

# **‘Labyrinths of the future’: Nietzsche’s genealogy of European nationalism<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT** *In light of the continued primacy of national identities in European politics, this article considers the earlier and largely unexplored genealogy of modern European nationalism advanced by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche towards the end of the nineteenth century. It argues that by analysing the rise of modern nationalism in Europe within the broader context of European nihilism, Nietzsche was able to gain original insights both about the appeal of national ideas in Europe and about why such ideas were perpetuated. On the basis of this unique understanding Nietzsche subsequently developed an innovative critique of modern nationalism that remains pertinent not only for the contemporary debate on Europe, but also for current attempts to theorize the rise of modern nationalism in Europe. Nietzsche’s own idea of the ‘good Europeans’, in turn, is one that transcends nationalist perspectives without, however, replacing the former with an essentialist idea of Europe.*

‘No matter which shape they eventually come in’, one scholar of European affairs has recently observed, ‘new European identities will have to either reconcile themselves with or combat nationalism and ethnicism’.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the challenge of nationalist sentiments and loyalties has been one of the principal normative motives informing the process of European integration since 1945. Judging on the basis of the European debate in the 1990s, this task is still far from being achieved. After much initial optimism and enthusiasm for a federal Europe leading up to Maastricht, there has been a progressive return, in the course of the 1990s, to the more modest consensus that for the foreseeable future the European order should remain based primarily on national identities and that nation-states should continue to provide the locus of meaning for European societies.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to much premature writing on the obsolescence of nations and nationalism, and despite several attempts to articulate the basis for

a common European identity, these forces remain potent in contemporary European politics. As Isaiah Berlin once noted in this regard, it is not so much that nationalism in Europe is new or resurgent, but rather that it has never died.<sup>4</sup>

In light of this persistence of national identities in European politics, the present article wishes to revisit the genealogy of modern, European nationalism that can be found in the corpus of the nineteenth-century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). Already as early as 1935, J. P. Mayer had observed, in his introduction to an anthology of Nietzsche's writings, that it is necessary to explore in greater detail the transcendence of nationalist divisions in Nietzsche's works.<sup>5</sup> Yet, to this day Nietzsche's views on Europe and modern nationalism remain largely unexplored.<sup>6</sup> This oversight appears particularly regrettable given that, as two scholars have recently observed, 'Nietzsche still seems to have been astonishingly prescient about the new Europe and its old predicaments. His overriding concern was that the "nations and fatherlands" of old Europe not obstruct forever the historic process of European unification'.<sup>7</sup> What follows below, therefore, is a more detailed consideration of Nietzsche's genealogical observations about the rise of modern nationalism in Europe.

These observations, it is argued, evince an original interpretation of the rise of modern nationalism in Europe that conceptualizes the latter within the context of the 'death of God' and the advent of European nihilism. Specifically, modern European nationalism is understood, in Nietzsche's account, as a manifestation of 'incomplete nihilism', i.e., as a secular continuation of a much longer existential structure referred to by him as the will-to-truth. The advantage of this perspective is that it enables a critical deconstruction of the notion of an inherent or innate identity 'need' that informs many nationalist movements in Europe, both past and present, and that still underpins several influential theories of nationalism. Indeed, what Nietzsche's critique suggests, is that even the contemporary emphasis on national identities within the European debate is, perhaps, only a 'labyrinth of the future'—an initially appealing but ultimately inappropriate response to the advent of European nihilism. His own notion of the 'good European', by contrast, is one who remains critical of national ideologies and who deliberately adopts a more European perspective, albeit one that does not consist primarily in constructing a federal European order or in deploying a pan-European identity. Rather it is one that seeks instead to encourage an affirmative and creative experience of autonomy by critically distancing itself from Europe's metaphysical cultural heritage.

### **Nietzsche, nihilism, and the rise of nationalism in Europe**

Nietzsche approached the rise of modern nationalism in Europe in a manner that would, perhaps, be deemed unconventional by contemporary standards. Writing towards the end of the nineteenth century and prior to the emergence of nationalism as an independent area of research, Nietzsche was certainly not a nationalism scholar in the conventional and contemporary sense. He did not, for

example, engage in the debate about the definition of nationalism, famously noting once how 'only that which has no history is definable' (GM, II, §13).<sup>8</sup> Neither did he provide his readers with a detailed theory of nationalism, nor even with a set of case studies of the rise of modern nationalism in Europe or elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Rather, Nietzsche approached the rise of nationalism genealogically. Part of the very nature of this approach, which he had pioneered in his book *Towards the Genealogy of Morals*, is that it amounts to a general ethos of reflecting on contemporary phenomena rather than a systematic methodology *per se*. This genealogical spirit, moreover, is always keen to allow for a plurality of appropriations and seeks, from the outset, to embody a creative tension between its constituent components. Nevertheless, there are at least four aspects of the manner in which Nietzsche's book turned towards the question of morality in Europe that have subsequently served as a broad outline of his genealogical approach.<sup>10</sup>

In the first instance, and at the most general level, a genealogy is a *historical* investigation, albeit not one in the traditional sense. A genealogy differs from more conventional histories in that it is not primarily interested in the past for its own sake, but turns towards the past in order to illuminate our understanding of the present. As one scholar has noted, 'a genealogy has not as its task to tell what actually happened in the past, but to describe how the present became logically possible'.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, a genealogy is also a *critical* approach in the sense that it does not take the contemporary order as given, but seeks instead to inquire into how this order has emerged historically, and that also wishes to facilitate, where necessary, critical reflection on the present.<sup>12</sup> Thirdly, a genealogy is *episodic* in that, rather than recounting the entire history of a phenomenon, it focuses on the crucial and contingent historical shifts that enabled this phenomenon to emerge. This episodic orientation allows the genealogist to remain open to the 'accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us', as Michel Foucault later put it in his essay 'Nietzsche, genealogy, history'.<sup>13</sup> Fourthly and finally, a genealogical account is also an example of what Nietzsche called *effective* history, in that it seeks to distance itself as far as possible from many of the metaphysical assumptions that accompany more traditional histories, such as the correspondence theory of truth, the notion of a transcendental subject, the tendency to view the present as the progressive unfolding of the past, and the possibility of attaining a supra-historical perspective.<sup>14</sup> The genealogist, Foucault noted with reference to Nietzsche, finds instead 'that there is "something altogether different" behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence, or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms'.<sup>15</sup> These, then, are also the four main attributes of the genealogical approach that Nietzsche can be seen as broadly following in his various observations about modern, European nationalism.

