Friedrich Nietzsche: The Hammer Goes to Monticello

"For I have sworn upon the alter of god, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."[1]

—Thomas Jefferson

"If a temple is to be erected *a temple must be destroyed*: that is the law—let anyone who can show me a case in which it is not fulfilled!"[2]

—Friedrich Nietzsche

What is the meaning of reason and its relationship to American democracy? Since the beginning of the United States itself, Thomas Jefferson has been celebrated by many political leaders, scholars, and average people as a figure who defines the highest American ideals. To take two representative examples, in July of 1987, Ronald Reagan announced his program for an Economic Bill of Rights. While encouraging Americans to pursue his vision of economic progress, he said the last words of John Adams, "Thomas Jefferson survives," were factually false but symbolically true. Reagan argued that throughout their history Americans have committed themselves to Jefferson's dream of "keeping this a land of liberty and justice for all [ensuring] that this country remains a bastion of freedom, the last best hope for mankind."[3] Almost thirty years later, Barack Obama framed his 2016 White House Science Fair as continuing an American tradition of support for science and progress. He said Jefferson, like many of his fellow Framers, was a child "of the enlightenment." By this he meant that Jefferson and those like him "had come of age when all the old dogmas were being challenged. And they had this incredible faith, this belief in the human mind, and our ability to figure stuff out."[4]

In the American political tradition, it is not possible to think seriously about topics such as equality, rights, limited government, reason, science, democracy, and progress without

becoming aware of the fundamental ways in which Jefferson set the tone for valuing and imagining them. When considering Jefferson's legacy, Reagan seems to have it right when he says, "we're still Jefferson's children."[5] At the same time, these words from Reagan and Obama already hint at some dimensions of Jefferson's way of thinking that will be explored below. Obama uses the phrase "incredible faith" to describe Jefferson's commitment to scientific reasoning. Reagan's words "last best hope for mankind," which he borrowed from another Jefferson admirer, Abraham Lincoln, are a prophetic statement about the fundamental meaning of the American political experiment in democracy.

To examine these and other components of Jefferson's political thought, and thereby to see what reason and democracy might ultimately mean for the United States, this chapter will draw upon the insights of one of the greatest modern critics of reason and democracy—Friedrich Nietzsche. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche describes his way of thinking as philosophizing with a hammer. By sounding out idols contemporary and eternal, he wonders which ones will give him "as a reply that famous hollow sound which speaks of bloated entrails." With Nietzsche's hammer in hand, the American idol of rational democracy will be struck "as with a tuning fork."[6] The vibrations from this hammer blow will show that for Nietzsche, Jefferson's sense of reason, and the concepts of morality, equality, democracy, and progress it articulates, sings Christianity in a different key. Because he is repackaging rather than repudiating the "old dogmas," Nietzsche would see Jefferson's rationalism and the vision of politics it generates as a manifestation of the paramount crisis of modernity—nihilism.

The Oracle of Reason

Jefferson would be neither surprised nor scandalized by the connection between reason and Christianity made above. In a letter to Benjamin Rush he explains, "I am a Christian, in the

only sense he wished any one to be."[7] His Christianity is a contrast with and improvement over the pervasive ignorance, superstition, and oppression generated by historical or "Platonic Christianity."[8] For Jefferson, Plato is a "Sophist" dedicated to "dealing out mysticisms incomprehensible to the human mind" and hence incapable of passing "the test of reason."[9] Jefferson believes that Plato, like other metaphysical charlatans, would have been consigned to the ash heap of history had it not been for a particular stroke of good luck centuries after his death.

Jefferson claims Jesus's early followers are "the most unlettered & ignorant men." A few centuries after the historical events of Jesus's life, Christian clergy realize they will cease to have power and employment unless they can convince the masses the truth about Christianity is far too complicated for the average person to discern without guidance. Enter Plato in an omophorion. Jefferson writes, "the Christian priesthood . . . saw, in the mysticisms of Plato, materials with which they might build up an artificial system which might, from it's [sic] indistinctness, admit everlasting controversy, give employment for their order, and introduce it to profit, power and pre-eminence."[10] The institutional church creates a variety of complex and unnecessary dogmas not to edify but to fog the minds of believers and tyrannize over them.

