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**Did Nietzsche Want His Notes Burned?**  
**Some Reflections on the *Nachlass* Problem**

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ABSTRACT

The issue of the use of the *Nachlass* material has been much debated in Nietzsche scholarship in recent decades. Some insist on the absolute interpretative priority of his published writings over those unpublished and suggest that an extensive engagement with the *Nachlass* is harmful because it is something Nietzsche rejected. To verify this claim, they appeal to the story of Nietzsche asking his landlord in Sils-Maria to burn some of his notes. Since the notes that were ultimately retrieved are purportedly incorporated into the compilation *The Will to Power*, the story also leads some to conclude that Nietzsche rejected his project on the will to power. However, the reliability of this story has been questioned. In this manuscript I first present the decisive piece of evidence that will settle the controversy over the story's authenticity. After showing that it is true that in 1888 Nietzsche wanted some of his notes burned, I address the question of what we can conclude from this story. I argue that it neither suggests the abandonment of the will to power project, nor warrants a devaluation of the *Nachlass*. Finally, I will discuss the methodological problem of the use of Nietzsche's *Nachlass* in general.

KEYWORDS Nietzsche; burning story; will to power; *Nachlass*; priority principle

The issue of the use of the *Nachlass* material<sup>1</sup> has been much debated in Nietzsche scholarship in recent decades. Students of Nietzsche are forced to choose between the position of the ‘lumpers’ and that of the ‘splitters.’<sup>2</sup> What is at stake is whether the writings Nietzsche did not publish can be legitimately used, alongside those he himself published, to reconstruct his thought, or whether the published writings take absolute priority over those unpublished in matters of interpretation, or even whether an extensive engagement with the *Nachlass* should

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<sup>1</sup> The German word ‘Nachlass,’ a compound of ‘nach’ (after) and ‘lassen’ (to leave), is to be understood in a broad sense as to mean estate, or in a more specific sense, as meaning an author’s literary remains, including work manuscripts, notes, diaries, correspondence, collections of material, private library etc. (Fricke 2007, 672-674). But in its most usual usage, ‘Nachlass’ is, as *The Oxford English Dictionary* tells us, ‘writings remaining unpublished at an author’s death.’ In the case of Nietzsche, *Nachlass* refers to his writings remaining unpublished up to the point of his mental collapse, or more precisely, his writings not intended by him for publication (the works that he prepared for publication but did not succeed in publishing because of his breakdown, such as *Twilight of the Idols*, *Ecce homo*, and *The Anti-Christ*, are usually included within the published works). While some Anglophone scholars use this term to refer specifically to unpublished *notes*, in the present study I insist on the customary usage of ‘Nachlass,’ according to which the essay ‘On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,’ a seemingly completed and polished essay that Nietzsche nevertheless did not want to publish, for instance, should be subsumed under the category of *Nachlass*. This classification is crucial for our present discussion. For many scholars protest against the extensive usage of the *Nachlass* not (merely) on the ground that the materials in the *Nachlass* are often short, rough or even fragmentary, but mainly because they are not published and therefore not authorized by Nietzsche.

<sup>2</sup> For the distinction between ‘splitters’ and ‘lumpers’ see Magnus, 1986: 79-85.

be dispensed with.<sup>3</sup> Were one to ask why a controversy of similar scope does not exist in scholarship on Kant or Husserl—authors for whom a *Nachlass* also constitutes a considerable proportion of their corpus—scholars like Jonathan R. Cohen, Reginald J. Hollingdale, and Brian Leiter<sup>4</sup> would likely answer that Nietzsche abandoned his *Nachlass*, while Kant and Husserl did not. To verify the claim about Nietzsche, they appeal to the story of the philosopher asking his landlord in Sils-Maria to burn the notes he left in his wastebasket—after all, it is hard to think of a gesture more suggestive of abandonment than tossing into the wastebasket or burning. Since the notes that were ultimately retrieved from Sils are purportedly incorporated into *The Will to Power*, a book planned by Nietzsche but ultimately pieced together from his notes by his sister, the story also leads some commentators like Leiter and Julian Young to conclude that Nietzsche rejected his project on the will to power both in the sense of writing a book with this as title and in that of elevating this to a psychological and cosmological principle.<sup>5</sup> However, the reliability of the story has been questioned, mainly because all these authors fail to provide first-hand evidence.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Clark and Dudrick’s assertion is representative: ‘We do not mean to deny that the *Nachlass* can ever be helpful, but we do suggest that in general it does more harm than good’ (Clark and Dudrick, 2015: 261).

<sup>4</sup> Hollingdale, 1965: 298 (this part remains unchanged in the revised edition, see Hollingdale, 1999: 250-251); Leiter, 2002: xvi-xvii, 143-144 (see also Leiter, 2015: xvii-xviii, 116); Cohen, 2010: 25.

<sup>5</sup> Some argue that Nietzsche is skeptical of the cosmological version of will to power on the grounds that he expresses this doctrine mainly in the unpublished writings. The ‘burning’ story has been invoked to support a more radical thesis: that Nietzsche abandoned both the cosmological and psychological versions.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Williams, 2001: 65; Katsafanas, 2013: 247-248; Meyer, 2014: 15; Hill, 2017: xv-xvi.

The present essay does not aim to take a side in the debate over Nietzsche's theory of the will to power; instead, it is focused upon the 'burning' story just mentioned. I will first present the decisive piece of evidence that will settle the controversy over the story's authenticity. After showing that it is true that in 1888 Nietzsche wanted some of his notes to be burned, I will address the question of what we can conclude from this story. I shall argue that it neither suggests the abandonment of the project of the will to power, nor warrants a devaluation of the *Nachlass*. Finally, I will discuss the methodological problem of the use of Nietzsche's *Nachlass* in general, which may also cast some light on our engagement with other philosophers with considerable literary remains.

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In his bestseller *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy*, whose first edition appeared in 1965, Reginald J. Hollingdale propagates a story of Nietzsche<sup>7</sup> that still lives on in popular books,<sup>8</sup> in the Wikipedia entry 'Friedrich Nietzsche'<sup>9</sup> as well as in academic literature today. According to Hollingdale, in the autumn of 1888, before leaving Sils-Maria for the last time, the philosopher asked his landlord Durisch to burn the notebook writings he left in the wastebasket. As the story goes, Nietzsche's expressed wish notwithstanding, Durisch kept these writings and later sent them to Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. Elisabeth then used a selection of these texts, among others, to reconstruct a book planned by her brother: the notorious *Will to Power* (henceforth *WP*). Some commentators invoke this anecdote to support the conclusion which according to them can be inferred from other evidence: that Nietzsche ultimately abandoned the will to power project. In his 2013 book *Agency and the*

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<sup>7</sup> See note 4.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Prideaux, 2018: 361.

<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich\\_Nietzsche](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Nietzsche) (last accessed 9 January 2019).

