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NIETZSCHE CONTRA RENAN

GARY SHAPIRO

I mean by the title of this essay to allude to *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* and thereby to suggest the use which Nietzsche made of Renan in formulating some of his most distinctive thoughts. More specifically I suggest that Nietzsche's later view of history, especially as expressed in *The Genealogy of Morals* and *The Antichrist*, is a critique and parody of Renan's *History of the Origins of Christianity*. (I speak deliberately of Nietzsche's "view of history" rather than his "philosophy of history" because the latter phrase contains too many associations which Nietzsche's view rejects.) What is at issue is not a question of influence, as that term is usually understood, but rather the possibility of delineating in some detail the way in which Nietzsche formulated the models of *genealogy* (to speak now in his own terms) as more or less explicit alternatives to those of *history*. As Michel Foucault has suggested, *The Genealogy of Morals* is to be read not simply as one more historical essay on the origin and development of the moral ideas in the tradition of Buckle, Lecky, Spencer, and Mill. These English psychologists are criticized at the very beginning of Nietzsche's book for their philosophical and therefore unhistorical way of thinking. They search for an origin (*Ursprung*), a single basic principle or *arche*, which will illuminate an entire development. The appropriate genealogical metaphor is not origin but ancestry or heritage (*Herkunft*).¹ In fact Nietzsche understands history as the philosophical pursuit of origins and genealogy as the discovery of tangled affiliations, dense roots, and hidden incestuous connections. Nietzsche's usage of "history" and "genealogy" is not always consistent, for he sometimes speaks of "history" alone when he means authentic, genealogical history — as in the seminal and summary declaration that "only that which has no history is definable" (*GM* II 13).² In what follows I shall be treating *The Genealogy of Morals* and some of Nietzsche's other later writings primarily as methodological tracts on history and genealogy;

1. Foucault shows Nietzsche's systematic distinction between *Ursprung* and *Herkunft* in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed Donald F Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, N.Y., 1977) Unfortunately the best English translation of *The Genealogy of Morals* (hereafter cited as *GM*), by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, does not consistently follow the distinction between the two terms and their cognates.

2. Wherever possible references to Nietzsche's works will be his own numbered divisions into larger parts and sections.

in this context Nietzsche's subtitle for the *Genealogy, Eine Streitschrift (A Polemical Book)* suggests that he is polemicizing not only against the values of Christianity, socialism, democracy, and the community of scientific inquirers, but also against a certain way of construing the beginnings, meaning, heritage, and affiliations of those values — that is, against an historical method which owes more to these values than it can in good conscience acknowledge. The historiographical distinctions between Nietzsche and Renan are connected with more general differences between them which have to do with the nature of narrative in general and with the role which literary, rhetorical, and theatrical models have to play in the construction of narrative. Renan's *History* is inconceivable apart from the models of narrative provided by French literature of the nineteenth century; Nietzsche's critique of "realistic" historical narrative through his attack on Renan is inseparable from his own criticism of the narrative mode which it shares with the literature of its time and place. The connection between aesthetics and history which is everywhere implicit in Renan becomes a subject of explicit discussion in Nietzsche. Historical or genealogical claims will appear to be inseparable from aesthetic values, especially in the case of the differing interests which the two narrators take in what we would today call the theater of cruelty.

I

We may acquire a preliminary impression of Nietzsche's evaluation of Renan in a passage from *The Genealogy of Morals*; it would probably be an understatement to call this section polemical. Nietzsche, in reviewing the scientific *praxis* of the day, asks whether modern historiography is better than the other branches of science (which he has just criticized) in displaying "an attitude more assured of life and ideals." Such historiography — Nietzsche seems to be thinking of Ranke and his many followers — is nihilistic in rejecting all teleology and all interest in the outcome of what it narrates. Yet even worse is

that other type of historian, an even more "modern" type perhaps, a hedonist and voluptuary who flirts both with life and with the ascetic ideal, who employs the word "artist" as a glove and has today taken sole lease of the praise of contemplation: oh how these sweetish and clever fellows make one long even for ascetics and winter landscapes!

It soon becomes clear that Renan, renowned for his style, his landscapes, his dramatic *mise en scène*, is an exemplary object of the critique:

I know of nothing that excites such disgust as this kind of "objective" armchair scholar, this kind of voluptuary of history, half person, half satyr, perfume by Renan, who betrays immediately with the high falsetto of his applause what he lacks, *where* he lacks it, *where* in this case the Fates have applied their cruel shears with, alas, such surgical skill! . . . such spectators (*Zuschauer*) dispose

me against the "spectacle" (*Schauspiel*) more than the spectacle itself (the spectacle of history you understand) (*GM* III 26).

What is it about Renan which makes him worthy to serve as Nietzsche's "antipodes" (*BGE* 48)? As a philosophical historian Renan's work exhibits a faith in continuous narrative, an organicistic aesthetics, and a belief in the convergence of religion, science, and art (which his own historical work both advocates and is meant to exemplify); these are crucial themes which will soon be examined through the perspective of Nietzsche's revisions. But, in addition, Renan's career as an author was a major public event of the nineteenth century. Beginning as a philologist of Semitic languages Renan lost his post at the Collège de France because of his secular and immensely popular *Life of Jesus*, which appeared in 1864. In the next year the book generated fifteen hundred books and pamphlets, assuring the literary success of the philologist and of the seven-volume *History of the Origins of Christianity* of which the *succès de scandale* formed the first book.³ In the reception of Renan Nietzsche must have noted a phenomenon parallel to that of his own early target, David Friedrich Strauss, another philologist turned (in Nietzsche's eyes) literary opportunist. Yet Strauss at least had the virtue of separating his critical philological endeavors, as in his early *Life of Jesus*, from his own later indulgence in cultural philistinism (as in *The Old and the New Faith*, the pretext of Nietzsche's first *Untimely Meditation*).⁴ In Renan these two moments are collapsed. His *History* purports to be founded on a close and critical examination of the sources; at the same time it takes flight in tendentious passages which are more insidious, because more alluring, than the old Strauss's clumsy moralizing and rationalizing of the ethos of Bismarckian Germany. Here is Renan blending an account of attacks on Jews in 66 A.D. with a meditation on their place in modern Europe:

This hatred marks one of the trenches of separation which, perhaps, will never be filled up in the human species. . . . [I]t is the hatred of the different functions of human society, of the man of peace contented with his home pleasures against the

3. There are two very clear and useful books by Harold W. Wardman on Renan's work with special reference to his historiography: *Ernest Renan: A Critical Biography* (London, 1964) and *Renan: historien philosophe* (Paris, 1979). There is an important article by Edward Said, "Renan's Philological Laboratory" in *Art, Politics and Will*, ed. Quentin Anderson, Stephen Donadio, and Steven Marcus (New York, 1977), 59-98.

4. For the contemporary observer there were other links between Renan and Strauss, notably their published correspondence during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871. Nietzsche's attack on Strauss in 1873 suggests that Strauss failed to see the distinction between military and cultural superiority. For his part Renan tended in the correspondence (some of which was published in newspapers) to place a very high value on German culture; this may have infuriated Nietzsche, who was something of a Francophile. For an account of the correspondence see Wardman, *Renan: A Critical Biography*, 117-128. For Nietzsche's Francophilia see W. D. Williams, *Nietzsche and the French* (Oxford, 1952), especially the index references to Renan. As a reader of the *Goncourt Journals* and the *Journal de Debats* Nietzsche was aware of Renan's public career.

man of war, of the man of the shop and the counting-house against the peasant and the noble. It cannot be without reason that poor Israel has spent its life as a people in being massacred. . . . The Jew . . . retained his own status; he wished to have the same guarantees as everyone else, and, over and above that, his own exceptions and special laws. No people has ever been able to tolerate this.⁵

From a rhetorical or stylistic view this passage is notable for its soothing and reassuring approach to its audience. Written in 1873, after the defeat of the Franco-Prussian war and the startling events of the Paris Commune, this text suggests both the continuity between first-century Rome and nineteenth-century Europe and the natural laws of social psychology which make that continuity intelligible. There will *always* be hostility among the different divisions of society, we are told; Renan's examples, the peasant and noble, the homebound man and the man of war, suggest, while artfully hanging back from explicit statement, that underneath such divisions is an underlying and solid foundation of which we are part. These contain resonances both of the idealized *ancien regime* in which all men have an assured social status and of the renewed hierarchy, founded on science, which was imagined by Comte and Renan. Such hostilities between men of different status point, then, to deeper unities. The choice of examples also adumbrates a feudal or neo-feudal conception of society which is far from the class conflicts which had first provoked Renan's philosophical reflections in 1848 and had driven him from Paris in 1871. This rhetoric of normalcy may be generally effective with the normal and included reader, whose inclusion Renan often reinforces by the use of the first person plural; this usage is often an unconscious parody or degradation of the absolute community of Hegelian philosophy, the recognition achieved with great difficulty at the end of a complex development. That such a community has indeed been formed, and that Christianity has been the means of realizing it, is both the presupposition and the burden of Renan's *History*. The final chapter of the last book in the series, *Marcus Aurelius and the End of the Ancient World*, is full of that smug self-congratulation which Nietzsche calls "forgery in ideals." Judaism, which in Renan's historical and racial system represents all which is Oriental and *other* than the properly European "we," has been *aufgehoben* by the civilization of modern Christianity:

Entirely Jewish in its origin, Christianity has thus in time succeeded in throwing off all its family characteristics, so that the view of those who consider it the Aryan religion *par excellence* is in many respects true. For centuries we have infused in it our modes of feeling, all our aspirations, all our good qualities, all our qualities. The exegesis according to which Christianity was inwardly molded in the Old Testament is the falsest of all. Christianity was the rupture with Judaism, the abrogation of the Torah. St. Bernard, Francis of Assisi, St. Elizabeth, St. Theresa,

5. Renan, *Antichrist*, in *Oeuvres Complètes (OC)*, ed. Henriette Psichari (Paris, n.d.), IV, 1275; in *Renan's Antichrist*, transl. William G. Hutchison (London, 1899), 126. I have occasionally corrected this and other translations from Renan.