According to Jefferson, reason can discern the truth about all of reality when it is freed from the constraints of "monkish ignorance."[11] Thus it has the power to transcend the limitations of Platonic Christianity, allowing individuals finally to decide spiritual questions for themselves. In a letter to Peter Carr, Jefferson explains reason "is the only oracle given you by heaven." To discover his personal religious convictions, Jefferson encourages Carr to "shake off all the fears & servile prejudices under which weak minds are servilely crouched. Fix reason in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion." As Jefferson states, Carr will be accountable to

God only for the "uprightness" of his use of reason and not the "rightness" of his conclusions.[12] This will be so because reasoning is an exercise in disinterested investigation. When reason errs, it makes honest and correctable mistakes of logic, method, data collection, or interpretation of materials. When used rightly, reason leads to the truth, whatever it may be, that should be accepted by all other rational beings.

Following his own advice, Jefferson argues reason demonstrates the true Jesus is the definitive moral instructor in human history. On his telling, Jesus's rational message builds upon the insights of ancient philosophy and Judaism. Jesus improves the human understanding of God to reflect "the principles of a pure deism," brings the common human code of ethics up to "the standard of reason, justice & philosophy," and reaffirms, on the basis of these revisions, the "belief of a future state."[13] In morality, the most significant progress Jesus makes over all previous religious and philosophical systems is "inculcating universal philanthropy . . . to all mankind, gathering all into one family, under the bonds of love, charity, peace, common wants and common aids."[14] By allowing evidence derived from his senses to be interpreted by reason, Jefferson feels he successfully defends his "creed of materialism" against the rival claims of supernaturalists.[15]

Like Jefferson, Nietzsche sees a very close connection between Christianity and Plato, calling the former "Platonism for 'the people.'"[16] Nietzsche agrees with Jefferson that Christianity was taken in a bad direction in its distant past, but he goes even further than Jefferson when he locates the demise of the religion at its beginning, specifically in the preaching of St. Paul. Such similarities notwithstanding, Nietzsche would be critical of Jefferson's conception of reason. Jefferson believes a difference between traditional Christianity and a rational Jesus truly exists and that the latter can be extracted from the former. For Nietzsche,

what Jefferson wants to do under the guidance of reason is not possible. In *Twilight of the Idols* he writes, "When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one's feet. This morality is by no means self-evident."[17] Christianity is a complete system; to reject any particular part, even on allegedly rational grounds, shatters the whole.

Further, Nietzsche would object to Jefferson using the language of reason to make Christian morality synonymous with morality as such. Moralities based on principles different from and incompatible with Christianity are not only possible but have historically existed. In the first essay in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche explains that Christian morality is neither natural nor universal. It is the historical culmination of a reaction of the base character against an older set of morals practiced by the noble or aristocratic person. Driven by hatred for the nobles, what Nietzsche calls *ressentiment*, the lower type in aristocratic society becomes creative. Desiring to remake the world so that it testifies to the universal truth and goodness of their weakness, those consumed with *ressentiment* take "imaginary revenge" upon their oppressors and launch a moral rebellion by creating new values.[18] *Ressentiment* and will to power lurk underneath the Christian moral revaluation that creates ostensibly loving values such as equality, humility, compassion, other-worldliness, and asceticism. What counts as good is simply the opposite of noble morality. Unlike Jefferson then, Nietzsche sees Christian morality as a historical creation serving the interests of a specific kind of person. It is not a discovery of universal values by dispassionate reason. As will be shown below, Nietzsche also finds the substance of this new moral orientation particularly disturbing.