*Foundations of Ethics: Nietzschean Constitutivism*, however, Paul Katsafanas refers to the ‘burning’ story as ‘a mere myth’ (Katsafanas, 2013: 248).<sup>10</sup>

Katsafanas has good reason to question the reliability of the story. Hollingdale does not refer to any source other than a magazine article by Fritz Koegel (Koegel, 1893). Yet Koegel speaks *no word* about Nietzsche’s intention to destroy anything, but only says that an unnamed visitor<sup>11</sup> found in Durisch’s house, besides numerous proof-sheets, some handwritten papers, among which there was a previously unknown version of the preface to *Twilight of the Idols*. Indeed, the drama of the rescue of Nietzsche’s manuscripts sounds like a fiction invented analogously to the famous incident of the ‘betrayed’ will of Kafka. Ironically, while the greatness of Kafka’s works rescued by Max Brod is acknowledged despite his burning instructions, some scholars tend to downplay the value of Nietzsche’s retrieved writings on the grounds that he expressly discarded them.

However, as Brian Leiter in his reply to Katsafanas points out, the Nietzsche story may not be apocryphal as it appears at first glance. To defend the authenticity of the story, Leiter (following Magnus, 1986: 88 note 19) appeals to Carl Albrecht Bernoulli’s 1908 book

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<sup>10</sup> Meyer, 2014: 15 holds a similar view: ‘[...] Leiter goes so far as to claim that Nietzsche “wanted his notebooks destroyed after his death.” The problem with Leiter’s claim is that it depends on and even seems to exaggerate a story for which there is no firsthand evidence.’ R. Kevin Hill, though he thinks that Nietzsche very probably left behind manuscripts at Sils-Maria in 1888, insists that ‘[t]o leave them there would not be to abandon them’ because Nietzsche ‘would no doubt return, in the summer of 1889, or so he thought’ (Hill, 2017: xvi). Hill argues that ‘it was [Nietzsche’s] unexpected collapse into madness, not careful deliberation, which stranded these texts’ (ibid.). Williams, 2001: 65 also doubts the authenticity of the ‘burning’ story.

<sup>11</sup> This visitor is Henry H. Petit, according to Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 25-28.

*Franz Overbeck und Friedrich Nietzsche. Eine Freundschaft*,<sup>12</sup> which reports that Nietzsche instructed Durisch to burn ‘many papers, notebooks and proofs’ he left in Sils (Bernoulli, 1908, II: 301).<sup>13</sup> But the appeal to Bernoulli’s report seems to muddy the waters rather than shed a clear light on the debate on the ‘burning’ story because he neither gives a hint of his source nor makes explicit which ‘papers, notebooks and proofs’ were to be discarded. Thanks to this vagueness, Leiter reads Bernoulli’s report to mean that Nietzsche wanted much of his *Nachlass* destroyed and goes so far as to suggest that it is therefore reasonable to question ‘the canonical status of the *Nachlass*’ (Leiter, 2017).

Leiter’s blog post of 2017 generates renewed attention to the ‘burning’ story, which, as Katsafanas noted, has vexed Anglophone Nietzsche studies ever since the publication of Hollingdale’s book in 1965. In the subsequent discussion in Leiter’s blog, Matthew Meyer brings some new materials to light. He gives some credit to the story he once viewed as untenable,<sup>14</sup> tracing it back to the book *Das Nietzsche-Archiv, seine Freunde und Feinde*, which was published by Nietzsche’s sister Elisabeth in 1907. As a product of the quarrel with the Overbeck camp (to which Bernoulli belongs, see below) concerning the alleged ‘lost manuscripts’ of Nietzsche, this polemical (as its title indicates) pamphlet quotes a letter from Henry H. Petit that reported about his discovery of Nietzsche’s literary remnants in Durisch’s house in 1890, which are said to include plenty of proofs for the published works as well as a few manuscripts (Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 25-27). In explaining why these had remained in

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<sup>12</sup> Leiter, 2017. Cohen, 2010: 238-239 also takes Bernoulli’s book to be the source of the story.

<sup>13</sup> Although Katsafanas is aware of Magnus’ speculation that Bernoulli’s book may be Hollingdale’s source for the ‘burning’ story, he seems to dismiss Bernoulli’s account as saying that Nietzsche wanted page proofs discarded, not his notebook writings (Katsafanas, 2013: 248, note 8). However, his discussion of the possible inferences of the ‘burning’ story is very helpful. See Katsafanas, 2013: 247-250.

<sup>14</sup> Meyer, 2014: 15 indicates this view, as Meyer acknowledges on Leiter’s blog.

the hands of Durisch and why he even had the freedom to give visitors some pieces of paper as a memento, Elisabeth mentions that Nietzsche asked his landlord to burn proofs and manuscripts he left behind before his departure from Sils in 1888, though she refuses to interpret this instruction as implying that all of the material had no value for her brother (Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 28). He gave such instructions, Elisabeth emphasizes, merely to avoid the danger of his manuscripts falling into the hands of strangers (Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 21). According to her, although Durisch did not execute Nietzsche's instructions to burn his work, plenty of handwritten notes nevertheless got lost because Franz Overbeck, who was entrusted with gathering and reclaiming her brother's belongings in Switzerland and Italy, did not request Durisch to preserve Nietzsche's manuscripts.

Interestingly, according to Elisabeth, as Meyer properly observes, Nietzsche was quite fond of burning his manuscripts. In books such as *Der junge Nietzsche* and *Der einsame Nietzsche*, she repeatedly tells the story that already as a child she adopted the habit of collecting every piece of paper to which her brother had ever set his pen and describes how she had saved countless handwritings of his from the flames. She asserts, for instance, that in 1879 after resigning his professorship and before leaving Basel, Nietzsche, whose habit is 'to write all preliminary matter in stiff-bound notebooks,' divided his notebooks into two heaps, one 'to be packed, the other to be burnt,' saying that 'What do I want with all these notebooks? [...] I shall soon be either blind or dead!' (Förster-Nietzsche, 1915: 64). It was thanks to her intervention that all of these writings were preserved:

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I was horror-stricken at the thought that these books in his dear handwriting were to be burnt. 'Fritz,' I said, hesitatingly, 'how can these stiff-bound notebooks be burnt?' 'Of course they won't burn with the covers on,' he replied; then he took a penknife and ripped off the covers. 'Look here, Fritz,' I said, 'I've already found something that ought not to go in the fire—you must let me sort the whole lot out.' 'Just as you please,' answered Fritz, 'only take the stuff out of my sight—have it packed away, or burnt, I leave everything in your loving and capable hands.' The heap of notebooks which my brother was ready to commit to the flames

comprised a large part of volumes IX. and X. in the Complete edition of his works, and of the three volumes of his classical writings. Needless to say, I did not burn a single line. (ibid.)