Francis of Sales, Vincent de Paul, Fénelon, Channing have no trace of Judaism. They are people of our own race, feeling with our hearts and thinking with our brains. Christianity was the traditional theme on which they wove their poem; but its genius is their own.⁶

It is this "we" which is deeply presupposed in the earlier passage, as throughout Renan's history. The racial and religious constitution of the "we" does not exhaust its identity: it is also characterized by a rejection of supernaturalism, combined with an acknowledgment of the indispensable social and communal ties provided by churches, and a vigorous commitment to the Western (and non-Oriental) pursuit of scientific inquiry, including that historical inquiry whose consequence is the reinforcement of this very community and its ideals. Given this rather articulate self-justification the rhetorical strategy of the first Renanian passage quoted becomes more perspicuous. The natural and historically evolved community finds a natural gap between itself and those who would presume to be in it but not of it.⁷

The History of the Origins of Christianity comes to its proper conclusion in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, when the role of Oriental or Jewish elements in Christianity has been reduced to a minimum. The governing idea is that the genius of Rome and the West was necessary in order to refine the crude oriental atmosphere of earliest Christianity. Once this dissolution of oriental elements has occurred, however, the fundamental lines of a continuous development are clear. Moreover, even the contest within the early church between Greek (or Roman) and Jew itself reveals an intelligible pattern in which the "genius" or "idea" of Christianity gradually asserts itself while its oriental trappings reveal their occidental character, dropping off like dead leaves to disclose the true and destined fruit. Again the model of continuous and organic development in Renan's *History* seems to be a parody of Hegel.⁸

6. Renan, *Marc-Aurele* in *OC*, V, 1142-1143; in *Renan's Marcus Aurelius*, transl. William G. Hutchison (London, 1903), 315.

7. For Renan's Orientalism, see Said's expansion of the article cited above in *Orientalism* (New York, 1978). Consider also Renan's verdict on Paul (*OC* IV, 1185; *Antichrist*, 50). Renan describes "the method of narrow and bigoted minds, like the Oriental for example" in *The Apostles*: "The mental vision of those races is not like ours; theirs is dull and fixed like the enamelled eyes of figures in mosaic. They see only one thing at a time and that takes entire possession of them. They are not their own masters whether to believe or not." *OC*, IV, 700; *The Apostles*, translator not indicated (New York, 1880), 301.

8. The association between Renan and Hegel seemed relatively clear to his contemporaries. The translator of Renan's *Philosophical Dialogues and Fragments* (1876) wrote in 1883 that the book "is remarkable, first, as a popular exposition, at once clear and attractive, of the Hegelian philosophy, and as such, perhaps, the only book of its kind in any language." See *Philosophical Dialogues and Fragments*, transl. Ras Bihari Mutcharji (London, 1833), ix. The edition I have used contains a flowery inscription by the translator "to that peerless metaphysical Sindbad Dr. J. H. Stirling, author of *The Secret of Hegel*, who has done more towards the spread of Hegelianism than Hegel himself" (Watson Library, University of Kansas).

In *The Genealogy of Morals* it is notable that Nietzsche is covering much of the same historical ground as Renan in his *History* — that is, the break between classical and Christian culture, the role of Judaism in that break, and the question of the connection between religion and science in the nineteenth century. The *Genealogy* was written very quickly, but is based on more than the distinction between affirmative values and *ressentiment* which had already been articulated in *Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*; it also owes much to the course of reading in world history upon which Nietzsche embarked in 1884, owing in part to the impetus of Jacob Burckhardt.⁹ By the spring of 1887, Nietzsche had pursued this point so far as to be studying Renan's *History*. In February he wrote to Overbeck, a friend and church historian, whom he kept informed of his historical researches, of some of his recent reading. In reading this letter of February 23, 1887, it will be helpful to keep in mind that Nietzsche wrote the *Genealogy* just four months later:

This winter I have also read Renan's *Origines*, with much spite and — little profit (*Nützen*). This whole history of conditions and *sentiments* in Asia Minor seems to me to hang comically in the air. At root, my distrust goes so far as to question if history is really *possible*. What is it that people want to establish — something which was not itself established at the moment when it occurred?¹⁰

The letter continues with interesting reflections on French and German histories of the French Revolution and of feudalism. Declaring Renan's history to be of little use or profit (*Nütz*), Nietzsche employs one of the key terms of his second *Untimely Meditation*, *Von Nützen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*. In that work Nietzsche distinguished three modes of history which might be *nützlich für das Leben*: the antiquarian, the monumental, and the critical. So Nietzsche's comment suggests that Renan's work does not exemplify any of these modes. In the meditation on history Nietzsche discusses Hegelian historiography as possessing the most dangerous *Nachteil* for life. The problem of historical consciousness is to strike a proper balance between remembering and forgetting; without memory man does not exist, but without forgetting he cannot act and live. Hegelian philosophy and historiography is committed to *Erinnerung*, to making inward once more what has already been experienced; Nietzsche sees such *Erinnerung* as a total project which is bound

9. See Nietzsche's letter of April 7, 1884 to Franz Overbeck in *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. and transl. Christopher Middleton (Chicago, 1969), 223: "The last few months I have been reading 'world history,' with great delight although with some terrifying results. Have I ever shown you the letter from Jacob Burckhardt which pushed me headfirst into 'world history'?"

10. *Selected Letters*, 261. Curt Paul Janz notes, apropos of this letter, that Nietzsche may very well have known of Wagner's great interest in and general approval of Renan, especially of his *Life of Jesus*. See Curt Paul Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche Biographie* (Munich, 1978), I, 826; II, 507-508. Cf. also Nietzsche's dismissal of Ranke and Renan as "'objective' gentlemen with weak wills" in a note of 1884; see *The Will to Power*, 128.

to discourage active life. One mode of such a project is what Nietzsche, in the 1887 letter to Overbeck, calls "establishing" (*feststellen*). The events of the distant past are to be established so that the man of historical consciousness will have a firm basis for the whole sequence and texture of events which have followed those early ones. Such establishing always proceeds with regard to some principles of narration according to which certain forces or classes of events are given more weight than others; these may be economic, military, political, or ideological. The point that Nietzsche insists on in his discussion of Hegelian history is that whatever narrative principle is employed will be one which gives a special privilege or value to the present in which the historian is writing and being read, and which presents the entire historical sequence as necessary. In commenting on Renan, Nietzsche identifies his principle of narrativity as a *sentimental* one. A history of *sentiments* (Nietzsche leaves the word in French) is very much a device of the nineteenth century, indebted to Rousseau and the romantic movement. To write a history of *sentiments* for a scantily documented period of history in Asia Minor appears as a bizarrely incongruous undertaking. One engages in it for the sake of establishing. If one's readers are used to an exploration of *sentiments* (from reading romantic novels, for example) then they will find such a mode of establishment plausible. The remarks in the letter appeal to Overbeck's ability to sense the obvious discontinuity between the sentimental psychology of nineteenth-century Paris and the rather unknown world of early Christianity. Given this recognition one will see that the motive for adopting the sentimental mode of history (or perhaps any other of the Hegelian types of narrative) must be the passion for establishing.

Renan's introductory essays to each of the seven volumes of his *History* clearly exhibit this connection between the need to establish and the practice of sentimental history. Trained as a philologist, Renan might have been expected to practice what Nietzsche calls critical history. The critical historian, exemplified by the higher critics of the various periods of Biblical history, is one who sees a plurality of voices where tradition or poverty of imagination sees a single one. As practiced by Strauss or Wellhausen, the higher criticism decomposes an apparently unitary text into a number of different strata: it pluralizes rather than establishes. Renan, however, uses the methods and discoveries of the higher critics in order to justify sentimental history. Confronted with the *disjecta membra* which are the residue of critical analysis applied to the relevant documents, Renan is appalled at the prospect of leaving this mess as it is, a condition in which Nietzsche's question "who is speaking?" would necessarily resonate with great force.¹¹ In his introduction to the *Life of Jesus*

11. "Now suppose that belief in God has vanished: the question presents itself anew: 'who speaks?'" *The Will to Power*, transl. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York, 1967), no. 275.

Renan explains the principles he has followed in order to avoid the chaos of critical history. The first is his visit to Palestine in 1860-1861. There the *genius loci* of the holy land inspired him with a sense of the harmony and psychological reality of the various texts:

All this history, which at a distance seems to float in the clouds of an unreal world, thus took a form, a solidity, which astonished me. The striking agreement of the texts with the places, the marvelous harmony of the gospel ideal with the country which served it as a framework, were like a revelation to me. I had before my eyes a fifth gospel, torn, but still legible, and henceforward, through the recitals of Matthew and Mark, in place of an abstract being, whose existence might have been doubted, I saw a living and moving and admirable human figure.¹²

The unity of place (one is reminded here of the neo-Aristotelian conventions of French classical drama) is followed by the unity of character. Renan records his realization that religious history is not an impersonal interplay of thoughts and doctrines, but is made by individual personalities. The fictional convention of the hero with a unified character has been imported into history. But how, on the basis of the evidence, is the historian to proceed to reconstruct character?

