian virtue" is to "speak the truth and *to shoot well with arrows*" (*EH*, 'Destiny', §3; cf. *Z*, I, §15). Nietzsche's awareness of the Zoroastrian emphasis on truth (*Aša*)—that "his teaching, and his alone, upholds truthfulness as the supreme virtue" (*EH*, 'Destiny', §3)—likely in part stems from Herodotus' observation of the Persians that they teach their sons "in three things alone—to ride, to draw the bow, and to speak the truth" (Herodotus 2003: [1.131]). A second example would be Nietzsche's 'great teacher' Schopenhauer, who compared "the Zend religion" (*P2*, §179, 340–341) and Judeo-Christian beliefs on multiple occasions (a point I shall say more about shortly).[20]

A final point indicative of the extent of Nietzsche's knowledge of the historical Zarathustra is that there are strong parallels between the tradition surrounding the historical Zarathustra's life and Nietzsche's Zarathustra. For instance, in the opening words of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's Zarathustra, just like the historical Zarathustra, leaves "the lake of his home" and goes into the mountains at the age of thirty to live in solitude, and descends ten years later, ready to communicate his message (*Z*, 'Prologue', §1). In the passage in *The Gay Science* from which the prologue is repeated, Nietzsche specifies the "Lake of Urmi" (*GS*, §342), which Zoroastrians traditionally hold Zarathustra to have lived by. Both figures also find it hard to gain followers in the early years of their preaching. Once again, it is significant that these details about the historical Zarathustra would not have been known amongst non-experts at the time.

Taken together, these reasons are compelling in establishing that Nietzsche likely had an informed understanding of the historical Zarathustra. Carl Jung went as far as to claim that "it is quite probable or even certain, that [Nietzsche] must have made some special studies along the line of the Zend-Avesta, a great part of which was already translated in his days" (1988: 1:4). However, we must be careful not to overstate the significance of the reasons presented. The fact that Nietzsche associated with various scholars of Zoroastrianism should not be taken as a suggestion that he was astute concerning every aspect of their research. Although the affinities between the historical and fictional Zarathustra are striking, there is little evidence to suggest Nietzsche had detailed knowledge about substantive Zoroastrian beliefs and practices. However, my suggestion is

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20. See Schopenhauer: *W2*, §46, 580; §48, 623–634; *P2*, §156, 271; §177, 332.

that he knew *enough* about Zarathustra (or at least the contemporary perception of him) to warrant considering him a significant figure in the history of morality.

3.2. *Morality in Which Sense?*

A second and altogether more promising strategy for diffusing the apparent tension between Nietzsche's claims—that (a) "Zarathustra *created* this most fateful of errors, morality" (*EH*, 'Destiny', §3) and (b) "with the Jews there begins *the slave revolt in morality*" (*GM*, I, §7)—is to question whether he is referring to the same concept when he speaks of 'morality' in these respective passages. Nietzsche implicitly relies upon a distinction between 'morality' in a broad sense (i.e., the collection of a person's or society's values, beliefs, and practices) of which there can be 'higher' and 'lower', and the more narrow sense of 'morality' that is the real target of Nietzsche's attack (i.e., a *particular* collection of values, beliefs, and practices). This conceptual distinction is most clearly expressed in *BGE*, §202:

> *Morality in Europe today is herd-animal morality*—that is to say, as we understand the thing, only *one* kind of human morality beside which, before which, after which many other, above all *higher*, moralities are possible or ought to be possible. (*BGE*, §202; cf. *TI*, 'Anti-Nature': §4)

Across his corpus, Nietzsche's preferred terms—*Moral*, *Moralität*, and *Sittlichkeit*[21]—are applied broadly to both moralities he praises and which he attacks.[22] Nevertheless, the latter—morality in the *pejorative* sense (to use Leiter's terminology)—might be briefly canvassed as follows. Rather than a monolithic system of substantive prohibitions and commands, the morality Nietzsche considers *harmful* is perhaps best thought of as a broad family of normative

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21. Nietzsche uses the latter term in his discussion of what he calls the "morality of custom" [*Sittlichkeit der Sitte*] (*GM*, II: §2; *D*, §9). This is the earliest form ethics, in which customs are established in the interests of the survival of the group (*D*, §16). In this "*pre-moral* period of mankind" (*BGE*, §32) 'good' and 'bad' referred merely to consequences, as opposed to conceiving of the value of an action's "origins" typical of the genuinely moral period (which begins with noble valuation, and later includes slavish valuation). I take it to be uncontroversial that the 'morality' which Nietzsche claims Zarathustra "created" is *not* the "morality of custom", for the simple reason that it would be hopelessly implausible. The idea that one person could 'create' the morality of custom would miss the entire point Nietzsche makes about its emergence as a global social phenomenon, and Zarathustra's "uniqueness". In addition, Nietzsche claims it occurs from "prehistoric times" (*BGE*, §32), putting Zarathustra out of the picture.

22. Given that Nietzsche's project in *GM* is partly to show that precise definitions for historical phenomena are futile, and that 'morality' must be understood historically as an evolving concept, it is no surprise he does not provide such a fixed definition. See *GM*, II, §13.

commitments (including the descriptive views they depend upon: e.g., about agency and free will) which constitute a certain worldview or outlook on life. Typically, this morality takes pity/compassion, equality, happiness and altruism to be of intrinsic value, and takes the status of this value to be both objective and unconditional. I shall not have time here to explicate these commitments in detail, but Nietzsche holds that they manifest in positions as diverse as Utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, Schopenhauerian pessimism, socialism, modern democracy, and secular humanism. Most importantly for my purposes here is that views as diverse as this, according to Nietzsche, carry on a tradition ultimately rooted in morality's paradigmatic expression: Christianity.