In addition to criticizing Jefferson's confusion on the relationship between rational morals and Christian morals, Nietzsche would conclude Jefferson does not know what he is doing when he is reasoning. Nietzsche believes all claims to truth are determined by the

perspective of the person making the claim. Thus he is often described as a "perspectivist" whose method of interpretation is "perspectivism."[19] In *The Gay Science*, he writes, "the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these. We cannot look around our own corner."[20] What specifically determines a person's perspective? In a word, his or her values. For Nietzsche, all people either create or adopt values, and it is those values that filter in what is accepted as objective and true, and filter out what is believed to be subjective and false. There are many areas of life where such a claim causes little trouble for most people. For example, everyone has had a conversation about a song, a novel, or a movie in which friends disagree about its meaning. Sometimes someone insists upon the truth of his or her interpretation, becoming angry when challenged or criticized, but most people in these circumstances can eventually live with the existence of multiple points of view.

Perhaps shockingly to some, Nietzsche extends comfort with subjectivity and multiplicity in discussions of the beautiful to those of the good and the true. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he argues most philosophers claim to discern the truth about something through the exercise of "cold, pure, divinely unconcerned dialectic."[21] In reality, the intellectual productions of an allegedly value-neutral reason are justifications of pre-existing desires. Nietzsche even rejects what most modern people take as the only truth available—truth generated by the modern natural sciences. He claims, "We see that science also rests on a faith; there simply is no science 'without presuppositions.'"[22] There is no position of interpretive privilege, no dispassionate realm a person can enter into and truly see things as they "really are."[23] Nietzsche never separates the question of value from the question "for whom?" If no value-free perspective is available, then there can be no universal truths binding upon all peoples in all situations, places,

or times. One set of values may be good for a person or people in a given set of circumstances, but those same commitments would be dangerous or destructive for a different person or people.

As these points about perspectivism suggest, Nietzsche's way of thinking is rather different from those of his predecessors, especially those in the traditions of ancient and modern rationalism. Because he focuses on multiplicity, subjectivity, and becoming, he is skeptical, even contemptuous, of philosophies and religions that emphasize unity, objectivity, and being.[24] With this in mind, one can see more clearly what Nietzsche would find inadequate in Jefferson's kind of reason. First, Jefferson sees reason as an objective truth finding faculty when it is really a subjective value-defending faculty. Second, Jefferson's misunderstanding of what reason is and what it does inclines him to believe reason's truths oblige all. The presence of these errors in Jefferson's account of morals has been addressed above. When examining other elements of what Jefferson's reason takes as true and authoritative, Nietzsche's likely criticisms become more intense.

What the Oracle Says about the Human Person and Politics

For Jefferson, reason is also essential to understanding the human person and politics. Reason shows the abstract individual is equal to all others, rational, industrious, charitable, and naturally virtuous. This is especially true of farmers, whom Jefferson's thinks may be "the chosen people of God."[25] In politics, reason points directly and exclusively at democracy. If a sufficient mass of rational people is allowed to govern itself on the bases of equality and popular participation, little can go wrong. He explains, "I have so much confidence in the good sense of man . . . that I am never afraid of the issue where reason is left free to exert her force."[26] Historically, it is these views that justify the claims in the Declaration of Independence that human equality, natural rights, and the right to majoritarian self-government are self-evident

truths, that is, the fruits of reason unencumbered by "the laws and institutions of a semi-barbarous ancestry."[27] Since 1776 American practice have proven "the sufficiency of human reason for the care of human affairs and that the will of the majority, the Natural law of every society, is the only sure guardian of the rights of man." With this confidence, Jefferson exhorts others to "for ever [sic] bow down to the general reason of the society."[28] Reason explains egalitarian democracy is the only form of government capable of providing for full human flourishing. Such claims about human nature, the purpose of politics, and the foundations of political legitimacy are obvious truths available to all who will but use their reason.