A great life is an organic whole which cannot be rendered by the simple agglomeration of small facts. It requires a profound sentiment to embrace them all, moulding them into perfect unity. The method of art in a similar subject is a good guide; the exquisite tact of a Goethe would know how to apply it. The essential condition of the creations of art is, that they shall form a living system of which all the parts are mutually dependent and related. . . . Each trait which departs from the rules of classic narration ought to warn us to be careful; for the fact which has to be related has been living, natural, and harmonious.¹³

I have quoted Renan at some length to exhibit his faith in a kind of pre-established harmony between the principles of art and of historical truth. Reading this passage today, after Nietzsche, it is tempting to see Renan as one more aesthetic voluntarist who flies to art as a result of his skepticism about truth.¹⁴ But for Renan art, or more specifically, classical art is itself the avenue to the truth. Like the organicistic novel of the nineteenth century with an omniscient narrator, the work of the historian must show organic unity, coherent development, and be based on a plausible sequence of sentiments. While it may be that all historians rely on narrative and literary models, what is surprising in Renan is his general passivity in relation to the literary taste of his time and his quite explicit statements of his own procedures, as in the preceding.

12. *OC*, IV, 79-80; transl William G. Hutchison, *The Life of Jesus* (A. L. Burt Publishers, n.d.), 61.

13. *OC*, IV, 81; *Life of Jesus*, 62-63.

14. Wardman draws some parallels between Renan and Nietzsche in the works cited above; consult his index references to Nietzsche.

In the Goncourt journal it is reported that Renan exclaimed "Madame Sand is the greatest artist of our time and the truest talent"; that was in 1863, at the time of the composition of the *Life of Jesus*.¹⁵ To depict *sentiments* in the Sandian manner is simply to be truthful, Renan believes, when it is a question of narrating human events. Certainly many of the great set-pieces of his *History* recall Sand's techniques, both in the portrayal of human sentiments and in the evocation of the sentimental landscapes which are, stylistically, one of Renan's most distinctive achievements as an historical writer. Committed to writing a completely nonsupernatural history, Renan not surprisingly made a connection between such philosophical naturalism and the literary, sometimes sentimental, naturalism of his time. An exemplary case is his treatment of the resurrection. It is the hallmark of the naturalistic life of Jesus (such as those in Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*) to end with his death. So does Renan's, but in the second volume of his *History* there is a daring, sentimental, and naturalistic reconstruction of the illusion of the resurrection which centers around Mary Magdalene. The scene is set by emphasizing that already on the Saturday after the crucifixion Jesus' disciples must have believed that he would somehow overcome death. Renan accepts the accounts according to which it was Mary Magdalene alone who visited the tomb the next morning: "It is her that we must follow step by step; for she bore on that day during one hour all the burden of the Christian conscience; her witness decided the faith of the future."¹⁶ Having narrowed the narrative to this one lyric sensibility, Renan proceeds with a (for him) unusual series of short, relatively staccato sentences which heighten suspense: "But when Mary Magdalene arrived on the Sunday morning, the stone was not in its place. The vault was open. The body was no longer there."¹⁷ She runs to Peter and John who come to see the empty tomb, but who then leave her alone in an even deeper solitude which allows Renan to describe Mary's vision of the risen Christ. The techniques here are critical, insofar as Renan, like Strauss, sorts out more and less credible texts, examines discrepancies, and seeks a coherent perspective. Yet critical technique is completely subordinated to sentimental narrative and to Renan's own apostrophe to the heroine of sentiment whom he has created:

Only Mary loved enough to pass the bounds of nature and revive the shade of the

15 *The Goncourt Journals, 1851-1870*, ed and transl Lewis Galantiere (Garden City, N. Y., 1958), 152. Given the Goncourts' disdain for both Renan and Sand, the statement's accuracy might give rise to some doubt. Renan, however, wrote an obituary notice of Sand in 1876 which confirms the report: "Her works are truly the echo of our age. When this poor nineteenth century which we abuse so much is gone, it will be heard and eagerly looked into, and much one day will be forgiven it. George Sand then will rise up as our interpreter. The age has not had a wound with which her heart has not bled, not an ailment of which she has not harmoniously complained." Quoted in Henry James, *Literary Reviews and Essays*, ed. Albert Mordell (New York, 1957), 133.

16. *OC*, IV, 474; *The Apostles*, 58.

17. *OC*, IV, 475; *The Apostles*, 59.

perfect master. In these kinds of marvelous crises, to see after the others is nothing; all the merit is in seeing for the first time, for the others afterwards model their visions on the received type. It is the peculiarity of fine organizations to conceive the image promptly, justly, and with a sort of intimate sense of design. The glory of the resurrection belongs, then, to Mary Magdalene. . . . The shadow created by the delicate sensibility of Magdalene wanders still on the earth. Queen and patroness of idealists, Magdalene knew better than any one how to assert her dream, and impose on every one the vision of her passionate soul. . . . Apply no cold analysis to this *chef d'oeuvre* of idealism and of love.¹⁸

In the introduction to *The Apostles* Renan had indicated his own attempt at reconciling himself with such sentimental idealism by claiming: "Our disagreement with those who believe in positive religions, is, after all, purely scientific; we are with them at heart; and we combat but one enemy, which is theirs as well as ours — and this enemy is vulgar materialism, the baseness of the selfish man."¹⁹ It is the combination of such maneuvers which Nietzsche must have had in mind when he catalogued Renan's contradictions in *Götzendämmerung*:

What avails all freethinking, modernity, mockery and wry-necked flexibility, if one is still Christian, Catholic and even priest in one's bowels! Renan possesses his mode of inventiveness, just like a Jesuit or a father confessor, in devising means of seduction; his intellectuality does not lack the broad priestly smirk — like all priests, he becomes dangerous only when he loves.²⁰

In this same series of "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man" Nietzsche analyzes the style of George Sand, which he compares to colored wallpaper and which exhibits "the vulgar ambition to possess generous feelings." The conclusion of his polemic is "But Renan respects her. . . ." Historian and novelist are vitiated by a common *stylistic* failing. For Nietzsche, especially in his later writings, style is everything; about both Renan and Sand he suggests that stylistic problems are ultimately sexual problems.²¹

II

After these extensive preparations, which have done no more than offer a stylistic and thematic sampling from one of the great monsters of nineteenth-century historiography and literature, Renan's *History of the Origins of Christianity*, I wish to turn to two of Nietzsche's last writings which deal with the problem of historical method on the same ground of religious history which is covered by Renan. Unlike Nietzsche's *Streitschrift*, Renan, in his introduction to *The Apostles*, says that it is his intention to write a contemplative, nonpolemical history and links such contemplative history to a more

18. *OC*, IV, 477-478; *The Apostles*, 61-62

19. *OC*, IV, 469-470; *The Apostles*, 52.

20. *Twilight of the Idols*, "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," 2.

21. "Skirmishes," 6; on Nietzsche's conception of style and its sexual ramifications see Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, transl. Barbara Harlow (Chicago, 1979) and my review in *Man and World* 14 (1981), 428-437.

general quietism.²² Nietzschean genealogy must distinguish itself from such contemplative and sentimental history because it places into question both the person of the historian (and his readers) and the apparently innocent aestheticism of the contemplation of the past. "We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge" is the first sentence in *The Genealogy of Morals*. The reader who forgets this opening and construes Nietzsche's narrative of master and slave moralities, guilt and asceticism on the model of contemplative history has a surprise in store. For Nietzsche's genealogical inquiry, like that of another "man of knowledge," Oedipus, into his own origins, prepares the way for a moment of tragic recognition and reversal in which the knower discovers his own deep implication in the tangled web whose lines he would trace. In the final essay of *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche discloses that science and history, which might have been thought to be genuine alternatives to the asceticism and herd-morality which have descended, by sometimes obscure lines, from the *ressentiment* of the bad (*schlecht*) slaves, are in fact nothing but variants and refinements of that attitude. Which is just to say that they are forms of nihilism.

Nietzsche's dialectic of master and slave morality has no place within it for the happy moment of reconciliation or perfected development seen by Hegel and Renan. Christianity is not the overcoming of Jewish *ressentiment* but its surreptitious extension. The contradiction between self-affirming and other-negating values is not *aufgehoben* but exacerbated. The deadly beginnings are neither absorbed nor do they wither away. A genealogical perspective sees that the official family tree is really constructed by the narrative principles of sentimental history; in contrast, it resolves to ferret out the incests, the *mésalliances*, and bastard births which are concealed by the official version. Genealogy's literary debt is to Oedipal tragedy, interpreted ontologically as an image of Dionysian chaos; sentimental history is itself a hybrid of Hegel and George Sand — a combination which must itself be genealogically and sexually suspect.

In general, history as envisioned in the *Genealogy* proceeds through the categories of scandal, rupture, and shock rather than by sentimental continuity or evolution: the formation of bad conscience, the single greatest turning point in Nietzsche's narrative, comes about as a totally unintended consequence of the conquest of peaceful nomads by a group of warriors. In order to establish a stable rule, the latter become unwitting inventors of civilizations, with their characteristic restraints and discontents. The necessary restrictions of the new urban life lead to a sudden reversal: "Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction — all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of the 'bad conscience.'" ²³

22. *OC*, IV, 467; *The Apostles*, 48.

23. *GM*, II, 16.