The relevance of this conceptual distinction is that it would potentially avert the proposed contradiction by interpreting Nietzsche to be referring to morality in the *broad* sense in the *EH* passage, and not morality in the *pejorative* sense, which he is describing in the *BGE* and *GM* passages concerning Judeo-Christian values. If this manoeuvre is successful, it would indicate that the argument suggesting a tension in Nietzsche's genealogical story misfires.

There are at least two reasons that may support this interpretation. Firstly, it is significant that Nietzsche appears to admire the historical Zarathustra in ways that are alien to his view of the initiators of the slave revolt. For example, although Nietzsche considers Zarathustra to have created the "most fateful of errors, morality", he simultaneously claims that "Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker", and that his emphasis on the value of truth is "the opposite of the *cowardice* of the 'idealist', who takes flight in the face of reality; Zarathustra has more courage in him than all other thinkers put together" (*EH*, 'Destiny', §3). Compare this with Nietzsche's various descriptions of the slaves and early Christians as "cellar rodents full of vengefulness and hatred" (*GM*, I: §14); "low-minded, common and plebeian" (*GM*, I: §2); and "the dross and refuse of mankind" (*A*, §44).

A significant part of this admiration, of course, is for Zarathustra's great innovation. Zarathustra, as we have seen, was critical of prevailing values and practices of his social environment and sought to *revaluate* them. The substantive issues may indeed differ from Nietzsche's own project of revaluation, but the vocabulary of truthfulness and courage ascribed to Zarathustra echo Nietzsche's praise for the "free spirit [*Freigeist*]", who challenges established norms and traditions (e.g., *HH*, 'Preface': §7; *D*, §56; *GS*, §347; *BGE,* §44).

A second reason which may drive a wedge between the morality of the historical Zarathustra and the pejorative sense of morality is that many aspects essential to the Christian worldview (at least as Nietzsche understands it) are entirely absent from Zarathustra's thought. This point has been identified by Kathleen Higgins, the only scholar from the secondary literature on Nietzsche who has given the relevance of the historical Zarathustra serious consideration

(though not specifically with respect to Nietzsche's history of morality in *GM*, as I aim to do here).[23] She writes:

> Some of the most pointed complaints that Nietzsche registers against Christianity do not apply to Zoroastrianism. Nature is not vilified; life on earth is treated as cosmically significant; suffering is neither emphasised nor valued in its own right; sin is considered not a natural disposition but a failure in discernment; the needs inherent in human psychology are not denied but are acknowledged and respected. (Higgins 2000: 158)

I agree that Zoroastrianism does not share these features which Nietzsche repeatedly attacks. The Zoroastrian worldview is one in which the natural world is devoid of intrinsic corruptness and baseness familiar from Christianity and Platonism. Zoroastrianism also explicitly discourages monasticism on anti-quietist grounds.[24] Perhaps most striking is the general absence of praise for 'turning the other cheek' and forgiveness in Zarathustra's thought. On the contrary, the Avesta pronounces "torment shall be upon him who to us is a tormenting oppressor" (*Yasna* 46:18). For Zarathustra, one commentator writes, "it is as important to ill-treat the wicked as it is to be good to the good" (Duchesne-Guillemin 1952: 7).

In light of this, perhaps one can solve the puzzle in the following way: on Nietzsche's view, the historical Zarathustra, with his self-conception as a truthful one, constructed a robust theological metaphysics around his own (noble) values which he took to represent an objective moral world-order. This was a manifestation of self-affirmation in a pre-scientific world. Nietzsche's own character of 'Zarathustra' then *completes* the intellectual trajectory of noble morality: he has the courage to accept the terrible reality that there are no objective values, and gives the noble values he shares with his namesake a naturalistic meta-ethical treatment compatible with the "unconditional, honest atheism" (*GM*, III: §27) which Nietzsche endorses.[25]

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23. An exception to this is Walter Kaufmann (1974: 98–99). However, Kaufmann, without addressing Zoroastrian thought in detail and noting its interpretative controversies, leaves himself open to the charge of misrepresentation.

24. For example:
"This precious reward of Thine O Mazda
Thou gives by way of the good mind
Thou givest to vigorous bodily life to him who works for and tends to Thy Creation,
Who furthers Thy beneficent plan by the power of his understanding,
Guided by Thy Spirit of Truth"
Yasna 34:14

25. My thanks for an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this interpretation.

This interpretation has significant merits. By emphasising these elements of the historical Zarathustra's understanding of the good Nietzsche admires—which, as we have seen, there are ample grounds for—it helps drive a wedge between 'morality' *in the pejorative sense* and moral values *more broadly*. By identifying the historical Zarathustra with the latter, we thereby gain an explanation of why *GM* is silent about Zoroastrianism: it has more in common with *noble* morality, which the first essay grants existed long before the slave revolt in many different cultures (*GM*, I: §11).

However, this attempt to distinguish between Zarathustra's morality and morality in the pejorative sense would be too quick as a solution to the proposed tension. There are several reasons which strongly suggest that Nietzsche *is* referring to the narrower sense of morality—or at least a version of it—with respect to the historical Zarathustra. Thus, the puzzle is not so easily dissolved, and Nietzsche's estimation of Zarathustra is a more complex matter.

