Notes on the text

A NOTE ON GENDER

As I find the use of both gender pronouns (for example, she/he; his/her) interferes with the flow of language, I have indiscriminately used one or the other, hoping that variation will make up for gender sensibility.

A NOTE ON REFERENCES

For hermeneutic reasons, I have worked my way through Nietzsche’s concepts, departing from a Spanish translation, checking against a German publication, and, for some texts, with English translations obtained from electronic libraries. All sources are listed in the Bibliography. Quotations are referred in the standard style with the usual English acronyms, followed by the Roman and/or Arabic section numbers provided by Nietzsche himself or by the editors.

Reference Key

A   = The Antichrist
BGE = Beyond Good and Evil
BT  = The Birth of Tragedy
D   = Daybreak
EH  = Ecce Homo
GM  = On the Genealogy of Morals
GS  = The Gay Science
HH  = Human, All too Human
TI  = Twilight of the Idols
WP  = The Will to Power
Z   = Thus Spake Zarathustra

Regarding quotes from other authors, I have tried to translate when necessary into English from their original languages, whenever possible.
A NOTE ON NIETZSCHE

Nietzsche is a dangerous philosopher, one we would not want to recommend to teenagers – nor to dictators – lest they end up joining a neo-Nazi movement.

Yet, he is immense – a great poet with profound philosophical insights. If we pass through the veils of his outrageous, and, by today’s standards, politically incorrect expressions on race, gender, religions, infirmity, slavery, etc., we find stark descriptions of human behavior and of human history. We have tried here to moderate the derogatory semantic load, replacing some of his expressions with more acceptable language. For example, instead of his ‘slave revolt’, we more often use the expression ‘revolt of ressentiment’, which is closer to what he had in mind. But such a strategy is not always possible, nor even desirable, because the pair ‘master/slave’ is, besides being almost a behavioral archetype, a philosophical category that refers properly to a common human relationship.

I ask the good reader’s forbearance with such expressions that may seem or feel offensive and ask that they focus on the meaning behind them. Expressions about a ‘superhuman’ nature, masters and slaves are offensive today, but history is full of them and euphemisms do not help us in dealing with them.

If we disregard those derogatory connotations, we will find that for Nietzsche ‘masters’ are really those persons able to create positive values; and his ‘will to power’ is actually the human drive to create.

I have kept the old English translation of ‘übermensch’ as ‘superman’, over the more recently used ‘overman’, because, although this last might be a more literal translation, I find the old one closer to his real meaning of ‘masters’ as creators; not necessarily dominators over slaves. Although there is much debate over the importance of the Nachlass (his posthumous, unpublished works) for the interpretation of concepts such as the will to power, the supermen, the eternal recurrence, etc. I agree with Heidegger, Jaspers, Danto and Schacht, among other authors, who give, if no more (as in Heidegger), at least equal importance to the Nachlass than to the works Nietzsche authorized for publication; especially the works he was working on for publication just before he died (i.e. Ecce Homo). Ideas are not fixed sets within our minds; they develop over the years; we correct or complete them along with thought and experience; and the consideration of posthumous work certainly enlightens previous published ones.

To grasp his understanding of ‘masters’ as self-affirming creators we look to both the published and posthumous works. But it is his ‘formula to achieve human greatness’ (EH: II, 10) which is the main key: amor fati, the love of our own human destiny; which led him to the existential goal, ‘...
in any circumstances, to be no more that an affirming person’. (GS: IV, 276), and wish that each person could ‘... get reconciliation with himself’ (GS: IV, 290)

A NOTE ON THE SPELLING OF RESSENTIMENT

The text keeps the French word ‘ressentiment’, as coined by Nietzsche, and used and considered a terminus technicus by authors thereafter, to refer to the complex phenomenon he describes. To aid the flow of the text, however, the word will be set in roman and not italic in the remainder of the book.