Renan is also concerned with the sentiments of cruelty, revenge, and *ressentiment*, but he tends to localize them in the Jewish or, more generally, oriental peoples. In his *Antichrist* he gives a quite Nietzschean reading of *Revelations* as a text formed by Jewish *ressentiment* toward Rome. The *Antichrist* itself, as several critics have remarked, expresses a marked darkening of Renan's tone and style. The first of Renan's series to appear after the Franco-Prussian war and the Paris commune (it was published in 1873), it is suffused with a fear and suspicion of the crowd and of the potentially destructive and even suicidal nature of mass movements. The defense of Jerusalem by the zealots in the siege of 70 A.D., leading to the city's final destruction, can also be read as a narrative of the doomed defense of the commune. At this point in Renan's account Christianity is still basically Jewish, which helps him to explain its vengefulness of spirit. After recounting the excesses of Nero, Renan notes how attacks on a popular movement tend to intensify rather than weaken its reaction to established power.²⁴

The *Book of Revelations*, or *Apocalypse*, is seen as the product of vengeful Christians of Jewish origin who have fled Rome for the relative safety of the Asian provinces of the Empire. Under such influences it was composed by the apostle John, Renan supposes, as an allegory in which Nero is the great beast and Rome the harlot. As such, it builds upon a long tradition of similar Jewish allegories and prophecies of revenge, notably the *Book of Daniel*.²⁵ Now Nietzsche also sees the early history of Christianity as the story of "Rome versus Judea" in which Jewish *ressentiment* plays a crucial role and in which we find the well-known opposition between the self-affirming morality of masters and the reactive vengefulness of the slaves: "'Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome': — there has hitherto been no greater event than this struggle . . . How . . . did the Jews feel about Rome? A thousand signs tell us; but it suffices to recall the Apocalypse of John, the most wanton of all literary outbursts that vengefulness has on its conscience."²⁶

So far Renan and Nietzsche are in some agreement. But Nietzsche maintains that Christianity as a whole is colored by this vengeful flavor; it is not simply a

24. *OC*, IV, 1246-1247; *Antichrist*, 99-100.

25. See Renan's chapters on "The Apostles in Asia," "The Apocalypse," and "The Fortunes of the Book."

26. *GM*, I, 16 (cf. *GM*, I, 7). Nietzsche has a philological difference with Renan concerning the Apocalypse. Whereas Renan's typical procedure here, as elsewhere, is to read the text as an expressive and symbolic totality, Nietzsche is characteristically *suspicious* of its authorship, seeing religious history as proceeding through the falsification of texts. He adds, parenthetically, "One should not underestimate the profound consistency of the Christian instinct when it signed this book of hate with the name of the disciple of love, the same disciple to whom it attributed that amorous-enthusiastic Gospel: there is a piece of truth in this, however much literary counterfeiting might have been required to produce it." Note that Nietzsche can refer to the book as straightforwardly *both* Jewish and Christian, an identification which Renan's strategy is designed to avoid.

Jewish aberration which is *aufgehoben* in a final synthesis. When Nietzsche declares that Christianity, in effect, *is* Judea he is not making an anti-Semitic point; in fact he claims that the Jews are the strongest and most versatile race in Europe.²⁷ The claim is rather that Christianity has simply been the most successful conquest by the spirit of *ressentiment*. So when Nietzsche concludes the first essay of *The Genealogy of Morals*, from which I have been quoting, by reproducing two testimonies to the Christian spirit of revenge, it is significant that he chooses as his spokesmen St. Thomas Aquinas and Tertullian. Thomas, who is quoted as saying that “the blessed in the kingdom of heaven will see the punishments of the damned, *in order that their bliss be more delightful for them*” represents that high Christianity of the thirteenth century which Renan sees as having long since transcended the spirit of revenge. And Nietzsche’s lengthy quotation from Tertullian’s *De Spectaculis* is from a Latin father of the church, explaining in grisly and gloating detail how the torture of the enemies of Christianity in the afterlife will be an infinitely more pleasurable spectacle than the delights of the Roman arena.²⁸ That Nietzsche saw the later history of Europe as essentially continuous with this tradition, including even democracy, socialism, and the life of science as variants of Christian *ressentiment* and asceticism, is probably too familiar to be worth demonstrating at length.

What may be of more specific interest in investigating Nietzsche’s polemic against Renan is the attempt of both writers to formulate an aesthetics of the cruel spectacle, in which the primary example is the theatrical experience of the ancient world. Renan’s commentators have been struck by the apparent inconsistencies in his tone when dealing with Nero, whom Renan sees as both a monster of depravity and a connoisseur, the inventor of a new aesthetics.²⁹ Since Nietzsche is often accused of a rather unbridled enthusiasm for cruelty and the cruel spectacle, it will be of interest to discover just how these are operative in the counter-text which he is presupposing and what sort of changes he makes in reply to Renan’s treatment of the same themes.

Renan’s discussions of the cruel spectacle and the aesthetics of martyrdom occupy several crucial places in his *History*. Of these the most notable is his chapter on “Massacre of the Christians — Nero’s Aesthetics” in *The Antichrist*. Structurally, *The Antichrist* may be said to revolve around two artistic works: Nero’s monstrous theatrical productions and the *Book of Revelations*. It would be difficult to discover a better set of illustrations of the characteristic expressions of master and slave morality as Nietzsche envisions them in the ancient world. Aside from Renan’s rather suspicious tendency to value Nero as a man of great aesthetic sensibility, the central claim of his narrative here is

27 *Beyond Good and Evil*, transl. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1966), 251.

28 *GM*, I, 15.

29. See Wardman, *Renan: historien philosophe*, 73-86.

that Nero was the discoverer of a *novel* aesthetic, that of the *volupté de pudeur*. Renan's entire portrait of Nero is literary. Not only was he "a mediocre but self-sufficient artist" whose "madness mainly took a literary form," but we must imagine him as something of a character in Victor Hugo's novels.

Renan presents Nero's aesthetic career as the convergence of his literary mania with the age's poor literary taste and the already well-established Roman custom of "making torture the occasion for a festival, the sight of butchery a public entertainment."³⁰ Now it is this custom, taken to be characteristic of the ancient world, to which Nietzsche devotes some of the most deliberately shocking pages of *The Genealogy of Morals*. In that inquiry the cruel festival emerges in a search for the origins and rationale of punishment. Having established to his satisfaction that one of the earliest forms of punishment is the exaction by the creditor from the debtor of the equivalent of an unpaid debt and noting that such equivalents were often discharged by giving the creditor the right to mutilate or torture, Nietzsche is faced with the question:

To what extent can suffering balance debts or guilt (*Schulden*)? To the extent that to *make* suffer was in the highest degree pleasurable, to the extent that the injured party exchanged for the loss he had sustained, including the displeasure caused by the loss, an extraordinary counterbalancing pleasure: that of *making* suffer — a genuine *festival*, something which, as aforesaid, was prized the more highly the more violently it contrasted with the rank and social standing of the creditor.³¹

The argument proceeds to suggest that the cruel spectacle of antiquity is a sign of health rather than of sickness: "in the days when mankind was not yet ashamed of its cruelty, life on earth was more cheerful than it is now that pessimists exist."³² Nietzsche is using the festival of cruelty, as Renan does, in order to draw a contrast between the present and antiquity, but unlike Renan he does it to point out the superiority of ancient times. What Renan sees as an anomaly in the system of punishments, Nietzsche sees as its strength. The former remarks that "those who underwent punishment were regarded rather as unfortunate victims than as criminals; in the mass they were considered as nearly innocent, *innocia corpora*."³³ For Nietzsche, however, it is the superiority of the ancient world-view that it allows men to transfer their guilt to the gods. After the crescendo of his discussion of Christianity, which depicts it as the development of the notion that the individual is irredeemably guilty and owes a debt to God which he could never possibly repay, Nietzsche pauses for a contrasting glance at the Greek gods, who "took upon themselves not the punishment but, what is *nobler*, the guilt."³⁴ Now many have been tempted to read such passages in Nietzsche as expressing a rather simple and

30. *OC*, IV, 1222; *Antichrist*, 82.

31. *GM*, II, 6.

32. *GM*, II, 7.

33. *OC*, IV, 1222; *Antichrist*, 82.

34. *GM*, II, 23.

frightening nostalgia for the barbarism of the "blond beast." Even if this were the case, there is still a significant difference between the spectacle of minimal guilt which Nietzsche is describing and modern purges or genocides, which tend to be obsessed with the guilt of their victims and to be more furtive and less public in torturing or executing their victims. But Nietzsche is engaging not so much in primitivistic nostalgia as he is interested in the contrast between Christianity and antiquity. His own ideal is to be distinguished from both. It involves freeing man from individual guilt through the myth of eternal recurrence, according to which all events are so ineluctably intertwined that none of them may be uniquely designated as cause (sinner) or effect (punishment). Such a shift of perspective would restore the "innocence of becoming."³⁵

Renan believes that Nero discovered and made possible a quite new aesthetic ideal on the basis of the spectacle, an ideal which consisted in the violated modesty of the beautiful female martyr. To set the stage for this discovery, Renan pictures Nero as being susceptible to the charm or enticement of the modestly veiled female body, presumably on the grounds that straightforward nudity may have become something of a bore for one so jaded. So he reconstructs Nero's interest in Poppea and Acte. Poppea, for example, is said to be "a courtesan of the most aristocratic circles, skilled in setting off by the refinements of a studied modesty the attractions of her matchless beauty and supreme elegance." This leads to an excursus on Nero's presumed taste in women, according to which he "seems to have been highly sensitive to that charm in women, which results from the union of coquetry with a certain piety."³⁶

Renan sees the spectacle of Christian martyrdom as a development of the same interest in modesty and its violation. Christian women had already adopted an ethos of bodily modesty quite different from pagan frankness. Therefore they would be excellent subjects for Nero's theatrics: "a poor timid girl veiling her nudity with a chaste gesture and then tossed by a bull and rent in fragments on the pebbles of the arena must have offered plastic forms and colors worthy of such a connoisseur."³⁷ Since Nero took part in such festivities by appearing as a beast, he is identified as the beast of the Apocalypse. Yet Nero is not only the beast but an aesthetic pioneer. Renan's summary statement of the new aesthetics is worth quoting, both for its own perversity and in order to contrast it with Nietzsche's view of the ancient spectacle and its modern transformations:

It was a day of note for heaven when Christian chastity, up till then carefully hidden, appeared in the full light of day, before fifty thousand spectators, and

35. The phrase occurs in *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Four Great Errors"; cf. *The Dawn*, 208 "Now, in summa, tell me what this new thing is that you want?" — "We no longer wish causes to be sinners and effects to be executioners."