Firstly, while Higgins is correct that Zoroastrianism differs from Christianity in some crucial respects, it retains other features which are central to Nietzsche's critique of morality. To give one significant example, it explicitly endorses egalitarianism with respect to the inherent dignity of persons. This position, of course, is subject to countless attacks across Nietzsche's works in multiple respects. For instance, because equality of persons has 'levelling-down' effects on perfectionist values he is concerned to promote (e.g., *BGE*, §62); because the *motivation* for considering equality intrinsically valuable betrays a profound narcissism (e.g., *A*, §43); or because valuing equality is expressive of a diminution in one's affective attachment to life, or an unrefined taste (e.g., *BGE*, §242, §268).[26]

Moreover, caution should be exercised in attempting to distinguish moralities here by claiming that Zoroastrianism has redeeming features. Nietzsche rarely makes wholesale endorsements (or rejections). Throughout his corpus, Nietzsche's admiration generally differentiates between (a) persons, (b) their worldview or ideas, (c) their followers. Without such classifications, it would be futile to attempt to comprehend Nietzsche's complex stance toward, for example, Socrates, 'Socratism', and post-Socratic philosophers.[27] While Nietzsche's attitude toward Socrates is frequently expressed negatively (as I shall shortly explicate), he reserves an admiration for him as an integrator of the theoretical and practical (e.g., *HH*, §85). The complexity of this attitude is reflected in a note from 1875, in which Nietzsche writes that "Socrates, to confess it frankly, is so close to me that almost always I fight against him" (*KSA*, 1875, 6[3]). This invites

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26. For the latter point in particular see Hassan (2017).

27. This important point is made in Kaufmann (1948). Wagner, Schopenhauer, and Jesus are other clear examples he gives of this distinction.

comparison to Zarathustra, which Nietzsche writes is "a name which is both estimable and hard to me" (*Z*, I, §15).

Hence, it would be problematic to infer from Nietzsche's admiration of a person an admiration of their worldview or values. Indeed, Nietzsche considers slave morality itself to have brought *some* benefits: it was the means by which "man first became an *interesting animal*, that only here did the human soul in a higher sense acquire *depth* . . ." (*GM*, I: §6). Moreover, he claims, the opposition between noble and slavish modes of valuation provided the means needed for a refining form of personal and cultural agon: "today there is perhaps no more decisive mark of a '*higher nature*', a more spiritual nature, than that of being . . . a genuine battleground of these opposed values" (*GM*, I: §16; cf. *TI*, 'Anti-Nature': §3). It is clear that from the fact Zarathustra has some admirable features it does not follow that his morality was not slavish.

A further reason to consider Zarathustra as the 'creator' of morality in the pejorative sense is Nietzsche's positioning of himself as antithetical to him: "the self-overcoming of the moralist into his opposite — *into me* — that is what the name Zarathustra means in my mouth" (*EH*, 'Destiny': §3). Nietzsche considers himself "the first immoralist" (*EH*, 'Destiny': §3). I will not have time here to explicate this concept, but what is important for my purposes here is that it is a substantive ethical position Nietzsche endorses in *opposition* to 'morality'. Since he considers Zarathustra to be "precisely the opposite [*gerade dazu das Gegentheil*]" (*EH*, 'Destiny': §3) of this immoralism, this strongly suggests that Nietzsche thinks of Zarathustra as a target of the *same kinds* of criticism as moralists like Kant, Mill, and Christianity more broadly. In other words, it indicates that Zarathustra is the "creator" of the morality linked to the slave revolt in *GM*.

To further cement this connection, it is necessary to consider *EH*, 'Destiny': §3 in light of the distinction between noble valuation and slavish valuation discussed in the first section of this paper. Noble valuation, Nietzsche claims, consists in a dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad'. Slavish valuation, on the other hand, consists in the dichotomy of 'good' and 'evil', and is reactive insofar as it is a product of *ressentiment*: 'evil' is "the original thing, the beginning, the distinctive deed in the conception of a slave morality" (*GM*, II: §13). It is the latter dichotomy that Nietzsche refers to with respect to Zarathustra:

> Zarathustra was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the actual wheel in the working of things: the translation of morality into the realm of metaphysics, as force, cause, end-in-itself is *his* work. (*EH*, 'Destiny': §3)

This section of the passage is significant for the additional reason that Nietzsche thinks Zarathustra's morality is the first "translation [*Übersetzung*] of morality

into the realm of *metaphysics*" (emphasis mine). While Nietzsche does not explicitly refer to Zarathustra as a man of *ressentiment*, he does suggest that metaphysics is intrinsically *evaluative*, and indicative of a certain kind of *psychology*. In particular, Nietzsche traces metaphysical views back to the origin of *ressentiment*.[28] Of course, Nietzsche has in mind here a conception of metaphysics in a narrow sense as views which postulate the existence of an unobservable 'true world' which explains and determines the value of phenomena we experience. Typical instances of this conception of metaphysics would be the Platonic realm of forms; the Kantian 'thing-in-itself'; and religious conceptions of a 'spiritual world beyond' or 'afterlife'. How might metaphysics in this sense be indicative of *ressentiment*?

