



# FREUD - NIETZSCHE - GIBRAN

## THE HUMAN CONDITION

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The back cover of our bulletin 'Ashtarou'

In September 2023, our group 'Ashtarou' received a paper written by Dr Amine Azar on the difference between the psychological therapy approaches of Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud. in 'Ashtarou free bulletin n° 2023.1024, oct 2023. Janet used hypnosis to «cure» his patient Marie by *Correcting* her fixed subconscious ideas, while Freud sought to uncover the *Truth* behind psychological illnesses through psychoanalysis.

In his paper Dr Azar wondered if Janet had ever read Friedrich Nietzsche. This prompted me to read Nietzsche's essay "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" (1873).

But what about Freud? Was he influenced by Nietzschean ideas?

It seems that Freud denied and refused any think of the sort. Freud's biographer Max Schur in "Freud living and dying" *International University press, New York, 1972* shows that Freud's literature gave shallow consideration to Nietzsche. Another specialist Paul-Laurant Assoun, in "Freud et Nietzsche", *PUF, 1998*, refers to a letter to Fliess 1900 Freud confided, that he whereby had taken a Nietzsche book, but was too lazy to open it!

Kahlil Gibran does not seem to have any complex about consulting Nietzsche books. On the contrary, his literature may have gained in flexibility and creativity after reading them.

Reading the posthumous essay “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” was like touching a high on voltage wire.

The main statement of Nietzsche’s manuscript says that we are trapped in a bubble that prevents us from reaching the *Essence* of things.

Science can only lead us to illusions and should be under control. Art is also an illusion that flirts with reality. But art doesn’t cheat because we know it’s an illusion, so it’s true.

The fable that caught my attention in the first few lines is definitely very important.

After reading these few lines, I’m reminded of a story by Kahlil Gibran. This story can be found in his first book written in English, titled “The Madman” 1918, and it’s the remarkable fable of “The Three Ants”.

Gibran was deeply influenced by Nietzsche’s most popular book, “Thus Spoke Zarathustra”, 1883. But did he read “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”? Could it have inspired him to write “The Three Ants”?



*“Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever animals invented knowing.*

*That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of «world history» but nevertheless, it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever animals had to die.”*



*“ Three ants met on the nose of a man who was asleep in the sun. And after they had saluted one another, each according to the custom of his tribe, they stood there conversing. The first ant said,*

*“These hills and plains are the most barren I have known. I have searched all day for a grain of some sort, and there is none to be found.”*

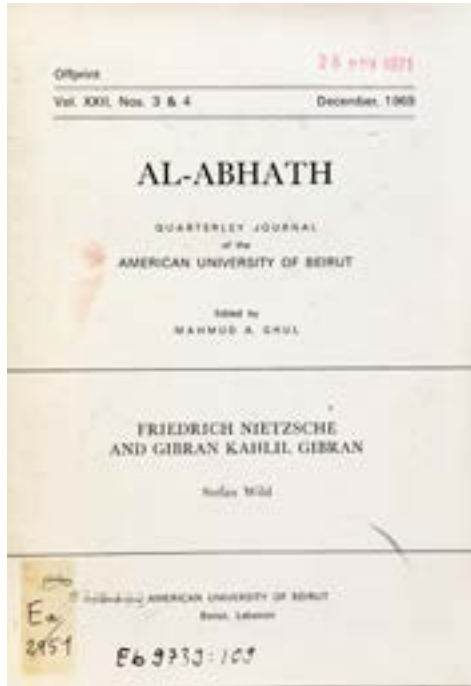
*Said the second ant,*

*“I too have found nothing, though I have visited every nook and glade. This is, I believe, what my people call the soft, moving land where nothing grows.”*

*Then the third ant raised his head and said,*

*“My friends, we are standing now on the nose of the Supreme Ant, the mighty and infinite Ant, whose body is so great that we cannot see it, whose shadow is so vast that we cannot trace it, whose voice is so loud that we cannot hear it; and He is omnipresent.”*

*When the third ant spoke thus the other ants looked at each other and laughed. At that moment the man moved and in his sleep raised his hand and scratched his nose, and the three ants were crushed.”*



Former Institute Directors Prof Fritz Steppart (1963-1968, left) and Prof Stefan Wild (1986-1973, right) with their wives in 1968.



Studies focusing on Nietzsche and Gibran have been relatively scarce.

I found an interesting paper written by German Professor Stefan Wild, former director of the *Orient Institut* in Beirut, in December 1969 for the *Quarterly journal of the American University of Beirut* "Friedrich Nietzsche and Gibran Kahlil Gibran".

Professor Wild's article succinctly captures the numerous references that highlight the relationship and influence between Gibran and Nietzsche.

Mr Joseph Geagea, Gibran museum's director, send me an attractive study over Gibran and Nietzsche written by Rasha Ismaiel Al-Kinani in "Between Nietzsche's hammer and Gibran's shovel", *LARQ Journal of Philosophy, Linguistics and Social Sciences* Vol. (4) No.(43) year (2021). According to Al-Kinani Gibran replaced Nietzsche's hammer, which breaks the idols of modernity, with a shovel that does not break, but rather digs graves for the idols of the East, after he had given up even on breaking them.

Eddy Choueiry with Sophia Denkova Delcheva checking Gibran's books in Gibran Museum Bchareh





Nietzsche's books preserved in Gibran Museum in Bchareh



Her study explored how the Nietzsche's book specially "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", altered the style and the romantic thinking of Gibran "The Tempests" 1920, conveys well this change.

While it is known that Gibran was familiar with Nietzsche's "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" it remains uncertain if he read any other works by Nietzsche.