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So, if Elisabeth's account of Nietzsche's 'burning' habit<sup>15</sup> is to be believed, it would not be surprising if he wanted some of his notes disposed of in the same way in 1888.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, aside from the two books *Das Nietzsche-Archiv* and *Franz Overbeck und Friedrich Nietzsche*, we have other sources for the 'burning' story. After the death of Overbeck in 1905 Elisabeth launched a campaign against the deceased, which was fought back by his student Bernoulli, his wife Ida, and Bernoulli's publisher Eugen Diederichs. In the quarrel, which evolved into series of publications and lawsuits, the 'burning' story was repeatedly invoked by both of the opposing sides as an explanation of why the *Nachlass* material in question had been left in Sils. Whereas Elisabeth emphasized that there was a considerable number of documents Nietzsche gave to his landlord to burn or to preserve, many of which got lost due to Overbeck's negligence, the Overbeck camp expressed reservations about both the quantity and the quality of the material in question, using Nietzsche's burning instructions as evidence of his rejection of it. We read, for instance, Diederichs saying in his article 'Sils-Maria und Friedrich Nietzsche,' published in 1906, that Nietzsche requested Durisch to 'burn the valueless proofs lying on the ground.'<sup>17</sup> Elisabeth, on the contrary, while ascribing

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<sup>15</sup> See also Förster-Nietzsche, 1912: 41; Förster-Nietzsche, 1915: 243-244.

<sup>16</sup> What we also know is that, along with Heinrich Köselitz, Nietzsche burned the manuscripts of the first three parts of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in Venice in 1887, see Schaberg, 1995: 101.

<sup>17</sup> Diederichs writes: 'Nietzsche ließ in der Regel viele Bücher und Kleidungsstücke bis zum nächsten Aufenthalt zurück, und so hatte er ihn [sc. Durisch] beim Abschied nur noch beauftragt, die am Boden liegenden wertlosen Korrekturen zu verbrennen.' And we read in Ida's article from 1907: 'Ueber die in Sils zurückgebliebenen, von Nietzsche selbst aufgegebenen Konzeptpapiere, von denen der Brief des Herrn Petit berichtet, steht längst fest, daß Herr Durisch sie, statt sie zu verbrennen bis zum Jahr 1893 an interessierte Reisende



Overbeck's fault to his low valuation of Nietzsche's *Nachlass*,<sup>18</sup> insisted that her brother's late notes, including those he left in Sils, were of great significance because they were directly related to his project of the revaluation of values, which did not come to an end because of his sudden collapse.

But let us leave this quarrel aside and return to the question of the authenticity of the 'burning' story. All the sources mentioned above only offer second-hand accounts of what happened in Sils in 1888. We still need decisive evidence.

I myself, like Katsafanas, had regarded the story as an apocryphal tale until I read the 'Antwort' of Diederichs published in 1907 in the weekly journal *Die Zukunft* (vol. 60).<sup>19</sup> To refute Elisabeth's story of the 'lost manuscripts,' Diederichs cites a letter from Durisch to Overbeck's widow Ida,<sup>20</sup> which I think contains the first-hand testimony we have been looking for:

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abgab und nachher, auf die Reklamation Overbecks, die noch vorhandenen Papiere an die Familie zurücksandte' (Overbeck 1907: 143). Bernoulli also maintains that what Nietzsche left behind is 'Papiere, die am Boden herumlagen und von Nietzsche ausdrücklich als wertlos bezeichnet worden waren' (Bernoulli, 1908, II: 301).

<sup>18</sup> Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 24 assumes that Overbeck did not ask Durisch to preserve Nietzsche's manuscripts '[n]icht etwa aus Mangel an Gewissenhaftigkeit, sondern weil sein literarisches Urteil bedauerlicherweise Nietzsches Nachlaß gegenüber unbegreiflich geringschätzig war.'

<sup>19</sup> This is an 'Antwort' to Förster-Nietzsche, 1907a. For the campaign against Overbeck launched by Elisabeth and the defense taken up by his widow, Bernoulli, and Diederichs see Hoffmann, 1991: 59-78, who, however, omitted this 'Antwort.'

<sup>20</sup> This letter is dated July 26, 1906. See the document of Ida's lawsuit against Elisabeth, which is preserved in the Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv under the signature GSA 72/909, page 61.

Upon your request, I hereby expressly declare that none of the things that Professor Friedrich Nietzsche left behind in my house in 1888 has been lost. All the property and books in my custody have been returned to his relatives. Regarding the manuscripts left behind, I declare that when departing Professor Nietzsche left a series of written sheets in the wastebasket with the instruction to burn them. I have given some papers to a gentleman from Bremen, whose name I have forgotten, at his request.<sup>21</sup> This gentleman has, it seems, made use of them. Since I received reclamations from your husband, I also sent back these materials that I could have burned, so that nothing has been lost and there is nothing left here that belonged to Mr Professor Nietzsche. I testify to this truthfully. Respectfully, J. R. Durisch.<sup>22</sup>

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The letter from Durisch, which Ida presented as testimony in her lawsuit against Elisabeth in defending her husband's reputation, proves that in 1888 Nietzsche did wish for him to burn the writings left in the wastebasket. There seems to be no special reason to believe that

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<sup>21</sup> The gentleman from Bremen is Gustav Pauli. See 'Nietzsche-Manuskripte,' in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, March 10, 1908; see also Krummel, 1998: 199.

<sup>22</sup> The original German text reads: 'Auf Ihre Anfrage erkläre ich hiermit ausdrücklich, daß von den 1888 bei mir hinterlassenen Sachen von Professor Friedrich Nietzsche nichts verloren gegangen ist. Alle in meiner Verwahrung befindlichen Effekten und Bücher sind an seine Angehörigen von mir zurückgesandt worden. Bezüglich etwa hinterlassener Manuskripte erkläre ich, daß eine Reihe beschriebener Blätter im Papierkorb von Professor Nietzsche bei seiner Abreise mit der Anweisung hinterlassen wurden, sie zu verbrennen. Einige Blätter davon habe ich einem Bremer Herrn, dessen Namen ich vergessen habe, auf Wunsch überlassen. Dieser Herr hat, scheint, davon Gebrauch gemacht. Da mir von Ihrem Gatten Reklamationen zugegangen sind, habe ich diese Sachen, die ich hätte verbrennen können, auch zugesandt, so daß nichts verloren gegangen ist und nichts mehr hier ist, das dem Herrn Professor Nietzsche gehört hat. Dies bezeuge ich der Wahrheit gemäß. Hochachtend J. R. Durisch.'