In a notebook entry from 1887 entitled the "*Psychology of Metaphysics*", Nietzsche writes the following:

> This world is apparent: consequently there is a true world; this world is conditional: consequently there is an unconditioned world; this world is full of contradiction: consequently there is a world free of contradiction; this world is a world of becoming: consequently there is a world of being: all false conclusions (blind trust in reason: if A exists, then the opposite concept B must also exist). It is suffering that inspires these conclusions: fundamentally they are *desires* that such a world should exist; in the same way, to imagine another, more valuable world is an expression of hatred for a world that makes one suffer: the *ressentiment* of metaphysicians against actuality is here creative. (*WP*, §579 [1883–1888])

This claim—which also finds expression in the published works I cite below— has three components. The first is that (a) metaphysicians crudely employ 'opposite' concepts to make fallacious inferences to the existence of a primary or 'better' world beyond our own. By 'opposite' Nietzsche broadly means concepts or objects which possess incompatible essential properties.[29] The second component is that (b) this belief in 'opposites' and the metaphysics of a 'better' world that he thinks it underpins betrays the *psychology* of the metaphysician. These judgements really express a desire:

> But the origin of these antitheses need not necessarily go back to a supernatural source of reasons: it is sufficient to oppose to it the real genesis of

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28. This claim is explored in depth by Jenkins (2019). I have greatly benefited from his discussion here. Jenkins persuasively argues (in far more detail than I can provide here) that "Nietzsche regards metaphysical thought as *evaluative* thought, and in particular, as *moral* thought".

29. See, *GS*, §109; *BGE*, §2 for other denials of binary opposites in favour of degree or 'rank'.

the concepts. This derives from the practical sphere, the sphere of utility; hence the strength of the faith it inspires (one would perish if one did not reason according to this mode of reason; but this is no 'proof' of what it asserts). (*WP*, §579 [1883–1888])

The third component is that (c) this desire is a *vengeful* desire; the metaphysician "condemns [*verurtheilt*]" and "befouls [*beschmutzt*]" (*TI*, 'Expeditions': §34) the world by postulating a 'better' world to come. This *ressentiment* is similar to the *ressentiment* that produces the slave revolt in so far as the cognitive process of desiring revenge is subtle; it occurs in the unconscious. However, it differs in that the *ressentiment* of the slave revolt is aimed at *specific people* (e.g., the Romans), whereas the *ressentiment* of the metaphysicians is aimed at *life itself*: "we *revenge* ourselves on life by means of the phantasmagoria of a 'another', a 'better' life" (*TI*, 'Reason': §6). Nevertheless, the suffering and hatred which constitutes *ressentiment* becomes 'creative' for metaphysicians too: "It was suffering and incapacity that created all afterworlds"—suffering and incapacity of those "who despised body and earth" (*Z*, I: §3).

The significance of these claims is that the historical Zarathustra is presented in *EH* as a metaphysical thinker in this narrower sense—the *original* metaphysical thinker—in that he "translates" the *opposite* ethical concepts of 'good' and 'evil' "into the realm of metaphysics" (*EH*, 'Destiny': §3). These values are posited as contraries and diametrically opposed, a view which Nietzsche claims is not only an error (cf. *BGE*, §2) but—if we read the above passages as consistent with *EH*, 'Destiny': §3—he also diagnoses as a symptom of *ressentiment*.

This line of thought can be further developed. Nietzsche considers Christianity "Platonism for 'the people' " (*BGE*, 'Preface')—and Kantianism as "that of a *cunning* Christian" (*TI*, 'Reason': §6)—insofar as it too posits a 'true' or 'better' world beyond. However, it does so in *religious* terms—eschatological reward and punishment—which allows *ressentiment* for life an outlet in those unable to comprehend the abstract metaphysics of a Platonic theory of Forms, or Kantian 'thing in itself'. The Christian heaven is a "phantasmagoria of anticipated future bliss" (*GM*, I: §14), which is no more than a "transcendental world invented . . . to slander this one" (*BT*, 'Attempt': §5). But, Zoroastrianism postulates this same 'better' world: the righteous who have used their free will responsibly and chosen the good are reconciled with Ahura Mazda after death in a blissful heaven (while those who have chosen evil are sent to hell to be tormented).

Indeed, Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a Christianised version of a near identical story in the Zoroastrian text *Ardā Wīrāz-nāmag* ('The Book of Ardā Wīrāz'). In this text (finalised in 9th–10th century, but likely created in the Sassanian period between 224–651 A.D.), Wīrāz—a devout Zoroastrian—is taken on a dream-like journey by two lesser divinities, or 'archangels', in order to demonstrate the truth

of Zoroastrian beliefs about both the afterlife and the good life. Wīrāz is first taken to witness the blessings of heaven for the righteous, where he is welcomed as entering a 'better' world: "From that perishable and very evil world, thou hast come unto this imperishable, unmolested world" (*The Book of the Arda Wiraf* 1917: 198). Wīrāz then is taken to witness the severe punishment for sinners in hell. Descriptions of offences and their corresponding punishments—which are particularly violent and gruesome—take up roughly sixty percent of the text. The parallels with Christianity are apparent, and Nietzsche's account of Christian eschatology as a particularly potent expression of cruelty (see *GM*, I: §15) is just as applicable to the Zoroastrian context. This is no surprise, since heaven and hell; the free will to choose good and evil; and the return to earth of a 'saviour' or 'messiah' (Av. *Saoshyant*) for final judgement, are traditionally considered to be features which influenced Judaism, and subsequently Christianity.[30]

If Nietzsche thinks that metaphysics in this sense is *intrinsically* tied to *ressentiment*, then the question "why a Beyond if not as a means of befouling the Here-and-Now?" (*TI*, 'Expeditions': §34) appears to apply equally well to Zarathustra's metaphysics, and we have additional reasons to consider him a proponent of slave morality. As Leiter claims: "Any morality, regardless of the class position of its adherent, will be 'slavish' insofar as it is structurally similar to the morality of 'good and evil' " (2002: 206–207).[31]

At this point I have raised numerous considerations which suggest the "moral world-order" (*EH*, 'Destiny': §3) which the historical Zarathustra espouses is, in Nietzsche's eyes, of the same category as the contemporary European morality which he traces back to the 'slave revolt' from which Christianity emerges. These include the following:

1. Zoroastrianism retains values (e.g., equality) typical of the 'morality' Nietzsche attacks, and which he insists are (a) harmful, (b) intrinsically tied to *ressentiment*.
2. Nietzsche considers Zarathustra the 'opposite' of his own 'immoralism'.
3. Nietzsche considers Zarathustra the 'creator' of the 'good' vs. 'evil' dichotomy which he elsewhere characterises as a slavish form of valuation.
4. Nietzsche attacks 'metaphysics' as a product of *ressentiment* towards life, and also considers Zarathustra a profoundly metaphysical thinker.

