

things higher than life itself; yet out of this evaluation itself speaks—the will to power.”¹¹⁴

Note what Nietzsche is saying the real causal power is: The *will to power* works *through* those individuals; it is *not* that those individuals develop and use power.

There is legitimate controversy among scholars over this interpretation of Nietzsche, but to the extent this interpretation is true it does undermine Nietzsche’s reputation as an individualist and strengthens the claim the Nazis have on him as a philosophical forerunner.

35. Conflict of groups

A second major point of agreement between Nietzsche and the Nazis is their view of conflict. For both, conflict is the fundamental human reality. Both believe firmly that life is a matter of some individuals and groups gaining at the expense of others.

The Nazis were clear about this in theory and practice. They did not believe it possible for Aryans and Jews to live in harmony. Nor did the Nazis believe that Germany could live in harmony with the liberal capitalist nations of the West.

In the liberal capitalist nations, by contrast, many economists and politicians had come to believe that conflict and war may become a thing of the past. The productive power of the Industrial Revolution was creating great wealth and surpluses, and those surpluses were leading to increased trade between nations that was mutually beneficial. Trade was a powerful harmonizing force, leading nations to want to do business with each other rather than make war.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Z 2:12.

¹¹⁵ For example, the great British politician Richard Cobden argued that commerce is “the grand panacea, which, like a beneficent medical discovery, will serve to inoculate with the healthy and saving taste for civilization all the nations of the world” (Cobden 1903, p. 36). Consider also Norman Angell, speaking to the Institute of Bankers in London on January 17, 1912,

The Nazis rejected that view and argued that recent economic history was a matter of the Jews and the capitalists advancing their interests at the expense of Germany's.

Nietzsche shares wholly with the Nazis the general point about zero-sum conflict. In his words, “The well-being of the majority and the well-being of the few are opposite viewpoints of value.”¹¹⁶ But even more strongly, he believes that this conflict is not merely a matter of historical and cultural accident but is built into the requirements of life:

“Here one must think profoundly to the very basis and resist all sentimental weakness: life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of peculiar forms, incorporation and at the least, putting it mildest, exploitation.”¹¹⁷

The horse eats the grass; the lion kills the horse; the man rides the horse and kills the lion. Life is an ongoing struggle between strong and weak, predator and prey. Cooperation and trade are possible, but they are superficial interludes between more fundamental animal facts about life. As Nietzsche again puts it: “‘Life always lives at the expense of other life’—he who does not grasp this has not taken even the first

on “The Influence of Banking on International Relations”: “commercial interdependence, which is the special mark of banking as it is the mark of no other profession or trade in quite the same degree -- the fact that the interest and solvency of one is bound up with the interest and solvency of many; that there must be confidence in the due fulfillment of mutual obligation, or whole sections of the edifice crumble, is surely doing a great deal to demonstrate that morality after all is not founded upon self-sacrifice, but upon enlightened self-interest, a clearer and more complete understanding of all the ties that bind us the one to the other. And such clearer understanding is bound to improve, not merely the relationship of one group to another, but the relationship of all men to all other men, to create a consciousness which must make for more efficient human co-operation, a better human society” (quoted in Keegan 1999, pp. 11-12).

¹¹⁶ *GM*, end of First Essay note.

¹¹⁷ *BGE* 259.

step toward honesty with himself.”¹¹⁸

On this key point, Nietzsche and the Nazis agree.

Given that conflict is inescapable, the next question is: How will the conflicts be resolved?

36. Instinct, passion, and anti-reason

Hitler was fond of saying, in private, “What luck that men do not think.”

Another significant point of agreement exists between Nietzsche and the Nazis: both agree that the great conflicts will not be solved rationally, through the processes of discussion, argument, persuasion, or diplomacy. Both Nietzsche and the Nazis are irrationalists in their view of human psychology—and this has important social and political implications.

Think about democracy for a moment. In particular, think about how much confidence in the power of reason that democracy requires. Democracy is a matter of decentralizing political power to individuals by, for example, giving each individual a vote. The assumption of democracy is that individuals have the ability to weigh and judge important matters and cast a responsible vote. The expectation is that members of democracies will have ongoing discussions and arguments about all sorts of issues, and that they will be able to assess the evidence, the arguments and counter-arguments. And they will be able to learn from their mistakes and, when appropriate, change their votes the next time around.

It is not an accident that neither Nietzsche nor the Nazis were advocates of either democracy or reason.

Hitler considered a highly-developed intellect to be a weakness and too much reliance on reason to be a sickness. Germany’s recent problems, he believed, stemmed from too much thinking. “The intellect has grown autocratic, and has become a disease of life.” What Germany required was *passion*,

¹¹⁸ WP 369.