36. *OC*, IV, 1204; *Antichrist*, 66-67.

37. *OC*, IV, 1227; *Antichrist*, 85.

posed as in a sculptor's studio in the attitude of a virgin awaiting death. Revelation of a secret unknown to antiquity, startling proclamation of the principle that modesty has a voluptuous charm and a beauty all its own! . . . In gaining the applause of a connoisseur so exquisite, of a friend of Petronius, who perhaps saluted the *moritura* with one of those quotations from the Greek poets which he loved, the timid nudity of the young martyr came to rival the self-assured nudity of a Greek Venus. When the brutal hand of that exhausted world, which sought its entertainment in the torments of a poor girl, had torn off the veils of Christian chastity, she might exclaim: "I also am beautiful." It was the principle of a new art. Blossoming forth under the eyes of a Nero, the aesthetics of the disciples of Jesus, up till then self-unconscious, owed the revelation of its magic to the crime which, tearing off its vesture, deflowered it of its virginity.³⁸

Such passages tend to make plausible Nietzsche's disgust with "this kind of 'objective' arm-chair scholar, this kind of scented voluptuary of history, half person, half satyr, perfume by Renan." Renan's most acute commentator notes that the chapter on Nero's aesthetics depends on implicitly associating the calculated modesty of the courtesan with the principled chastity of Christianity and on shifting from the depiction of Nero as a depraved beast to seeing him as one of the great connoisseurs.³⁹ Yet the reason for these displacements is not to be found merely in some peculiar, sadistic feature of Renan himself.

The *History of the Origins of Christianity* is an aesthetic history in a double sense; it not only employs artistic models and paradigms in narrating events, but it also finds the most crucial historical turning-points to be changes of aesthetic or artistic taste. Renan's account of the new beauty of Christianity has been prepared by a running critique of the classical ideal which follows Hegel's contrast of the classical (ancient) and romantic (Christian) forms of art. Hegel distinguishes the perfect self-sufficiency of the Greek norm from the spiritual beauty which rises superior to the body; his paradigms are the perfect statue of the Greek god and the suffering and distorted body of the crucifixion. The first is a spirit self-contained to the point of being almost unconscious; the second shows an awareness that the claims of spirit extend beyond the limits of the body.⁴⁰ Renan's contrast of classical and Christian beauty is a sensationalized version of Hegel's, just as his *History* is a kind of popular presentation of Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. In describing Paul's visit to Athens, Renan finds an excellent occasion for contrasting Greek and Christian sensibility. As in Hegel's account, the Greeks are said to have little feeling for the profundity of death but are an artistic people who take an immediate joy in the present; their art is always a modification of the natural.

38. *OC*, IV, 1232; *Antichrist*, 90.

39. Wardman, *Renan: historien philosophe*, 73-86.

40. For Hegel's contrast of classical and romantic art, see especially his "Introduction" to "The Romantic Form of Art," in *Hegel's Aesthetics*, transl. T. M. Knox (Oxford, 1975), 517-529. Hegel defends the modern practice of clothing statues as spiritually superior to nudity, 742-750. For an enlightening survey of the nature of clothing in art see Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York, 1978).

The mutual failure of comprehension of Paul and the Athenians is thus not at all difficult to explain, as Renan expands it to the difference between the somewhat "blunt and heartless" Greek and the Celts and Germans whose "hearts are the source of our genius."⁴¹

Nietzsche's development of the theme of the spectacle in *The Genealogy of Morals* is a critique of this Renanian-Hegelian valuation of inwardness. Nietzsche agrees that this internalization represents a major shift in taste, but it is a disaster rather than an evolutionary advance. His term for the new form is "bad conscience" and he explains:

All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* — this is what I call the *internalization* of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his soul . . . Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction — all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of bad conscience.⁴²

Bad conscience is, then, an internalization of the theater of cruelty. Each victim of this "illness" plays the double role of both victim and torturer. The growth of Christianity is the intensification of this internal sense of guilt, in which the man of bad conscience becomes an ever more exacting judge and spectator of his own transgressions, which may in turn exist only in the internal theater of conscience. In the history of philosophy this shift from public to private stages coincides with the transition from the classical philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, with its orientation toward the state, to the Augustinian concern with the interiority and subjectivity of individual experience. One of Augustine's own crucial experiences in his path toward conversion was his rejection of the classical theater and its spectacle; his tortured self-examination is then a paradigm both of bad conscience and of internal theater. The Cartesian mode in which so much of modern philosophy is cast is thoroughly Augustinian; even the British empiricists are given to using metaphors of internal theater, such as Locke's "empty cabinet" of the mind, in order to describe the locus of subjective experience. The closing motto of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, "*Dionysus vs. the Crucified*" may be read as a juxtaposition of two theatrical modes. Both gods preside over and enact a spectacle of sacrifice. But the Dionysian spectacle is one in which there is an opening up to the world and a dissolution of the boundaries of the isolated ego; in Nietzsche's understanding Christ's sacrifice is a form of "psychical cruelty" in which there "resides a madness of the will which is absolutely unexampled: the *will* of man to find himself guilty and reprehensible to a degree that can never be

41. *OC*, IV, 848-874, esp. 871; *St Paul*, 124-145, esp. 142.

42. *GM*, II, 16. It must also be noted that "internalization" is hardly an unqualified disaster for Nietzsche. In the same section he remarks that now man is for the first time "*pregnant with a future*" and "gives rise to an interest, a tension, a hope, almost a certainty, as if with him something were announcing and preparing itself."

atoned for."⁴³ The identification of Nero and Antichrist could then be read by Nietzsche — who also calls himself the Antichrist — in a quite different sense than the one intended by Renan. From this perspective Nero would not be the inventor of the internal theater and the unwitting destroyer of the classical ideal of harmony and beauty. That ideal which owes so much to Schiller, Winckelmann, and Hegel is one which Nietzsche argues, from *The Birth of Tragedy* on, never really existed. Nero could be seen as a precursor of Artaud, who saw his mission as the liberation of theater from the bondage of the text and the production of a theatrical event which was no longer a representation but an *event* in which there could no longer be spectators who distanced themselves from the action. Here Artaud's pronouncements on the theater may be taken as developments of Nietzsche's conception: "I propose to treat the spectators like the snakecharmer's subjects and conduct them *by means of their organisms* to an apprehension of the subtlest notions"⁴⁴ and "the highest possible idea of the theater is one that reconciles us philosophically with Becoming."⁴⁵ One of Artaud's planned theatrical programs had to do with the theme of the fall of Jerusalem, a spectacle which Renan enjoys vicariously through a distanced re-creation in his *Antichrist*.⁴⁶ It may be that Renan's description of his literary madness had something to do with evoking Nietzsche's triumphant "I am all the names of history" in a postcard to Jacob Burckhardt written at the onset of his own madness:

The fantasies of all centuries, of all poems, of all legends, Bacchus and Sardanapalus, Ninus and Priam, Troy and Babylon, Homer and the insipid verse of his own day, were jostled chaotically together in his brain, the feeble brain of a mediocre but self-sufficient artist, to whom chance had granted the power to realise all his wildest dreams.⁴⁷

Nietzsche, who styled himself as the Antichrist (or on occasion as "the crucified") in his last written communications and who came to think of his own *Antichrist* as being the whole of the "Transvaluation of Values," fantasized that he had been given the power which Nero actually had.

III

Despite his reputation to the contrary, there is not much in Nietzsche's writings to suggest that he looked forward to a political reenactment of the ancient

43. *GM*, II, 23. Cf. Jacques Derrida's essay "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" in *Writing and Difference*, transl. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1978), 232-250.

44. Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and its Double*, transl. Mary Caroline Richards (New York, 1958), 81.

45. *The Theater and its Double*, 109.

46. *The Theater and its Double*, 99.

47. *OC*, IV, 1198; *Antichrist*, 61. Nietzsche's letter to Burckhardt is dated January 6, 1889.

theater of cruelty. Yet such is not the case with Renan. Renan's *Philosophical Dialogues* contains a scenario of just the sort which has often with little justification been foisted on Nietzsche. The third of the *Dialogues*, "Dreams," consists largely of a fantasy of a scientific and intellectual oligarchy which will rule the world through the use of weapons so complex that they could be used only by members of the elite. Theoctistes, the advocate of this idea, says that the rule of science will be more like Islam than Christianity, for it will require only obedience, not conversion. Truth may not be comforting or cheerful, so that the power of those who discover it may have to be enforced by vicious mercenaries. The final vision is appalling:

Truth will one day be power. . . . The worship of reason will then be a truth; for whoever shall offer any resistance to it, that is to say, shall not recognize the reign of science, will have to atone for his offence on the spot. . . . A broad application of the discoveries of physiology and of the principle of selection might lead to the creation of a superior race, deriving its right to rule not only from its science, but from the very superiority of its blood, its brain, and its nerves. . . . Thus we can imagine a time when all that formerly held sway in the form of prejudice and groundless opinion may hold sway as genuine and true: gods, heaven, hell, spiritual power, monarchy, nobility, legitimacy, superiority of race, supernatural powers, may all be revived by virtue of the existence of man and of reason. Should such a solution ever be in any measure realized on the face of the planet earth, it seems as though Germany would fulfill it.⁴⁸

In his preface to the *Dialogues* Renan is careful to ask that he not be identified with any specific character or statement in the work. Nevertheless, the *Dialogues* seem to exhibit a progression of increasingly authoritative and comprehensive perspectives, of which Theoctistes is the last. Even Theoctistes, however, says that the last identification of Germany as the possible home of a scientific master-race may be taken as either praise or blame.