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30. Free will too, Nietzsche claims, is an error which he suggests is utilised by slavish evaluation (see *GM*, I: §13; *BGE*, §17; *TI*, 'Four Great Errors': §7). Zoroastrianism is the religion of free will *par excellence*. Zarathustra's innovation in postulating a free will to decide between good and evil is a central theme of his *Gathas*, also found in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

31. Compare with David Owen's claim that "Nietzsche's primary concern is to point out that the genesis (and popular appeal) of this mode of evaluation is intrinsically related to the experience of being subject to domination and to the disdain of those who dominate" (2007: 84–85).

While Nietzsche admires Zarathustra in certain respects, I submit that the above are good reasons to suppose Nietzsche nevertheless sees him as part of the moral tradition. At the very least, these are reasons which the denier of this conceptual identity claim now must take on the burden of proof to respond to. If this interpretation is correct, then the puzzle raised in Section 2 remains: why is Zarathustra or Zoroastrianism not mentioned in *GM*'s account of the origins of morality? I now, in the final section of this paper, propose my own answer to this puzzle.

4. An Attempt at Solving the Puzzle

With the tension still threatening the consistency of Nietzsche's claims, I offer the following explanation: the historical Zarathustra should be interpreted as an early proponent of the morality Nietzsche attacks, but *GM*'s focus is on (a) the *culmination* of slavish valuation; and (b) the *particular* contingent social context which caused the effective *promulgation* of this morality. Since (a) and (b) do not correspond to Zarathustra's morality, but to the Jews and early Christians, the absence of Zarathustra or Zoroastrianism in *GM* is unproblematic. The first step of this argument requires explicitly distinguishing between the emergence of 'slave morality' and the 'slave revolt'.

Nietzsche understands noble morality to have dominated the socio-cultural plain in various parts of the world for centuries preceding the slave revolt he associates with a particular phase of Judaism. It is observable in the behaviours of "the Roman, Arabian, Germanic, Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes, the Scandinavian Vikings . . ." (*GM*, I: §11). In support of this view, he makes use of etymological evidence. The "*right* road", he claims, to a historically sound genealogy of morals is the question "what was the real etymological significance of the designations for 'good' coined in various languages? I found they all led back to the *same conceptual transformation*" (*GM*, I: §4). Here Nietzsche claims that 'good' in various languages originally corresponded with nobility and privilege, and 'bad' with the common, plebeian, and low. In the following section, Nietzsche cites various evidence, even alluding to corresponding "Iranian" (*GM*, I: §5) words for *arya*, by which he must mean *airya* (Avestan) and *Ariya* (Old Persian): both of which mean "venerable" or "of noble birth", and are *self-designations* (i.e., terms referring to that cultural group: the aryans).

At some point, however, a social class oppressed by their society's nobility began an attempt to discharge their *ressentiment* towards them by *inverting* their table of values. Eventually, this elaborate scheme had great success and came to form the basis of contemporary European morality. A popular interpretation of

the first essay of *GM* holds that this 'slave revolt' occurs concurrently with the rise of Christianity in the 1st century A.D. and the eventual Christianisation of the Roman Empire (e.g., Prinz 2016). However, this can be the case only if the 'slave revolt' is understood purely as the successful spread or promulgation of a morality from which its kernel had already surfaced in history. There are two reasons for this.

The first reason is that Nietzsche observes slavish traits and valuation in individuals *prior* to the 1st century A.D. The clearest examples he repeatedly gives are that of Socrates and Plato. Of Socrates—whose complex status for Nietzsche, we have already noted above, reflects Zarathustra's in important respects—we are told his "way of reasoning" in ethics "smells of the *mob*" (*BGE*, §190), and that he "belonged, in his origins, to the lowest orders: Socrates was rabble" (*TI*, 'Problem': §3). Of Plato, he refers to him as "so morally infected, so much an antecedent Christian" (*TI*, 'Ancients': §2), and "an instinctive Semite" (*WP*, §195 [1887–1888]). After all Christianity is merely "Platonism for 'the people'" (*BGE*, 'Preface').

But a second reason why the 'slave revolt' must only refer to the successful *promulgation* of morality if it is attributed to the emergence of Christianity is that Nietzsche seems to refer to the ancient Jews (between 1000–500 B.C.) when he claims that it is "with the Jews there begins *the slave revolt in morality* (*GM*, I: §7). This point has been defended recently by Mark Migotti, who argues that "it is important for Nietzsche's genealogy that both the noble and the slave modes of moral evaluation entered human history long before the turn of the Common Era" (2016: 222). The reason being that Nietzsche's strategy in the *GM* is to show that there is nothing *morally distinctive* about Christianity; it "has no morality of its own" (Migotti 2016: 223), but is merely the means by which the oppressed inhabitants of Judea from centuries prior were able to *promulgate* their new values.

