

exceptional men had tolerated slavery in the Constitution. Mill, like Thomas Jefferson, had expected it to wither away, and was encouraged by a spate of manumissions following the Revolutionary War and by the American ban on the importation of African slaves in 1808.

Mill blamed the survival of slavery on economics: Cotton production required little but brute animal force for its production, depleted the soil,

and fueled an insatiable desire for new territory. If the North had compromised with the secessionist states, he wrote, the South's peculiar institution would have been pushed by the barrel of a gun into Mexico and Central America as cotton growers acquired the virgin land necessary for further production. Slavery would have been somewhat legitimized and would ultimately have required a crusade by civilized Europe to eliminate.

Mill had become concerned that America forgot its principles in the pursuit of prosperity in the early years of the 19th century. A "courtier spirit" pervaded American life, and people had little stomach for those who questioned established institutions. America lived in "perpetual adoration of itself," Mill wrote, and the greatest danger it faced was that the national mind would be dulled by the self-satisfied notion that all was right.

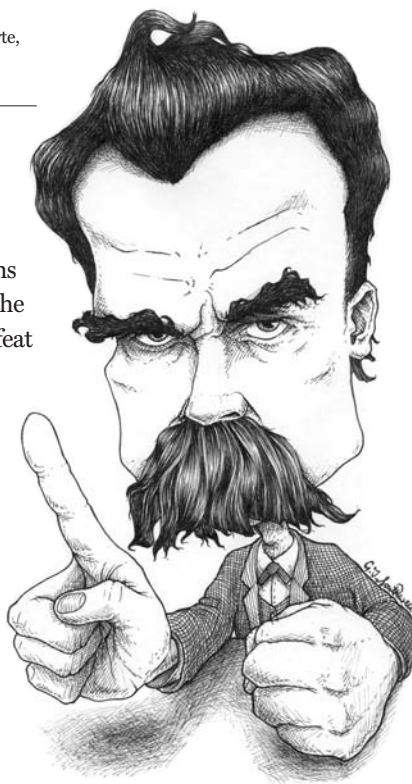
## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

# Nietzsche and the Nazis

**THE SOURCE:** "The Uses and Abuses of Nietzsche in the Third Reich: Alfred Baeumler's 'Heroic Realism'" by Max Whyte, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, April 2008.

DURING WORLD WAR II, Hitler's soldiers marched off to battle with field-gray editions of Friedrich Nietzsche's works in their packs, and ordinary Germans were occasionally urged on with the philosopher's words. After the defeat at Stalingrad in 1943, Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels declared, "We shall once more justify the words of the philosopher: 'That which does not kill me makes me stronger.'" Yet today Nietzsche (1844–1900) is one of the guiding lights of modern and postmodern thought, his exploitation by the Nazis dismissed as a travesty based on ignorance and willful distortion.

Not so fast, says Max Whyte, who



Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, prolific and ambiguous, provided grist for the Nazi mill.

recently received his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge. Nazi thinkers picked selectively from Nietzsche's vast and ambiguous corpus, but we must still reckon with the fact that many of the philosopher's ideas did lend themselves to the Nazi cause. Liberal bourgeois existence—the very ideas of Christian morality, democracy, and rationality—filled Nietzsche with contempt. God is dead, he declared, and mankind must reinvent itself in a new image of greatness. The door was open.

Among the Nazi thinkers who seized on Nietzsche was Alfred Baeumler (1887–1968). A professor at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Berlin, Baeumler embraced the Nazi cause around 1930 and was granted an hour-long audience with Hitler himself in 1931, the same year he published his influential *Nietzsche: The Philosopher and Politician*. Baeumler also edited Nietzsche's works and wrote for the general public; Whyte adds that he was "a close personal and professional ally of Alfred Rosenberg—the self-proclaimed 'chief ideologist of National Socialism.'"

For Nietzsche, the way toward a new human future lay through the ancient Greeks, pioneered by the *Übermensch*, or superman, a heroic figure who through great struggle would transcend the banalities of everyday experience. Baeumler had to make some twists and turns to get around other Nietzschean ideas, such as the philosopher's emphasis on the creative, Dionysian side of Greek culture (notably in music) over its more orderly Apollonian aspect. He based much of his argument on the posthumous *Will to Power*

(1901), in which Nietzsche argued that the desire to dominate is the most essential human drive, surpassing even the will to live.

Baeumler called his simplified Nietzschean doctrine "heroic realism." Enmity and war were not

## EXCERPT

## Devotional Jihad

*The dominant thread in Islam does see the extension of the faith . . . as a legitimate reason for deploying force: This is the conclusion of serious Muslim scholars and the literature is vast. So if, in the Christian just war tradition, there are criteria you have to go through—barriers, in effect—to the deployment of armed force, in Islam, you must search for ways to refrain.*

—JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, professor of social and political ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School, in *American Behavioral Scientist* (May 2008)

unfortunate facts of the human condition, he declared, but its essential and perpetual characteristics. Violent conflict was the only path to ennobled human life. Baeumler then shifted the role of the *Übermensch* to the German *Volk* (people), hungry

for a political and cultural rebirth in the unhappy years after World War I: "The old task of our race reappeared before Nietzsche's eyes: the task to be leaders of Europe."

Baeumler was not alone among Nazi ideologists in drawing on Nietzsche—the philosopher Martin Heidegger shared his view for a time—but some sharply criticized the practice. (Nietzsche had, among other things, spoken out against anti-Semitism.) "Baeumler's depiction of Nietzsche . . . was certainly one-sided and myopic, but

it was neither incoherent nor absurd," Whyte concludes. National Socialism was not a cohesive doctrine, he adds, and understanding it, as well as Nietzsche's place in it, remains unfinished business for scholars.

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## Dad's Biological Clock

**THE SOURCE:** "Dad's Hidden Influence" by Tina Hesman Saey, in *Science News*, March 29, 2008.

DON'T HAVE BABIES WHEN you're too young, or too old. Avoid alcohol, and watch the coffee. No long hot baths and no drugs or even a single cigarette. Don't gain too much weight—or too little. And go

easy on fish—it might be laced with mercury. Women of childbearing age have long been warned that the effects of any unhealthful practices would be visited on their children. Now it appears to be men's turn.

A father's age and his exposure to chemicals can leave a medical legacy that lasts generations, writes Tina Hesman Saey, a geneticist who

writes about molecular biology for *Science News*. Infants with teenage dads face increased risk of being born prematurely, or even stillborn. And while researchers couldn't determine whether such results were related to the dads' socioeconomic status or physical health, they noted that fathers under age 20 often have more fertility problems than men a decade older. At the other end of the age spectrum, children of much older fathers face increased chances of having autism, schizophrenia, and Down syndrome. And babies fathered by