In line with this genealogical method, Nietzsche approached the rise of

modern nationalism in Europe more specifically within the context of the cultural crisis of European nihilism, or meaninglessness. Writing towards the end of the nineteenth century, Nietzsche urged his readers to understand modern nationalism as a response to the ‘death of God’ and the resultant experience of meaninglessness that this event had triggered in Europe. The most immediate meaning of Nietzsche’s declaration that ‘God is dead’ is, as he himself noted, ‘that the belief in the Christian God has become unbelievable’, and the recognition that this might entail the eventual collapse of both the moral framework and worldview that was built around it (GS, §343). The ‘death of God’ would constitute a cataclysmic event for European culture, Nietzsche predicted, because it was Christianity that had previously endowed European existence with a deeper sense of meaning capable of redeeming life’s suffering and finitudes. The question that would subsequently confront modern Europeans in the absence of this faith was what, if anything, could still endow European existence with a greater sense of meaning. In a classic passage from *The Gay Science* Nietzsche thus sought to anticipate how, over the course of the twentieth (and perhaps even the twenty-first) century, Europe would lose its ‘horizon’, would lose all sense of orientation and direction, leaving it to experience only the ‘coldness’ and the ‘breath of empty space’ (§125). Soon, he noted, it might even be necessary to light lanterns at noon.

Part of the very originality of Nietzsche’s treatment of modern nationalism, then, is that he understood its rise in Europe to be a response to precisely this impasse in European culture. Noting how in his own times the ‘religious’ instinct for meaning was growing powerfully at exactly the same time that theistic satisfaction was being increasingly refused with deep suspicion (BGE, §53), he came to view the rise of modern nationalism in Europe as a more secular replacement for its Christian predecessor. ‘What is the meaning of our nationalism?’ he asked quite explicitly and replied, ‘the metamorphosis of the cross’.<sup>16</sup> This insight, moreover, has found considerable resonance throughout the course of twentieth-century nationalism scholarship. In the early years of nationalism scholarship, Carlton Hayes, Hans Kohn, and Arnold Toynbee had all analysed the rise of modern nationalism in Europe within this context of European secularization.<sup>17</sup> More recently, this aspect of the rise of modern European nationalism has also enjoyed a renaissance within the works of contemporary scholars. Benedict Andersen, for example, has influentially argued that what was needed as religious modes of existence waned, was ‘a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning’, and in his view, ‘few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of nation’.<sup>18</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer similarly finds it no accident that nationalism was becoming increasingly religious in character at the same time as religious sentiments were declining in the West, and understands both Christianity and nationalism as ‘ideologies of order’ that ‘conceive of the world in coherent, manageable ways ... [and] both suggest that there are levels of meaning beneath the day-to-day world that give coherence to things unseen ...’.<sup>19</sup> Finally, Joseph Llobera has argued quite explicitly that in modern Europe ‘nationalism has become the functional equiv-

alent of religion; or, expressed in a more pungent way, nationalism has become a religion—a secular religion where god is the nation'.<sup>20</sup> This recent scholarship, moreover, provides important historical and empirical evidence to corroborate Nietzsche's earlier insight about the relationship between the 'death of God' and the rise of nationalism.

Importantly, however, Nietzsche's genealogical account of modern nationalism also remains distinct from these aforementioned accounts in that it additionally seeks to problematize and understand theoretically this 'need' to posit a deeper meaning underlying European existence that nationalism is seen to fulfil after the decline of Christianity. From a Nietzschean perspective, in other words, these aforementioned studies, while correct in pointing to the close relationship between Christianity and nationalism as overarching social and cultural structures, do not go far enough in that they do not investigate in greater detail this 'need' for meaning and identity. In many ways, tracing the rise of modern nationalism back to Christianity only places the phenomenon in its proper historical context, without, however, engaging with the core issue. Nietzsche's account, in turn, wishes to engage explicitly with this question of the identity 'need' and, in so doing, still retains great value for contemporary theorists of nationalism.

In order to draw attention to this particular difficulty involved in thinking and theorizing about the rise of modern nationalism in Europe, Nietzsche specifically referred to modern ideologies like nationalism not simply as surrogate religions, but rather as examples of 'incomplete nihilism'. Nietzsche considered as 'incomplete' nihilism any 'attempt to escape nihilism without re-evaluating our values so far' (WP, §28).<sup>21</sup> Put differently, incomplete nihilism is the attempt, in the aftermath of the 'death of God', to replace the Christian God with a more secular one. Underlying this strategy for confronting the 'death of God' is the desire to salvage the traditional habit of endowing European existence with a deeper sense of meaning and identity, not by erecting new other-worldly deities, as this was now no longer credible, but rather by transposing the Christian distinction between a 'true' world and an 'apparent' world onto the realm of earthly existence. As David Toole notes, the only difference between Christianity and strategies of incomplete nihilism, 'is that this space is now occupied by a new god. The same drive to escape meaninglessness, the same unwillingness to face the world as it is—a drive that Nietzsche deems "the will to truth"—remains operative in this incomplete form of nihilism'.<sup>22</sup> For Nietzsche, therefore, nationalism is also a modern manifestation of this much older 'will-to-truth' that historically informed large parts of western culture. This will-to-truth is a mode of existence that denigrates the sensual world, broadly conceived, in favour of some fixed and higher reality or 'ascetic ideal'; it abstracts from the diverse aspects of existence an underlying truth or reality and imposes upon the day-to-day existence of Europeans a metaphysical structure that discriminates between, on the one hand, a merely apparent and meaningless realm of existence that is in constant flux, and, on the other, a 'true' world where the real and deeper meaning of existence is located. What is original about Nietzsche's

understanding of modern nationalism in Europe, therefore, is that it does not seek to understand this phenomenon solely, or even primarily, in sociological, economic, psychological or functional terms. Rather, Nietzsche sought to investigate how the existential self-understanding historically cultivated by European culture provided a fruitful ground for the spread of nationalist ideas in the aftermath of the ‘death of God’.