So slavish forms of morality surface prior to Christianity centuries earlier in Greek philosophy and in Judaism.[32] As Nietzsche clearly notes:

> The whole fatality [Christianity] was made possible by the presence in the world already of a similar kind of megalomania, the Jewish . . .; on the other hand, Greek moral philosophy had already done everything to prepare the way for and to make palatable moral fanaticism even among Greeks and Romans. (*WP*, §202, [1888])

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32. Nietzsche suggests in more than one place that Plato's morality was perhaps a *consequence* of contact with Judaism: "Plato, the great viaduct of corruption . . . was already marked by Jewish bigotry (—in Egypt?)" (*WP*, §202 [1888], §429 [1888]; cf. *TI*, 'Ancients': §2).

Migotti is correct, then, in claiming that "Christianity is inconceivable without its intellectual parents: Platonic philosophy and Jewish religion" (2016: 223).[33] But there being antecedent forms of 'morality' is consistent with—and is even *required* by—Nietzsche's method of genealogy, in which he claims *multiple* socio-cultural threads need to be disentangled in order to comprehend modern values. Contemporary western morality is a multifarious entity with numerous historical roots. It did not develop in a vacuum, but has a record of "mutation"; the "continuing moiling and toiling going on in morality" (*D*, §98) requires a sharpened attention to detail: the *historische Geist* which the 'English psychologists' lack.

This point is crucial, and has been well established in the secondary literature.[34] Maudemarie Clark, for instance, writes that:

> Morality is a very complex affair on Nietzsche's account; and the moralisation of virtue could not have taken place without earlier developments that also contribute to central strands to our conception of morality—strands left completely out of the *Genealogy*'s First Essay. This point can be appreciated by considering the incompleteness of its account of the revolt against the noble mode of valuation. (1994: 26)

Clark allows that some very early developments in the morality which finds its pinnacle in Christianity are not mentioned in *GM*. Before I suggest why this might be, attention to this feature of Nietzsche's genealogical investigation provides us with a promising means for beginning to dissolve the proposed tension concerning when he claims morality began. If it is true that Nietzsche believes critical phases in morality's development preceded the 1st century A.D., then it becomes consistent to claim that Zarathustra "creates" the morality which (a) finds its paradigmatic form in, and (b) is successfully promulgated by, Christianity many centuries later.

To develop this interpretation, it will be useful to first consider a suggestion made by Andrew Huddleston concerning Socrates' and Plato's place in the moral tradition. Huddleston writes that:

> there is a tension here with Nietzsche's own account of when morality began. The best way to resolve this tension, in keeping with his terminology, is to see Socrates and Plato as proto-moralists, who retrospectively become part of the moral tradition because of what their views lead to with Christianity and its secular offspring. (2015: 286)

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33. On this point, see also Forster (2011: 358).
34. This is a central theme in Geuss (2001).

A 'proto-moralist', in this context, would be one whose thought can be traced back to as a significant causal influence on the eventual emergence of Judeo-Christian morality. Socrates and Plato count as proto-moralists, since their philosophical tradition is a crucial ancestor to this phenomenon. I will argue that this conceptual tool can be applied to the historical Zarathustra too. However, my understanding of a 'proto-moralist', strictly speaking, will differ from Huddleston's in that I will understand it to involve a stronger claim, namely: that those who fall under its definition are not only pre-cursors to Christianity, but also proponents of an older form of slave morality.

Applying this line of thought to the historical Zarathustra has not, to my knowledge, been explored in the secondary literature. Yet, considering him to be a proto-moralist similar to Plato in some degree would reflect the claims in *EH*, 'Destiny': §3. Let us again consider Migotti's view that slavish and noble modes of valuation both existed prior to the emergence of Christianity in the 1st century. The 'slave revolt', Migotti claims, occurred at an earlier phase of Judaism, hence: "Nietzsche's view is not that Christianity began with the slave revolt, but that it was born of it" (2016: 223). As Nietzsche claims:

> Christianity can be understood only by referring to the soil out of which it grew — it is *not* a counter-movement against the Jewish instinct, it is actually its logical consequence. . . (*A*, §24; cf. *WP*, §204 [1887–1888])

This allows Nietzsche to "separate the problem of explaining the *origination* of slave values from the problem of explaining their successful *propagation*" (Migotti 2016: 223).

I agree with Migotti that this distinction is crucial to Nietzsche's story in *GM*, and that Nietzsche considers Christianity merely the vehicle for the successful propagation of slave morality. In Nietzsche's words: "Christianity only takes up the fight that had already begun against the *classical* ideal and the *noble* religion" (*WP*, §196 [1887–1888]). Christianity, as Migotti rightly states, "should not be mistaken for slave morality as such; it is simply the dominant form of slave morality in the West" (2016: 222). My disagreement concerns the *point of origination* of slave values. The moral values of Judaism too have their ancestors, and Nietzsche would appear to acknowledge this in *EH*, 'Destiny', §3.