Durisch lied on this point (neither the Overbeck camp nor Elisabeth, who complained about the loss of Nietzsche's manuscripts, doubted his account of Nietzsche's instructions).<sup>23</sup>

Durisch, unlike Elisabeth, did not show any intention of portraying an image of himself as a savior of Nietzsche's writings. It is probably due to his love and 'deep, childlike respect'<sup>24</sup> for the professor who spent seven summers in his house that this simple countryman did not want to destroy the products of the professor's unusual mind,<sup>25</sup> but at the same time he did not have the awareness to keep these wastebasket papers intact: he generously gave some as souvenirs

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<sup>23</sup> Note that I do not say that Durisch's testimony is totally reliable or that Elisabeth and others give full credit to it. Durisch seemingly forgot or concealed the fact that he handed some of Nietzsche's literary remnants to visitors aside from the gentleman from Bremen (relevant testimonies about him giving away Nietzsche's writings are: Koegel, 1893: 702-703; Petit's letter to Elisabeth written on August 6, 1905, in: Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 25-27; Anna Dunker's letter to Elisabeth on September 26, 1906, in: Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 28; Bernoulli, 1908, II: 301 and the anonymous report of 1908 entitled 'Nietzsche-Manuskripte'). Although Elisabeth does not share Overbeck's suspicion that Durisch traded Nietzsche's manuscripts for money, she questions (I think rightly) Durisch's declaration that nothing from the materials Nietzsche left behind has been lost. Even worse, she claims, Durisch commingled the manuscripts Nietzsche wanted preserved in Sils with those he instructed to burn. Elisabeth denies that Durisch is dishonest, but indicates instead that his memory is fallible—not only due to the considerable span of years between his testimony and Nietzsche's last stay in Sils, but because of the trauma of having lost his wife and daughter in the interim (Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 28-29).

<sup>24</sup> Eugenie Galli, 'Im Wohnhaus Friedrich Nietzsches in Sils-Maria.' *Deutsche Zeitung*, December 17, 1899. Reprinted in Gilman, 1987: 169-172, here 172.

<sup>25</sup> 'He [sc. Durisch] fully understood that for seven years he had had one of the most unusual minds working under his roof' (Gilman, 1987: 170-171).

to the visitors interested in Nietzsche. It was not until 1893 that he sent the rest of these papers to Elisabeth, and only after she requested a reclamation<sup>26</sup> once she heard what he was doing with Nietzsche's manuscripts, of whose existence she had until then been unaware (Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 27).

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What, then, can we learn from the 'burning' story? As noted, according to scholars like Leiter and Young, it implies that Nietzsche gave up the will to power project. Some even read the story as saying that Nietzsche abandoned the writings he did not publish, which then entails, according to them, that generally speaking, the *Nachlass* is of little value for interpreting Nietzsche's philosophy. In what follows I will present reasons to reject both theses. I take issue with Hollingdale in particular, since his book, which contributes greatly to the circulation of the 'burning' story in Anglophone scholarship, has in a way given birth to the two theses just mentioned.

In Hollingdale's narrative, the 'burning' story first serves to discredit the compilation *WP* edited by Elisabeth and Heinrich Köselitz (aka Peter Gast), which was promoted as Nietzsche's *magnum opus*, and then, as I will show, implicitly to devalue the *Nachlass*. Hollingdale stresses that Elisabeth, among other problematic editorial operations, included in *WP* even a selection from 'the whole load of refuse' retrieved from Sils (Hollingdale, 1999: 251). *WP* is, we are told, a product of such a dilettantish editor who made no distinction

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<sup>26</sup> Elisabeth indicates that what Durisch said about the reclamation of Nietzsche's manuscripts is not accurate: '[...] Herr Durisch [hat] Recht, wenn er sagt, daß er die Handschriften auf Reklamation abgegeben habe; leider zuerst im Sommer 1889 oder Juni 1890 an einen ganz Unberechtigten [according to Petit, Durisch first gave a stranger, purportedly on behalf of the publisher C. G. Naumann, some of Nietzsche's literary remnants, see Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 26], dann einen Teil an Overbeck Ende Juni 1890 und schließlich den Rest an mich im Frühjahr 1894' (Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 28).

between unpublished material Nietzsche ‘had used in a different form’ and that which he ‘had rejected’ or ‘actually thrown away’ (Hollingdale, 1999: 250).

Elsewhere Hollingdale puts the distinction between two types of *Nachlass* material more precisely: the first type consists of ‘preliminary drafts or parallel formulations of something already published, and therefore rejected as superfluous,’ and the second type is ‘material set aside as being for one reason or another unacceptable’ (Hollingdale, 1999: 223). Despite the distinction, it is worth noting, the whole *Nachlass* is understood as rejected by Nietzsche. And for Hollingdale, the criterion for distinguishing the ‘superfluous’ from the ‘unacceptable’ is quite simple: ‘anything in the *Nachlass* which cannot be paralleled in the published works’ must be ‘unacceptable’ (ibid.).

Although Hollingdale seems to agree with Heidegger and Kaufmann who consider the will to power as Nietzsche’s ‘central tenet’ (Hollingdale, 1999: 259), he nevertheless defends the popular view that in 1888 Nietzsche renounced the project of writing a book entitled *The Will to Power*.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, some vagueness in his narrative tempts us to believe that a significant number of notes included in *WP* were actually discarded by Nietzsche<sup>28</sup> and that the ‘burning’ story has therefore a considerable weight on our judgement of *WP*. It comes as no surprise that Young, obviously relying on Hollingdale, makes the following statement: ‘Many’ of the ‘693 fragments’ printed in *WP* that are not included in Nietzsche’s plan made on March 17, 1887,<sup>29</sup> on which *WP* was claimed to be based, ‘had in fact been consigned to Nietzsche’s wastepaper basket in Sils, from which, for unknown reasons, Durisch retrieved them’ (Young, 2010: 628 note 9). According to Young, the ‘burning’ story confirms the

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<sup>27</sup> This has become the standard view, after the publication of the original, German-language version of Montinari’s article ‘Nietzsche’s Unpublished Writings from 1885 to 1888; or, Textual Criticism and the Will to Power’ (reprinted in Montinari, 2003: 80-102) in 1976. For the counterarguments, see Brobjer, 2006, 2010 and 2011, which I find more convincing.

<sup>28</sup> Prideaux, 2018: 361, for instance, whose source is probably Hollingdale, describes the manuscripts retrieved from Sils as ‘[a]n avalanche of paper.’

<sup>29</sup> In Young’s book, the plan is wrongly dated to 1884.

theory that Nietzsche gave up the plan of writing *WP*, which, he argues, originated in Nietzsche's rejection of his earlier project to extend the will to power to a principle that underlies all phenomena in the organic and the inorganic world. In his 2017 blog post, Leiter clearly adheres to this interpretation. Relating the 'burning' story to Nietzsche's alleged abandonment of the *WP* plan, he asserts that it ultimately leads us to question the centrality of the will to power in Nietzsche's thought.