If, in Nietzsche’s account, both Christianity and modern nationalism are examples of the will-to-truth that is evident in much of the history of European culture, then it is also this will-to-truth that must receive more detailed attention. In this vein Nietzsche sought to trace genealogically the origins of this particular belief structure in Europe. His subsequent genealogy of the will-to-truth leads him as far back as the thought of Plato, particularly the latter’s ideal world of the Forms. For Plato, Nietzsche argued, it was the non-empirical and eternal Forms that constituted the permanent and unchanging foundation of all things. What Nietzsche effectively identified in Plato’s thought is the historical beginning of the will-to-truth, of this tradition and predisposition of postulating a deeper meaning or reality underlying the daily flux of existence. In Nietzsche’s account, moreover, it is this structure of thinking, this same will to postulate a ‘true world’, that was subsequently retained and popularized within the Christian faith where, Nietzsche argued further, the ‘true’ world continues to reside in the promise of a redeeming afterlife. Like Platonism, Bruce Detwiler notes, ‘Christianity asserts that there is a universal and timeless “true world”, independent of the apparent world, that is synonymous with the “good as such” and also that there is such a thing as an omniscient “pure spirit” that is independent of and superior to corporeal existence’.<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche could thus also insist that in many ways Christianity itself was only a form of ‘Platonism for the people’ (BGE, Preface). In any case, in Nietzsche’s account, the will-to-truth is one of the most notable legacies of Europe’s Christian–Platonic heritage and one of the most important clues to understanding the rise of modern nationalism in Europe.

The deeper implication of the ‘death of God’, in turn, was, Nietzsche argued further, that this very structure of thinking of the will-to-truth had finally begun to put itself into question and could no longer be accepted unquestioningly. In Europe, Christianity’s emphasis on the importance of truth had, over time, paradoxically revealed the existence of God to be a lie, and had even begun to put the value of ‘truth’ itself into question. As Nietzsche noted in this regard, ‘[f]rom the moment faith in the God of the ascetic ideal is denied a *new problem arises*: that of the *value* of truth’ (GM, III, §24). In this sense, the advent of European nihilism implies for Nietzsche not only that ‘God is dead’, but, more importantly, also that ‘all gods are dead’ (Z, ‘Of the bestowing virtue’, §3). With the advent of European nihilism and the self-questioning of the will-to-truth, any attempt to posit a deeper or ‘true’ meaning underlying European existence, i.e., any attempt to reactivate the will-to-truth and to posit a ‘true’ world, is no longer intellectually credible. To this extent, the ‘death of God’ would not only lead to the demise of Christianity, but eventually also to a more complete form of

nihilism, i.e., the collapse of an entire existential mode that had permeated European culture for over two millennia. As Simon Critchley has pointed out in this regard, the 'death of God' and the advent of European nihilism ultimately refer to the complete 'breakdown of the order of meaning, where all that was posited as a transcendent source of value becomes null and void, where there are no skyhooks upon which to hang a meaning for life'.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, Nietzsche was also realistic enough to recognize that it might well take over a century before these deeper implications of the 'death of God' would begin to emerge and would become more widely recognized. In the short term, he anticipated, most Europeans would simply opt for continuity and stability, and would seek to find new, more earthly, ways of endowing European existence with a deeper meaning. They would opt for worldly interpretations of existence capable of retaining this will-to-truth within the context of increasingly secularized societies. The likely response, in other words, that Nietzsche predicted for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, yet himself opposed, was the erection of new and secular ideals that would fill the space left behind by the 'death of God'. 'God is dead', he thought, 'but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown' (GS, §108). Modern nationalism, in Nietzsche's view, was simply one of these many strategies of 'incomplete nihilism' that modern Europeans evolved in the quest to fend off the deeper implications of the 'death of God'. What still remains to be seen in greater detail, however, is how this unique understanding of modern nationalism as a manifestation of the will-to-truth and as a modern strategy of incomplete nihilism unfolds in detail, and how it can assist our understanding not only of the appeal of national ideologies, but also of the reasons why these were propagated.

### **European nihilism and the appeal of nationalism**

How, then, can Nietzsche's conceptualization of modern European nationalism as a form of 'incomplete nihilism' illuminate our understanding of the appeal of nationalist sentiments in an increasingly secularized European culture? Such an understanding of the nature of this appeal is crucial to any account of nationalism and is something that structural accounts in general, and Marxist accounts in particular, often face difficulty in accounting for.<sup>25</sup> Structural and Marxist accounts are effective in explaining the self-interest of certain segments of society to advocate nationalist sentiments, but, despite the complexities of their positions, often face greater difficulty in explaining why people actually believed the nationalist ideas and why they acquiesced in their own exploitation. What is more, this inability to explain adequately the attraction of nationalism raises the suspicion that many of these structural accounts often rely implicitly on an underlying theory of meaning in human life without, however, making such assumptions explicit. In his influential theory of nationalism, for example, Ernest Gellner points out to his readers quite candidly that by emphasizing the

contrived and artificial nature of nationalism, he had by no means intended to 'deny that some measure of such patriotism is indeed a perennial part of human life'.<sup>26</sup> This concession, however, also means, as Alan Finlayson has recently argued, that at the basis of Gellner's influential theory of nationalism there is, in effect, 'an untheorized, asserted claim about the innate features of human social need and an unexplained "loyalty"'.<sup>27</sup> This claim about a social need occupies a crucial place in Gellner's account and yet remains largely unexplored by the latter. In doing so, Finlayson also points to an important weakness of many structural accounts of modern nationalism in general.

Conversely, the resort to psychological accounts of nationalism in order to address this aspect of modern nationalism would seem to run into the opposite kind of problem. While such accounts might be more effective in explaining the appeal of nationalism, they, in turn, often face difficulties in explaining why certain groups perpetuated nationalist ideas, and also why they did so particularly effectively in modern Europe. As Breuille has recently argued, the problem with psychological accounts of nationalism in particular, and with functional accounts of nationalism in general, is that they also need to account for the particularly modern aspects of the rise of nationalism in Europe.<sup>28</sup> In order to do so, Breuille argues further, such functional explanations invariably need to complement their account by taking into consideration some specifically modern development. By making this additional move, however, these explanations usually also exceed the limits of functional explanation alone. In short, then, and at the risk of slightly oversimplifying matters, the problem in accounting for the rise of modern nationalism in Europe is that structural accounts of nationalism face difficulties in explaining the appeal of nationalism, while the resort to psychological theories of nationalism faces difficulties in accounting for the historical rise of nationalism in modern Europe. Against the background of this set of difficulties, it is interesting to return to Nietzsche's analysis of the appeal of nationalist ideas because his account goes some way towards avoiding these difficulties.