As we have seen, the claim that the historical Zarathustra was in some sense revolutionary and highly influential is not unconventional, particularly at the time Nietzsche was writing. Schopenhauer, for example, in a number of passages on religious history follows the lead of his German contemporaries in Indo-Iranian studies in precisely this respect. For instance, he writes that "The myth of the Fall of man (although probably, like the whole of Judaism, borrowed from the *Zend Avesta: Bundahishn*, 15), is the only thing in the Old Testament to which

I can concede a metaphysical, although only allegorical, truth" (Schopenhauer, *W2*, §46, 580).[35] He makes the claim explicit shortly after: the "Jewish religion resulted from this Zend religion, as J.G. Rhode has thoroughly demonstrated in his book *Die heilige Sage des Zendvolks*; Jehovah came from Ormuzd [Ahura Mazda], and Satan from Ahriman" (Schopenhauer, *W2*, §48, 623). Hegel too considers the tremendous influence of 'Zoroaster' on world history as a necessary stage in the evolution of the *weltgeist*, writing that "the principle of development begins with the history of Persia" (2004: 174).[36] Similar views are defended in contemporary scholarship on Zoroastrianism. For example, R.C. Zaehner is one of many who would come to echo the views that Schopenhauer refers to and endorses. Zaehner writes that Zoroastrian doctrines of reward and punishment in the afterlife based on good and evil actions is, in particular:

> . . . so strikingly similar to Christian teaching that we cannot fail to ask whether here at least there is not a direct influence at work. The answer is surely 'yes', for the similarities are so great and the historical context so neatly apposite that it would be carrying scepticism altogether too far to refuse to draw the obvious conclusion. (1961: 57)

Mary Boyce similarly claims that "it was out of a Judaism enriched by five centuries of contact with Zoroastrianism that Christianity arose in the Parthian period, a new religion with roots thus in two ancient faiths, one Semitic, the other Iranian" (1979: 99).[37]

While Nietzsche does not explicate the causal story of how Zoroastrianism may have influenced Judaism and subsequently Christianity, *EH*, 'Destiny': §3 appears to suggest something close to this 'orthodox' view.[38] When Nietzsche there claims that Zarathustra "must be the first to recognise" the error of morality, it is because he has had "longer and greater experience here than any other thinker". In other words, the moral tradition *starts* with the historical Zarathustra,

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35. The 'Zend Avesta' contains the holy scriptures of Zoroastrianism and commentary on the text.

36. Zoroastrianism's influence in world history is a central theme of Part One of *The Philosophy of History*. To be sure, Hegel's (and to a lesser extent, Schopenhauer's) observations on Zoroastrianism and 'eastern' thought more generally often involve oversimplifications and generalisations. But these mistakes nonetheless reflect the *belief* in Zarathustra's significance.

37. For detailed attention to this issue, and interpretative obstacles in comparative religion generally, see Barr (1985).

38. Nietzsche does however make multiple references to the Achaemenid Persian Empire (550–330 B.C.). This, as he would have been aware, included Judea. It is worth noting that Judaism begins to experience a shift in theology around the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., a period in which Cyrus II established the first Persian Empire and freed Jewish slaves from Babylonian captivity, allowing them to return to Judea. This might be the first significant contact that Judaism had with Zoroastrianism.

and gradually comes to be endorsed by different societies, in which it undergoes change and "mutation" (*D*, §98), eventually culminating in Christianity. Nietzsche gives further hints: Zarathustra's morality places an emphasis on truth as a cardinal virtue, yet 'good' and 'evil' is itself an "error". This sows the seeds for morality to bring about its own downfall. Hence, Nietzsche's Zarathustra represents the "self-overcoming [*Selbstüberwindung*] of morality through truthfulness; the self-overcoming of the moralist into his opposite" (*EH*, 'Destiny': §3). But Nietzsche finds this very *same* paradox retained in Christianity, which he repeats frequently:

> All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming [*selbstaufhebung*]: thus the law of life will have it . . . In this way Christianity *as a dogma* was destroyed by its own morality; in the same way Christianity *as morality* must now perish, too: we stand at the threshold of *this* event. After Christian truthfulness has drawn one inference after another, it must end by drawing *its most striking* inference, its inference *against* itself. . . (*GM*, III: §27; cf. *D*, 'Preface': §4; *GS*, §357; *BGE*, §32)

This affinity further ties together the morality of Zarathustra with the morality of Christianity; that the latter is really a continuation (albeit transformed and refined) of a tradition beginning with the former. One significant difference, however, is that Nietzsche considers the historical Zarathustra to exercise a profound honesty that, given ample time, *would have* enabled him to see through and abandon his morality (as the fictional Zarathustra *does*). This is partly why Nietzsche admires Zarathustra while also holding him responsible for the "most fateful of errors". As Higgins writes: "Zarathustra, as Nietzsche sees him, takes his moral doctrine seriously and yet is so committed to honesty that he is willing to accept the destruction of this doctrine at his own hand. Nietzsche identifies with this Zarathustra" (2000: 161). In contrast, Nietzsche condemns Christianity for lacking exactly this honesty: *GM* is meant to demonstrate precisely how it cannot own up to what it is.

Viewing the historical Zarathustra as a 'proto-moralist' in this way—that is, as an innovative thinker about morality in terms of metaphysical dichotomies, acting as a significant precursor to later phases of Judaism—is compatible with Migotti's observation that "The rise of Christianity has to do not with the coming into existence of slave values, but with their ongoing interpretation, their articulation, refinement, development, adaptation to circumstance, and so on" (2016: 223). What it does require, however, is refining the meaning of the 'slave revolt'.

On the view under consideration, the 'slave revolt in morals' does not refer to the emergence of slave morality *per se*, but a *new phase* of slave morality. This

is triggered by a particular *socially* directed *ressentiment* (i.e., desire for revenge upon a particular social class), as opposed to a solely *world* directed *ressentiment* of the metaphysicians. The 'morality' which Zarathustra 'creates' adapts upon contact with Judaism, providing the downtrodden with new a conceptual framework to discharge their *ressentiment*. The inversion of noble values is exacerbated by increased oppression under the Roman occupation of Judea, out of which slave morality eventually culminates in Christianity, and is propagated as the identifiable phenomenon contemporary European values are informed by.