The recent tendency to de-emphasize Nietzsche's *Nachlass* on the grounds of the 'burning' story can be traced back to Hollingdale as well. Following Karl Schlechta,<sup>30</sup> he goes so far as to imply that not only the notes retrieved from Sils, but the whole *Nachlass* was meant to have ended up in the wastebasket: unpublished material that finds no parallel in the published works should be totally excluded from 'any formulation of Nietzsche's philosophy' (Hollingdale, 1999: 223), while the unpublished material later integrated into his publications is something superfluous, and we merely need to consult the published works for the ultimate and in Nietzsche's eyes better presentation of his ideas. Hollingdale does not even mention that the former kind of material, though 'rejected' by Nietzsche, could provide a negative foil heightening his authorized and considered views by contrast. Although Hollingdale claims we ought to read the *Nachlass* with caution, he actually advises us to set it aside. In the contemporary debate on the *Nachlass*, Leiter defends a moderate version of this view. While arguing that the notebook material 'sometimes serves to deepen our understanding of the works Nietzsche chose to publish,' he maintains with reference to the 'burning' story that Nietzsche recognized that a lot of his remaining notebook material was 'of dubious merit' and therefore wanted it destroyed (Leiter, 2015: xviii).

What can we do with these two claims mentioned above? To respond to the first claim that the 'burning' story suggests that Nietzsche abandoned the *WP* project or even that he had become skeptical of his will to power theory, we must first ask which writings he wanted to destroy and whether the will to power ever constitutes their main content. There are three

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<sup>30</sup> Schlechta explicitly used the word 'refuse (Abfälle)' to describe Nietzsche's *Nachlass* (Schlechta, 1958: 95).

relevant testimonies: Koegel's article from 1893, Petit's letter to Elisabeth dated 1905, and Elisabeth's account in her 1907 book. Koegel and Petit, however, only tell us that the unwanted material includes a few handwritten pages such as a previously unknown version of the preface of *Twilight of the Idols*, while its majority consists of proof-sheets of Nietzsche's published works.<sup>31</sup> The only clear account of the material in question comes from Elisabeth. According to her, regarding the handwritten manuscripts, what she had reclaimed were '8 quarter- and folio sheets [...] and 5 small sheets' and the rescued notes were published partly in the Großoktavausgabe—'the 14th volume: aphorism 338 p. 174<sup>32</sup> and aphorism 299 p. 415-17;<sup>33</sup> the 15th volume: aphorism 229,<sup>34</sup> and partly in the Taschenausgabe—'in the 9th

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<sup>31</sup> Koegel reported that in the room where Nietzsche used to live, a visitor (Petit) found some of his literary remnants, 'meistens Korrekturbogen schon gedruckter Werke,' and 'der Scharfblick des Nietzschekundigen fand doch ein paar handschriftliche Blätter heraus, die mehr verrieten' (Koegel, 1893: 702-703). This is consistent with what Petit himself said about his discovery: 'Die größere Mehrzahl bestand in Korrekturen, unter den Manuskripten stellte ich Entwürfe und Variationen fest, die in einzelne mir bekannte Werke hineingehörten' (Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 27).

<sup>32</sup> This note, dated to summer 1886-spring 1887, is printed in KGW VIII 1 as 6[22].

<sup>33</sup> It is the abandoned preface of *Twilight of the Idols* which was discovered by Petit, see Koegel, 1893: 703-704. The original text, dated to September 1888, is printed in KGW VIII 3 as 19[7]. The editors of GOA 14 splice a part of the note KGW V III 3, 19[1] into it.

<sup>34</sup> This note (now in KGW VIII 3 as 23[1]), which is dated to October 1888, is also printed in the 10th volume of the Taschenausgabe as section 734.

volume [...]: aphorisms 32,<sup>35</sup> 256,<sup>36</sup> 395,<sup>37</sup> 417,<sup>38</sup> 534,<sup>39</sup> 673,<sup>40</sup> in the 10th volume: aphorisms 732,<sup>41</sup> 902,<sup>42</sup> 1040,<sup>43</sup> 1061<sup>44</sup> (Förster-Nietzsche, 1907b: 27).

Thanks to this account, we know that, of those writings retrieved from Sils, 13 ‘aphorisms’ were published by Elisabeth. To understand what bearing the retrieval has on *WP*, one should know that when we talk about *WP*, we customarily refer to the second, extended edition of the note collection carrying this title, which was first published in 1906 in the 9th and the 10th volume of the Taschenausgabe and contained 1067 ‘aphorisms.’<sup>45</sup> So Elisabeth actually tells us that 11 ‘aphorisms’ saved from the flames were incorporated into

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<sup>35</sup> Part of the note KGW VIII 1, 6[25], dated to summer 1886-spring 1887.

<sup>36</sup> The first part of the note KGW VII 4/2, 34[264], dated to spring 1885. For the reason why the KGW editors put this note in the *Nachberichtband*, see KGW VII 4/2, 64.

<sup>37</sup> Dated to beginning-spring 1886, printed in KGW VIII 1 as 4[7].

<sup>38</sup> A combination of KGW VII 1, 8[14] (dated to summer 1883) and a part of KGW VII 1, 24[28] (winter 1883-1884).

<sup>39</sup> Part of KGW VII 4/2, 34[264], dated to spring 1885 (see also KGW VII 4/2, 64).

<sup>40</sup> Part of KGW VII 1, 24[28], dated to winter 1883-1884.

<sup>41</sup> Dated to beginning-spring 1886, printed in KGW VIII 1 as 4[6].

<sup>42</sup> Part of KGW VIII 1, 6[26], dated to summer 1886-spring 1887.

<sup>43</sup> Part of KGW VIII 3, 18[1], dated to July-August 1888.

<sup>44</sup> Part of KGW VII 4/2, 34[260], dated to spring 1885 (see also KGW VII 4/2, 64).

<sup>45</sup> The first compilation carrying the title *The Will to Power*, which was produced by Köselitz and the brothers Horneffer, appeared in 1901 in the 15th volume of the Großoktavausgabe, with only 483 alleged aphorisms. The second version produced by Elisabeth and Köselitz was first published in the Taschenausgabe and then transferred in 1911 to the Großoktavausgabe to supersede the Horneffer-Köselitz edition.



*WP*.<sup>46</sup> Our conclusion is already quite clear: in contrast to the impression given by Hollingdale's account, Nietzsche did not discard 'many' of the materials later printed in *WP*, but only a very small proportion of what this book includes (only 1 percent!).<sup>47</sup> And, by taking a look at the rescued notes, we can further conclude that the 'burning' story indicates little about Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power, for these notes mainly focus on topics such as critique of morality while touching upon the 'feeling of power' only once (*WP* 534).

But what if the will to power were the central topic of the 'rejected' notes? Can we, in this case, assume that Nietzsche retracted his earlier commitment to this theory? I think the answer is clearly no, for the rejection of an idea should be distinguished from the rejection of the vehicle in which the idea is conveyed. The 'burning' story only tells us that Nietzsche did not want to keep some of his manuscripts. He decided to destroy certain notes, perhaps because he no longer accepted the ideas set out there. But it is equally possible that he was merely unsatisfied with the unpolished style. It is also possible that he took the notes he discarded to be repeating what he had already said elsewhere.<sup>48</sup> Or he may have thought that his argumentation in those notes was not problematic, but still not strong enough, so he decided to discard them in the prospect of developing more effective argumentation. Perhaps he simply changed his work plan or his interest had gone elsewhere and he felt there was no need to work on those drafts anymore. We see, then, that there is a variety of possible reasons

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<sup>46</sup> They are the following sections in *WP*: 32, 256, 395, 417, 534, 673, 732, 734, 902, 1040, 1061 (English translations follow the numbering of the 1906 edition). Readers interested in the material retrieved from Sils may also consult the two 'aphorisms' published outside the framework of *WP*, namely sections 338 (p. 174) and 299 (p. 415-17) in the 14th volume of the *Großoktavausgabe*.