Nietzsche's genealogical analysis suggests that the modern appeal of nationalist ideas derives to a large extent from the aforementioned and formative influence that Platonism and Christianity have had on European culture. This heritage has historically sustained and perpetuated amongst many Europeans the belief that there actually ought to be a deeper meaning underlying their daily existence. In the aftermath of the 'death of God' and the rise of modern science, however, this expectation of a deeper meaning remained increasingly unfulfilled. It is, in Nietzsche's account, within the context of this unfulfilled demand and the resultant 'spiritual vacuum' that national ideologies could become appealing to Europeans and could begin to prosper. As Nietzsche explained, '[t]he nihilistic question "for what?" is rooted in the old habit of supposing that the goal must be put up, given, demanded *from outside*—by some *superhuman authority*'. The response to the 'death of God' that Nietzsche found most likely in modern Europe was that '[h]aving unlearned faith in that, one still follows the old habit and seeks *another* authority that

can *speak unconditionally* and *command* goals and tasks' (WP, §20). More specifically, he insisted, in the aftermath of the 'death of God' Europeans would be seeking a 'temporary *redemption* from pessimism', and in this quest would turn, amongst other things, to 'nationalism'.<sup>29</sup> It is in this sense that Nietzsche took European nationalism to be 'the metamorphosis of the cross' and that he did indeed link the rise of modern European nationalism with a particularly modern development, namely the process encapsulated in the 'death of God'.

Unlike psychological theories of nationalism, however, or, for that matter, structuralist accounts like that of Gellner, Nietzsche's account does not take this 'need' for meaning to be an innate feature of human existence. Rather, as his genealogical reflections sought to demonstrate, the residual desire for the postulation of a deeper meaning underlying modern existence can be traced back to Christianity and Platonism that had sensitized Europeans into requiring a greater sense of meaning or purpose, rather than to an innate biological or psychological need. In this regard, Henry Staten's recent assessment of one particularly virulent form of modern nationalism, National Socialism, also remains true for the rise of modern nationalism in general. It is, as Staten observes from a Nietzschean perspective, 'one case more of the old habit of mendacity—a problem not of too little transcendence but of still not enough immanence'.<sup>30</sup> The problem with nationalist movements, in other words, is that they still seek some residual form of transcendence, rather than accepting a more thorough notion of immanence. By refusing to see this 'need' for a deeper meaning as an innate feature of human existence, moreover, Nietzsche's understanding of the appeal of modern nationalism can also go some way towards avoiding the difficulties inherent in both functional and structural accounts of modern European nationalism. Contrary to structuralist accounts of modern nationalism, Nietzsche's account can shed light on the appeal of modern nationalism. By simultaneously historicizing this 'need' for meaning and refusing to take it as an innate feature of human nature, however, he also avoids the difficulties usually encountered by psychological and functional accounts of nationalism.

Furthermore, it is precisely the fact that the appeal of modern nationalism is often deemed to hinge on some kind of perceived 'identity need' or 'need for meaning' that also allows for Nietzsche's first criticism of it. As Henry Staten has argued further, '[w]hat motivates the immanentizing of transcendence could thus well be not a trans-historical or transcendent need for transcendence but a pre-existent ideology of transcendence or a need generated by such an ideology'.<sup>31</sup> Put differently, the reason for the success of modern nationalism in Europe may not be some transcendental need for meaning, but rather a need that is perceived as necessary only on the basis of Europe's preceding Christian–Platonic heritage. It is this very insight that nationalist ideas refuse. Rather than critically examining the purported assumption of an innate need for meaning, nationalist ideas actually encourage and indeed prosper on the basis of this assumption. Just as Nietzsche found Christianity 'nihilistic' in the sense that it

elevated a fictitious world above humanity, so too do national ideas frequently perpetuate the myth of some deeper national belonging that can be achieved historically.

In Nietzsche's own account, however, the perceived necessity of such fictions was usually the sign of a culture seeking to escape and deny the inherent ambiguity and diversity of existence. In this vein, he noted in an important passage from the *Gay Science* how:

[t]he demand that one *wants* by all means that something should be firm (while on account of the ardor of this demand one is easier and more negligent about the demonstration of this certainty)—this, too, is still the demand for a support, a prop, in short, that *instinct of weakness* which, to be sure, does not create religious, metaphysical systems, and convictions of all kinds but—conserves them. ... Even the vehemence with which our most intelligent contemporaries lose themselves in wretched nooks and crannies, for example into nationalism [*Vaterländerei*] ... always manifests above all the *need* for a faith, a support, backbone, something to fall back on. (GS, §347)

Consequently, in Nietzsche's account, at the root of modern nationalism is the desire *not* to confront the modern experience of meaninglessness and contingency in a critical manner, but rather to escape the experience of meaninglessness by simply replicating the traditional, transcendental structures within the earthly realm and by returning to the comforting aspects of transcendental systems. The first criticism, then, that emerges from Nietzsche's genealogical analysis of the appeal of modern nationalism is that it still rests on the same psychological principles as Christianity had done previously and that, as a strategy of incomplete nihilism, it actually perpetuates the need for a greater sense of meaning, rather than undermining this assumption and subjecting it to critical scrutiny. In nationalism, Nietzsche once noted provocatively, 'people want to work as little as possible ... with their heads' (HATH, §480).

This first criticism that Nietzsche makes of nationalism as a strategy of incomplete nihilism also has important implications for the way in which contemporary scholars think and theorize about modern ideologies such as European nationalism. For what Nietzsche's genealogical approach demonstrates, in effect, is that such an identity 'need' can no longer be taken for granted at the theoretical level. This insight applies not only to structural theorists of nationalism who often implicitly rely on the assumption of such an inherent identity need, but also to psychological theories of nationalism that place the latter more explicitly in relation to such an identity 'need'. From the Nietzschean perspective, both of these approaches run the risk of inadvertently perpetuating and reifying what is itself a problematic assumption in need of further questioning. With this first criticism of modern nationalism in mind, it is possible to turn to Nietzsche's second set of criticisms that, in turn, relate to his understanding of why national ideas were actually being advocated in modern Europe.

## European nihilism and the advocacy of nationalist ideas

Nietzsche's ability to theorize the appeal of nationalist ideas within the context of his genealogy of the will-to-truth does not mean that he failed to recognize, as structuralist theories of nationalism point out, that it is also in the self-interest of certain segments of a society to propagate such ideas. There are, in fact, several passages in Nietzsche's corpus which indicate that it was his very awareness of these interests, rather than his ignorance of them, that triggered his suspicion that nationalism did not constitute a desirable and honest confrontation with the spiritual vacuum left behind after the 'death of God'. Already towards the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, and before the advent of the prominent nationalism scholarship that would follow in the course of the twentieth century, Nietzsche urged his readers quite explicitly to detect the self-interest behind the perpetuation of nationalist ideas by politicians and businessmen.