To delve deeper into this topic, I contacted Sophia Denkova Delcheva, a specialist in preserving Gibran's archive and artworks. She informed me that Gibran owned five books by Nietzsche, including two editions of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", "Beyond Good and Evil", "The Genealogy of Morals", and a special edition of "The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche" dedicated to Gibran by Mary Haskell in 1913.

The following day, I had the opportunity to visit the Gibran's Museum in Bchareh, with the kind assistance of the director, Joseph Geagea.

Together we commenced our investigation.

Sophia carefully examined Gibran's extensive collection of books, hoping to find any trace of Nietzsche's essay. Meticulously, we inspected every page of the five books, looking for any annotations or indications that Gibran may have engaged with the text. Employing ultraviolet light, Sophia skilfully detected fingerprints within the books, providing evidence that Gibran had indeed handled them. The worn-out spines of the books further hinted at their frequent use.

It appeared that Gibran had not come across the specific Nietzsche essay I was searching for.



First pages from Gibran Book of "Thus Spake Zarathustra", Macmillan Company, 1908

As a result, some may consider as a flaw that "The Prophet" was inspired by "Zarathustra".

It becomes intriguing to explain the profound connection between Gibran's and Nietzsche's two fables.

These two distinct narratives harmonize remarkably, offering parallel insights into the human condition. Both tales eloquently unveil the illusion and confusion that often beset human beings.

For a minute, "The World History" witnesses the arrogance and mendacity of these "clever animals" on a narrow understanding called Science. Nevertheless, it was only a minute, a moment, then Nature by a few careless breaths, during its slumber, swiftly crushes these ignorant ants.

What I attempted to do by intertwining the two fables was to show that their individual meanings remain unchanged.

It is plausible to assume that the "clever animals" in Nietzsche's fable correspond to the hard-working ants depicted in Gibran's narrative. The prideful "clever animals" who claim to possess knowledge align with the third ant in Gibran's fable, who pretends knowledge of the exact situation. It is truly remarkable how Gibran, without having read Nietzsche's fable, elucidates and concurs with an identical perspective. It is evident that both fables convey the notion that human beings, akin to the third ant, may come close to grasping the intricacies of the human condition, yet ultimately fall short of comprehending the *Essence* of their existence.

Despite Gibran's admiration for the Nietzschean style, he maintained a unique perspective that diverged from Nietzsche's nihilistic philosophy.



In conclusion, this humble quest unveiled, for the first time, specifically Nietzsche books were owned and used by Gibran. Regardless of Gibran's opposition to Nietzsche's nihilism, these two fables undeniably form an exception, showcasing the striking similarities in their messages of the human condition, independently from any previous Nietzsche direct reference.

The real reference for Gibran was "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", in fact we discovered that he had two copies of it; A very used copy with Gibran annotations, and a second new copy almost untouched. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche wrote "In my lifework, *Zarathustra* holds a place apart. With it, I gave my fellow-men the greatest gift that has ever been bestowed upon them.

...Such things (his words) can reach only the most elect ; it is a rare privilege to be a listener here; not every one who likes can have ears to hear Zarathustra".

Gibran as a poet and an artist is the elected one who can perfectly resonate with his colleague Nietzsche.

in "The complete works of Friedrich Nietzsche", volume 17, edited by Dr Oscar Levy, "Ecce Homo" *New York Macmillan Company*, 1911.

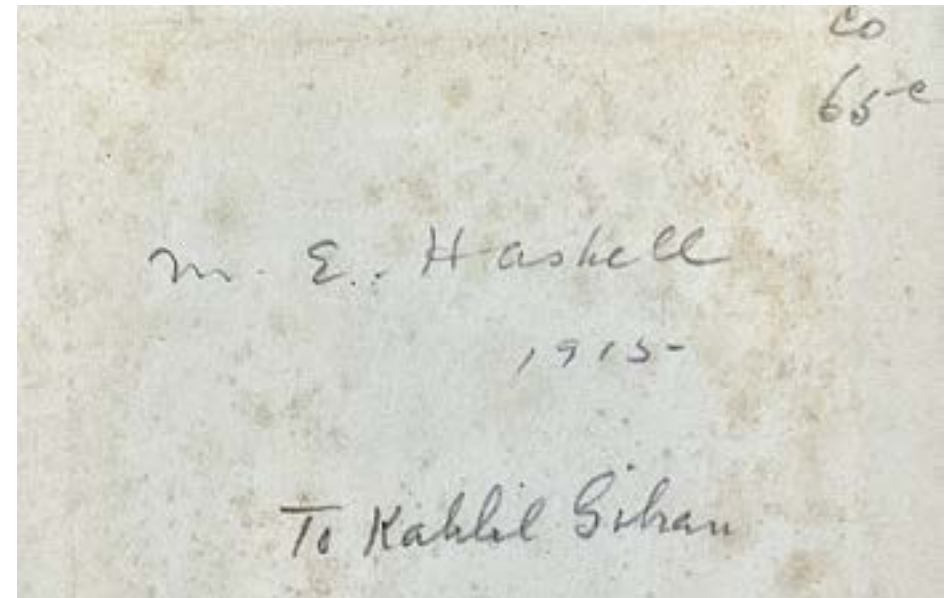
Many thanks to Gibran's museum and Gibran's comity for their support. Also so grateful to Paola Samaha, Gebran Vladimir Yazigi for their remarks.

"Thus Spoke Zarathustra, is a book for All and None". Freud is the none of them!



Pages from Gibran Book of «Thus Spake Zarathustra», *Macmillan Company*, 1908 where we found this yellow paper

"The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche" by Daniel Halévy, *William Briggs* (Toronto), 1916, dedicated from Mary Haskell to Kahlil Gibran written on the first page of the book





Some items of my bibliography