Jefferson's zealous defense of the people and democracy makes it difficult for him to be charitable toward those who do not share his views. His deep and uninterrupted loathing of Alexander Hamilton is well known, as is his deep but temporary rift with John Adams. Hamilton, Adams, and others of similar mind tend to have more reverence than Jefferson for the wisdom of tradition and the teachings of history. They are also more skeptical of claims regarding human reason and natural goodness. To Jefferson, those who hold such different views are not good people with bad ideas. They are members of a heretical sect, "monocrats" who have been seduced by "the glittering of crowns & coronets."[29] Americans who have more favorable opinions of Britain than France, especially in the 1790s, are also heretics as well as part of an "Anglican monarchical, & aristocratical party" who have "had their heads shorn by the harlot England."[30] In a letter, he counsels his friend John Taylor to persevere in the midst of the sufferings inflicted upon the American people by the Adams administration. He writes, "a little patience, and we shall see the reign of witches pass over us, their spells dissolve."[31]

Nietzsche sees the Christian values described in the previous section of this chapter, especially compassion and equality, as the foundation for various modern political movements,

including democracy.[32] In the *Genealogy*, he has a "free spirit" of his time say about this seemingly odd situation "it is the church, and not it is poison, that repels us. — Apart from the church, we, too, love the poison. —"[33] Elsewhere he states, "the *democratic* movement is the heir of the Christian movement."[34] Whereas Jefferson sees reason making a much-needed break with oppressive traditional religious convictions, Nietzsche would interpret his claims about rational democracy as an articulation of political morality for the base herd of humanity. Jefferson's democracy of reason is a politicized Christianity unaware of its Christian paternity. For this reason, Nietzsche would end up finding more sinister undercurrents in Jefferson's vision.

In a section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* titled "On The Tarantulas," Nietzsche locates commitments to equality, so prevalent in Jefferson's mind, in a deeper desire for revenge. The tarantulas scream, "what justice means to us is precisely that the world be filled with the storms of our revenge . . . We shall wreak vengeance and abuse on all whose equals we are not."[35] For Nietzsche, this vengeance pretending to equality is directed against any people who possess and display unusual talents beyond the reach of most ordinary individuals. In politics, this requires leaders to avoid speaking and acting on the basis of individual authority and superior competence. To prevent political disenfranchisement and social ostracism, even leaders of genuine merit are coerced into pandering, branding themselves as citizen-politicians, servants of the people, and instruments of the popular will. Jefferson's populist rhetoric of appealing to the common man suggests Nietzsche's observation would be on some solid ground. Underneath their vows to provide and defend equality, freedom, other natural rights, and self-government, Nietzsche sees democracies driven by the spirit of *ressentiment*. One can see such bitterness on display when Jefferson characterizes his opponents. In Jefferson's democracy of reason, there is

ample room for angels and demons. While Nietzsche would agree with Jefferson that the latter's reason discloses something about democracy, their interpretations of the content of that discovery would be rather different.

Reason is what gives Jefferson his hope for democracy's future. In a letter to Roger Weightman he predicts the following:

> All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God.[36]

He and his fellow Framers played a pivotal role in this historical drama. He encourages those who, like him, cherish the freedom to think and to publish to defend these liberties when they come under attack, becoming martyrs if necessary.[37] Even in the midst of spectacular suffering, Jefferson's optimism about the power of reason and the inevitability of global democracy could not shaken. He believes the violent turn of the French Revolution in the early 1790s is truly lamentable, but instead of seeing it fail in its efforts to achieve equality, freedom, and democracy, "I would have seen half the earth desolated. Where there but an Adam & an Eve left in every country, & left free, it would be better than as it now is."[38] Jefferson never repudiates his conviction that violence suffered or committed in the pursuit of democracy can be justified to the degree that it ultimately redeems the world.