The primary promoter of modern nationalism, in Nietzsche's account, was the modern state. In order to justify its existence, growth and influence, and in order to legitimate the demands it made of the citizenry, modern European states increasingly employed nationalist ideas. This, he argued, was representative of a larger trend following the 'death of God' whereby rulers sought to persuade their subjects that the relationship between them is a quasi-religious one, very much like the one between a prophet and his followers. As a result, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the modern, nationalistic state is labelled as the 'new idol' and the 'coldest of all cold monsters' because it follows, and is in fact made possible, by the 'death of God' (Z, 'Of the new idol'). Indeed, Nietzsche lamented:

[t]oday almost everything on earth is determined by the most common and evil forces, by the egoism of acquirers and military despots. In the hands of the latter, the state attempts, as does the egoism of the acquirers, to organise everything anew from out of itself and to be the bond and the pressure for all those hostile forces; that is to say, the state wants human beings to idolise it in the same way that they previously idolised the Church. With what success? We will have to witness this. (UM, III, §4)

In Nietzsche's account, the modern state was thus able to benefit from the 'death of God' by portraying itself as the new source of meaning in people's lives. 'The monster', as he metaphorically called it, 'divines you too, you conquerors of the old god' (Z, 'Of the new idol'). What is more, he warned his readers, '[y]our weariness serves the new idol' (Z, 'Of the new idol'). The modern state, by harnessing nationalist ideas, was able to thrive, in part, on the basis of those unwilling to welcome the experience of meaninglessness as harbouring the possibility of a cultural rejuvenation of Europe and who instead preferred a secular substitute for the 'old Idol' of Christianity.

In addition to serving the members of state bureaucracies, the advocacy of national ideals also served to benefit, Nietzsche argued further, those who stand outside of politics and in the service of international capital. Here, Nietzsche, like Gellner after him, sought to attack those 'truly international homeless

hermits' who, in light of their own lack of state instinct, had learned to abuse politics as an apparatus for their own enrichment.<sup>32</sup> He designated, 'as the most dangerous characteristic of contemporary politics, the application of revolutionary thought to the service of a self-serving, stateless money-aristocracy ...'.<sup>33</sup> Nietzsche clearly objected to those men whose loyalty was primarily to money and material wealth. Such men too, he thought, would choose to manipulate and propagate nationalist sentiments in the service of their own material interests. Indeed, what united many European statesmen and businessmen, in Nietzsche's account, was their inability to confront honestly the experience of meaninglessness and their desire to generate or appropriate new forms of meaning that would ensure their respective power and wealth. As he noted in this vein, national ideas require 'cunning, lies, and force to remain respectable' (HATH, §475). The continued existence of nationalist sentiments depends on the decisive efforts of the commercial and social classes in whose interest such a situation is maintained (HATH, §475). 'What is called a "nation" in Europe today', he insisted, 'is really rather a *res facta* than *res nata* (and occasionally can hardly be told from a *res ficta et picta*) ...' (BGE, §251).<sup>34</sup> In addition, therefore, to resting on the same psychological foundations as Christianity, Nietzsche's second reason for criticizing modern nationalism as a means of engaging with the problem of European nihilism derives from his argument that it was being perpetuated by precisely those two actors in European affairs who had little interest in actually entertaining the problem of nihilism and who were thus also quite content to propagate only a fairly artificial form of meaning that served their respective interests.

Not only was the perpetuation of nationalist ideas, in Nietzsche's account, an artificial response to the 'death of God', but he also viewed it as being merely a fairly basic and unsophisticated form of meaning that, as Tracy Strong has suggested, serves to keep modern politics at a very low level.<sup>35</sup> When compared to the European scope of the advent of nihilism, nationalism is a very modest form of meaning ascribed to European existence. Nietzsche thus repeatedly referred to nationalism as 'petty' and small, and saw it in no way as being fit to address the magnitude of the problem of European nihilism whose nature he found to be more profound and sophisticated. As he himself complained in this regard:

[n]ationalism, this *nervrose nationale* with which Europe is sick, this perpetuation of European particularism (*Kleinstaaterei*), of petty politics [has] deprived Europe itself of its meaning, of its reason—[has] driven it into a dead-end street.—Does anyone besides me know the way out of this dead-end street?—A task that is great enough to *unite* nations again? (EH, 'The case of Wager', §2).

What is more, he insisted, '[i]t is a bad symptom, that one pays so much tribute to the love of the fatherland and politics. It seems that there is nothing higher which one can praise'.<sup>36</sup>

This additional recognition of the self-interest of certain segments of society in perpetuating nationalist sentiments means, then, that Nietzsche ultimately

understood its rise as a regrettable symbiosis between European publics yearning for a greater sense of meaning or purpose in the aftermath of the 'death of God', on the one hand, and self-interested segments of society wishing to profit from the production of national meanings and identities on the other. Indeed, Nietzsche saw both modern European statesmen and businessmen as actually working in opposition to the quest to achieve a rejuvenation of European culture. Their willingness, moreover, to propagate national sentiments in order to serve their own interests stood in opposition to Nietzsche's search for a more honest response to the onset of European nihilism. Rather than confronting the advent of European nihilism, such leaders preferred, in Nietzsche's account, to keep the myth of a deeper meaning alive, and to sustain the conviction that there has to be a greater meaning underlying existence, even if this meant, in the end, pitting Europeans against one another. For Nietzsche, the rising tide of nationalism was itself already a sign of the 'nihilistic catastrophe' that had befallen Europe.<sup>37</sup>

In line with this understanding of modern nationalism Nietzsche concluded, in the end, that 'this artificial nationalism is in any case as perilous as artificial Catholicism used to be, for it is in its essence a forcibly imposed state of siege and self-defence inflicted on the many by the few and requires cunning, force and falsehood to maintain a front of respectability' (HATH, §475). Indeed, he noted,

[i]t is not the interests of the many (the peoples), as is no doubt claimed, but above all the interests of certain princely dynasties and of certain classes of business and society, that impel to this nationalism; once one has recognised this fact one should not be afraid to proclaim oneself simply a good European and actively to work for the amalgamation of nations (HATH, §475).

