

Preface to the Polish translation

Friedrich Nietzsche—has any other thinker exerted so much influence in the century since his death? One measure of the power of Nietzsche's ideas is that they have engaged intellectuals of the widest possible diversity, from atheists such as Sigmund Freud to theists such as Martin Buber, from free-market capitalists such as Ayn Rand to postmodern socialists such as Michel Foucault, from questing novelists such as Hermann Hesse to despairing philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre.

And the National Socialists—has any other political movement exerted so much horrified fascination after its demise? Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, and the Holocaust are household names and, appropriately, the subject of schoolbooks the world over as a negative lesson to be learned.

The question of *Nietzsche and the Nazis* is whether Nietzschean philosophy is properly linked to National Socialist theory and practice. A generation separates the two: Nietzsche died in 1900 and the Nazis assumed power in 1933. Yet the leading Nazi intellectuals and politicians cited Nietzsche as an inspiration, perhaps as their leading inspiration. Meanwhile, those horrified by Nazism but attracted to Nietzschean themes are concerned to distance Nietzsche from the Nazis.

So how do we sort out, as a matter of philosophical and historical accuracy, the proper relationship between the two?

Nietzsche and the Nazis began as a two-hour documentary by N² Productions in 2006, with DVD distribution managed by Victory Multimedia out of Los Angeles. Netflix acquired video-distribution rights in 2008, which enabled video-streaming to its subscribers around the world. The original documentary script, meanwhile, was developed more fully into a book manuscript, and the hardcover book version was published by Ockham's Razor in 2010.

I am especially pleased by the publication of this Polish translation. Few nations have a history as rich, tragic, and promising as Poland's. Poland also has a direct connection to the two principals of this book: Nietzsche suggested that he had Polish ancestry, and Poland was the first nation to engage militarily with the German Nazis in World War II. Those connections are partly contingencies of history, but they add force to the necessity felt by all thoughtful citizens of the world to absorb and digest the great lessons of the past and to make those lessons inform their future actions.

Dr. Przemysław Zientkowski of Nicolas Copernicus University initiated the project of producing this Polish translation and saw it through the press. I thank him for his efforts and especially for the vote of confidence those efforts entail. Dr. Zientkowski's own work on Nietzsche will, I hope, be seen as complementing mine.

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