One of Nietzsche's first important critics, Georg Brandes, cites Renan's *Dialogues* in suggesting that Nietzsche's "aristocratic radicalism" was quite similar to the French thinker's. From the *Dialogues* he quotes the claim that "in fine, the object of humanity is the production of great men . . . nothing but great men" as evidence that Renan "would have subscribed to Nietzsche's fundamental idea that a nation is the roundabout way nature goes in order to produce a dozen great men."⁴⁹ It may very well have been Brandes who first gave some currency to the view that the Nietzschean *Übermensch* was to be thought of along the lines of Renan's scientific world-rulers. For he suggested in his pamphlet of 1889, "Friedrich Nietzsche: An Essay on Aristocratic

48. *OC*, I, 615-619; *Philosophical Dialogues and Fragments*, 63-67.

49. Georg Brandes, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, transl. A. G. Chater (New York, n.d.), 12-13. See also Brandes's essay "Ernest Renan," in *Eminent Authors of the Nineteenth Century*, transl. Rasmus B. Anderson (New York, 1886).

Radicalism" that the *Übermensch* was a more dogmatic version of that which Renan had expressed tentatively in the form of the dialogue.⁵⁰

Although Nietzsche was delighted with Brandes's cosmopolitanism and his recognition (Brandes gave the first series of public lectures on Nietzsche's philosophy), he had already given his answer to the alleged link with Renan by declaring him his antipodes. The aphorism in which he does so, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, is part of the chapter "What is Religious?" The aphorism will repay a detailed reading, for Nietzsche often discloses himself most by his critique of others. The aphorism begins with a complex play of ethnic categories in which Nietzsche articulates the antipodal relation:

It seems that Catholicism is much more intimately related to the Latin races than all of Christianity in general is to us northerners — and unbelief therefore means something altogether different in Catholic and Protestant countries: among *them*, a kind of rebellion against the spirit of the race, while among us it is rather a return to the spirit (or anti-spirit) of the race. We northerners are undoubtedly descended from barbarian races, which also shows in our talent for religion: we have *little* talent for it. We may except the Celts, who therefore also furnished the best soil for the spread of the Christian infection to the north: in France the Christian ideal came to flourish as much as the pale sun of the north permitted it. How strangely pious for our taste are even the most recent French skeptics insofar as they have any Celtic blood! How Catholic, how un-German August Comte's sociology smells to us with its Roman logic of the instincts! How Jesuitical that gracious and clever cicerone of Port-Royal, Sainte-Beuve, in spite of all his hostility against the Jesuits! And especially Ernest Renan . . .

Nietzsche's parallels between religious and ethnic identities here are just the reverse of Renan's. Renan had suggested that the Greeks were too this-worldly for a religion like Christianity, which was properly the possession of the northern races; the Latins formed an intermediate type, on the whole closer to the Greeks. He was proud of his own Celtic origins and eulogized the Celtic penchant for mystery and the longing for the infinite. Much of the progressive view of history in Renan's *Origins* depends upon this notion of Christianity finally coming to its proper locale among "ourselves," the northern races. For Nietzsche the genuine northerners play the skeptical role which Renan attributes to the Greeks, while the Celts are fundamentally anomalous, much as Renan had seen the Jews as an anomaly in both the ancient and the modern worlds.

Renan, then, is one of the "strangely pious" French skeptics whose piety must be *explained*, given Nietzsche's general admiration for the skeptical psychology of the French. Such strange piety should have already been sufficiently documented in this essay. But it may not be so obvious that even such a passage as the apocalyptic development of the "knowledge is power" theme in Renan's *Dialogues* may well have appeared "strangely pious" to Nietzsche,

50. Brandes, *Nietzsche*, 36-37.

rather than as a version of his own "aristocratic radicalism." In the very same series of speeches in which Theoctistes develops his "nightmare-dream" of "the government of the world by reason" in the German spirit, it is clear that this fantastic project has a very un-Nietzschean theological dimension. For the project of organizing the universe by the scientific elite is said to be the *realization* of that which religion has only dreamed of. This is one sense in which Renan's work was correctly characterized as popular Hegelianism. It takes the identity of God and man in a left-Hegelian sense as something to be achieved and consummated through history, and more specifically through man's becoming aware of himself through that history. So Theoctistes continues the vision:

Thus the universe might be consummated in a single organised being, in whose infinity would be summed up at once myriads of myriads of lives, those that are dead and those that are living. . . . Already we participate in the life of the universe (a life as yet very imperfect) through science, morality, and art. Religions are the epitomised and popular forms of this participation; in this their sacredness consists. But nature aspires to a far closer and more intense communion, a communion which will attain its final term only when there shall arise a really perfect being.⁵¹

Given the political context of the *Dialogues*, Renan may have been most interested in the social consequences of this evolutionary religion, according to which it is right and proper for the lower classes to enjoy the achievements and pleasures of their superiors in vicarious fashion. Yet neither the traditional aristocracies nor the future scientific elite which he prophesies resembles very closely Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch*. The latter is one who has *overcome* (*überwinden*) the human condition, even in its bondage to linear time, of which Renan's evolutionary scheme offers a classical paradigm. In the last essay of *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche also makes quite clear his view that science does not offer an alternative to the life of religion. There he argues that the scientific way of life is simply a minor variation on the ascetic ideal; it involves the sacrifice of one's own desires and goods for the sake of an infinite goal, the attainment of scientific truth (and in Renan's version, technological world-supremacy). The true opposition is not religion and science — the more popular dichotomy of the nineteenth century — but "Plato vs. Homer," art against science. The *Übermensch* is much closer to the creative artist than he is to the science-fiction fantasy of the power-mad scientist.⁵² The common element in Nietzsche and Renan, as Brandes correctly saw, is an aristocratic or oligarchical tendency; but all aristocracies or oligarchies are not equal. Zarathustra does repeat a number of times his question "Who will be the lords of the earth?" In reading this question, as Heidegger

51 *OC*, I, 622; *Philosophical Dialogues and Fragments*, 70-71.

52 *GM*, III, 23-28, which contains the critique of Renan and contemplative historiography quoted earlier.

suggests, we should place as much weight on the notion of *earth* as on the apparently more familiar one of lordship. As understood in *Zarathustra*, the earth is not the universe or even the terrestrial sphere as conceived by the natural sciences; that is, it cannot be reduced to a set of laws and variables. It is rather the world of experience, the earth as it is lived as the background of all activities. The distinction is suggested in the last stages of Nietzsche's sketch of the history of metaphysics in "How the 'True World' Became a Fable" (in *Twilight of the Idols*). This world, when it is conceived (as in traditional religion and metaphysics) as a secondary emanation of the "true world," is thought of as approximating the rational structure of the latter. Positivism is the philosophical view which takes the "true world" to be unknown and unknowable but which retains the conception that *this* world is to be correctly conceived according to the principles of science. Yet once the idea of a "true world" behind the scenes ceases to have any appeal, there is no reason to retain its pale reflection. Nietzsche's way of formulating this is simple: "We have abolished the real world: What world is left? the apparent world perhaps? . . . But no! *with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!*" If this world is no longer conceived as the contrast of a beyond (*Jenseits*) then it can be thought and experienced as Zarathustra experiences it, as the world of joys, hopes, and sorrows: a world of "radical empiricism" (as in William James) or the *Lebenswelt* (of phenomenology).

Now we can read the second half of the long aphorism about Renan:

How inaccessible the language of such a Renan sounds to us northerners: at one instant after another some nothing of religious tension unbalances his soul, which is, in the more refined sense, voluptuous and inclined to stretch out comfortably. Let us speak after him these beautiful sentences — and how much malice and high spirits stir immediately in our probably less beautiful and harder, namely more German, soul as a response!

"Disons donc hardiment que la religion est un produit de l'homme normal, que l'homme est le plus dans le vrai quand il est le plus religieux et le plus assuré d'une destinée infinie. . . . C'est quand il est bon qu'il veut que la vertu corresponde à un ordre éternel, c'est quand il contemple les choses d'une manière désintéressée qu'il trouve la mort révoltante et absurde. Comment ne pas supposer que c'est dans ces moments-là, que l'homme voit le mieux?"

These sentences are so utterly *antipodal* to my ears and habits that on finding them my first wrath wrote on the margin "la maiserie religieuse par excellence!" But my subsequent wrath actually took a fancy to them — these sentences standing truth on her head! It is so neat, so distinguished to have one's own antipodes!⁵³

As so often, Nietzsche's critique of another thinker begins with a matter of *style*. He is willing to grant the superior beauty of Renan's limpid French in contrast to his own "malice and high spirits." But this is just to say that Renan

53. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 48. The quotation from Renan is in *OC*, I, 280. I owe the reference to Harold Wardman who points out that Nietzsche has altered the wording, but not the sense, of the passage.

is essentially a southerner, imprisoned in that classical world of beauty from which he had attempted to distance himself. Renan is an aesthetic positivist whose scientific leanings reveal the debt which positivism owes to religion and transcendental metaphysics. When Renan allows himself to dream, as in his *Dialogues* or in many of the personal excursions with which he embroiders his *History*, the religious goal of his scientism becomes clear. Renan, who had left the seminary because he could not reconcile religion with his scientific knowledge, repressed religion. His later works, no matter how positivistic their official ideology, disclose a return of the repressed. This helps to suggest the immense strength of Renan's appeal in the nineteenth century. He allowed his readers to believe themselves scientific and even a bit skeptical, while still allowing them to indulge in religious sentiments, to let them become "voluptuous" and "to stretch out comfortably."