Nietzsche, then, was clearly not blind to the fact that nationalist sentiments were being promoted in order to protect and enhance self-serving interests amongst certain sections of society; rather, his objection to the rise of modern nationalism derived, in part, from the recognition of this very fact.

This second set of criticisms of modern European nationalism, too, has important implications for the way in which contemporary scholars think and theorize about political ideologies such as nationalism. For, to the extent that the issue of an inherent or innate identity 'need' is not sufficiently problematized within existing theories of nationalism, this raises questions not only as to their conceptual accuracy, but it also means that such theories may inadvertently contribute towards maintaining the possibility of a nationalist politics that seeks to legitimize itself and flourish on the basis of the perception of such a 'need'. From the Nietzschean perspective, in other words, criticizing and problematizing this identity need is necessary not only in terms of arriving at a proper understanding of the rise of modern nationalism in Europe, but also because the inability to arrive at a deeper understanding of the genealogical evolution of this belief structure implicitly contributes towards the maintenance of a politics that is based on such a presumed identity 'need'. It is also for this reason that

Nietzsche chose to propose to his readers instead the idea of the ‘good European’ as someone who refused to participate in and perpetuate this kind of identity politics.

### **Nietzsche’s idea of the ‘good Europeans’**

When viewed in combination, Nietzsche’s above approach to the rise of modern European nationalism amounts to a more fundamental objection to the spread of national ideas, namely that as a form of incomplete nihilism nationalist ideas constitute, in the end, an essentially inappropriate response to the ‘death of God’, both on behalf of those who accept such ideas and on behalf of those who propagate them. Indeed, in Nietzsche’s view the overall effect of modern nationalism, as a reinstatement and continuation of the will-to-truth, is actually to avoid a genuine and critical confrontation with the advent of European nihilism and the ‘death of God’. As Tracy Strong explains, ‘[n]ationalism allows people to avoid coming to terms for awhile with the gradual disintegration of meaning—what Nietzsche formulated in the aphorism of the “death of God”’.<sup>38</sup> As a form of incomplete nihilism that rests on similar, albeit secularized, principles to Christianity, modern European nationalism is likely to culminate only in a further institutionalization of the ‘need’ for a greater sense of meaning and of the will-to-truth than in a more honest confrontation and genuine engagement with it.

In Nietzsche’s own view, the proper response to the advent of European nihilism could *not* be the deployment of new idols that followed the same structure as their Christian predecessor. This entire desire to find a greater sense of meaning underlying European existence, be it in its Christian or nationalist manifestations, only serves to deprive existence of the ‘marvellous uncertainty and rich ambiguity’ (GS, §2).<sup>39</sup> Correspondingly, he also sought to confront critically and unequivocally the rise of modern nationalism in Europe. Indeed, Nietzsche thought that in light of the European-wide implications of the ‘death of God’ a more European response was necessary. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, he wrote how the rise of modern nationalism in Europe has obscured this need for a more European perspective:

Owing to the pathological estrangement which the insanity of nationality has induced, and still induces, among the peoples of Europe; owing also to the shortsighted and quick-handed politicians who are at the top today with the help of this insanity, without any inkling that their separatist policies can of necessity only be entr’acte policies; owing to all this and much else that today simply cannot be said, the most unequivocal portents are now being overlooked or arbitrarily and mendaciously reinterpreted—that *Europe wants to become one*. (BGE, §256)

In a letter to an acquaintance towards the end of 1888, he further suggested, somewhat heroically, that ‘[t]his provocation to self-idolisation of the nations is described as great politics, is being experienced almost as a duty and taught in this way!!! ... This has to be put to an end—and I am strong enough for this’.<sup>40</sup>

In Nietzsche's view, those who propagate nationalist ideas are simply perpetuating the 'sickness of the century' and are 'an enemy of the good Europeans, an enemy of the free spirits' (HATH, II, §87).

This critique of modern nationalism, moreover, has not lost its relevance for the contemporary debate on Europe. In fact, Nietzsche himself had thought that the importance of his corpus would only be recognized posthumously, and that some of the processes he anticipated would take well over a century to develop. Nor has the European debate, in its attempt to come to terms with the deeper implications of European secularization, moved far beyond the conceptual parameters that Nietzsche already encountered towards the end of the nineteenth century. As a result, many of the above passages still sound strikingly contemporary. Europeans may well still be caught in one of those 'labyrinths of the future' in which Nietzsche thought they would lose themselves in their attempt to come to terms with the 'death of God'. When national identities frequently continue to go unchallenged today, and when national identities continue to provide the locus of meaning for European societies, it is hard to see how Nietzsche's critique is less pertinent today than it already was towards the end of the nineteenth century. To this extent, it is indeed interesting to turn to Nietzsche's own notion of the 'good European ... laughing about the nations [*Vaterländer*]' as an example of an alternative response to the contemporary debate between 'nationalizers' and 'Europeanizers'.<sup>41</sup>

Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans' is not one that simply seeks to replace the various national myths with an overarching European one. Nietzsche was too critical of ascetic ideals in general to advocate any such ideas that follow these traditional principles, be they national or European. 'No new idols', he wrote quite explicitly 'are erected by me; let the old ones learn what feet of clay mean' (EH, Preface, §2). What was necessary instead, he thought, was to work towards a transvaluation of values. What Nietzsche called for, in effect, was the adoption of a strategy of an active and more complete nihilism. In the case of complete nihilism, David Toole explains, 'we meet the experience of meaninglessness of the world in the wake of the diminished effective power of higher values not with denial and an overeagerness to revalue the world but with acceptance'.<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche thus sought to encourage the 'good Europeans' of the future to develop a greater tolerance for the ambiguous and enigmatic aspects of existence rather than incessantly seeking to escape it. Rather than constantly finding ways of deferring the experience of European nihilism, he invited his readers to recognize instead the enormous creative potential that the advent of European nihilism actually entailed. Indeed, his own starting point in this regard was very much a '[p]rofound aversion to responding once and for all in any one total view of the world' and a 'refusal to be deprived of the stimulus of the enigmatic' (WP, §470). The response of Nietzsche's 'good Europeans' therefore, is also not one of incomplete nihilism that seeks to retain or reactivate Europe's will-to-truth by either advocating national or European identities. Rather, in this reading, being a 'good European' consists precisely in cultivating a critical distance to the metaphysical aspects of Europe's Christian-Platonic heritage and

in seeking to return to the primacy of experience and its interpretative capacity. As Michael Haar has noted in this regard, Nietzsche seeks to make ‘us see what the concern with primary causes and ultimate ends and the quest for the originary and the unconditional dissimulate to us because with them we lose sight of the elementary perspectives of the living being’.<sup>43</sup>