Beyond his contempt for the regime itself, Nietzsche would find Jefferson's frequent and fervent predictions about the future of democracy and reason concerning rather than inspiring. Again, there is equivalence between Jefferson's thinking and the older Christian tradition Jefferson thinks he has progressed beyond. Most Christians believe if they act according to godly

values, repenting and asking for God's forgiveness when they fall short, they will inherit the kingdom of heaven. This world to come is the "true" world for Christians. It is beautiful and desirable because it is free from the suffering, injustice, change, and decay that define the false, "apparent" world in which people live.[39] Over time, Nietzsche claims, belief in the true world of Christianity has become less and less credible.

Even as belief in God declines, the disappointment with earthly life generated by Christianity remains with many people.[40] As noted above, Jefferson makes it clear that belief in a future state of rewards is an essential component of a rational system of ethics. When this idea is interpreted through the lens of his predictions of a democratic future, it becomes clear that the future state he has in mind is not found in some realm radically separated from this world, as is the case with traditional Christianity, but is instead located in this world, one that is supposed to be politically, rationally, and spiritually transformed by human hands. His prophesies about democracy refer to an immanent rather than transcendent paradise. With this eschatological orientation, it is easier to see why his enemies are heretics and why those who die trying to save the world for democracy are called martyrs.

The endurance of this otherworldly thinking would be troubling for Nietzsche because the tension between this world and the next generated by Christian values is a central component in the irruption of nihilism. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche explains, "A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist."[41] Such a judgment about these two worlds is made when the actual experience of living leads a person to conclude his or her values cannot be realized. Rather than discarding the values in question, the world itself is demoted to a contemptible location for a life that cannot end soon enough. Jefferson's thought agrees at least with the first half of this definition of a

nihilist. As far as he is concerned, the world most certainly is not how it should be. Although there are hints that Jefferson occasionally loses confidence in a future of reason and democracy, he does not seem to have fallen into the type of despair associated with fully formed nihilism. It is true there are many substantive differences between Jefferson and Christianity on the end of history. Here it is enough to note that for Nietzsche, Jefferson's belief in a rational democratic apocalypse and a Christian's belief in the Second Coming amount to the same disturbing and life-denying thing.

What the Oracle Is

One might wonder why a person or a nation would live according to ideas where *ressentiment* and hatred of the world underpin seemingly cheerful statements about the progress of reason and democracy. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche spends a great deal of time analyzing the meaning of what he calls ascetic ideals. In the most general sense, an ascetic ideal is something one holds forth as a goal for which tremendous sacrifices will be made. Especially in Christianity, the ascetic ideal is powerful because it gives the weak, the "whole herd of the ill-constituted, disgruntled, underprivileged, unfortunate, and all who suffer of themselves," a meaning in life that calls forth action and staves off suicide.[42] Thus, the change from noble to base morality is not merely an act of revenge. It is an expression of the instinct for existence. Even though the ascetic ideal is nihilistic, it is still a manifestation of will to power. For Nietzsche, then, the appeal of such a notion, at least for the weak personality, is not hard to understand. He writes, "man would rather will *nothingness* than *not* will."[43]

Nietzsche's assessment of the meaning and appeal of the ascetic ideal further clarifies his perspectivism. He claims the ascetic ideal does not necessarily decline along with the demise of Christianity. He writes, "from the moment faith in the God of the ascetic ideal is denied, a *new*

problem arises: that of the *value* of truth."[44] Lingering faith in the Christian value of the truth has allowed the ascetic ideal to give fundamental shape to the modern reason and science that rejects the dogmatic beliefs of Christianity. How else do modern sciences, guided by reason, understand themselves except as committed to revealing the truth about the world that has been obscured or suppressed by religious authorities? Jefferson sees modern political thought, also guided by reason, as pursuing a different part of this broader project of liberation from the backward past. In this sense, Jefferson's political rationalism is also an expression of the will to truth. It is also a carrier of the ascetic ideal.

In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche invokes his perspectival method and explains "the *more* eyes, different eyes" one uses when examining a given topic "the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity' be."[45] Following this advice, this chapter has considered various aspects of Jefferson's political thought. For a thinker such as Nietzsche, it is clear that Jefferson does not derive his most deeply held views from the exercise of some kind of objective rationality. In valuing reason, truth, equality, and democracy, Jefferson is offering an interested interpretation rather than a disinterested description of existence. Applying Nietzsche's tools, wielding his hammer, light has been shone in the darker places of Jefferson's thought where resonances with *ressentiment*, ascetic ideals, and nihilism are found.

