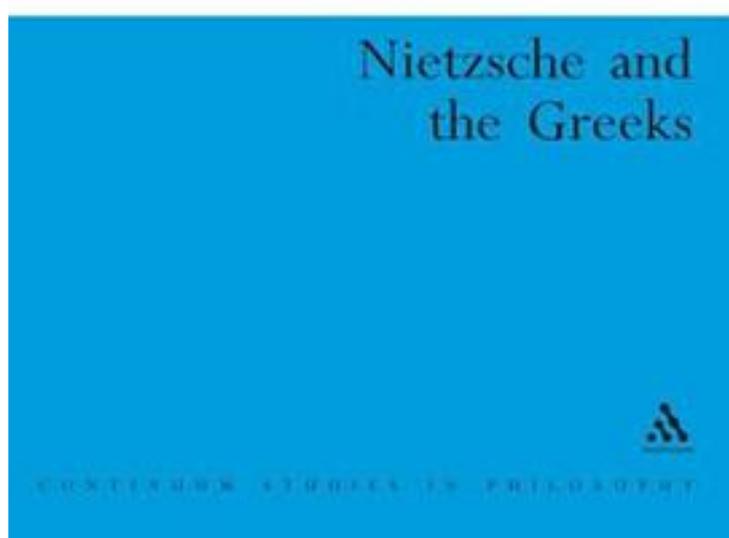


Nietzsche and the Greeks

Dale Wilkerson



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Dale Wilkerson's book shows how, like many of his contemporaries, Nietzsche looked to the Greeks in an attempt to alleviate Europe's woes. His work in this area resembles that of the cultural anthropologist who uncovers formal differences in social manners that might explain the development of humankind's most important instincts—those for carving out personal identity and for forging social unity. Nietzsche argues that recognizing such formal differences is what makes cultural evaluations and even normative judgments possible. Nietzsche acknowledges important likenesses between Western society in the nineteenth century and the Greek world during the time of the Pre-Platonic philosophers. Both societies were increasingly secular, wealthy, and focused politically on securing order in the city-states at home, and on establishing colonies abroad. Similarly, the changing social landscapes in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. were linked to a developing interest in the natural world, to humanistic notions of the individual's place in it, and to principles of rational and mathematical calculation. Despite acknowledging such commonalities, Nietzsche's examination of the Greeks is founded upon the notion that the distance between the Greeks and modernity could offer a new perspective from which to understand the "inner-workings" of culture. With a strategy that highlights this distance, Nietzsche analyzes how culture forms and breaks apart, how it is effective, and how cultural institutions structure the lives of all individuals, the exceptional and the ordinary. "Nietzsche and the Greeks" is a much needed guide to this fascinating subject matter.

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