<sup>47</sup> Note that Elisabeth insists that not all the retrieved notes were discarded by Nietzsche, since Durisch commingled the manuscripts Nietzsche wanted preserved with those he left behind to be burned (see note 23).

<sup>48</sup> I thank Matthew Meyer for this point.

for Nietzsche to have asked Durisch to burn some of his manuscripts. This gesture *alone* tells us nothing about what he thought about the ideas expressed there.

Now let us turn to another conclusion derived from the ‘burning’ story: that the *Nachlass* is something Nietzsche passed over or even rejected and therefore has dubious value. As noted above, Leiter is the most recent representative of this view. To come to this conclusion, he first exaggerates the misleading impression encouraged by Hollingdale’s book to the point of saying that ‘Nietzsche wanted his notebooks destroyed after his death’ (Leiter, 2015: xvii-xviii),<sup>49</sup> and second, he follows Hollingdale’s division of the whole *Nachlass* into materials already used in the published works (and therefore rejected by Nietzsche as superfluous) and those rejected as unacceptable.<sup>50</sup> This neat distinction, however, displays a certain hermeneutical and historical naïveté in its implied conception of how to deal with an author’s self-evaluation as well as in its oversimplified picture of the way an author might work with her writings. Hollingdale fails to recognize that the self-evaluation of the author is not always decisive in matters of interpretation, nor does he see that the *Nachlass* material ‘which cannot be paralleled in the published works’ is not necessarily meant to be abandoned. To be sure, an author may choose not to publish certain writings because she comes to recognize them as of dubious merit. But she may also put them aside to be returned to later

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<sup>49</sup> We should note that Nietzsche’s notebooks include more than 9,000 written pages (see the categories C, D and E listed in Magnus, 1997: 9).

<sup>50</sup> See Leiter, 2015: xviii: ‘Given that, in general, Nietzsche culled the books he chose to publish from his notebooks; given that he clearly chose not to publish much of the material that now survives in *The Will to Power* and the *Nachlass*; and given that he wanted the remaining notebook material destroyed – surely a plausible explanation for all these facts is precisely that Nietzsche recognized that a lot of this material was of dubious merit.’

(just think of the drafts on your computer).<sup>51</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to ascertain how she would use her remaining private writings unless one has her own testimony.

More importantly, Hollingdale's distinction reveals his ignorance of how Nietzsche worked. In fact, Nietzsche did not discard his notebook writings once he had used them to construct books published shortly afterwards, but continually returned to those writings, reread and revised them, and extracted materials from them which could be used for new publications. Just one example: The majority of the texts in the notebook M III 4a, which are dated to 1881, were used to make up *The Gay Science*, the first edition of which appeared in 1882. But in *Beyond Good and Evil* of 1886 and even in *Dionysos Dithyramps*, written in 1888, Nietzsche picked up several as yet unused notes from M III 4a (KSA 14, 654-655). So how could we know that he would not publish those notes of the late 1880s which he did not include in the works he published or prepared for publication until January 1889, the time he collapsed into madness, if this misfortune had not occurred? We should not forget that Nietzsche's work was interrupted forever in one of the most productive periods of his life.<sup>52</sup> It is also important to keep in mind that there is sometimes a long delay between his

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<sup>51</sup> Even if Nietzsche did not want to work on a draft anymore, we cannot infer that he rejected it as unacceptable. Daniel Breazeale's discussion of why Nietzsche gave up his project on the Pre-Platonic philosophers is illuminating. According to him, it 'had more to do with the form than with the content' of the uncompleted book (Breazeale, 1979: xlvii-xlviii). Referring to the development of the style and format of Nietzsche's publications, he argues: 'The publication of such a relatively "safe" and traditionally structured book was impossible after the publication of *Human, All-too-Human*,' which has a 'much more radical and risky format' (Breazeale, 1979: xlviii).

<sup>52</sup> That Nietzsche sent the *Wahnsinnszettel* on January 3, 1889 is usually taken as a definitive signal of the onset of his insanity. In 1888 he published *The Case of Wagner* and prepared the following works for publication: *Twilight of the Idols*, *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, *The Anti-Christ*, *Ecce homo*, and *Dionysos Dithyramps*.

experiments with an idea or a topic in his notebooks and its debut in his published works, as Daniel Breazeale emphasizes with the example of ‘the “social” account of the origin and utility of the distinction between truth and lies’ or that of ‘the “perspectival” analysis of knowing’ (Breazeale, 1979: xlv).<sup>53</sup> Against Montinari’s assertion that ‘*the Turin catastrophe came when Nietzsche was literally entirely finished with everything*,’<sup>54</sup> Thomas H. Brobjer and Bernard Reginster point out that at the very end of his active life, Nietzsche seemed to adhere to his original plan of developing his *Revaluation* project into four books and described *The Anti-Christ*, the latest book he prepared for publication, merely as the first installment of this project.<sup>55</sup> In light of this, the late notes presumably present, in Reginster’s words, ‘the most advanced stages’ of Nietzsche’s thought (Reginster, 2006: 19).

So far we have gathered basic facts about the ‘burning’ story. As shown in Part 1, the Durisch letter suggests that Nietzsche did want some of his writings burned, but now we know that what he asked Durisch to burn (even when we take all the materials left in Sils to be what he wanted burned) is—besides page proofs as well as the papers given away to visitors—13 ‘written’ pages of various sizes, that is, only a tiny proportion of his *Nachlass*.<sup>56</sup> So again: What could we learn from the ‘burning’ story? In contrast to the claim of Leiter and

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<sup>53</sup> When Kaufmann infers from the fact that Nietzsche did not publish many late notes, which he could have done quite easily by integrating them into ‘a chapter of aphorisms in *Twilight of Idols*,’ that these notes ‘did not altogether satisfy him’ (Kaufmann, 1967: xvi), he simply ignores the possibility that Nietzsche saved these notes for the projects to be developed later.

<sup>54</sup> Montinari, 2003: 101; emphasis original. Here Montinari alludes to Nietzsche’s statement in his letter to Carl Fuchs of December 11, 1888 ‘Alles ist fertig’ (KSB 8, 522; emphasis original). However, as Brobjer notes, it does not necessarily mean that ‘everything of my life work is finished;’ Nietzsche may have meant everything in a chapter or everything in a book is finished (Brobjer, 2010: 21).

