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BOOK REVIEW

Nietzsche and the Antichrist: Religion, Politics, and Culture in Late Modernity Edited by Daniel Conway (Bloomsbury Academic 2019, ISBN: 9781350016880)

Reviewed by Paul E. Kirkland, Carthage College, United States

This volume makes a valuable contribution to Nietzsche scholarship by providing a single volume on one of Nietzsche's texts, *The Antichrist*, with pieces from an array of prominent scholars. It calls attention to the importance of a work less often systematically treated in the scholarship than some others. The contributors to the volume represent a wide array of philosophical approaches to Nietzsche's thought and offer a good sampling of the perspectives in Nietzsche scholarship. Conway has assembled an especially strong group of scholars who approach Nietzsche's thought via political theory and those who have advanced our insight on Nietzsche's political thought. This link among many of the essays helps to unify the volume and call attention to the political themes and long range aims of Nietzsche's *Antichrist*.

The prominence of political themes broadly construed emerges in the framing Conway provides, which highlights Nietzsche's aims to shape a future. Conway helpfully lays out Nietzsche's plans for the publication of *Ecce Homo* as the introduction of the author of *The Antichrist* in a way that shows its intended role in the "great politics" of his time. While these publication plans were not realized, Conway shows the long range aims included in Nietzsche's project of revaluation. The volume introduction provides such a political framework for many of the essays in the volume as they address Nietzsche's *Antichrist* in its religious, ethical, and political dimensions, revealing a project organized with plans to bring about a new future. Assessments of this project vary throughout the contributions to the volume, including representatives of many approaches to Nietzsche's work. It thereby offers a multi-faceted look at Nietzsche's late and relatively undertreated *Antichrist*.

Conway's own chapter in the volume gives due attention to Nietzsche's strategic aims in *The Antichrist*, including that of recruiting others to his effort to overcome the effects of Christianity. He carefully describes the rhetoric Nietzsche uses to draw such potential allies into his campaign and attends to the role of the affects (especially in relation to disgust) in bringing others into his effort and shaping a new "we" to serve his project. The intention brought about by a "recalibration of the affects" (194) is nonetheless one of liberation and rational enlightenment. Nietzsche plans to use, Conway demonstrates, the existing attachment to Christian truthfulness to bring about the overcoming of Christianity and its heirs, the cultivation of a new sort of virtue, and the liberation of potential free spirits from their Christian attachments. Conway's account of Nietzsche's rhetorical strategy is especially helpful as an analysis of the means by which Nietzsche hopes to bring about the overcoming of Christianity, a project close to the core of Nietzsche's political aims as he articulates them in his descriptions of the aims of "the good European" (e.g., GS 380).



Other chapters unify the volume insofar as they also attend to Nietzsche's rhetorical and political effect. Lawrence Hatab and Gary Schapiro's chapters bookend the volume with attention to theme of new gods linked to a Dionysian embrace of eternal recurrence and a consideration of his accelerationism. These contributions clearly fit the larger aim of the volume that show *The Antichrist* as a kind of political action. Hatab's essay begins the volume in a way that shows that a positive vision, demonstrated through the eternal return, informs Nietzsche's approach to a polemic against Christianity and his aim of revaluation. Schapiro makes an argument that Nietzsche is better understood in the context of other accelerationist efforts. Chapters like these bring the full scope of the political campaign represented by *The Antichrist* to light, one that is attentive to both the methods by which a revaluation may be brought about and the grandest aims of the new values.

Paul Loeb's chapter on Nietzsche's view of Kant stands out in its careful presentation of Kant as a philosopher moved by what Nietzsche calls the "theologian's instinct," and it reveals the way in which Nietzsche's anti-Christian project is as much committed to anti-Kantian aims as anything else. Presenting this argument about Nietzsche's anti-Kantianism in the larger context of Nietzsche's campaign, Loeb's chapter shows the philosophical stakes of the political engagement launched in Nietzsche's *Antichrist*. Christian Emden also addresses Nietzsche's relation to Kant and German idealism, offering the provocative claim that life affirmation would not oppose nihilism, but rather demand an affirmation of nihilism. Emden's argument leaves the question of whether such affirmation might involve a transformation of the nihilism affirmed by a tragic view.

The possibility of love for the world as the alternative to a love directed toward death emerges from Tracy Strong's chapter. Strong's chapter cuts through the distinction, emphasized by others, between the life of the Christ and the theology of Paul, offering a possibility that exists in neither form of Christianity. In this way, his chapter shows the positive vision beneath Nietzsche's assault on Christianity. David Owen serves this aim as well in bringing to life the "alternative ethical orientation" (69) in Nietzsche's anti-Christian ethics by showing its affirmation of Renaissance *virtu* as described and advanced by Machiavelli. Along with agonistic practice it includes a revaluation of fidelity along Machiavellian lines, thereby distancing Nietzsche's view of the sovereign individual from one that would identify it as an expression of autonomy.

Other essays in the volume take up analytical, historical, and comparative religion questions that shed light on Nietzsche's sources and his relation to subsequent thinkers, situate his thought, in Christology, and reveal crucial dimensions of view of the relation between Christianity and other world religions. Tom Stern addresses the ways in which Nietzsche's use of the history of morality involves a genetic fallacy, concluding that he lacks the grounds on which to argue that Christian morality is anti-natural. Anthony Jensen addresses Nietzsche's relation to the quest for the historical Jesus in order to show Nietzsche's approach to offer a "nobler" lie rather than reveal an absolute reality. Vanessa Lemm's contribution explores Nietzsche's naturalism in the context of Freud and Binswanger. Antonio Panaioti takes up the Nietzsche's use of comparative religion, demonstrating that philosophical intervention and not solid history is the basis of his approach. Further questions about Nietzsche's view of the character of philosophy that is not priestly philosophy spring from some of these arguments about Nietzsche's philosophical approach, his understanding of noble lies, and his strategic presentation of

material. They point to the need for a full consideration of the way in which he understands the character of philosophical activity and distinguishes genuine philosophical life and writing from that moved by the theologian's instincts.

As is often the case with an edited volume, the approaches and claims of each chapter vary in ways that defy easy organization. Nonetheless, the unity of the volume provided by the text of the *Antichrist* makes it especially valuable to those addressing that work. The essays in the volume represent valuable contributions to Nietzsche scholarship and an important resource for the study of Nietzsche's *Antichrist*.