Nietzsche would not be interested in answering a question like "Is Jefferson's political rationalism good or bad?" That is the kind of thinking Nietzsche's perspectivism tries to avoid. When the Nietzschean "for whom?" is recalled, it is clear that Jefferson's democracy of reason is good for, that is, has worked for, the same people who thrive under other forms of the ascetic ideal—the weak. Politically speaking, Jefferson's kind of democracy is the one best equipped, at least for a time, to perpetuate their survival. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche states, "If we have

our own *why* of life, we shall get along with almost any *how*."[46] Something like Jefferson's democratic rationalism has been a "why" for the masses in American democracy for some time. It is at the heart of U.S. continental expansion, economic progress, technological innovation, and global militarism. But, since such a perspective ultimately culminates in nihilism, what might Americans need to consider when the political equivalent of the death of God begins?

Overcoming the Oracle?

Evidence continues to mount that suicides, drug addiction, illegitimate births, divorces, poverty, and despair are at unsustainable levels in the U.S. Civic engagement, stable families, meaningful employment, environmental stewardship, confidence in institutions, genuine love of country, respect for tradition, and hope for the future are in very short supply. Faith in the democracy of reason appears to be collapsing.[47] Having been sounded out with Nietzsche's hammer, the entrails of this idol do indeed appear to be bloated. Nietzsche would not be surprised by such a turn of events. If Jefferson's vision of reason and democracy is Christianity in a different key, then America's disintegration is a political chapter in the civilization implosion Nietzsche describes as emanating from the death of God. In *The Gay Science*, a madman declares "God is dead . . . and we have killed him."[48] His atheistic audience is indifferent to this revelation. After all, cannot the relevant political institutions and moral commandments survive without the religion that gave birth to them? Nietzsche's answer, discussed in a different context above, is "no." From his point of view, the institutions and norms of American life cannot continue in the absence of America's democratic faith.

What to make of the possibility of such an American future? For Nietzsche, things are not likely to get better for those who belong to the base majority of people. Although Nietzsche is no advocate for Christianity, he recognizes that most people need something like it because such a

structure is the only means by which they can survive. He writes, "the less one knows how to command, the more urgently one covets someone who commands, who commands severely—a god, prince, class, physician, father confessor, dogma, or party conscience."[49] Without the commanding presence of faith in reason and self-government, the base masses will be at sea and likely look to more radical and even violent political and social formations to fill the void. With this in mind, those from the right and left who advocate the dismantling of the values that have sustained America, those who, in other words, want to smash the idol they despise, are as smug and naïve as the atheists in Nietzsche's aphorism. If there is any hope for most Americans, it probably lies in rejuvenating or creating a god who can save them.

For those few who have the potential to command, and such people are Nietzsche's primary audience, there might be a different and genuine hope. The environment that degrades the masses is also one that can "give birth to exceptional human beings of the most dangerous and attractive quality."[50] Nietzsche gives such people no new values, no new method of abstract reasoning. To do so would invalidate his project. Instead, he seeks to inspire others to undertake responsibility for the adventure of creating distinct lives. It is to those "who are bent on seeking in all things for what in them must be *overcome*," that Nietzsche provides the advice to seek life's greatest joy in living dangerously.[51] How will such dangerous people know when they are giving "style to one's character."[52]? In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche asks whether or not the reader could bear the possibility that his or her life, exactly as it had been lived, would recur with "every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life."[53] The goal for the free spirit is to construct a life that will enable him or her to say "yes" to this prospect, to what Nietzsche calls the eternal recurrence.[54] In the contemporary American context, the people capable of and willing to experience the exhilarations and sufferings of real freedom

and independence must first overcome faith in the democracy of reason. For those who can, Nietzsche would say it is time to pick up the hammers, leave Monticello, and create lives "in the horizon of the infinite."[55]

Notes

[1] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, Sept. 23, 1800," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1082.