One way to reconcile the claims of *EH*, 'Destiny': §3 and *GM* then, is to conceive of the slave revolt as the development of a *form* of slave morality, out of which Christianity is born and subsequently promulgated (successfully) throughout the western world (and later exported to other areas through colonial expansion). As Nietzsche writes in 1886, Christianity is "the most extravagant *elaboration* [*Durchfigurirung*] of the moral theme that humanity has ever heard" (*BT*, 'Attempt': §5, emphasis mine). So the opposition of noble and slavish *valuation* existed not only prior to Christianity, but prior to Judaism too. This interpretation is consistent with Nietzsche's assertion that "Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome" characterises the opposition of noble vs. slave morality, since he describes it as "the *symbol* of this struggle" (*GM*, I: §16, emphasis mine). I have argued that there are good reasons to suppose Nietzsche's considers this struggle to have been present in human history for much longer than commonly understood; that the events of the 1st century A.D. in Judea are merely the *culmination* and *paradigmatic expression* of their conflict:

> Let us stick to the facts: the people have won—or the 'the slaves' or 'the mob' or 'the herd' or whatever you like to call them—if this has happened through the Jews, very well! in that case no people ever had a more world-historic mission. (*GM*, I: §9)

A final word to be said about Nietzsche's reasons for omitting Zarathustra from *GM*: perhaps it can be understood as merely a *strategic* decision. As we noted above, *GM* is a polemic intending to shake otherwise higher-types from their false consciousness about morality's worth, or at least to provoke a reconsideration of it. Part of his programme is to reveal this morality as a vehicle of revenge for a feeble and oppressed class. Revealing Zoroastrianism as its origin would have been ineffective for this purpose, since *very* few Europeans would have even heard of it. While this point shouldn't be ignored, it strikes me as *by itself* too weak to act as a solution to the puzzle. Most importantly, it seems very out of place with Nietzsche's frequent and emphatic claims that a genealogical critique requires a *real history* of morality's origins and development. Unlike the English psychologists, *he* aims to provide you with the ugly *truth* of the matter. For this

reason, the provisional solution I have offered in this last section in accounting for this looks preferable.

Conclusion

We are now in a position to determine an answer to the interpretative puzzle raised in Section 2. I have suggested that a possible reconciliation of the claim of *EH*, 'Destiny': §3 that the historical Zarathustra "created morality", with the claim of *GM* that the "slave revolt begins with the Jews", will be to interpret the slave revolt as the birth of a particular form of slave morality. This form has antecedents in earlier slavish valuations (e.g., Plato), the earliest of which, in Nietzsche's view, articulated by the historical Zarathustra. Since Zarathustra is a 'proto-moralist' in this way, his absence from *GM* should not be alarming, since *GM*'s concern is with the *culmination* and subsequent *promulgation* of slave morality, reflected in the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is *this* form of slave morality that has prevailed in Europe. On this interpretation, Nietzsche's claims about Zarathustra would no longer appear to undermine his genealogical story, but actually *enrich* it. This solution is not simply a priority claim about when slave morality actually *began*, but reveals a more nuanced understanding of what this phenomenon actually *is* (i.e., its constitutive features and antecedent causes).

This paper may in the end have raised more questions to be answered. But since my aims here have been explorative, this would be a welcome result. If my arguments that link Zoroastrianism and Judeo-Christian morality are not successful, I take it that there is at least a new question to be answered concerning Nietzsche's otherwise seemingly contradictory claims about when 'morality' was established. Moreover, the answer to this question will bear upon important questions which *are* found in the secondary literature, for instance: whether moral values are essentially tied to *ressentiment*, or can arise independently of it. Lastly, I have claimed that the interpretive puzzle gets off the ground only if Nietzsche is committed to providing a historically accurate genealogy. I suggested that there are good reasons to believe he is. However, proponents of a fictionalist or semi-fictionalist interpretation may find potential support in much of what has been discussed in Sections 2 and 3: they could deny that *GM* is in the business of truth-tracking, using this interpretive puzzle—if unsolvable—as evidence. What I have hoped to demonstrate is that a seemingly narrow interpretative issue at first glance in fact has far-reaching implications for the study of *GM*: I and Nietzsche's critique of morality more broadly. In the process of doing so, I have additionally sought to highlight that Nietzsche's knowledge of the historical Zarathustra was relatively substantial, and that Nietzsche's own estimations of him were more nuanced than has previously been noticed.

Acknowledgements

References

Works by Nietzsche are cited by section using the following abbreviations and translations:

A = *The Antichrist* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Penguin. 1968.
BGE = *Beyond Good and Evil* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Penguin. 1990.
BT - *The Birth of Tragedy* (S. Whiteside, Trans.). Penguin. 1993.
D = *Daybreak* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Cambridge University Press. 1992.
EH = *Ecce Homo* (W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Vintage. 1989.
GM = *On the Genealogy of Morals* (W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Vintage. 1989.
GS = *The Gay Science* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). Vintage. 1974.
HH = *Human, All Too Human* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Cambridge University Press. 1996.
KSA = *Kritische Studienausgabe*. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Eds.). De Gruyter. 1967. Via the *Nietzsche Source* (*eKGWB*).
TI = *Twilight of the Idols* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Penguin. 1968.
Z = *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.) Penguin. 2003.
WP = *The Will to Power* (Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Vintage. 1968.

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