<sup>55</sup> For textual evidence see Brobjer, 2006, 2010 and 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Katsafanas and Meyer also make this point on Leiter’s blog.

others that it has crucial consequences for understanding Nietzsche, the outcome seems quite meager. At the very best, it tells us about Nietzsche's attitude toward the writings he left in Sils. (And, if Elisabeth is to be believed, he had the same attitude toward many other unpublished writings.) But even if Nietzsche has placed little value on these texts, it nevertheless reveals little about how he thinks about the ideas communicated in the texts, and neither does it play a decisive role in how we should approach them. After all, most of us would agree that an author's valuation of her own writings cannot determine their actual value.

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To conclude, I want to address briefly the general question of how we engage with Nietzsche's *Nachlass*,<sup>57</sup> not only because of the fundamental significance of this question for Nietzsche studies, but also in the hope of provoking considerations of how we use other philosophers' unpublished writings. In Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship, where the problem of the interpretative priority of the published works versus the *Nachlass* has received special attention, the prevailing tendency is to question the legitimacy of the *Nachlass* as a source for

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<sup>57</sup> Here is not the place for a comprehensive survey of the *Nachlass* problem, nor can I discuss fully all the positions in the debate. Suffice it to say that there have been four main approaches, as Wicks, 2017 summarizes: The first is to emphasize the interpretative priority of the published writings over the unpublished; the second maintains that the *Nachlass* is no less significant than the published works; the third proposal tries to judge 'the priority of published versus unpublished works on a thematic, or case-by-case basis;' the fourth, postmodern position is to stress that 'any rigid prioritizing between published and private works is impossible, since all of the texts embody a comparable multidimensionality of meaning.' For a fuller discussion of the debate, see Meyer, 2014: 14-18.

making sense of Nietzsche.<sup>58</sup> One cannot deny that the recent discussion has prompted illuminating methodological reflections; but in the meantime one wonders if '[t]he issue of what weight one should assign to published or unpublished texts,' as R. Kevin Hill puts it, 'has generated disproportionate worries' (Hill, 2003: xiv). As I have mentioned, the mainstream of Kant and Husserl scholarship would hardly agree that the *Nachlass* 'does more harm than good.'<sup>59</sup> In all that has been written about Nietzsche, there is rarely a convincing explanation why the case of his *Nachlass* should be the reverse. Reginster even makes a strong case for Nietzsche's *Nachlass* as being more relevant than that of Kant: While Kant expressly opposes any kind of concealment and mystification in philosophy,<sup>60</sup> in his published writings Nietzsche is said to have employed various rhetorical devices to make his insights opaque to a wide readership, the majority of which he regards as unqualified for them. In his private writings, on the contrary, he is believed to dispense with masks and speak more directly (Reginster, 2006: 19). This 'esotericism,' no matter how distasteful to our 21st-century sensibilities, seems to be indicated in Nietzsche's letter to Overbeck on July 2, 1885. 'My "philosophy,"' he says, '[...] is *no longer* communicable, at least not in print' (emphasis original).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This tendency can be seen clearly in the reviews of Moore, 2002, Reginster, 2006, and Meyer, 2014. Instead of winning applause, efforts to reconstruct Nietzsche's thinking through painstaking work on numerous, mostly not translated notebook materials are often taken to suffer from a serious methodological defect.

<sup>59</sup> See note 3.

<sup>60</sup> See Kant's essay 'On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy.'

<sup>61</sup> Even in cases where different or even contradictory views are voiced in the published works and the *Nachlass* from the same period, if we accept the premise of Clark and Dudrick's 2012 study that in the published works Nietzsche is not saying what he actually thinks, it follows, *pace* Clark and Dudrick, that we should turn to the writings he wrote for himself for his authentic ideas.

The issue of why different fates overtake the *Nachlass* of Nietzsche and that of Kant or Husserl, though interesting in its own right, will not be elaborated upon here. It is enough for present purposes to point out that it has to do with the infamous role Nietzsche's *Nachlass à la WP* played in constructing National Socialist ideology.<sup>62</sup> Soon after the war, it became fashionable to decry *WP*, which has been condemned for bearing part of the responsibility for fascist appropriation of Nietzsche. Yet, the endeavor to rescue Nietzsche's reputation by discrediting *WP* often leads to a skepticism about the value of his late notes, even of the whole *Nachlass*, which was palpably fuelled by the 'burning' story when infecting the Anglophone world. People often forget the simple fact that the *Nachlass* and *WP* are two different things.<sup>63</sup>

Importantly, the resistance to the unpublished Nietzsche is also meant to act as an antidote to the position purportedly held by Heidegger which is believed to be given voice in his claim that 'what Nietzsche himself published during his creative life was always foreground. [...] His philosophy proper was left behind as "Nachlaß"' (GA 6.1, 6-7). Heidegger's claim has often been interpreted as if he had set up a contrast between the published and the unpublished writings and had adopted as his starting point the assumption that only the unpublished contained Nietzsche's authentic views. Admittedly, Heidegger's Nietzsche interpretation relies heavily on the *Nachlass*. But, we should note, it is the *Nachlass*

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<sup>62</sup> There are, of course, other important motivations for the devaluation of the *Nachlass*. As Meyer has astutely pointed out, it is sometimes a strategy to interpret away 'any views deemed philosophically *weak* or even *silly* by contemporary standards' (Meyer, 2014: 16).

<sup>63</sup> Also, as result of this confusion, Montinari, who argues emphatically for the philosophical significance of the *Nachlass* while insisting on Nietzsche's rejection of the *WP* project, has been incorrectly labeled by Magnus and others as one of the so-called 'splitters,' who distinguish sharply between the published and the unpublished writings, tending to devalue the *Nachlass* (Magnus, 1986: 82). For Montinari's evaluation of the *Nachlass* see Montinari, 2003: 80-102, 146-147.

from Nietzsche's late period that is crucial for him. What underlies the quoted claim and his reliance on the late notes is a developmentalist hypothesis, according to which it was only in the last two years of Nietzsche's creative life (1887-1888) that he formed his most mature, considered doctrines. Nietzsche's philosophy proper is, on Heidegger's account, only or mainly presented in the *Nachlass*, not because he deliberately chose not to publish it, but because an intervening event, his sudden breakdown, prevented him from continuing to revise and rearrange what he had written in his late career for publication.<sup>64</sup> Heidegger does not go so far as to juxtapose the *whole Nachlass* with the published works as an interpretative principle; instead, he simply does not give other unpublished texts the same priority as the late notes.