In Nietzsche’s account, moreover, such a strategy of complete nihilism that seeks to resist and put into question the will-to-truth did not even have to lead to pessimism or despair. In fact, Nietzsche repeatedly referred to the positive aspects of the experience of nihilism, and emphasized the autonomy it provides from many of the previous constraints of European culture. In *The Gay Science*, for example, he noted quite explicitly that his response to the experience of nihilism was ‘not at all sad and gloomy, but rather like a new, difficult to describe kind of light, happiness, relief, amusement, encouragement, dawn ...’ (GS, §343). If anything, he argued, ‘we philosophers and “free spirits” feel, when we hear the news that “the old god is dead”, as if a new dawn shone on us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonition, expectation. At long last the horizon appears free to us again’ (GS, §343). In the end, therefore, Nietzsche concluded that ‘I praise I do not reproach, its arrival’;<sup>44</sup> for, it means that ‘our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an “open sea”’ (GS, §343). The animating spirit of the ‘good Europeans’, then, is one that finds its meaning precisely in the irreducible ambiguity of existence, rather than in some hidden or deeper meaning that resides behind or above the flux of existence.

Nor, from the Nietzschean perspective, are these ‘good Europeans’ even themselves nihilistic, despite their acceptance of the ‘nihilistic’ implications of the ‘death of God’. The reason for this is that these ‘good Europeans’ have themselves already undergone a ‘transvaluation of values’ following which it is precisely the positing of higher idols and ideals that devalues earthly existence and can thus be said to be nihilistic. ‘One has deprived reality’, Nietzsche noted in this vein, ‘of its value, its meaning, its truthfulness, to precisely the extent to which one has mendaciously invented an ideal world’ (EH, Preface, §2). Consequently, it is also through the very resistance of the need for a greater meaning underlying European existence—be it Christian, national, or even some overarching idea of Europe—that Nietzsche insisted that ‘[w]e are, in one word—and let this be our word of honour—*good Europeans*, the heirs of Europe, the rich, oversupplied, but also overly obligated heirs of thousands of years of European spirit’ (GS, 377). In order to be such a ‘good European’, however, Nietzsche also insisted that ‘[o]ne must have liberated oneself from many things that oppress, inhibit, hold down, and make heavy precisely us Europeans today’ (GS, §380). In this account, in other words, what is much more important than replacing the national ideas in Europe with a larger, European identity, is the ability to provoke amongst Europeans an affirmative and creative experience of autonomy in relation to Europe’s metaphysical heritage and a

return to the primacy of experience rather than the articulation of new national, or even European, ideals.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion

What emerges, therefore, from the above consideration of Nietzsche's genealogical observations about the rise of modern nationalism in Europe, is an original interpretation and critique of both the adherence to, and the perpetuation of, nationalist ideas in the aftermath of the 'death of God'. By virtue of evaluating the rise of modern nationalism against the background of the problem of European nihilism, Nietzsche was able to develop a genealogical critique of modern, European nationalism that can still be seen as applying to contemporary European politics. Indeed, from the Nietzschean perspective, the resort to national ideas, as a strategy of incomplete nihilism, continues to constitute as inappropriate a response to the advent of European nihilism as it already did towards the time of Nietzsche's writing. To this extent, the continued primacy put on national identities in European politics may also turn out to be, metaphorically speaking, only a 'labyrinth of future', i.e., an initially appealing but ultimately not viable antidote to the European experience of nihilism (WP, Preface, §3). In a time when national identities frequently continue to go unchallenged, such a critique remains, perhaps, as timely as ever.

At the same time, Nietzsche's genealogical approach to the rise of nationalism in Europe also has important implications for the way in which scholars think and theorize about modern ideologies such as nationalism. Firstly, it demonstrates the importance of placing these ideologies in their historical context, and of remaining aware of the close relationship that often exists between Europe's Christian heritage and the rise of these ideologies in the aftermath of the 'death of God'. This, in turn, not only entails tracing the trajectory from Christianity to modern nationalism, but also going back further in time in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the rise of Platonism and Christianity in European culture. For it is only then that the contingency of these existential structures begins to emerge. Secondly, and in so doing, it remains important to problematize more explicitly the question of the 'need' for meaning and identity that often implicitly underlies accounts of nationalism. For what Nietzsche's genealogical approach seeks to demonstrate is that such a need can no longer be taken for granted. This is true both for structural theories of nationalism that often implicitly rely on such an identity 'need', as well as for psychological approaches which place nationalism more explicitly in relation to such an identity 'need'. From the Nietzschean perspective, both of these approaches inadvertently perpetuate what is itself a problematic assumption that needs to be questioned and problematized, and are thus also not adequately demonstrating to people that they may be freer than they believe in their choice of appropriating such identities.

The genealogical approach, in turn, that the 'good Europeans' inherited from Nietzsche, and that was outlined at the outset of this article, is aimed precisely

at achieving such a critical distancing and separation from these traditional Christian–Platonic and metaphysical structures of thinking centred around the will-to-truth. To this extent, Nietzsche’s genealogical approach is also much more than just one methodology amongst many others for thinking about the rise of modern nationalism in Europe. Rather, it is one that not only critically illuminates important aspects of the rise of modern nationalism in Europe, but additionally constitutes a more affirmative, creative and autonomous response to the advent of European nihilism in European culture, to which modern nationalism is itself also a response. Indeed, the genealogical approach takes great care to avoid the risks inherent in many more traditional approaches to nationalism that end up either reifying or legitimizing the assumption of an innate identity need by trying to explain it theoretically, or whose theoretical devices often embody many of the same metaphysical assumptions on which the nationalist movements can flourish in the first place. It does so, moreover, under the conviction that ‘[a]ttempts to escape nihilism without revaluing our values so far, they produce the opposite, make the problem more acute’ (WP, §28). To this extent, a genealogical approach, despite its unconventional features is, perhaps, also particularly well suited for the study of the rise of nationalism in Europe.