[2] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, Inc., 1989), 95.

[3] Ronald Reagan, "Remarks Announcing America's Economic Bill of Rights, July 3, 1987," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan: 1987 (In Two Books), Book I—January 1 to July 3, 1987* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1989), 744.

[4] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at the White House Science Fair, April 13, 2016," accessed July 22, 2019, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/04/13/remarks-president-white-house-science-fair.

[5] Reagan, "Remarks Announcing America's Economic Bill of Rights, July 3, 1987," 740.

[6] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, or How One Philosophizes with a Hammer*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1976), 465, 466.

[7] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, Apr. 21, 1803," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1122.

[8] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to John Adams, Oct. 12, 1813," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1302.

[9] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to John Adams, July 5, 1814," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1341; Thomas

Jefferson, "Letter to William Short, October 31, 1819," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1430.

[10] Jefferson, "Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, Apr. 21, 1803," 1124; Jefferson "Letter to John Adams, July 5, 1814," 1342.

[11] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Roger C. Weightman, June 24, 1826," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1517.

[12] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Peter Carr, Aug. 10, 1787" in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 904, 902.

[13] Jefferson, "Letter to Dr. Joseph Priestley, Apr. 9, 1803," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1121.

[14] Jefferson, "Letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush, Apr. 21, 1803," 1125.

[15] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to John Adams, Aug. 15, 1820," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1443.

[16] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Inc., 1989), 2.

[17] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 515.

[18] Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, 36.

[19] There are several interpretations of Nietzsche's perspectivism in the scholarship. Deleuze and Nehamas understand it as a component of the broader aesthetic project that is Nietzsche's philosophy. On their views, Nietzsche's perspectivism, and its relationship to the creation of values, is consistent throughout his thought. See Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia UP, 1983) and Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1985). Clark and Leiter interpret

Nietzsche's perspectivism as part of a developing notion of truth in his philosophy that culminates in his affirming the truth of sense experience and empirical reasoning in his last publications. See Maudmarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990) and Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[20] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Inc., 1974), 336.

[21] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 12.

[22] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 281.

[23] Disagreement over the meaning of such statements about modern science exemplifies the differences between Deleuze and Nehamas on the one hand, and Leiter and Clark on the other. For example, Deleuze interprets such claims as representative of Nietzsche's consistent view and writes, "What [Nietzsche] attacks in science is precisely the scientific mania for seeking balances, the *utilitarianism* and *egalitarianism* proper to science. This is why his whole critique operates on three levels; against logical identity, against mathematical equality and against physical equilibrium." Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 45. In contrast, Clark draws upon her privileging of *Twilight of the Idols* and *Antichrist* and argues, "[These works] contain no hint of the view that human truths, science, logic, mathematics, or causality falsify reality. Instead, they exhibit a uniform and unambiguous respect for facts, the senses, and science." Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 105.

[24] About this part of Nietzsche's thought, Deleuze explains, "Pluralism is the properly philosophical way of thinking, the one invented by philosophy; the only guarantor of freedom in the concrete spirit, the only principle of a violent atheism." Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, 4.

[25] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: The Viking Press Inc., 1975), 217.

[26] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Diodati, August 3, 1789," in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: The Viking Press Inc., 1975), 444.

[27] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Major John Cartwright, June 5, 1824," in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: The Viking Press Inc., 1975), 578.

[28] Thomas Jefferson, "Response to the Citizens of Albemarle, February 12, 1790," in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: The Viking Press Inc., 1975), 259-60, 260.

[29] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to George Mason, Feb. 4, 1791," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 972; Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to James Madison, Dec. 28, 1794," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1015.

[30] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Philip Mazzei, Apr. 24, 1796," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1036, 1037.