Derrida's famous postmodern reading of the notation "I have forgotten my umbrella" may also have done much damage to the reputation of the *Nachlass* because it gives the impression that Nietzsche's notebooks are full of casual jottings whose context is vague. Derrida even goes so far as to regard this notation, which according to him 'is structurally liberated from any living meaning' in the absence of context (Derrida, 1979: 131), as representative of 'the totality of Nietzsche's text' (Derrida, 1979: 133). It is understandable that for the sake of intellectual integrity and to save the published works from deconstructive game playing, some scholars like Maudemarie Clark tend to distinguish the published and the unpublished writings by emphasizing that the former provide 'much more of a context for specific passages and therefore many more checks on the accuracy of interpretations' (Clark, 1990: 26) while the latter offer 'very little in the way of context' (Clark and Dudrick, 2015: 261) and then argue that our reliance on the *Nachlass* should therefore be dispensed with. Yet the 'umbrella' notation presents an extreme case. With regard to the majority of the notes

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<sup>64</sup> When quoting the notorious sentence, we should not ignore that just before saying that 'Nietzsche's philosophy proper was left behind as "Nachlaß",' Heidegger also says that Nietzsche speaks 'in all the writings he himself published on the basis of his fundamental position, his philosophy proper,' although it has not ripened there to 'a final form' (GA 6.1, 6).



reproduced in the Colli-Montinari edition, it is possible to work out their context, sometimes just by reading them alongside the notes before and after: just as there are internal connections between successive aphorisms in the published works, a series of notes (as presented in their original sequence in the critical edition) can throw light on each other, for Nietzsche is usually concerned with several main themes at a certain time.

If there is no need to dispense with the *Nachlass*, how can we use it properly? In the current debate, in order to distance himself from the radicalism of the priority principle proposed by Clark and Leiter, Reginster argues for what he calls ‘a qualified version of the priority principle’ (Reginster, 2006: 20). While insisting on the interpretative precedence of the published writings over the unpublished, this principle is said to be qualified insofar as it recognizes that the *Nachlass* may sometimes contain Nietzsche’s considered views, in case ‘these views jibe with views explicitly discussed in the published works,’ which means, ‘when they are duplicated, explicitly anticipated, summarized, implied or implicated by them [sc. published views], or otherwise plausibly grow out of them’ (Reginster, 2006: 20).

However, the label ‘qualified version’ seems misleading, insofar as the principle Reginster proposes still takes the published views as the ultimate and only criterion for what Nietzsche really thinks. To be clear, an absolute version does not have to go so far as to insist that the *Nachlass* is something to be dismissed as harmful. The priority principle is qualified only when it admits that there may be cases where the published works do not enjoy the hegemony in clarifying Nietzsche’s position, or that, as Alexander Nehamas properly puts it, ‘there can be no single answer to the question of priority’ (Nehamas, 1985: 10).<sup>65</sup>

In some cases the importance of the *Nachlass* is hardly to be overestimated. It seems obvious, for instance, that to collect biographical information or to reconstruct the genesis of a text requires us to appeal to the *Nachlass*. In addition, the engagement with the *Nachlass* is indispensable for a contextualizing approach, which attempts to clarify the special points of Nietzsche’s positions by locating them in certain philosophical traditions and dialogues, insofar as in the *Nachlass* he often refers to the books he was reading and the authors to whom he (in the published works implicitly) was responding. Alan D. Schrift gives two

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<sup>65</sup> I am indebted to Wei Cheng for this point.

examples: ‘where the published works make no mention of authors such as Gustav Teichmüller or Afrikan Spir, we would have little evidence outside Nietzsche’s personal library and letters for the care and attention with which he read Teichmüller’s *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt: Neue Grundlegung der Metaphysik* (Breslau, 1882) or Spir’s *Denken und Wirklichkeit* (Leipzig, 1873), were it not for the citations and page references found in the *Nachlass*.’<sup>66</sup> These examples are compelling, since even Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, who argue against the importance of the *Nachlass*, admit that Nietzsche’s various excerpts from and references to the neo-Kantian thinker Afrikan Spir at the time of writing *Beyond Good and Evil* in his notebooks are all but indispensable for their interpretation, which considers Nietzsche’s engagement with Kantian philosophy as central to *Beyond Good and Evil* and suggests that this book ‘might be read as a dialogue with Spir’ (Clark and Dudrick, 2012: 18).

In other cases, for example, when we want to study the genesis of a certain theory, a retrospective look at the notes would be necessary. While published writings often only contain the result of his thinking, the *Nachlass* shows its process: how Nietzsche raises questions, entertains different ideas, abandons some and comes to others. And if our concern is to assess Nietzsche critically, it would be appropriate to examine different ideas or arguments with which he had once experimented in both published and unpublished writings and see if he made a good choice and if he convincingly established his point.

That the *Nachlass* can be helpful in the cases mentioned above seems relatively uncontroversial. The issue under dispute is whether we can appeal to the *Nachlass* as evidence for Nietzsche’s position when it says something that substantially goes beyond what has been given in his published writings. I think for scholars like Daniel Breazeale, Christoph

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<sup>66</sup> Schrift, 2012: 421. I would add that generally speaking, we get more reliable information about Nietzsche’s reading from his *Nachlass* than from his library, for not all of the books Nietzsche read have been preserved in his posthumous library (there is, for instance, no work of Teichmüller), and it is often impossible to know if the reading marks in the books found in this library, like the underlinings, are Nietzsche’s.

Cox, Matthew Meyer, Bernard Reginster, Richard Schacht, and Alan D. Schrift this is where the great value of the *Nachlass* resides, although in cases of clear conflict with the published works, they would advise to rely on the published works.<sup>67</sup> But there are quite a few commentators who see in this ‘going beyond’ the risk of attributing to Nietzsche the views that do not belong to him. My position, as I have noted, is similar to that of Nehamas, who recommends not to suppose the *absolute* primacy of the published writings in advance even when the published views contradict the unpublished and not to generalize the priority of the published works to an interpretative principle that should be applied to every study (Nehamas, 1985: 9-10).

To put it roughly: in cases of conflict, if our concern is with the philosophical value of ideas and arguments set out in Nietzsche’s corpus, it does not matter whether the text to be interpreted is published or not. If we are more concerned with the question of which views can be attributed to Nietzsche or that of what are his more considered views, it seems reasonable to rely more on the published works—in most cases, but not always: we should note that the chronological sequence of Nietzsche’s different ideas and arguments also plays a substantial role (this, though seemingly obvious, has frequently been ignored in practice); if an idea was expressed in the notes from his late period, the possibility that it presents his more considered view cannot be ruled out merely on the ground that it is unpublished. And we should not forget that Nietzsche is, as Nehamas points out, famous for making inconsistent statements about various questions, even within his published works (Nehamas, 1985: 10).

Nietzsche, the ‘writing animal (Schreibthier),’<sup>68</sup> has the habit of noting down things he is thinking about. Students of Nietzsche are lucky to have his ‘intellectual diary’ preserved (Montinari, 2003: 82). We would be throwing the baby out with the bath water if we disregarded the *Nachlass* simply because it does not necessarily express what Nietzsche actually or ultimately advocates.

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<sup>67</sup> See Breazeale, 1979; Schacht, 1995; Cox, 1999: 9-11; Reginster, 2006: 16-20; Schrift, 2012; Meyer, 2014: 14-18.

<sup>68</sup> See Nietzsche’s letter to his mother, September 14, 1888 (KSB 8, 431).

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