IV

Renan's most striking success along these lines was of course his *Life of Jesus*. That work enables us to place Nietzsche's *Antichrist*, which contains his most extended consideration of the life and person of Jesus, in a fuller context than that in which it has usually been considered. Most of Nietzsche's commentators, even the sympathetic among them, have been offended at the apparent shrillness and unbridled polemics of that book.⁵⁴ It has often been supposed that the *Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo*, both written just before Nietzsche's collapse, are colored by his approaching madness. Yet in one sense the *Antichrist* is a very conventional nineteenth-century book which can be viewed, without great distortion, as part of a major genre of the time: a contemporary life of Jesus, written by a philologist, which claims to investigate its subject without the aid of revelation and to articulate its implications for contemporary religious and secular life. David Friedrich Strauss had begun the genre with his left-Hegelian *Life of Jesus* in 1835. With its rejection of the miraculous and its high criticism of the sources the book scandalized the theological establishment and ruined Strauss's official career. The notoriety and official disfavor of the author became something of an attraction for readers who might want to think of themselves as free spirits. In any case the older Strauss became a staunch defender of Prussia who engaged in a polemical political correspondence with Renan. The later incorporation of the onetime maverick into the cultural establishment also became part of the typical career of the writer of a life of Jesus. In Strauss's case it was signaled by his *Der alte und der neue*

54. For a more extended consideration of Nietzsche's *Antichrist* see Gary Shapiro, "Nietzsche's Graffito: A Reading of the *Antichrist*" in *Boundary 2* (Winter 1981, Nietzsche issue). The most useful account of the *Life of Jesus* genre is still Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* [1906] (New York, 1961).

Glaube which glorified the culture of the newspaper, what Nietzsche called “cultural philistinism” in his first *Untimely Meditation on David Strauss, Writer and Confessor*. Renan’s career conforms to much the same pattern. *The Life of Jesus* which he published in 1863 was an immense and immediate *succès de scandale* which was both one of the best-selling European books of the year and the cause of the author’s removal from the chair of Semitic languages at the Collège de France.

As we have already seen, Renan attempts to follow the narrative principles of the great realistic novels of the nineteenth century. That is, he assumes that the realistic novels have discovered the most truthful method of depicting human nature and history and then proceeds to construct his own history along the same lines. Specifically, a life must be seen in relation to its milieu, both natural and social. Here Renan is indebted to the contextualism of Balzac, which has been masterfully analyzed by Erich Auerbach. Just as Balzac created scenes in which characters, interior settings, and clothing are all mutually expressive of each other and form a larger whole of meaning which grounds significance of the parts, so Renan describes Jesus’ character as inseparable from his Nazarene environment, which is so “charming” that “no place in the world was so well adapted for dreams of perfect happiness.”⁵⁵ Renan here superimposes George Sand’s pastoral vision on Balzac’s contextualism. He becomes an omniscient narrator by testifying himself to the *genius loci* of the various sites of the life of Jesus, reminding us that he has been there himself. Jesus’ shift, in his last months, from blissfulness to anger is explained in part by his change of locale from Galilee to Jerusalem. Renan also recognizes what Roland Barthes has called “the effect of the real” as a constituent of realistic narrative. In assessing the authenticity of St. John’s Gospel, for example, he argues that frequent references to specific details, such as “it was the sixth hour,” “the servant’s name was Malchus,” or “they had made a fire of coals, for it was cold,” reveals the touch of the genuine observer rather than the later compiler or inventor of legends.⁵⁶ In his own narrative Renan does not fail to milk such details for all that they might be worth.

The plot of *The Life of Jesus* is a consequence of Renan’s conjunction of the pastoral and urban modes of the realistic novel. The first part is pastoral and fills in the details of Jesus’ natural surroundings, his companions, an idealized vision of Mediterranean peasant life, his learning in the Jewish scriptures and his idyllic family life.⁵⁷

In this pastoral setting Renan makes plausible a Jesus who felt himself to be immediately and peacefully close to God, not in ecstasy or hallucination,

55. *OC*, IV, 102; *Life of Jesus*, 86. For Auerbach’s analysis of Balzac’s contextualism see *Mimesis* (Princeton, 1953), chapter 18.

56. *OC*, IV, 62; *Life of Jesus*, 43.

57. *OC*, IV, 125-127; *Life of Jesus*, 114-116.

but as a son close to an idealized father. This blissful period of unity is characteristic of Jesus' early days only, "of those chaste and pure days when the voice of the Father re-echoed within him in clearer tones. It was then for some months, perhaps a year, that God truly dwelt upon the earth."⁵⁸ When John the Baptist appeared in the midst of these reveries he gave Jesus no new ideas, but the impetus to preach. He becomes a "transcendent revolutionary" preaching that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, that is, that all men will soon share his own beatific vision of things. As he extends the orbit of his teaching he becomes increasingly disenchanted in his contacts with established Judaism, and so is led into ever more virulent opposition to the established order. He now believes himself to be the Messiah, and tolerates the legendary beliefs which spread among his followers. His hostility to the actual, that is, to the corruption represented by Jerusalem, becomes so great that he proclaims the insubstantiality of both family and state. From this point on, Renan assures us, Jesus' approaching death was a narrative and aesthetic necessity:

It was not that his virtue deteriorated: but his struggle for the ideal against the reality became insupportable. . . . death came to liberate him from an endurance strained to the utmost, to remove him from the impossibilities of an interminable path.⁵⁹

Having set the scene, Renan has no difficulty in orchestrating the crescendo of Jesus' clash with the priests, his condemnation, and his crucifixion.

In his *Antichrist* Nietzsche challenges both the substance of Renan's account and, more generally, his attempt to apply any narrative principles to the life of Jesus. Insofar as he is concerned with the person of Jesus, Nietzsche constructs a psychological account which does not differ greatly from the pastoral stage in Renan's version. Yet any reconstruction of the figure of Jesus, Nietzsche argues, is made almost impossible since "the type of the redeemer has been preserved to us only in a very distorted form" because even the earliest Christian community "retrospectively enriched [Jesus] with traits which become comprehensible only with reference to warfare and the aims of propaganda."⁶⁰ Since the entire tradition has repeated this process of falsification, Nietzsche is completely skeptical of all such reconstructive efforts as Renan's. Nevertheless, he offers his own account, which, when it is understood, may help in the understanding of the apparent paradox posed by the juncture of his skepticism and his claims to historical knowledge. According to Nietzsche, Jesus was always a blissful naif with no interest in belief, the other world, rewards, or promises.⁶¹

Jesus, then, was simple and ahistorical. He is not to be understood narra-

58. *OC*, IV, 135-136; *Life of Jesus*, 125.

59. *OC*, IV, 284-285; *Life of Jesus*, 294.

60. *Antichrist*, 31.

61. *Antichrist*, 32.

tively, because he remained the same and had no development. Nietzsche's affirmations of Jesus' simplicity and ahistoricity are formulated often as denials of the complexity and development found in Renan's *Life*:

There yawns a contradiction between the mountain, lake and field preacher, whose appearance strikes one as that of a Buddha on a soil very little like that of India, and the aggressive fanatic, the mortal enemy of theologian and priest, which Renan has wickedly glorified as "*le grand maître en ironie*."⁶²

I resist . . . the incorporation of the fanatic into the type of the redeemer: the word *imperieux* alone which Renan employs here *annuls* the type.⁶³

Nietzsche's view, then, seems to approach the orthodox criticism of Renan. Jesus is a unique figure who cannot be understood by the principles of realistic narrative. Yet the grounds of the critique are quite different. It is not that Nietzsche recognized the authority of revelation, but that he rejects the supposed primacy of realistic narrative as a way of describing this world. Renan is taken as exemplifying the furthest possibilities of the realistic approach and therefore as also demonstrating its limits. Renan's belief in the viability of his particular narrative account of Jesus is based upon his general view of history as organic and continuous. Since Nietzsche rejects this general approach for what he calls genealogy, he also doubts the adequacy of the realistic narrative as applied to a specific life or historical segment. In the widest context, the issue here is between Hegel (represented by Renan) and Nietzsche's own conception of eternal recurrence, that is, between narrative and non-narrative views of reality. More specifically, within the philological context which is often invoked in the *Antichrist*, it is a rather radical distinction in the ways in which Nietzsche and Renan interpret the results of the German higher criticism. Renan was deeply impressed by Strauss's attempt to construct a coherent biography of Jesus by means of a critical and comparative assessment of the various sources, supposing that none are beyond criticism and that the concepts of miracle and revelation are of no historical value. Renan, as we have seen, is delighted by the possibilities which such an approach offers for an explicitly secular history of Christianity, although it is one which still retains, as Nietzsche points out, a religious subtext. Nietzsche admits that when he was twenty he too "savoured the work of the incomparable Strauss." But now he argues that "The stories of saints are the most ambiguous literature in existence: to apply to them scientific procedures *when no other records are extant* seems to me wrong in principle — mere learned idling . . ."⁶⁴

What has intervened, philologically speaking, between the work of Renan and Nietzsche is Julius Wellhausen's remarkable *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, which appeared in 1878, after Renan had already completed

62. *Antichrist*, 31.