[31] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to John Taylor, June 4, 1798," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1050.

[32] Bruce Detwiler elaborates upon this relationship and Nietzsche's interpretation of its meaning when he argues, " [Nietzsche] might argue that contemporary Christianity (with its emphasis on compassion and love of humanity), contemporary liberalism (with its emphasis on toleration), and democracy (with its emphasis on equality) are all in important respects nihilistic to the core. They are all the products of a skeptical, relativistic age that accepts everyone and

everything without distinction because it has strong convictions about nothing." Bruce Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990), 71.

[33] Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, 36.

[34] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 116.

[35] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1976), 212.

[36] Jefferson, "Letter to Roger C. Weightman, June 24, 1826," 1517. Jefferson makes a similar statement a quarter of a century earlier when he writes, "I join with you in the hope and belief that they will see, from our example, that a free government is of all others the most energetic; that the inquiry which has been excited among the mass of mankind by our revolution & it's [sic] consequences, will ameliorate the condition of man over a great portion of the globe." See Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to John Dickinson, Mar. 6, 1801," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1084-1085.

[37] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to William Green Munford, June 18, 1799," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1065-1066.

[38] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to William Short, Jan. 3, 1793," in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 1004.

[39] About Nietzsche's sense of the world Nehamas states, "the ultimate nature of the world is to have no orderly structure: in itself the world is chaos, with no laws, no reason, and no purpose." Rather than driving people to despair, this insight should inspire them to create values by which to live. Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life and Literature*, 42-43.

[40] In *The Affirmation of Life*, Bernard Reginster explains, "As Nietzsche himself recognizes, nihilism is a pressing problem for those who are still in the grip of this [Christian]

worldview, in so far as they believe, for example, that without the hope for another life this one has no meaning." As this chapter shows, a person can be in the "grip" of such a vision without being an orthodox Christian. Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2006), 8.

[41] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), 318.

[42] Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, 120.

[43] Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, 163. See also Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 12-14.

[44] Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, 153.

[45] Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, 119. Such a statement from Nietzsche is where Clark's and Leiter's interpretations of his perspectivism start to take shape. For example, Leiter writes, "It bears emphasizing that there is *nothing* in the optical analog Nietzsche invokes . . . that requires him to deny the existence or possibility of objective knowledge: after all, GM III: 12 is, itself, a passage about the right way to think of both 'knowing' and 'objectivity,' not a repudiation of either." Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 219. Clark goes further and claims, "a philosopher can oppose the ascetic ideal only by commending and opposed ideal to universal attention. Otherwise, the philosopher will still be working in the service of the ascetic ideal." Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 201-202. These interpretations seem grounded in pre-existing beliefs in truth and the perpetual but incremental progress of science that are difficult to reconcile with Nietzsche's thought. Perhaps Nehamas has the best response to this peculiar line of interpretation. He states, "Nietzsche [is] not interested in providing a theory of truth." Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life and Literature*, 55.

[46] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 468.

[47] About the death of God, Detwiler writes, "Modern man no longer believes in God, but he is oblivious to the untoward consequences of his disbelief. He does not see that his irreligion will gradually dissolve the horizon, the moral firmament of ideas and aspirations, that has made possible all that is worthy in the Western world." This insight is worth considering as more and more evidence points to the decline of America's democratic faith. See Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Rationalism*, 72.

[48] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 181.

[49] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 289.

[50] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 176.

[51] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 228.

[52] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 232.

[53] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 273-274.

[54] The mercilessness of the eternal recurrence is one reason Nietzsche thinks few people will be capable of living as "free spirits." Reginster elaborates upon the relationship between revaluation and the eternal recurrence when he argues, "This is a demanding ideal, which is presumably achieved only rarely. But it is *achievable* in the first place only if I hold no life-negating values, for if my life were assessed by the light of such values, it would necessarily leave something to be desired. This is why a revaluation of these values is a condition of the very possibility of the affirmation of life." Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life*, 227.

[55] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 180.