## Notes and references

1. The article uses the following abbreviations for Nietzsche’s works: BGE for *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966); EH for *Ecce Homo*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967); GS for *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974); GM for *On the Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967); HATH for *Human, All Too Human*, translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann (London: Penguin, 1984); Z for *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1961); TI for *Twilight of the Idols*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1968); UM for *Untimely Meditations*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); WP for *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968).
2. T. Eriksen, ‘In search of Brussels: creolization, insularity and identity dilemmas in post-national Europe’, in J. P. Burgess (Ed.), *Cultural Politics and Political Culture in Postmodern Europe* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 254–255.
3. See, for example, U. Hedetoft, ‘On nationalizers and Europeanizers in contemporary Europe—an introduction’, in U. Hedetoft (Ed.), *Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).
4. See T. Judt, ‘The new old nationalism’, *New York Review of Books*, 26 May 1994, p. 44.
5. J. P. Mayer, *Kritik und Zukunft der Kultur: Aus Friedrich Nietzsches Werken für die Gegenwart Ausgewählt* (Leipzig: Rascher, 1935).
6. J. Nolte, *Wir Guten Europäer: Historisch-Politische Versuche über uns Selbst* (Tübingen: Narr, 1991), p. 195.
7. D. Krell and D. Bates, *The Good European: Nietzsche’s Work Sites in Word and Image* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 1.
8. This is, of course, not to insist that definitions are irrelevant, but rather that they always already entail ‘an enormous sphere of human evaluations’: see H. Shinoda, ‘Conflicting notions of national and constitutional sovereignty in the discourses of political theory and international relations: a genealogical perspective’, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 1998, p. 13. Generally, however, Nietzsche’s remarks refer to what Otto Dann has called ‘organized nationalism’, i.e., an aggressive movement propagating the idea of the nation as a ‘political term of belief and selfidentification’: O. Dann, ‘Modernity and the project of the modern nation’, in J. Müller and B. Stråth (Eds.), *Nationalism and Modernity: EUI Working Paper HEC 99/1* (San Domenico, Florence: EUI, 1999), pp. 34–35.
9. It is worth noting, however, that Nietzsche’s observations were frequently, but not exclusively, directed at his German contemporaries living during the last third of the nineteenth century. Nietzsche did also

travel widely across Europe, though, and thus also referred more generally to rise of nationalism in Europe. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind when reading Nietzsche's works that this lack of conformity to traditional academic standards is not an accidental feature of Nietzsche's corpus and should therefore also not lead contemporary scholars of nationalism prematurely to dismiss Nietzsche's insights *prima facie*.

10. Foucault, for example, once noted that '[i]f I wanted to be pretentious, I would use "the genealogy of morals" as the general title of what I am doing': 'Prison talk', in Colin Gordon (Ed.), *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge* (London: Harvester, 1980), p. 53.
11. J. Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 8.
12. D. Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics, and Modernity: A Critique of Liberal Reason* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), p. 39. See also Robert Cox's useful distinction between *critical* theory and *problem-solving* theory, 'Social forces, states and world orders: beyond international relations theory', *Millennium*, 10/2 (1981), pp. 128–130.
13. M. Foucault, 'Nietzsche, genealogy, history' in J. Faubion (Ed.), *The Essential Works of Foucault, Volume Two: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, translated by Robert Hurley and others (London: Allen Lane, 1998), p. 374.
14. Owen, *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, p. 147.
15. Foucault, *op. cit.*, Ref. 13, p. 371.
16. F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente, 1885–1887* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), pp. 305 and 127. The status and importance of Nietzsche's *Nachlass* has been subject to debate amongst Nietzsche scholars. The present article restricts itself to drawing upon Nietzsche's posthumously published notes where these illustrate in greater detail some of the ideas that he himself published or intended for publication.
17. C. Hayes, *Essays in Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1926); H. Kohn, *Prophets and Peoples: Studies in Nineteenth Century Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1946); A. Toynbee, 'Death in war', in A. Toynbee (Ed.), *Man's Concern with Death* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1968).
18. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 11.
19. M. Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 31.
20. J. Llobera, *The God of Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), p. 143.
21. I draw on this book only as a source for English translations.
22. D. Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo: Theological Reflections on Nihilism, Tragedy, and Apocalypse* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), p. 37.
23. B. Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 74.
24. Simon Critchley, *Very Little ... Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 7.
25. Anderson, *op. cit.*, Ref. 18, p. 80.
26. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 138.
27. A. Finlayson, 'Psychology, psychoanalysis and theories of nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism*, 4/2 (1998), p. 146.
28. J. Breuille, 'Approaches to nationalism', in G. Balakrishnan (Ed.), *Mapping the Nation* (London: Verso, 1996), pp. 154–155.
29. Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, Ref. 16, p. 410.
30. H. Staten, "'Radical evil" revived: Hitler, Kant, Luther, neo-Lacanianism', *Radical Philosophy*, 98 (1999), p. 14.
31. Staten, *ibid.*, p. 14.
32. F. Nietzsche, 'The Greek state', in *Nachgelassene Fragmente, 1870–1873* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), p. 774.
33. Nietzsche, *ibid.*, p. 774.
34. Something made; something born; something fictitious and unreal.
35. T. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), p. 208.
36. F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente, 1875–1879* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), p. 305.
37. Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, Ref. 16, p. 377.
38. Strong, *op. cit.*, Ref. 35, p. 205.
39. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, therefore, Nietzsche argued quite explicitly that one of the most important tasks in an age characterized by the 'death of God' is '[n]ot to remain stuck to a fatherland—not even if it suffers most and needs help most—it is less difficult to sever one's heart from a victorious fatherland' (BGE, §41). Indeed, Nietzsche further insisted in one of his posthumously published notes, '[I]et some fresh air in! This absurd state of affairs must not go on any longer in Europe! What sense is there in this

bone-headed nationalism? Now that everything points to larger common interests, what is the purpose of encouraging this scurvy egoism?': F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente, 1887–1889* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), p. 92. Instead of being a way of providing a cultural rejuvenation of Europe, modern nationalism was, in Nietzsche's view, the anti-cultural sickness *par excellence* and only a 'labyrinth of the future' in which Europeans would get lost (EH, 'The case of Wager', §2).

40. Nolte, *op. cit.*, Ref. 6, p. 197.

41. F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente, 1884–1885* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), pp. 404 and 150.

42. Toole, *op. cit.*, Ref. 22, p. 37.

43. M. Haar, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, translated by Michael Gendre (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. xii.

44. Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, Ref. 39 p. 56.

45. For a more detailed account of Nietzsche's idea of the 'good Europeans', see Stefan Elbe, 'European nihilism and the meaning of the European idea', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics, 2001, and Stefan Elbe, 'We good Europeans: genealogical reflections on the idea of Europe' *Millennium*, 30/2 (2001), pp. 259–283.

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