63. *Antichrist*, 32.

64. *Antichrist*, 28.

five of the seven volumes of his *Origins*. Nietzsche does not mention Wellhausen by name but his distinctive theses are an important part of the argument of the *Antichrist*. Wellhausen had argued on philological grounds that the Law could not possibly be the basis of the histories and prophetic writings. Its composition follows the exile after the Assyrian victory over Israel in the sixth century and coincides with the transition from Israel, a land of warriors, kings, and prophets, to Judaism, a priestly religion with an extensive emphasis on law and ritual. The priests consolidated their power by editing the scriptures and adding new ones, falsely predated, which radically displaced priestly law into a much earlier time. In a capsule history of Israel and Judaism in the *Antichrist* Nietzsche draws on Wellhausen's thesis to explain how natural values are denaturalized.⁶⁵ The general philological conclusion which he draws is that the history of religion is a history of falsification and distortions.⁶⁶

The "Law," the "will of God," the "sacred book," "inspiration" — all merely words for the conditions *under* which the priest comes to power, *by* which he maintains his power — these concepts are to be found at the basis of all priestly organizations, all priestly or priestly-philosophical power-structures (*Herrschaftsgebilde*).⁶⁷

In the philological sense, Christianity is completely continuous with Judaism; its texts are always the products of *Herrschaftsgebilde*, not the naive fragments of an organic history which will later be pieced together by an actually naive historian. The church, Christianity, and their secularized heirs (like Renan) have an interest in establishing the continuity of the Christian "tradition" (a word which Nietzsche writes in quotation marks in the *Antichrist*); it is natural to suppose that a continuous and intelligible life, understood either theologically or realistically, is the ground or foundation of such a larger continuity. Yet beneath every asserted continuity, whether that of the early church or the ostensibly secular historian, Nietzsche detects the workings of *Herrschaftsgebilde*. Nietzsche's nonnarrative "life of Jesus" is really an attack on the narrative principle itself. Rather than claiming, paradoxically, to provide the final historical and philological truth about that which has been distorted by a series of radical rewritings, Nietzsche is rather performing something like a transcendental deduction of Jesus as a blank page on which the angry and passionate graffiti of various generations and groups with differing and competing interests have been inscribed. So Nietzsche's descriptions of Jesus' character can be read on a semiotic and methodological level, as in the following: "If I understand anything of this great symbolist it is that he took for realities, for 'truths,' only *inner* realities — that he understood the

65. *Antichrist*, 25-27. Nietzsche had been reading Wellhausen just a few months before writing the *Antichrist*; see Janz, *Nietzsche Biographie*, II, 578, 627.

66. *Antichrist*, 26.

67. *Antichrist*, 55.

rest, everything pertaining to nature, time, space, history, only as signs, as occasions for metaphor.”⁶⁸

To say that for Jesus everything is internal is a material way of expressing a more important formal point: Jesus has no significant contextual relations and is therefore inaccessible to realistic historiography. This is the theme which runs through Nietzsche’s polemic with Renan and the vulgar Hegelianism which he represents:

The attempts I know of to extract even the *history* of a “soul” from the Gospels seem to me proofs of an execrable psychological frivolity. Monsieur Renan, that buffoon *in psychologicis*, has appropriated for his explication of the type Jesus the two *most inapplicable* concepts possible in this case: the concept of the *genius* and the concept of the *hero*. But if anything is unevangelic it is the concept hero. Precisely the opposite of all contending, of all feeling oneself in struggle has here become instinct: the incapacity for resistance here becomes morality. . . . Our whole concept, our cultural concept “spirit” (“*Geist*”) had no meaning whatever in the world Jesus lived in.⁶⁹

In debased Hegelianism, heroism and genius are to be understood as involving the development through conflict which is essential to *Geist*. To say that there is no *Geist* here is to rule out the use of such categories. Nevertheless, Nietzsche does suggest *another* narrative that might have been written about Jesus. After claiming that the physiologist would properly call Jesus an “idiot,” he expresses the “regret that no Dostoyevsky lived in the neighborhood of this most interesting *decadent*; I mean someone who could feel the thrilling fascination of such a combination of the sublime, the sick, and the childish.”⁷⁰ The reference seems to be to Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*, in which Prince Myshkin is such a blank page as Nietzsche supposes Jesus to be. The action of the novel consists not of any development or conflict of this central character — who cannot be called a hero — but of the whirling centrifugal motion of a circle of others who find him an object of fascination or dread.

V

Renan’s place in Nietzsche’s last works may still seem to be something of a puzzle. The French writer is no longer supposed, as he once was, to have contributed much of lasting significance to philosophy or history. His enormous influence on such diverse figures as Anatole France, Sir James Frazer, Matthew Arnold, and Oscar Wilde is now a curiosity for the intellectual historian. Literary scholars are still occasionally interested in him as a great stylist, and historians of France note his combination, not always coherent,

68. *Antichrist*, 34.

69. *Antichrist*, 29.

70. *Antichrist*, 31.

of many currents of thought in French political and cultural life.⁷¹ Nietzsche, on the other hand, has been elevated almost to the status which Aristotle once had in the French universities of the middle ages. Philosophical controversy now often takes place by means of commentary and exegesis of the words of the German master. The apparent discrepancy does little to account for Nietzsche's interest and polemic. Of course Renan was not the only contemporary figure with whom Nietzsche was concerned or obsessed, although many, like Wagner, seem to have stood the test of time much more successfully.

I want to suggest a further reason which may have contributed to Nietzsche's interest in Renan. Nietzsche's later notebooks are littered with plans and sketches for a comprehensive philosophical work which would have been called *The Will to Power* or "The Transvaluation of Values." In *Ecce Homo* and elsewhere he suggests that the *Antichrist* comprises the first book of "The Transvaluation." For many years it has been traditional to read Nietzsche in the light of his failure to achieve this encyclopedic work. Nietzsche's sister and Peter Gast even pieced together a number of fragments from the notebooks and published them as *The Will to Power*, and this "book" still plays a surprisingly large role in studies of Nietzsche. A more sophisticated extension of the same tendency is Heidegger's attempt to read Nietzsche in the light of the great work which he was struggling to complete. Yet one might also wonder whether Nietzsche was in fact capable of writing such a systematic and synthetic work. This suspicion was first voiced as the view that Nietzsche was essentially a fragmentary and aphoristic writer who could not complete a single coherent book; this belief is still held by most of Nietzsche's French commentators, although they have transvalued and glorified the fragment.⁷² Elsewhere I have attempted to show that Nietzsche's books do, taken one at a time, generally meet his own stylistic demand of unity.⁷³ Yet, as he says in *Ecce Homo*, each is quite distinct, revealing an individual style, expressing distinctive psychological possibilities.⁷⁴ So the doubt as to Nietzsche's fitness for his self-imposed task remains.

In terms of Nietzsche's hope to complete a definitive and systematic exposition of his philosophy, I think it is possible to hazard a reconstruction of his interest in Renan, which seems to have accelerated as the project came to occupy a larger role in his life. We might note, first, that the multi-volume

71. Theodore Zeldin recounts some of Renan's French influence in *Taste and Corruption* (New York, 1980), 255-256

72. See especially Jacques Derrida, *Eperons/Spurs* and more generally the works of Sarah Kofman, Gilles Deleuze, and others; partial translations are available in *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David Allison (New York, 1977).

73. See "The Rhetoric of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*" in *Philosophical Style*, ed. Berel Lang (Chicago, 1980) and "Nietzsche's Graffito."

74. *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Write Such Good Books," 1.

treatise or series of works was the preferred mode of philosophical exposition in the second half of the nineteenth century. Most of these *Summas*, like Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive* and Spencer's *A System of Philosophy*, gather dust on the shelves, not only because of our relatively low opinion of their authors but because we lack a feeling for the form in which they wrote. Even a figure like John Stuart Mill is remembered for essays like *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty* rather than for his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, which he regarded, with some justice, as his most comprehensive philosophical statement. In the United States Charles Peirce projected a great series of twelve volumes, *The Principles of Philosophy: or Logic, Physics and Psychics Considered as a Unity, in the Light of the Nineteenth Century*; but he could find neither the leisure nor the psychological resources to make much progress with it.⁷⁵ In Germany, Nietzsche recognized the weakness of thinkers like Eugen Dühring and Eduard von Hartmann, but he persisted in his effort to beat them at their own game. Among such writers Renan's efforts were not, at the time, implausible. His *Origins of the History of Christianity* was a synthesis of history and philosophy which helped to ground many of his more topical or polemical publications. That Renan attempted such a synthesis may very well have been of interest to Nietzsche, who aimed at being a philosopher both of his own age and of eternity. As it is, Nietzsche's works tend to be, as he classified them in *Ecce Homo*, either relatively timeless works like *Zarathustra* or polemical and topical, like *Beyond Good and Evil*. Many of Nietzsche's sketches for his great work suggest that it was to be philosophical and historical. One plan makes the *Antichrist* the first of the series, to be followed by two books which would be critiques, respectively, of European philosophy and morality, and concludes with "Dionysus: Philosopher of Eternal Recurrence." This suggests that Nietzsche may have wanted to begin with an historical and methodological critique of religious and philosophical history and to have ended with a repudiation of narrative and historical thinking. This would have been an inversion and parody of Renan's (or Hegel's) attempt to show that truth is the daughter of time. Yet this suggestion must remain as speculative as our guesses as to why Nietzsche's madness came on just at the time when, as he says in *Ecce Homo*, he was about to "confront humanity with the most difficult demand ever made of it."

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75. Charles Peirce, *Collected Papers*, VIII (Cambridge, 1958), 282-286.